CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A drama is a literary enterprise. Though the dramas are written by the dramatists, these, very often involve a number of technical inputs without which the dramas are failed to be called so. If a study of a number of dramas is carried out, it can be found that most of them follow certain rules and techniques, be it the literature of any language. Sanskrit dramas which are known as Rūpakas as considered by the dramaturgists, also contain certain important features found in the writings of dramaturgists. Some of the dramatists are very much popular for their contribution in composing dramas. Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Harṣa are to mention a few. Harṣa occupies a significant place amongst the dramatists, for his three dramas Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānanda. A study of these dramas and a critical evaluation is very much essential not only to know how far these dramas follow the dramaturgical rules, but also to understand Harṣa’s expertise in delineating all those features in his dramas. Hence a critical study of Harṣa’s drama is proposed in this work.

Before going to begin the task, the knowledge of the terms ‘Literary Critique’ is very much required here. Critique means ‘the art of criticism’. In this context anything is judged from a critical point of view. An act of
criticizing is very often essential to evaluate the standard of any object, be it a piece of knowledge or anything that comes under the purview of critical exercise. Literary criticism is the study of a literary piece, its evaluation and the interpretation of that work. In a literary criticism, one may criticise a piece of work, from a holistic approach or from a particular aspect. This criticism includes all aspects of literary understanding though the emphasis is given mainly on the evaluation of literary works and the author’s position in the field of literature.

Literary critique, though not a part of literary piece, but is very much associated with the part of the body of knowledge on literature, which goes just like a shadow of a literary piece of work. Any academic exercise on literature goes hand in hand with literary critique. If there is one piece of literary work, a number of critical exercises follow, which signifies the importance of literary critique.

The three works *Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī* and *Nāgānanda* of Harṣa are evaluated partially, by various Sanskrit scholars, yet the analysis is not satisfactory as no systematic and elaborate discussion have been made on these works so far. Moreover, lot of works has been carried out on various Sanskrit dramas but hardly any in-depth study has been taken up on Harṣa’s drama. It is unfortunate that Harṣa received scant attention from
the students of Sanskrit literature in comparison with other dramatists. As no systematic attempt has yet been made to analyse and interpret the techniques adopted by him, the proposed work is taken to present a critical analysis and interpretation of the three dramas of Harṣa.

This research work is organized in six chapters. In the Introductory chapter stress is given on the authorship of three dramas of Harṣa, the life and date of the author and chronology of the three dramas. A literary piece is evaluated on the basis of some characteristics, hidden in it and hence a thorough discussion is required on those criteria so the second chapter includes the general characteristics and technicalities of Sanskrit drama. Third chapter deals with the theme, source, plot, deviation and evaluation of the three dramas of Harṣa. The fourth chapter deals with Harṣa’s indebtedness to Bhāsa and Kālidāsa The fifth one includes some major components of Sanskrit drama and their reflection in Harṣa’s work. The last chapter i.e. the concluding chapter contains the major observations.
AUTHORSHIP OF THREE DRAMAS

In Sanskrit literature three dramas entitled Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānanda have come down to us under the name of Śriharṣa. About the authorship of these dramas there are different opinions of different scholars. So the question arises who is the actual author of these works and whether these works are the products of one and the same author. It is a common problem with almost all the writers of Sanskrit literature.

Going through the preludes of Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānanda, one can easily come to the conclusion that all these works are the product of the same person who is none but king Śriharṣa. In the prelude of Ratnāvalī, Sūtradhāra informs that Śriharṣa has composed a Nāṭikā named Ratnāvalī. Such a sentence has again been repeated in the prelude of Priyadarśikā. Almost all the words have been uttered by the Sūtradhāra in the prologue of Nāgānanda also. Again in one verse of the prelude of Nāgānanda, Śrīharṣa is described as a poet.

