

Subandhu of Śūdraka- A Chronological Account

Sudarsan Kumar Sharma

Śubandhu, the author of prose romance *Vāsavadattā* was a king who flourished in the 6th century A.D. at its end as postulated by Dr. V.S. Aggarwal,¹ on the ground that he has referred to Dharmakīrti's *Bauddha samgati alankāra*² and Udyotakara's *Nyāyavārtika*³. Chronologically the Indian history has also referred to a vipra Subandhu by name, aspiring for a high seat in the court of Nanda King, a contemporary of Cāṇakya who installed Chandragupta as the king of Magadha. The same is referred in *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva which is the Sanskrit version of *Brhatkathā* of Guṇādhyā.⁴ Thus a contradiction has occurred between Subandhu, the author of *Vīṇāvāsavadattam* by Śūdraka⁵ on the one hand and Subandhu, the vipra on the other. Dr. M. R. Kale fixes the date of Śūdraka approximately at 2nd century B.C. Śūdraka has been ingeniously correlated⁶ Cāṇakya with Subandhu giving a hint to the critic to find the contemporaneity or seniority or juniorty of the two. There are also indications that Śūdraka is styled as Viṣṇugupta as in *Kāmandakīya Nītisāra*⁷; Kautilya and Viṣṇugupta in *Arthaśāstra*; Daṇḍin as in *Daśakumāracaritam*. Subandhu as *Sindhurāja* has also been mentioned by the author of *Vīṇāvāsavadattam*.

Subandhu has been explicitly called as *Sindhurāja* by the author of *Vīṇāvāsavadattam*. It obviously means that illustrated as a suitor for the hand of *Vāsavadattā* deprecated as coward by Bharata,

Rohaka, minister of Pradyota Mahāsenā, he was a contemporary of Udayana Vatsarāja whom Mahāsenā forcibly wanted to bring for the espousal of his daughter Vāsavadattā. He was most probably a contemporary of Gopālaka and Pālaka, the sons of Mahāsenā (537-513 B.C)⁸ or even earlier as Pālaka ascended the throne by a coup-de-tat comprising of assassination of Gopālaka resulting in the imprisonment of Āryaka, the latter's son. But the escape from Bindusāra's bondage makes this view anachronistic because Bindusāra's succession to Chandragupta Maurya comes in 297 B.C or 293 B.C. This is against the view of contemporaneity of Subandhu with Udayana, Gopālaka and Pālaka. According to Dr. A.D. Pusalkar, Vairantya is Rintipur on the Gomti, a branch of Chambal in Madhya Pradesh. If Sindhusāvira are to be taken contiguously then Subandhu becomes the overlord of Sindhu Sauvira according to Bhāsa, a contemporary of Udayana and Pradyota referred to by Guṇādhyā.⁹

On comparing the data available in Pratiññāyagandharāyaṇa and Avimaraka, some idea about the authorship and date of Viñāvāsavadattam can be had. Mālatīmādhavam of Bhavabh ti¹⁰ clearly synchronizes the facts that Pradyotamahāsenā had received Dūta Āryajaivanti whom he welcomed but did not accede to the espousal waiting for the catching alive of Udayana by the ruse of mechanical elephant, subsequently allowing his daughter to elope with Udayana. Bhāsa does not mention any of the names of Magadhas like Dūtajaivanti. He also calls Viṣṇusena and Jayavarma as the two sons of Ka irāja. The latter is the King of Mathura as referred in VVD. Also the allusion of VVD to Ka ipati as Viṣṇusena makes the point that after Sañjaya, Viṣṇusena might have inherited

the ancestral throne in Kāśī. After Sañjaya's death, Subandhu took over the charge of SindhuSavira.

