

LITERARY ESTIMATE OF THE BOOK SEKHASUBHODAYA

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The book Sekhasubhodaya containing in its present form twenty five chapters goes to establish a high antiquity for the Shrine of a Mohammedan Saint of the 15th century A.D and incidentally to establish the right of the Shrine to some connected landed property. But what is peculiar and attractive to the wind of the Scholars, is that the pious fraud challenges chronology and history at one end and on utter literary forgery on the other end is hinted at. The text presented in corrupt Sanskrit and in prose is romance-cum-collection of folk – tales and takes the hero to the reign of the last Hindu King of Bengal who is said to have been convinced of the religious merits of the Saint and to have endowed his mosque with valuable land. The scope, purpose, style, language of such an ordinary text gradually increases our determination curiosity to ascertain its place and importance in the Kathanaka literature. To unearth its hidden treasure in the literary field a humble research works in around with as. In our limited effort on observation starts evaluating the text Sekhasubhodaya from literary sides.

Key word:- Imagination, Manuscripts, Romance-cum-collection, Smrti work, Pseudo-historical verses, Hindustani Mohammedan, Introverted, Suspicious, Miracles.

A literature becomes wonderful and bright as it becomes a store-house of different incidents, imaginations, stories that fulfill the interest of the readers. Manuscripts, inscriptions etc. are considered as records of the ancient. Indian literature that glorify the level of the-then society from different points of view i.e. social, political, cultural and religious This literature is fancied on prose and verse sections that attract the mind and sentiment of the people as a whole making us realize affluence and greatness of it.

The two sections that apprise of the gravity, delicacy, inspiration and charms of the literature are the major factors for realizations. The present text the Sekasubhodaya, exhibits its double coated character signifying the nature of the fable literature. This is the first literary record in Bengal which purports to honor a Pir, though the country at the time of the Sena dynasty was not aware of Islam. Along with the auspicious coming of the seikh and incidentally description of the adventures of the people, some animal fables and folk tales have been narrated.

The work containing at present twenty-five chapters only has been presented in corrupt Sanskrit and in prose. On our glance to the scope of the work, it is manifestly an utter forgery and partly a pious forgery to boot. The purpose evidently was to establish a high antiquity for the shrine of a Mohammedan saint of the fifteenth century and incidentally to establish the right of the shrine to some connected landed property. Within the span of anxiety to establish this, the unknown concoctor of this pious fraud threw chronology and history to the winds and took the hero of this romance-cum-collection of folk-tales three centuries earlier to the reign of the last Hindu king of Bengal, who is said to have been convinced of the religious merits of the saint and to have endowed his mosque with valuable

lands. The authorship also has been ascribed to Halayudha Misra who is well-known as a courtier of Laksmana-sena and author of the Brahmanasarvasva, a popular Smṛti work, so that its authenticity does not go beyond challenge. Chapter XVIII bears much importance pointing out the purpose in writing this book, as it contains the names of villages of a Mohammedan inspiration in its contents.¹ By the style of narration Indian sense and thoughts are fairly shared and from the aspect this book is a direct descendant of the Vetalapancavim .sati, the Dvatriṃsatputtalika, the Sukasaptati and other similar medieval works. In fact it is found that the spirit of Hindu-story-telling is wedded with Mohammedan romance.

The structure of this book bears a similarity with a historical Kāvya written in prose and verse. But its claim to historicity is confined, to a few pseudo-historical verses and some anecdotes and in the names of historical persons such as Laksmanasena, Umapatidhara, Govarahana 'Acarya. Halayudha Misra, Vijayasena, Ramapala, Dhoyi, Gango, the dancer etc.

The Sekasubhodaya retaining the nature of Kathanaka group puts a collection of miscellaneous stories that were current in the country. Some of these stories remind us of Vetalapancavim/ati and a few are of historical importance. The story of the mother mistaking her child for the pitcher and dropping him in the well is depicted in a panel of the ruined temple excavated at Paharpur in North Bengal, not far off from a historical side connected with the Sena kings.

Lacking in much material for the text-book variety of history, some of the incidents and references articulated breathe the spirit of genuine history. For example, Laksmanasena's hostility to Muslims and his clash with Umapatidhara though absent in any records of Laksmanasena and his sons, was a fact. In Saduktikarnamṛta two of his court poets made an eulogy to the king as a smiter of the Muslim force.²

The Sekasubhodaya again shows antagonistic attitude to the Turks. Chapter IX points out that the seikh was told by the Great Person to go to the eastern country where the king was Laksmanasena who killed the Muslim that ventured there.³

Opposition between king Laksmanasena and Umapatidhara and between Vallabha" and the minister happens to be the main note in many of the stories and anecdotes in Sekas'ubhodaya. The king had a disliking to the minister who possessed a skilled attendant like Madana, and also cherished a bad mentality to the same on account of the latter's aversion for Vallabha. This spirit of stories is akin to the story of Prabandhacintamani of Merutunga.