In all these three dramas, a very striking similarity is found as regards the construction of the plot, situation, repetition of the same idea and phrases. The concluding stanza of the drama Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī is same and two verses of Priyadarśikā are repeated in the Nāgānanda also.
A great similarity is found in the case of *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā* as both are *Nāṭikās* consisting of four acts. The source of these works is also the same i.e. Udayana legend. In both the *Nāṭikās* Udayana is described as the person who may be a historical figure. The *Nāgānanda*, however, belongs to a different category. It is a *Nāṭaka* consisting of five acts where the hero is Jīmūtavāhana, the son of Jimūtaketu. He falls in love with Malayavatī, a *Siddha* princess. One of the lover’s drawing a portrait of the other, the meeting of the lovers in a bower, one of the lovers over-hearing of love confessions of the other, etc. are common facts represented in all of the three dramas. The heroine’s attempt to commit suicide by hanging herself and her rescue by the hero are common incidents that take place both in *Ratnāvalī* and *Nāgānanda*. The preludes of all these works are constructed in the same style. It is therefore, clear that the three dramas are composed by one and the same person and he is none but king Śriharṣa.

Now, it is a very perplexing problem to identify who is the actual author as there is a good number of Harṣas known to us. There about seventeen persons bearing the name Harṣa, in the realm of Sanskrit literature.

1. The first one is Ādityavarman, the king of Maukhary dynasty who took the name Harṣagupta⁹.
2. In the dynasty of Pāṇḍu there was another king by the name Harṣa. He was the son of Chandragupta. He reigned in kośala in the seventh century A.D.

3. There was another Harṣagupta who was the son of Kṛṣṇagupta of the dynasty of later Guptas. It is known from an inscription, found in Afsad, near Gaya. Most probably this Harṣa reigned in Vaṅga, Mālava and Magadha.

4. There was a king named Harṣa in the dynasty of Bhagadatta in the eighth century A.D. He was known as Harṣavarman and also Harṣadeva.

5. A king named Harṣaraja reigned in Mewar in the dynasty of Gohalis in the earlier part of the ninth century A.D.

6. Śriharṣa, a king of Kashmir is described by Kalhana in his Rājatarāṅginī. He lived between 1089 A.D. and 1101 A.D.

7. One Harṣa named Harṣamitra was a commander-in-chief in the kingdom of Kashmir.

8. In the kingdom of Kashmir, mention of another Harṣa is found who was the ruler of the kingdom of the province ‘Lohara’ and was the son of Kapila.
9. Another Śriharṣa was the grandfather of Bhoja, the king of Dhara and the father of Muṇja and Sindhala, who is supposed to be living in the earlier part of the tenth century A.D. 17.

10. Matrarata Anaṅga Harṣa ascended the throne of Kashmir in the eighth century A.D. whose name is mentioned by Dāmodaragupta in his Kuṭṭanimatam. He was the author of the drama Tāpasavatsarājacaritam 18.

11. In the sixth century A.D. another king, named Vikramāditya Harṣa reigned in Ujjayinī 19.

12. One Śriharṣa composed a commentary on Kāvyapradīpa 20.

13. In modern time, another Harṣa is found as a commentator of Gītagovindam, the famous lyrical poem of Jayadeva 21.

14. There was another Harṣa who is the commentator on Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata 22.

15. One Śriharṣa, a resident of Telengana was the author of a poetical work namely Amarakhaṇḍanam 23.

16. In the twelvth century A.D. another Śriharṣa is found, who was the court-poet of Jayacandra, the king of Kānvakubja 24.

17. The Indian history mentions another Śriharṣa, also known as Harṣavardhana, who was the king of Sthāneśwara. He was the son of
king Prabhākaravardhana and the younger brother of Rājyavardhana. He reigned in the seventh century A.D. He was the patron of the great poet Bānabhaṭṭa.

