INTRODUCTION

Sanskrit Gadyakavyas are very few but the poets who have made pursuits for the development of this branch deserve sincere praise. Perhaps we are yet to explore the ancient Indian lore and tradition. While making efforts for his work Subandhu wanted to uphold the ancient Indian lore by giving shape to an ancient story in his own way.

As a Prose-writer Subandhu is known to all Sanskrit lovers. He flourished most probably during the second half of the sixth century A.D. The Vasavadatta his only work stands as an epitome of Sanskrit culture. The cause of writing this work, as the author himself declares was to show his skill in displaying the figure Slesa. Indeed his literary merit excels in his elaborate and skilful handling of this figure.

Much has been said about this writer and his treatise, but a fresh assessment still cannot be denied so far as the distinctive features of the work as well as of the author’s scholarship are concerned.

We come to know about the two recensions of the text Vasavadatta of which one belonging to Northern India is called the Northern-recension and the other belonging to the Southern India is called the Southern-recension. But
most of the scholars accept the Northern recension as the authentic one. Dr. Sukla has made a very careful analysis about the recensions in his work. The first edition of this work was published by Fitzedward Hall from Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta in 1859 A.D., following the Northern recension. In my Thesis I have followed this edition. This text was edited many times by the scholars both Indian and foreign some of which are now not available. It seems if any day all the editions are obtained and the unpublished commentaries become published the value and importance of the work will be enhanced and appear anew to the world of scholars. However, in my Thesis entitled “A Study on Subandhu’s Vasavadatta”, an humble attempt has been made to discuss in detail, the notable features of the work as well as the erudition of the writer. In doing this the contents of the text has been critically analysed and in doing the latter special emphasis has been given on Subandhu’s exhibition of Ślesa and his knowledge in Sanskrit Vocabulary.

The Thesis consists of four chapters excluding the Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter deals with the personal accounts viz. the date and homeland; Subandhu found in Sanskrit Literature; the personality etc. The Second Chapter gives details of the text—the type of the work; the source of the plot; the commentators; the theme and its development. The Third Chapter in continuation of
the Second one gives an exhaustive analysis of the text-contents viz. the characterization; the nature; the peculiar images; the society and religion etc. In the Fourth Chapter an attempt has been made to give a comprehensive idea about the merit of the author by discussing Subandhu's scholarship; his fondness on Ślesa; the poetic figures used in the work; his vocabulary etc.

I have tried in my own humble way to present a wellnigh and compact study of the text throwing some new lights wherever possible.

In the work we find that Subandhu while dealing with the story makes a brief survey of the entire Sanskrit Literature referring to the names of Sanskrit works, their authors and sometimes the names of the characters contained therein.

It becomes evident from the work that he could even present to the Literary world a very good piece of poetic work. But in order to display his skill in exhibiting Ślesa, he selected Prose-writing. Indeed in prose the Ślesa finds a greater scope of application. Moreover the author takes a vow to display pun in each letter of his work. The vow invariably needs a careful examination. Indeed the use of this figure of speech in his work reveals that one may work at length taking "Ślesa in the Vasavadatta" as a separate subject of study.
This figure of speech reveals a distinct feature of Sanskrit Language and the application of it by the author is novel. Truly one may feel that the author wanted to propound this figure as one of the principal figures of speech if not the basic one which abounds almost all other alamkāras. Obviously Subandhu had ample scope to illustrate other figures of speech also in his work. None can deny that as a best rhetorician Subandhu excels not only in Ślesa but precisely shows his command over Sabdā-ālamkāras (the alamkāras based on Sabda). As for example we see that in case of delineating the character of a king, some names of deities or mythological persons or of some distinct natural objects were enough to the author.

Thus we have tried to show the importance of the work as the distinct contribution of the author in the field of Sanskrit Literature. We feel that the work stands as an indispensable one to every lover of Sanskrit. It's a fact that unless one is expert in Sanskrit Lexicography or is well-versed in the proper application of the words he will not be able to judge Subandhu properly. And it is true, on the contrary that one who goes through the work will be surprised to see the wealth of Sanskrit Language and culture as well as our great ancient tradition.

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