There are various anecdotical traditions regarding Dandin's life. In one of such traditions, he is represented as a contemporary of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti; another tradition places him in the court of Bhoja and there is still another which describes his poetic rivalry with Kālidāsa. Beyond according a distinct recognition to the author, such traditions do not help us in knowing the personality of Dandin. Efforts to deduce some facts from his name Dandin which signifies a brāhmana mendicant are of no value, for such conjectures lack corroborative evidence. And the fact that Dandin was his name and not the title is ascertained beyond doubt by the biographical evidence of Avantisundarīkathā;

1. Op. Kavicaritä which has a story that these poets described Sarasvatī (who manifested in the form of a damsel playing with a ball) differently, Dandin, on his part, depicting the scene in a verse reminiscent of DK. pp. 151-3 and esp. p. 153.

2. Op. Ballāla's Bhojaprabandha which records an incident of samasyāpūrana in which the samasyās candraśikēmā laḷambe, was completed by Bhavabhūti, Dandin and Kālidāsa, each composing one line.

3. Sarasvatī is said to have given her verdict in favour of Dandin on the question as to which of the two poets was a real poet, though she supplemented her judgement by identifying Kālidāsa with herself.

4. Op. Wilson: DK., intro. p. 4; Pt. Krishnamachariar also made a similar conjecture; op. Agashe, op. cit. p. lxv. A. Rangasvami Sarasvatī (QMV., XIII, p. 630) pointed out that acc. to one of the comm., the author came to be called Dandin on account of the beauty of the first verse of DK. (Brahmānda etc.) xxxxxx where-in the word danā occurs 8 times. These conjectures are groundless, as also the view (referred to in Agashe, op. cit., p. lxv) that the author was an imposter who
the somewhat unfamiliar appellation seems to signify Danḍin's being the mainstay of his family, as he was born to his parents after so many daughters.

According to the work, the ancestors of Danḍin belonged to Ananda'pura, a town in the North-western part of Aryadesa, from where some forefather of his migrated to Acalaoura, a city in the Kāśikya country. Here one Nārāyaṇasvāmin was born in this family. He got a son named Dāmodarasvāmin who, through the poet Bhāravi, befriended the Gālukya prince Viśṇuvardhana. Once he accompanied Viśṇuvardhana in hunting excursion and was forced to take meat. As atonement for the sin, he started on a pilgrimage and in the course of his wanderings, he met the Gaṅga king Durvinīta and joined his court when he was about twenty. The Pallava king Simhavisnu came to know of his poetic talent and invited him to his court. Dāmodara joined his court and finally settled at Kāṇcī, where he composed many works like Gandhamadana etc. Danḍin, who was the great grandson of this Dāmodara, was born to Viradatta and Gaurī after several daughters.

After the upanayana ceremony at the age of seven, Danḍin started his studies; about the same time he lost his father.

lik[e Chatterton in English lit. attempted to pass off his work under a revered name Danḍin.

Meantime, Kāncī was attacked and devastated by enemies. In confusion that followed, Dandin left Kāncī and roamed about different places, lived in famous centres of learning for long and attained knowledge. When life became normal in Kāncī, he returned home and lived a happy life. He acquired great reputation among the scholars, poets and artists of the day. Among his friends were Lalitālāya, a famous architect, magician and poet, Hanamalla, the Commander-in-Chief's son, Māṭḍatta, a Vedic Scholar and poet, Devasārman, a brāhmaṇa scholar, Jayanta, Nārāyana, Bhajanānada, Rāmāsārman, Vimata etc.

Dandin was a great scholar and was specially proficient in Kauṭilya’s Arthasāstra and Vātsyāyana’s Kāmasūtra. He was widely travelled; in his boyhood when he was forced to leave Kanci, he wandered about different lands, and probably visited the northern countries also. This afforded him an opportunity of coming into close contact with people of all sorts, customs, dresses and languages. He was a keen observer who closely witnessed the multifarious aspects of life which have been well reflected in his Daśakumārācarita and Anantisundarākathā, as we shall see below.

7. Op. ASKS. I. 36; this portion is lost in ASK. That the author belonged to South is also evidenced by frequent references to southern places, which, as Collins (SHI.D, p. 42) remarked, display less conventionality than other parts of his geography. As Kale (DKC., intro., pp. xv-xvi) points out, the description in DKO. of cock-fight ( pp. 143-4) which was a common diversion in South, and of economic housekeeping in the story of Cominī (pp. 159 ff.) which characterises southern ladies even now, also suggests the same thing. KA, also shows its predilection for southern places like Malaya (II. 174; III. 165 etc.), Kāverī (III. 166), Kānci.
That he was fully acquainted with the life in royal courts is amply evidenced by all his works and is fully consistent with the data afforded by Avantisundarīkathā. It is also gathered from his works that he lived a happy life in affluent circumstances and saw the picture of life with its bright as well as dark sides.

He was a devotee of Viṣṇu from whom he got inspiration for writing his Avantisundarīkathā, but he had a liberal outlook towards other faiths, though he seems to have been somewhat prejudiced against the Jain and Buddhist sects.

( suggested in III. 114 ) Cola ( III. 166 ), Kalinga ( III. 166 ) etc.

8. Cp. ASK, pp. 12-3; 14; 16; 17. We know of one Mātrdatta as a comm. of Ṣīranyakesīyaśrautasūtras; cp. K. R. Kavi: ASK, intro., p. 4; Rāmadarman's identity with Bhāmaha's predecessor of the same name ( II. 19; 58 ) is doubtful.

9. See below; sect. IV, chap. V.


12. Cp. DKC., p. 75 etc.; see below also.