CHAPTER 6

Major findings and Conclusion:

MAJOR FINDINGS:

After a detailed study of the book ‘Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa’ critically, the major findings are arranged chapterwise as follows:

In the introductory chapter i.e. Chapter-I, while studying dates and works of Asvaghosa we find that

- Asvaghosa was contemporary to Kushana King Kaniska. His talent flourished during the period AD 78 - AD 150.
- It is also learned from this chapter that the Buddhacarita was originally composed in 28 cantos and was rendered into Chinese and Tibetan. Sanskrit text of this invaluable work comprises 17 cantos only of which again only the first 13 plus some verses of the 14th are genuine and the remainder are of dubious origin.
- Again from this chapter we find various classification of Kavya.
• From the summary of contents of Buddhacarita we got an idea about biography of Gautam Buddha from his birth to demise.
• This also gives some philosophical doctrines of Buddhism and let us knows how Buddhism spread throughout at that time.
• A large number of legendary and historical figures like Agastya, Ahalya etc. has been introduced.

Chapter-II let us know that

• Asvaghosa has depicted Santarasa as the main sentiment in the Buddhacarita.
• He has also depicted the sentiment Srngara as the subordinate sentiment even then we find some references where his apathy regarding the worldly passion has revealed.
• We got an idea about some passions which are harmful to human beings.
• The beautiful descriptions of flora and fauna in the Buddhacarita reflect Asvaghosa’s knowledge for Botany.
• Here we get the defect of ‘Cytasamskrti’ (lacking in correctness i.e., not in conformity to the rules of grammar). As for instance the word Varsa has been used on the neuter gender instead of feminine gender.

In Chapter- III we find

• Asvaghosa was very fond of Upama (simile). He used Upamas derived from the nature such as the Sun, the Moon etc. But
his use of figure Upama does not conform to the strictest classical standard as the gender fails to correspond in Buddhacarita. These faults are later clarified by Dandin under the ruling of Kavyadarsa.

- The other figures whose descriptions fill the pages of the treaties on poetics hardly need notice, as their identification is of no aid in estimating the quality of his poetry.
- Meters used by him are both the varieties of Samavrttas and Ardhasamavrttas.
- His largely used meters are Upajati, Anustup and Vamsasthavilam and has rarely used the other meters like – Rucira, Praharsini, Malini, Puspitagra etc.

Chapter-IV gives us idea that

- Cast division prevailed at those times in the society.
- Different activities and the status of the Brahmanas and Ksatriyas were mentioned by him but no such details were mentioned for Vaisyas and Sudras.
- At Buddhacarita, he treats as the standard authorities the works of Usanas or Sukra and Brhaspati which though not extant are equally called the fundamental treatises in the Mahabharata.
- The law of inheritance is also mentioned in the epic where after the death of a property owner the wealth was inherited by his legal heirs.
• We get various information in the Buddhacarita in respect of the education system of the time of Asvaghosa.
• The women at that time received high respect from all classes of people.
• The chapter informs us about the existence of painters & sculptures.
• There are mentions of the customs like the initiation to the rite called Upanayana.
• Anna was the important cereal food and somarasa was the important drink at those times.

Chapter-V tells us about

• Various qualities of a Mahakavya.
• It also informs us that Buddhacarita satisfies the requirements of a Mahakavya.
• An epic opens with a benediction, salutation or naming of the principal theme but Buddhacarita is not in conformity with this rule always.
CONCLUSION:

Asvaghosa was a philosopher and poet and was considered to be the father of Sanskrit drama, is attributed with first using the word Kavya. It is generally supposed that he flourished during the age of the great Kushan king Kaniska. Asvaghosa is undoubtedly, first and foremost a poet of versatile genius- a Buddhist monk, a poet of high calibre, a scholar and a devotee, a poet of deep thought, wonderful novelty and wide outlook. He has expressed in his works the dry philosophical and ethical theories in a very beautiful manner. He takes upon himself the difficult task of establishing Buddhism in India as well as outside. The world-renowned Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa is the first and by far the best work, but unfortunately, the Sanskrit text of these invaluable works is not complete. Buddhacarita deals with the biography of Gautama Buddha, along with the doctrines of Buddhism in a very attractive style. The classical rules of metre, grammar and poetics were very strict in his time and he handled them very tactfully throughout his works. Asvaghosa set up a standard for the future ‘Mahakavis’ by his Buddhacarita. His rhetorical skill, his knowledge of different Sastras, his mastery over words and phrases place him among the great poets of Sanskrit literature. Asvaghosa was well acquainted with political ideas, ethical codes, traditions and customs of ancient India. Asvaghosa’s words are not merely poetic but also embody a social philosophy adumbrated in the Smritis and practiced by the
people at large. He respects all that is good in our cultural tradition and obeys all the rules of traditional customs as prescribed by sacred treatise like Smritisstra, Manusamhita etc. In his Buddhacarita he draws the picture of a highly civilized society and the work is a gift for all the readers who are interested in the fundamental social attitudes at that time. The science of politics though intricate, is an important topic of an ornate court poem and Asvaghosa demonstrates his political ideas very nicely which enhance the charm and gravity of this work.

To Asvaghosa nature is a media of manifestation of his poetic talents. He has the extraordinary power to observe every minute details of the nature and to portray them by his writings. He loves nature in every mood and the Kavya Buddhacarita indicates his sincere observation of every aspects of Nature’s beauty. Thus Asvaghosa draws a lovely and sweet relation between Man and Nature. He describes with equal success the static and dynamic aspects of human life and Nature. This type of presentation is very rare. Asvaghosa stands unique in this regard.

Asvaghosa was so expert in expressing his thoughts that the reality and rationality of his philosophy never for a moment retard the freshness, liveliness and loveliness of his poetry. His significant work not only illuminate the mid but also enters deeply into our innermost soul in such a manner that we don’t feel that we are reading philosophy in poetry.
Lastly we can conclude that through Buddhacarita, we have indeed for the first time an actual epic of Buddha composed by a real poet. Who filled with intense love and reverence for the exalted figure of Buddha, is able to present the life and doctrine of Master one in noble and artistic way. It appears that Buddhacarita bears almost all the necessary qualities of Mahakavya. The picture of the pleasures of love drawn by Asvaghosa point out his greatness as a writer. He draws touching pictures of nature in his work. From the detailed discussion about the usefulness of nature, some light is thrown on the awareness of our ancient seers about the environment, and its constituents. The unity in diversity is the message of physical and metaphysical sciences of that era. The internal message from his writing is clear that environment belongs to all living beings, so it needs protection by all, for the welfare of all. Thus the study proves the origin of environmental studies from ancient times. Some of the points made by Asvaghosa in his Buddhacarita may be treated as defects as they go against strong tradition or established notion. Defects may occur in the case of words and sentences. Even then his Buddhacarita, a poem in Sanskrit occupies a prominent place in Buddhist and Sanskrit literature. Without the study of Buddhacarita the knowledge about the life and philosophy of Buddha can not be thought of complete. With its poetic beauty and literary merits the Buddhacarita receives attention from the readers.