

CHAPTER - III

TREATMENT OF LOVE AND NATURE IN SAUNDARANANDA

INTRODUCTION:-

The term 'Kavya' means literature as a form of art. Kavya is composed by 'Kavis', so the word 'Kavya' in its vast and widest sense connotes all that is the work of a poet. In that sense Kavya or poetry is the subject of classical Sanskrit literature and it is not only means 'metrical composition' but signifies any literary piece which is highly sentimental. In the oldest known Sanskrit lexicon of Amara Sinha, the word 'Kavi' or poet is defined by a set of synonyms as a person who is learned, wise, able to judge what is right and wrong, clever in sciences and arts, endowed with knowledge, intelligent, deeply versed, steady in character, sensible, an adept, foresighted and farsighted etc. There were 'Kavis' in earlier ages like Amara, Achala, Abhinanda etc. who are either completely forgotten or imperfectly known to us as mere names in the anthologies as their works have all been destroyed by the destructive forces of nature. The poets whose works are now extant are—Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Māgha, Sriharsa, Aśvaghoṣa, and the like. 20

Asvaghosa, whose poetic experiences are inspired by the description of natural sceneries which are beautiful, charming and

sympathetic for mind and heart. It is no exaggeration to say that the Asvaghosa's Buddhacharita, which is regarded as his best production, is solely devoted to the description of nature in different moods as viewed by the scholars. His another best epic poem Saundarananda, presents a more natural description of nature from the viewpoint of a separated lover. This epic mainly sets in the natural surroundings of the hermitages of the sage kapil Gautama. It is mentioned in the following verse:-

"गौतमः कपिलो नाम मुनिर्धर्मभृतां वरः ।

बभूव तपसि श्रान्तः काक्षीवानिव गौतमः ॥”

(saun ; chap=1 and verse=1)

It means that, there was a sage, who was versed in sacred texts, called Kapila Gautama and he was as untiring in meditation as (काक्षीवानिव) Kākshibāna Gautama.

The 'Kāvya' or poetry as exemplified by Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita and Saundarānanda and Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava and Raghuvamsam represents a stage in the development of literary art in India which is distinguished from the earlier stage of poetry as reflected in the popular epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. Bhikṣu Aśvaghōṣa was a poet and a faithful follower of Lord Buddha at the same time and he through his poesy, tries to put into effect the sugar-coated quinine pills as

a remedy to the pestilent sorrows of the world. Asvaghosa revealed to us as a genius poet through his two great epics, the Buddhacarita and Saundarananda. Buddhacarita deals with the acts or life history of Gautama Buddha, a well known and great founder of Buddha philosophy, from his birth to his demise. On the other hand, Saundarananda deals with the acts or life history of his half brother Nanda, from the birth to complete emancipation. Saundarananda bears all the necessary qualities of a Mahakavya or epic. The whole poem is written in Vaidharbhi style. The epic contains beautiful similes, the picture of the pleasures of love, vivid description of nature the principle of Nitisastra, description of battle scenes and so on.²¹

Beside the two epics Buddhacharita and Soundarananda, Asvaghosa's other three works, viz., Sariputra Prakarana, Gondi-Strutra and Vajrasuci are also characterized by the description of nature in varying degrees.

In this present paper the researcher has tried to exhibit "Treatment of Love and Nature in Saundarananda" which will compose the third chapter of the proposed research work.

TREATMENT OF LOVE IN SAUNDARANANDA:-

Asvaghosa whose poetic genius is inspired by nature excels in the description of natural scenery in its beautiful, charming and

sympathetic aspects. It is no exaggeration to say that the excellent and elevating description of nature is the very soul of Asvaghosa's poetry of great epics. The Buddhacharita, which is regarded as his best production, is solely devoted to the description of nature in different moods as viewed by the scholar. His another best epic poem Saundarananda, hinges on the description of the love between Nanda and his beloved wife Sundari. Actually, Saundarananda presents a more nature description of nature from the viewpoint of a separated lover. This epic mainly set in the natural surroundings of the hermitages of the sage kapil Gautama. Beside the two epics Buddhacharita and Soundarananda, Asvaghosa's other three works, viz., Sariputra Prakarana, Gondi-Strutra and Vajrasuci are also characterized by the description of Nature in Varying degrees.