Taking aside Halayudha Misra and Umapatidhara, a few other persons are mentioned in Sekasubhodaya who are believed to belong to the court of Laksmanasena, such as Govardhana Acarya, Dhoyi and Jayadeva. Govardhana Acarya who is called Jagadguru appears as an upright, pious brahman of somewhat irritable temper. The anecdote of Dhoyi, an illiterate person at first and afterwards possessing divine gift of high poetry covers the tradition of stories concerning Valmiki and Kalidasa. The story of Jayadeva and his wife contesting Vudhana Misra suffers disproof, as Kapilendra of Orissa belonged to the fifteenth century. But what is significant to say that Jayadeva was not a court poet of King Laksmanasena, but had just come there as an outsider Saduktikarnamṛta refers.⁴

Apart from such dignitaries, another figure Gango by name in Sekasubhodaya is associated. Many with him are connected viz. Jaya, his son and Vidvutprabha, his daughter-in-law. These two persons have been referred in Sekas'ubhodaya as play actor and actress. But in Saduktikarnamṛta there was a historical person named Garigoka who was a play actor and also a poet of some sort.⁵

Halayudha Misra, author of this book, is here depicted as a friend of the seikh in the opening chapter and in the later chapters he is furnished to be a good impartial man liked by the seikh, enjoying the full confidence of the king and respected by the people.

Another important character supposed to be the hero in the story is Jalalu-d-din Tabriz! being a common and integrate epithet borne by Mohammedan saints and preachers in India. The epithet is considered by the scholars a combined name of both Jalalu-d-din Rumi, the celebrated Persian Sufi poet (flourished in 1207 - 1273 A.D.) and Shamsi Tabreiz, his intimate friend, a legendary practice bringing out potent value for the Mohammedan preacher as that of spiritual Prester John.

We find are Jalalu-d-din Tabriz! a great preacher of Mohammedanism born at the city of Tabriz! in Persia as described in a recent Indian Mohammedan chronicle. He was at first the pupil of Seikh Abu Sayyad of that city and after the demise of his teacher he became the disciple of Seikh Sihabuddin Suhrawardi, an old feeble and religious person, frequenting to Mecca every year. After the death of that teacher he came to Delhi in the time of Khwaja Qutbu-d-din Saikh Najamuddin Saghri and was not in fair term with Shaikhu-l-islam who brought an odious charge against him, and so prosecuted him that he had to leave Delhi and go to Bengal.⁶

Another Jalalu-d-din mentioned to have 'ought with 3000 dervishes against Gaura-govinda, the last Hindu King of Sylhet, has his tomb in the town of that place.⁷ He was apparently a Hindustani Mohammedan and was responsible for introducing among the local Bengalee Mohammedan in Sylhet a Devanagari script known as 'Sylhet nagari' to be used as a sort of quasisacred alphabet.

On the Maiadive islands we meet a third Jalalu-d-din Tabrizi who preached the Mohammedan faith there.⁸

All the above persons in the same name and design cannot be equal to the Jalalu-d-din of our work. But in some quarters we can account for Jalalu-d-din Tabrizi in the Persian Khurshid Jahan Numa and that Jalalu-d-din of the Sekasubhodaya preserving elements of the legends accruing round the name of the same person who came to Bengal as a Mohammedan preacher from upper India. Shah Jalal or Jalalu-d-din Tabrizi or Jalalu-d-din Rumi attained a unique reputation in India and the name of more than one local Mohammedan Pir or saint has been confused by the ignorant with that of the great Persian Sufi. The Sekaslibhodaya mentions that the hero was born in the province of Attava⁹ which may be Etowah in Uttarpradesh. It goes to prove that he was not a foreigner, but he was an Indian from Hindustan and later on came to Bengal.

The name Shah Jalalu-d-din was associated with the founder of Bais Hazari Mosque. In this context the founder of Bais azari mosque, whoever he was, has been made hero of it. The work shows its nature to touch the earlier part of the 16th Century and also does not exhibit the part and parcel of history as the life of the seikh is concerned. It's as likely as not that some Mohammedan mendicant travelling from place to place came to Bengal before the coming of the Turks as conquerors and destroyers and he was allowed to settle down and to build a mosque by some Hindu kings with the normal tolerance of Hindus in these matters, and that the Bais Hazari mosque grew out of this and later came to be associated with the dignified name "Seikh Jalalu-d-din Tabriz!". Such a Mohammedan faith in Eastern India in Mediaeval times disturbed History and Chronology. Mohammedan Hagiology in India is a very vexed question, for a great deal of the popular non-Mohammedan element has been inextricably absorbed in it, local gods and goslings having frequently been Islamized as Pirs or saints.

The tomb of this Jalalu-d-din, whose death, according to Ilahi Bakhsh, occurred in 738 Hegira i.e. 1337 A.D. is said to be in Deomahal in Pandua.