Among these vast accounts, there are six persons bearing the name Śriharṣa. They are – (a) The author of Naiṣadhadarita (b) The commentator of Kāvyapradīpa (c) The king of Kashmir (d) Father of Muñja (e) A Telegu poet of Telengana (f) The king of Sthāneśwara, the son of Prabhākaravardhana.

In the Daśarūpaka (of tenth century A.D.) and Dhvanyāloka (of ninth century A.D.) there are some quotations from Ratnāvalī, Priyadarśikā and Nāgānanda. It is therefore, certain that all these three works are composed before ninth century A.D. and out of these six Śriharṣas mentioned earlier, only king Harṣavardhana Śilāditya of Sthāneśwara is said to have reigned from 606 A.D. to 647 A.D. The first two persons were not kings and the first lived at the close of twelfth century A.D. while the other in the fifteenth century A.D. The king of Kashmir is said to have reigned in the end of eleventh century A.D. while the father of Muñja ruled in the beginning of the tenth century A.D. The fifth one is an inhabitant of Telengana, was a Telegu poet who is nowhere mentioned as a king. So the author is undoubtedly king Harṣa of Sthāneśwara who is of seventh century A.D.
In the last quarter of the seventh century A.D. the Chinese pilgrim Yi-Tsing clearly refers to the dramatization of the subject of Nāgānanda by Śriharṣa. He also said that king Śilāditya had written the story of Bodhisattva Jīmūtavāhana who surrendered him to the Garuḍa in place of a Nāga. Jīmūtavāhana is said to be an incarnation of Lord Buddha, who is the hero of the drama Nāgānanda. In the drama, Lord Buddha is found to be praised in benedictory stanza or Nāndī. Śriharṣa was devoted to Siva, the Sun and the other Deities and in his later years he was more inclined towards Buddhism. He was so much influenced by Buddhism that his thoughts were also reflected in his work Nāgānanda. It is a sensational piece with a Buddhistic colouring, the hero being Bodhisattva and Buddha being praised in the introductory benediction. Therefore, it can easily be said that Śriharṣa or Harṣavardhana is the actual author of the drama Nāgānanda.

The question of actual authorship was raised in antiquity, for while Mammaṭa in his Kāvyaprakāśa merely refers to the gift of wealth to Bāna or Dhāvaka in some manuscripts by Harṣa, the commentator observes that Dhāvaka was richly awarded for the writing of Ratnāvalī under the name of Harṣa. This view has been favoured by Pischel, Wilson and Paranjape. Hall and Buller also accepted Bāna as the author of these three dramas. But in Kāvyaprakāśa, there is no such word basing which the commentator can warrant such observation and everyone is well acquainted
with the forceful style of Bāna. Besides this, Bāna is a prose poet or ‘Gadyakavi’ and there is no such reference in Bāna’s work that he ever wrote any drama. Above all, in Harṣacarita, Bāna himself speaks of Harṣa as a poet. Bāna therefore can not be ranked as the author of these works.

Mr. N. Shastri tried to establish that Bhāsa is the author of the drama Ratnāvalī and Priyadarśikā. But this is apparently based on hearsay.

Prof. Keith states that three dramas as well as some minor poetry, have come down to us under the name of Harṣa, unquestionably the king of Sthāneśwara and Kānvakubja, who reigned from about 606 A.D. to 648 A.D, the patron of Bāna who celebrates him in the Harṣacarita and of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who is our most valuable information of his reign.

In the Sanskrit anthologies, Harṣa was referred to as a good poet and dramatist. Piyusavarṣa Jayadeva said in his Prasannarāghava that Harṣa is a great delighter of poetry. In the opinion of Bāna also Śriharṣa is a good poet. In the eleventh century A.D. Saddal praised Śriharṣa in his champu, Udayasundarīkathā and adorned him with the word ‘Gīr Harṣa’. In the three dramas i.e. in Ratnāvalī, Priyadarśikā and Nāgānanda the mention of the words ‘Śriharṣaḥ nipunaḥ kaviḥ’ give evidence of his authorship. Yitsing also testifies Śriharṣa’s authorship of the drama Nāgānanda. So from the above testimonials, supplied by various scholars, Harṣa’s authorship of these works has been recognized. Besides these three dramas, he is also
said to have written the *Suprabhātastotram* and a few stray verses in the Sanskrit Anthologies\(^{45}\). Thus there is a good number of evidences both internal and external, in support of Harṣa’s authorship of the three dramas. All these works were written in the same style. It is therefore, clear that the three dramas are composed by one and the same person and he is none but king Śriharṣa.