Love as a sentiment:

Love is universal. The height of human personally attains its perfection in love. It is not only an affair of the senses but it is also an affair of spirit. A part from the birds, beasts and human beings, Siva, the great yogi is also in love. Even flora and fuana, trees and creepers are pervaded, stimulated and instigated by this passion. It is one of the four goals of human life. It is not inconsistent, therefore brings about to the union of the physical and the spiritual in life. It is an instrument of individual and social regeneration. Only the wild life and unrestraintal

passion go counter to the principle of spiritual love. Sex life under law and control is spiritual in character. One can lead the life of a householder and yet be a hermit in temper. The goal of human life is joy and serenity and not the sensual pleasure or carnal happiness. The aim of love is a happy harmony between man and woman. Love poetry occupies, therefore, a dominant place in literature and has attracted the mind of Asvaghosa, the greatest poet of human heart and nature. The exquisite delineation of this feeling is the characteristic feature of all his compositions and our poet is an accomplished master in the demonstration of this art. It is also a significant fact to be noted that instead of presenting all gumuts of human feeling and instincts; such as kindness, piety, generosity, heroism, jealousy in poetry, Asvaghosa dwells upon love sentiment as the main theme in his creations. He observes very minutely and realizes the value and character of this passion. So he concentrates his full attention in its delineation. Love, therefore, blossoms in glowing colour in his works and with progressive development it gains perfection. 22

Love Poetry in the Rig-Veda:

Rig-Veda, the sacred book of the Indo-Aryan community deals with love episodes. In a dialogue hymn, Pururavas expresses love for Urvast, but she repudiates him. She advises him to return and leave

her forever. She compares herself to the wind, difficult to capture. She disappears like dawn, disappointing Pururavas. Rejected by the beloved, the King wails that he will go far away, never to return. There the wolves will devour him. That would be the end of his life. But Urvashi implores him not to die and not to be eaten up by wolves. She confesses that she is not one to be loved, for she possesses the cruel heart of a hyena. Here, the love between a divine damsel and an earthly King has a tragic end. The Rgveda (X.10) describes wild love of Yami towards her own brother Yama. The exciting passion overpowers and perturbs the young lady so much that she wistfully expresses her feeling for the brother Yama. Having lost her balance of mind, she opens her mind before him. But Yama condemns and rejects her. In the Rgveda, Usas is the loveliest creation of the seers. As a heroine, She comes early in the morning with her bright physique to fascinate her lover, the Sun. She appears before the Sun like a handsome young Maiden, bathing on a high place. She is the daughter of heaven. Like an auspicious and beautiful damsel, She unfolds her charming grace and opens her loving heart to the lover. In this first treatise, we meet with the theme of love treated in a beautiful way.²³

Concept of beauty:

Both Asvaghosa and Kalidasa stand supreme as the magic creators of beauty. Their poetic portrayal of beauty is infinitely superior

as the creation of the creator. Their beauty blossoms in full grandeur in the field of love. It becomes embellishment even to ornaments. It is a thing of heaven. Kalidasa's Sakuntala is noth the creation of this earth. She is taken to the heaven by her celestial mother Menaka after she is rejected by her husband. Kndumate dies by the more touch of a garland that slipped off from the Vina of Narada. The divine garland reminds her of celestial abode and she returns to heaven in haste. Uma in the Kumara Sambhava is invested the divine beauty. Urvasi and Yaksapatni are also accompanied by celestial beauty. In earthly creations, Malavika stands matchless. Sita is the perfection of beauty. She has the virtue of all allurements. Thus, all the heroines of kalidasa have no competitor in beauty.

Concept of love:

Both Asvaghosa and Kalidasa are the poets of love. According to them, "the world is not as sweet and pleasant as the lover's servitude at the feet of the beloved". The world is dark and desolate to the person, to whom love is denied, but it is bright and blissful to the person by whom it is gained. But it is common and general understanding fact. Love is a sensual passion of human heart which rises by physical loveliness, craves a physical satisfaction and is consummated after satisfaction. So being physical in nature, it can be satisfied even in

absence of mutual feeling of each other. Here, marriage is the corporal union of lovers and not the emotional.

This type of passionate love does not require the harmony of inner feelings. On the contrary, Love springs out of human hearts and it cares little of the bodily beauty. No obstacles can damp its harmony. Death may separate lovers physically but is unable to disjoin them heartily, who are animated by the ideals of true love. Thus, love is an abiding sentiment of heart which powers the way to man's ennoblement. It eliminates the grosser passion and lifts lovers above the common ground. His imagination dwells upon various kinds of love. His uninhabited ideal of love has undergone gradual changes.