The mosque in Pandua, where the relics of the seikh Jalalu-d-din were kept, is known as Bais Hazari Dargah, as the property attached to it yielded an income of twenty-two thousand rupees. There are more than one building in this Dargah, all of which appear to be late. The building was built by Sultan A, 'uddin Shah (740 - 745 Hegira, 1339 - 1344 A.D.) and its ruins were seen by Ghulam Hussain (1780 A.D.); but at the time of Ilahi Bakhsh no vestige of it remained. The building at present seen having been the residence of Shah Jalalu-d-din was erected by Sayyad Shah Nimatullaas recorded in an inscription in Persia.¹⁰ This building is again known as the 'Mansion of Laksmanasena' not from Laksmanasena the king but from e Laksmanasena who was a naib in that estate.¹¹

Thus in the end we feel an in secured position in determining the particular Mohammedan monk who after showing miracles - possesses supernatural quality and holds honorable and respectable position on the then society. That Seikh-Jalalu-d-din plays significant role in the text, does not hint any single one, and therefore if earliest person be taken, he can never be a part and parcel with the time of the King Laksmanasena and thereby creates a deadlock situation in justifying their natural meeting. To make this work more attractive and palatable to the readers a few characters are chosen and to attain some goal it is fancifully narrated. In this way no date of the work can be ascertained in one hand and the authorship of the work cannot be unquestionable.

Ancient Indian writers hardly allow exerting themselves before the public or the readers of their own accounts etc. as they are introverted in their nature. So precision of the date of the work as well as authorship feels trouble and becomes engaged to spare a thorough search over dependable records like contemporary works, inscriptions, manuscripts etc. The present work Sekasubho- daya' fails to co-operate the scholar in ascertaining the date as all the available materials are forgery. Forgery in the literary sphere and another Qn its date is precariously seen when glimpses between the lines happen. The first category intends to give weight to the book as an old work of historical importance and as a contemporary witness to the miracles attributed to its hero, while the second one retains its importance as a valuable work on early Bengal and culture.

Whatever, the tendency of the work remains; let us practically search out the materials available so far for precision of its date. Then colophon, which is fragmentary, tells us that the manuscript was copied for one Jagannatha Roy by one Ramabhadra Sarma in the month of Bhadra on Friday, the fifth day of black fortnight, but the year is lacking. Thus the complete figure is not available. Hegira and Vikra- maditya Samvat - the two eras professing to give exact date of the sojourn of the saint in Bengal, is suspicious. The Vikrama Samvat was unknown in Eastern India where as a rule the Saka year was current and La Sam in Mithila. Vikrama Samvat is the era of Hindustan and Western India and the bringing of it in a Bengali Manuscript as the document which recorded the grant of the property that was attached to the mosque. As the work contains not a few Perso-Arabic words¹² as it mentions Kapilesvara, last of the solar line of the kings of Orissa, who ruled from 1434 to 1470 A.D., it cannot go back to the time of Laksmanasena. Again the linguistic features of the work (the use of the negative particle after the finite verb - bujhasi na) categorically exhibited the early Middle Bengali period. This book would seem to have been written during the 16th Century, perhaps during the reign of Akbar, when it became necessary to show some documentary evidence in support of the Durgha's claim to the lands.

Regarding the composition of the work there is some evidence that either wholly or for the most part was written in verse in an early stage. The present text shows the prose portions

strewn with broken verse feet, not often properly adjusted in the sentence. The verses, verse-lines, the imbedded verse-feet other than quotations, are usually written in very good Sanskrit. The prose too sometimes shows good Sanskrit words, phrases and idioms. Not a few stories carry an atmosphere of pre-Muslim days. One such story, not found anywhere else, is depicted in a panel of the Paharpur temple (C.922 A.D. A few of the other stories belong to the class of Vet[^]lapanca- vimsati. The historical stories and anecdotes undoubtedly came by the way of popular tradition. It can, therefore?, be presumed that the original work, a collection of popular tales, was made sometime in the 14th or 15th Century.

References:

1. SSD (Sekhasubhodaya) Ch. XVIII, Lines –24-28, P-98
2. i) Saduktikarnamrita – III.15.4
ii)Ibld V.18.3.
3. SSD.Ch. IX .Lines – 17-18, P-48
4. Saduktikarnamrta. 1.10.5
5. Ildd. IV. 40.4
6. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,1895,292 ff.
7. R.D. Banerjee, Banglar itihās, Vol.II. Calcutta.PP.216-17.
8. R.D. Banerjee. Op.cit.
9. SSD.Ch. VI, lines.3-4.P-27
10. Bais Hazari Dargah, Introduction to SSD.Ed. Sukumar Sen.P.XXXIV.
11. This Information has been kindly to the editor,Prof. Sukumar Sen, by MN.Haridas Palit. Introduction to SSD.P.XXXIV.
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