**LIFE AND DATE OF HARṢA**

The Indian history as well as the *Harṣacarita* of the renowned poet Bānabhaṭṭa tells that Harṣavardhana is the son of king Prabhākaravardhana and Yaśavaṭī (Yasamati). King Prabhākaravardhana and Yaśavaṭī are compared with “Śaṅkara and Pārvatī, Viṣṇu and Laxmī, Candramā and Rohiṇī, Prajāpati and Buddhi, Vaiśiṣṭha and Arundhati” in Bāna’s work. But they had no issue for long after their marriage and hence King Prabhākaravardhana used to pray to his family deity Śiva, with a regular strict routine, which is informed by Bāna in his work *Harṣacarita*. In this context he also worshiped the Sun god and in course of time he became the father of three children. Rājyavardhana is the eldest son of Prabhākaravardhana while Harṣavardhana is his second son.

Bānabhaṭṭa, the court poet of Harṣavardhana does not mention any particular date or year regarding the birth of Harṣa. According to Bāna, Harṣa was born in the month of *Jyaiṣṭha* on the twelvth day of the dark
fortnight, the pleinds being in the ascendant, just after the twilight time when the young night had begun to climb, a sudden cry of women arose in the harem. He also does not give necessary details pertaining to Harṣa’s early life and education. It is only definite that Harṣa assumed full control of the affairs of the kingdom when he was about sixteen years of age. Most probable emphasis was laid on physical and military education to Harṣa and Rājyavardhana. They were weltrained in the sword fighting and bow fighting. It is described by Bāna that when Sthāneśwara, the kingdom of Prabhākaravardhana was disturbed by Hunas, he sent his eldest son Rājyavardhana to lead an expedition against the Hunas. He was a grownup youth and was fit for wearing armour. He attended by ancient advisors and devoted feudatories towards the north to attack the Hunas. By this time Prabhākaravardhana took bed due to illness and consequently met with death. At that situation Rājyavardhana ascended the throne. But before he and his younger brother could recover from the shock of the death of his father, they had been struck by another sad news that Grahavarmana, the husband of their sister Rājyaśrī had been killed by Devagupta, the king of Malwa. Grahavarmana and Rājyaśrī were thrown into a prison in Kānvākubja. Hearing this Rājyavardhana immediately started with his troops to repress his enemy and asked Harṣa to remain in the kingdom. Ill-luck was working behind them and soon Harṣa came to know that
Rājyavardhana was treacherously killed by the king of Gauḍa who is probably identified with Śaśāṅka.

After the death of Rājyavardhana, Harṣa ascended the paternal throne of Sthāneśwara. His first and foremost duty was to rescue Rājyaśrī, relieve her kingdom Kanauj (Kānvakubja) from Śaśāṅka and punish him for foul deed. To achieve his goal Harṣa advanced with a strong force and in course of his march he made friendship with Bhāṣkaravarman. Soon Harṣa could know that Rājyaśrī had been released and flew towards the Vindha forest. After a vigorous search, Harṣa found her when she was about to immolate herself. Harṣa then returned with his sister. Bāna has given upto this information as with this very incident the most valuable source Harṣacarita has unhappily comes to an end. So nothing could be known about his later life from this source.