The poet disfavours passionate love, rooted in physical grace. Love based on physical consideration and self-interest ends in grief. It seeks the help of outer appearance, extraneous decoration and outward setting. Such type of sensual love never leads to peace and pleasure. It is cursed and condemned. So Asvaghosa favours at first the Union of hearts rather than the Union of body. Such love ensures divine pleasure for the lovers. Therefore, love born of the physical attraction should be transformed into true love based on penance and restraint. He illustrates this truth in all his works. In true love, the two lovers cast their lives, with the knowledge that destiny has denied them the consummation of their

love. True love cares not for bodily union, but longs for requital. It is better to die for a lover than be wedded to one who is callus. 24

There is no charm in union where one of the lovers is fully absorbed in love and other is not. On the other hand, even death is preferable where lovers cherish mutual love, but have no hope of Union. The longing for the union gives lovers joy and delight, even in the absence of love's fulfilment. Love is deepened by austerity and suffering, borne for its own sake. It grows in intensity and eternity by obstacles to realization. Love born of physical attraction is to be sublimated into true love. Their goal of life is joy and not carnal happiness. Thus love is a happy link between husband and wife. The harmony between husband and wife is a great pleasure.

Treatment of love:

Asvaghosa excels in the treatment of love both in Union and separation. He demonstrates love in varying situations and in various colours and presents his ideal by progressive development. We observe evolution in his concept of love. He depicts both earthly and heavenly types of love, but aims at the combination of both. Love rises from union on the earthly plane. It grows and is nourished on heavenly plane. Then there is harmonious blending of the earthly and heavenly loves. He utilizes for this purpose the mortal, semi-divine, divine, combined mortal-

divine and the perfect human characters. The Saundarananda deals with the love in union between mortal lovers having nature as its theme. The epic depicts love intrigue as confined to the love of Nanda and Sundari. It is passionate love which lies at the level of reusuality between them. Asvaghosa's concept of love has wider implication. He emphasises that even the spiritual love not merely self regarding. In its positive aspect, love should be consecrated by wedlock and should ensure the stability of the social organization. He asserts that love should not be a bane to society or a hindrance in the performance of duties. It should not go contrary to the social, cultural, religious and moral values. It should promote interest and welfare of society and should lead to the higher achievements in life. It is, therefore, excellent because it represents this true and noble ideal of love in life.

Love is universal. Love poetry occupies a dominant place in literature. The presentation of love scenes is one of the indispensable elements of an ornate court poem. The pictures of the pleasures of love drawn by Asvaghosa are so beautifully decorated which impressed all Indian poets. But still Asvaghosa was more sincere about his burning enthusiasm for his own ideal, i.e. the noble purpose of conveying the ultimate truth about salvation. Asvaghosa seems to be well acquainted with Kamasutra. In the second canto of the Buddhacarita, (verse no.27-

32) the poet very beautifully describes Buddha's delightful dwelling with his wife Yashodhara in the royal palace where he passed the time with the noble music of a female singer who were as beautiful as the celestial nymph. The aim of love is a happy harmony between man and woman. We can also find the love between Nanda and his wife Sundari in the following verses:

“मुनौ ब्रूबाणेऽपि तु तत्र धर्मं धर्मं प्रति ज्ञातिषु चादृतेषु ॥

प्रासादसंस्थो मदनैककार्यः प्रियासहायो विजहार नन्दः ॥”

(saun; chap=4 and verse=1)

तथा,

“स चक्रवाक्येव हि चक्रवाकस्तयासमेतः प्रियया प्रियार्हः ।

नाचिन्तयद्द्वैश्रमणं न शक्यं तत्स्थानहेतोः कुत एव धर्मं ॥”

(saun; chap=4 and verse=2)

The above mentioned verses means that after obtaining the complete emancipation, Lord Buddha explains his ethical teaching to his kinsmen and all the kinsmen shows their devotion to the noble teachings of Buddha, but in the palace, Nanda and his wife Sundari had busy with amorous sports. They had a view that, Love is above all and there was no

room for worship and religion. As like the male partridge and the female partridge, they absorbed in love. 25

Asvaghosa shows his highly poetical skill in the description of the excursion of the young prince of Buddhacarita in canto iii, where there is a beautiful scene that how on hearing the prince's exit, the women of the city out of curiosity, hastily came out from their rooms to the house-tops and the windows. The women with misplaced jewellery and falling girdles were moving fast by pushing and jostling one another and the clinking of anklets, girdles and ear-rings frightened away the birds on the roofs. The rush of the fair women whose ear-rings came into contact leaning out of the windows and their faces looked like the bundle of lotuses. The poet compares their faces as so many full-blown lotuses with which the walls of the palace were decorated.