Dr.P.L.Bhargava points out that Bindusāra who ruled from 580- 552 B.C.¹¹ being a contemporary of Pradyota and Ajātaśatru, it can easily be reconciled that Subandhu could have been a junior contemporary like Udayana escaping bondage of Pradyota. But Vatsarāja as Śātānīka and Sahasrānīka,¹² the father and grandfather of Udayana as alluded by Daṇḍin. It makes clear that Subandhu as Sindhurāja is a younger contemporary of Bindusāra like Udayana being a younger contemporary of Pradyota. Subandhu likewise could have been brought in bondage by Bindusāra. In Avantisundarikathā, Śūdraka is said to have flourished in subsequent periods of Pradyota (472 B.C-422 B.C) Dr.P.L.Bhargava.¹³

There is another possibility. Śūdraka has mentioned Subandhu along with Cāṇakya and Guṇādhyā in Brhatkathā and has also referred to hostility between Subandhu, a vipra aspiring for an elevated position in the court of Yogānanda. It can be pointed out that Cāṇakya having liquidated Yogānanda and his son installing Chandragupta Maurya on the throne. Subandhu vipra might have taken to such a recourse during the days of Bindusāra taking him into custody being afraid of a coup-de-tat and might have escaped from that bondage. Vatsarāja in that case may be Naravāhanadatta,¹⁴son of Udayana. Subandhu's hostility to Cāṇakya could have incited the former to seek revenge on the son of Chandragupta. Bindusāra, who could have taken him into custody afraid of a coup-de-tat.¹⁵ Dr.Pusalkar describes Śūdraka as the king of Śobhāvati in Karnataka or Kalinga in the light of the complete acquaintance he has evinced in his Mrcchakatika. Dr.R.G.Harshe proves that the home of Subandhu was in Central India. He also

evinces a Bharwāni Copper Plate Inscription of Mahārāja Subandhu belonging to Madhya Pradesh. Dr. V.V Mirashe also supports this view. Halder takes the time of Subandhu to Gupta Era making Subandhu as the subordinate king of Budha Gupta (A.D.485-86). The inscription of Bhirwāni also proves the age of Śūdraka flourishing before the period of Mauryas. The colophons in the Arthaśāstra indicate that Cāṇakya as Viṣṇugupta is not Sudraka but might be an elder contemporary of Cāṇakya.

Dr.D.K.Gupta refers to the verse 6 of Avantisundarikathā mentioning to Bindusāra who had close relationship with Vatsarāja Subandhu. This corresponds to A.D.416-417. Dr.Budh Prakash refers to Subandhu mentioned by Śūdraka as a powerful king of that time ruling in Māhiṣmati in Central India. From this it can be understood that Subandhu as a king of Madhya Pradesh in the 5th Century A..D. stands established with reference to Chandragupta Vikramāditya. This is also proved in Vāmana's Kāvyaṅkārāsūtravrtti. Dr. D.S.Trivedi ¹⁶ brings the date of Śūdraka to post-Mauryan period but not later than Bindusāra. The historical fact of taking Bindusāra as contemporary to Udayana looks to be an anachronism in the same way as Subandhu as Sindhurāja with Subandhuvipra.

References:

1. Harṣacarita- eka samskr̥tika Adhyayana p-6 Bihar Rāṣṭra Bhāṣā Parishad, Patna sammelana Bhavana, Patna -3
2. Vāsavadattā, a prose romance of Subandhu.(Tr) Louis H.Gray.Motilal Banarssi Das, Delhi
3. Ibid.
4. Kathāsaritsāgara 1.5.115-125P.14 MLBD 1970. (Ed) J.L.Śāstri

5. Revised edition by Dr. K.V.Sharma.
6. M.R.Kale. Vāsavadattā- An Introduction. P.25. MLBD, Varanasi.
7. Kāmandakīya Nīṭisāra I.5.6.
8. Recent Studies in Sanskrit and Indology. Prof. Jagannātha Felicitation Vol. Ed. By Dr. D.K.Gupta.1982.
9. Dr.A.D.Pusalkar. Bhāsa- A Study. P.346.
10. Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti. Ed. M.R.Kale. p.57, MLBD. Delhi-1967.
11. Recent Studies in Sanskrit and Indology. Prof. J.N.Aggarwal Felicitation Vol. p.168.
12. Bhāsanātakacakram. Pratijñāyogandharāyaṇam.p.177.
13. Recent Studies in Sanskrit and Indology. Prof. J.N.Aggarwal Felicitation Vol.p.169.
14. Referred to by Guṇāddhya. Brhatkathāmanāñjari.IV.139 p.114.
15. Ibid.IX.6. 263-264. p.308.
16. Indian Chronology. Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay-7.