From a detailed study of Indian history it is known that Harṣavardhana ascended the throne of Sthāneśwara on 606 A.D. The Inscriptions of Nalanda and Banskhera provide us much information regarding his reign, the most important information is provided by Hiuen Tsang, who slipped from China to India in 629A.D. Following these informations it is known that he reigned from 606A.D.-647 A.D. In his reign he was only once defeated by Pulakeshin II in 620 A.D. His last campaign was of bringing under his power the District of Ganjam on the Coast of Bay of Bengal in 643 A.D. four years before his death.
From the above discussion one can know about his political life. Besides the political aspects of his life, various references are found about his religious and other cultural aspects also. He was a patron of poets. He denoted one fourth of his revenue for rewarding high intellectual eminence. He was himself a good poet as there are three dramas viz. \textit{Priyadarśikā}, \textit{Ratnāvalī} and \textit{Nāgānanda} which have been attributed to him.

Though initially Harṣa was Hindu but later on he was found to be much influenced by the Buddhist Philosophy.

Harṣa was a benevolent ruler and his administrative ideal was the attainment of happiness for his subjects. He was an ideal king and it is highly reflected in his drama \textit{Nāgānanda}. Bana portrayed Harṣa as one, who possessed the qualities, superior to those possessed by famous heroes and gods. He was the Universal Monarch. To crown all, he is describes as \textit{“Dharma incarnate”}.

He was a great emperor and his marches included his expeditions against the rulers of Malwa, Gauda, Valabhi, Orissa, Kashmir, Nepal and other places. He received the title ‘\textit{Śilāditya}’ which is evidenced from Chinese record. He possessed in him all the qualities of an emperor and the history tells that he extended his kingdom towards the east.

Harṣa was a liberal patron of the man of letters and art. His court was adorned by the famous poets like Bāna, Mayura, Mātaṅga, Divākara and others and he, himself was a great poet as is mentioned in \textit{Harṣacarita}. 
CRONOLOGY OF HARṢA’S DRAMAS

It is not so easy to determine the order of composition of Harṣa’s plays. Yet it is assumed from the comparative study of the plot, style and theme of the dramas, that Priyadarśikā is Harṣa’s first work. In Priyadarśikā, the immaturity in the field of style, plot construction and general set–up is noticed and it is full of some technical defects, so Harṣa was not fully successful in the composition of Priyadarśikā and probably this reason lead him to take the next attempt to compose Ratnāvalī taking the same story. Both the Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī are Nāṭikās, consisting of four acts. The theme of both the plays is also same yet Ratnāvalī appears to be superior to Priyadarśikā. From a serious survey of both these works one can opine that Harṣa wanted to improve his writing capacity and at the same time tried to overcome the lacuna that he found in his early work. His Ratnāvalī is considered as one of the best drama in the realm of Sanskrit literature. The question of determining the order of the two dramas, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānanda, is to some extent difficult. Of these two dramas Ratnāvalī surpasses Nāgānanda in literary beauty. Some scholars placed Nāgānanda in second position on the basis of simplicity and its literary beauty. But this opinion is not so sound. Going through the life of Harṣa, it is observed that Harṣa, who was initially a Hindu Emperor, was converted towards Buddhism in his later life. More over, in the benedictory stanza of Nāgānanda, there is the praise of Lord Buddha and it presents Harṣa’s Buddhistic inclinations, so it must have been his last work.
Notes and References


10. Ibid. Pp. 221-222.

11. Ibid. P. 72.


13. Ibid. P. 160.


22. A. N. Jani, op. cit. p. 84.


24. A. N. Jani. op. cit. P. 84.


31. A. N. Jani. op. cit. P. 84.

32. V. A. Smith. op. cit. P. 348.


35. P. V. Kane, HC, Ucch. III. Pp. 45-46.


42. Api cāsyā tyāgasyarthinaḥ prajñāyā śāṣtrāṇi kavitvasya vācaḥ. P. V. Kane, HC, First Edition,1918,Ucch. II. P. 35.


44. Log. Cit.