Another fascinating picture where the poet shows his artistic craftsmanship is in the forth canto of Buddhacarita .where in the pleasure grove the prince Gautama was surrounded by youthful damsels trying their level best by twists and turns and by applying all the arts of love, to attract the young prince towards the mundane pleasure.

The poet fulfils all the requirements which are essential to draw the blandishment of the beautiful women by which they seek to tempt the prince. In the fifth canto of the Buddhacarita, where the high

coloured description of the night scene of the harem which is the cause of prince's resolution to leave the palace, the poet reveals his knowledge of science of love. How vivid and fascinating is the image of a maiden who locked in the sweet embrace of sleep looked resplendent, holding a flute in her hand while her white robe shifted from her bosom, resembling a river with lotuses being enjoyed by a straight row of bees and with banks laughing with the foam of its wave. Such type of pictures abounds in Asvaghosa's noble writings, pointing to the greatness of the artist and reveals his knowledge of the sense of love.²⁶

TREATMENT OF NATURE IN SAUNDARANANDA:-

Nature plays an important role in human life. We have our root in nature. We flourish in its lap and at the end take eternal rest therein. Nature inspires us to auspicious deeds. There is close relationship between man and nature. It is no wonder then that Nature has been depicted in glorious terms by our poets.

Treatment of nature in literature can be categorised in two ways:-

- (i) A representation of nature as observed or appreciated by the poet and accordingly he created his famous epics.
- (ii) The description of nature as the imitation of previous poets.

The representation of Nature as observed: The Rgveda only presents the earliest picture of nature. The Vedic seers were attracted by various aspects of nature. Its glamour, loveliness helpfulness, regularly, virile and unassailable power and sometimes fear caught up their imagination. First of all, Agni appeared helpful to the Vedic people. Fire was kindled early in the morning. Its long red flames shot up in the air. They were compared with the birds that fly up to the branches of trees. Its lustre repelled darkness and made everyone. The miraculous deeds of fire appeared good and useful. Even animals attended the flaming fire with great pleasure in the winter evening. Fire was the most adorable, handsome, Trustworthy and the most favourite guest of the householders. Its lovely aspect attracted the Vedic poets who began to worship it as a god. Nature worship began with the worship of fire in the Vedic Age.²⁷

Similarly, the seers were fascinated by the rising sun. Usas like a handsome young maiden approached before them with smile and beaming complexion of enchanting beauty. She captivated their hearts. She unfolded her bosom and bestowed happiness removing all sorts of evil from her worshippers. Thus, Usas was personified as a goddess. Once she appeared in her lovely form. Next she impressed as the accomplisher of desires. Beautiful imageries were employed for her description. She inspired the poets in their fancy and imagination.

Ancient sages saw the Sun rising everyday in the east early in the morning and setting everyday in the west in the evening. The Sun shone in the day and the moon during the night. The stars glittered in the sky at night but disappeared at dawn. They observed the working of nature with great curiosity, Wonder and terror with the simplicity of a child. Why the Sun, Moon and Stars do not fall from the Sky? Where the moon and stars go in the daytime? The waters of the rivers flow into the ocean, but never fill it up. The sages observed regularity in Nature. The unfailing laws pointed to a divine power behind all activities. Sarita is the controller and regulator of laws, the Rta. The broad handed god, standing erect, stretches his arms over and impels the whole creation to action. Even waters and wind are under his control. In the imagination of the Vedic poets, Sarita was great man whose rays were the hands spreading over the Universe to lead it to duties. The rising Sun moved all to action.

