INTRODUCTION

That Bāṇa is one of the great masters of Sanskrit prose is a matter beyond dispute. But Bāṇa's style has been a controversial issue in the History of Sanskrit Literature.

The traditional critics, mostly of Sanskrit have showered unstinted praise upon him. In Vidagdhamukhamandana Dharmadāsa says that in Bāṇa's writings, we find the use of charming words and letters, and sound echoing to the sense, which describe appropriate sentiments and emotions:-

"Rucirasvarvarnapadā Rasabhāvavatī Jaganmāno Harati. Tatkim Tarunī Na Hi Na Hi Vānī Bāṇasya Madhurādī-Pasya."

Fascinated by the brightness of his picturesque descriptions, Tagore has rightly compared Bāṇa's unique romance Kādambarī with a 'PICTURE-GALLARY'. Bewildered at amazing power of his imagination pervading the whole universe somebody has exaggerated him:--

"Bānacohistām Jagat Sarvam."  

Intoxicated by the exhilarative relish of Kādambarī in its latter part Bāṇa's own son praises heart captivating beauty of Bāṇa's poetry in the following words:-

"Kādambarī-rasabhareṇa Samasta Eva Matte Na Kiṅcidapi
Cetayate Janoyam." ³

But whereas the traditional scholars have showered unbound praises on Bāṇa, the modern, particularly some western scholars have criticised him for his style etc. Bāṇa's adverse critics are represented well in Weber's effective protest against Bāṇa:—

"In short, Bāṇa's prose is Indian wood where all progress is rendered impossible by the undergrowth until the traveller cuts out a path for himself and where even then he has to reckon with malicious wild beasts in the shape of unknown words that affright him." ⁴

But as adduced above, most of the critics are of the view that Bāṇa is a poet par excellence and his prose is the finest in entire Sanskrit Literature. And to justify this, it will be not wrong to quote Winternitz here:—

"However, tiring a reading of this novel (KĀDAMBARĪ) may be for reader of the west, we have to bear in mind that the Indian readers are presumed to have a sound knowledge of Sanskrit language and for them work has its own special charm." ⁵

Indeed, the chief value of Bāṇa’s prose lies in its suggestiveness and more so in the suggestive poetry as also in his imaginative picturesque descriptions. Enough has been said on the latter aspect, but little attention has been paid to the former aesthetic aspect of Bāṇa’s work which is the foremost. Because to have suggestiveness is a condition for a work of high literary value. Thus, a work of literary art is an object of beauty first and any thing else afterwards. This fact gives rise to some questions. What is the literary beauty? How is it perceived? These questions can be met with proper answers in the following verse of Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyāloka:-

"Pratīyamaṇaḥ Puraranyakadeva Vastvasti Vāṇīṣu Mahākaviṇām Yattatprasiddhāvayavātiriktaṁ Vibhāti Lāvanyamivānagānāsu."6

As in the case of a Juno, (beautiful woman), the reflection of beauty is the joint force and full results of all her famous limbs but even then in an entirely different thing in character and cannot be expressed or mentioned by the name of anyone of the limbs, however, beautiful in itself, and her famous and beautiful limbs lose their identity before this heart-gladdening effect called beauty in respect of appealing to the heart. In a beautiful poem, the beauty of poem or the "Pratīyamaṇa" uses expressive

meaning and all other elements as a jumping-off ground to suggest a meaning which is an entirely different thing not only in degree but in kind also. And expressive meaning with all other elements must be contributing towards this heart-charming "Pratīyamāna" or suggestive meaning and however beautiful in itself expressive meaning must be reckoned as inferior to the suggestive meaning in respect of appealing to the Sahrdaya or the man of taste.

On this very conception of suggestion, Ānandavardhana's Dhvani-theory is formulated. It is Ānandavardhana's contention that only the Dhvani theory can logically explain all the facts of the poetic prose to the satisfaction of the creative poet on the one hand and "Sahrdaya" or the appreciative critic on the other.

In the present times we often try to verify our judgement by the western standards. A comparative study of eastern and western aesthetics fortunately deepens our faith in the wisdom of Ānandavardhana, and this aesthetic element or suggestive poetry is found in abundance in Bāṇa's prose writings - namely 'Kādambarī' and 'Harṣacarita'. One or two examples from 'Harṣacarita' will confirm it.

(i) ASAŅLAKŚYAKRAMA DHVANI in the description of love affairs between DADHĪCA and SARASVATĪ:-
"Turugārūdhasa Ca Tam Prayāntaḥ Sarasvatī Sucirasmuttambhita-
pakṣamanā.......Krochrādiva Ca Sañjahāra Drām." 7

(ii) SAMLAKSYAKRAMA DHVANI in the description of
Sthānuśvara towns-

"Yatra Ca Mātāngagāminyaḥ Śilavanyas'ca, Gauryo Vibhavaratās'ca,
Syāmāḥ Padmarāginyas'ca.............Pramadāh." 8

Bāṇa's excellence in use of Dhvani, without which
no excellence in 'Rasa'—presentation was possible, had
made him a prose-writer whose parallel is not found anywhere.
The 'Mahākavitvapadalābha' has come to him because he has
used the suggestive sense called "Dhvani" with a super sense
of judgement. Even 'Ānandavardhana', the founder of Dhvani
theory, has quoted few of his lines as examples of Dhvani.
Any proper exposition in the use of Dhvani made by Bāṇa has
not been done so far. Thus, though Bāṇa has been explained
and re-explained, yet the source of beauty in his poetry
still remains hidden from the seeking eyes of the lovers of
his poetry.

This has incited me to make a critical study of Bāṇa
from this aesthetic point of view under the topic "DHVANI: in
Bāṇa's Prose" and establish Bāṇa as one of the finest prose
writers of Sanskrit from the view point of use of Dhvani.