In the prayers of Sarita, we get a beautiful picture of the dusk. The night is gradually approaching. She has withdrawn all actions into her, as a wearing woman wraps all the threads at the day fall, what she has spread in the day time. When activities are afoot, all of a sudden, Sarita exercises his power and causes them to stop. With the approach of never-failing and impeller Sarita, who divides the seasons, the activities come to

stop. Sarita is the presiding deity of dawn and dusk. All activities begin with his rise and finish with setting. 28

There is a natural description of the sun-set which gives a signal to the stoppage of all works. With the sun-set, the people who are gone out return home, as it were by the commandment of Sarita. All day wanderers retire to beds. Back to their abodes, they leave aside their unfinished work. The description conforms to our daily life. At the Sun-set, aquatic creatures go into waters for rest; animals stay on the land, birds take shelter in the nests on trees. Sarita consigns every creature to rest. When the daylight fades away, fire is kindled in every house. The mighty home-born lustre of Agni attends on all living beings in their dwellings. Columns of smoke issue forth from each and every house. Here in the praise of Sarita, we get a real picture of dawn and dusk.

The poet presents a charming picture of the last part of the night. The darkness is decaying and the dawn is just to come. The night departs from her sister Usas. She of black colour vacates the path for the ruddy dawn. After a little while, Usas appears like a young maiden. She impels all beings to their duties. Agni is kindled wherein oblation is offered for the Gods. The day light approaches gradually, repelling darkness. This is a simple description of morning. When darkness is

removed by Usas, People get engaged in different activities. The sages kindle sacrificial fire and offer oblation to the Gods.

The treatment of nature has been depicted in glorious terms by our poet. The beauty of nature becomes embellishment for the poetical art. As an epic or Mahakavya, Saundarānanda also contain the description of natural sight and Asvaghosa has perceived nature with minute and close attention.

Asvaghosa is the poet who draws a scene of Nature on imitation, invests it with all embellishments. In the description of the vernal season, for instance, the spring begins with bending boughs of trees and several Creepers, due to blossomed flowers in profuse and new tender shoots, with the cooing of cuckoos and intoxicated birds, with gentle and fragrant breeze, with ponds and rivers, decorated with lotuses in bloom and cackling of geese and ducks, with amorous playing of birds and animals, with pleasing moon and stars. Such descriptions recur very frequently. Asvaghosa also describes the nature in the first chapter of Saundarananda which shows in the following verses:-

“माहात्म्यादीर्घतपसो यो द्वितीय इवाभवत् ।

तृतीय इव यश्चाभूत्काव्यांगिरस्योर्धिया ॥”

(saun; chap=4 and verse=4)

It means that, in glory, he (Kapila Gautama) was comparable to Dirghatapa, in prudence he equal to Shukracharya (शुक्राचार्य) and vrihaspati (बृहस्पति).

“तस्य विस्तीर्णतपसो पार्श्वे हिमवतः शुभे ।

क्षेत्र चायतनं चैव तपसामाश्रयोमोऽभवत् ॥” (saun; chap=1 and verse=5)

It means that, He constructed his hermitage in the pious region of the Himalaya for prolonged meditation—this hermitage was the temple and above of meditation.

“पर्याप्तफलपुष्पाभिः सर्वतो वनराजिभिः ।

शुशुभे ववृधे चैव नरः साधनवानिव ॥” (saun; chap=1 and ver=9)

It means that, as it was decorated in all sides by flowers and fruits, the hermitage gave the impression that a person exists there with all the necessary materials near at hand.

From the above description, we may find the excellent pedantry over nature and its beauty depending upon nature, Asvaghosa had the whole or all round knowledge of nature. Therefore, he put ample instances of natural beauty in his all those creation, specially for instance we may take the epic Saundarananda for this purpose.29

Poets of later date are influenced by their predecessors. They improve upon inspiration, ideas and expressions. They follow up their descriptions but express them in new grabs and colours. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the first renowned literary products in classical Sanskrit. These epics portray objects of Nature as they were seen by Mahakabi Valmiki and Mahakabi Vyas who lived in the forests abounding in trees and creepers, flowers and blossoms, birds and beats. They had full opportunity to perceived, study and appreciate the beauties of Nature. They could paint Nature in their epics. Parallel pictures of objects, occurring frequently in these epics, and suggestions they must have been made on the basis of previous accounts. Thus the two great epics give traditional account of Nature. Generally, Mahakabi Kalidasa follows the same line in the description of Nature. In Saundarananda all these pictures are not merely similes to satisfy rhetorical requirements, these are the pictures made of words, drawn from the nature. Besides these, in each and every canto there are so many references of seasons, mountains, rivers, oceans, trees, plants, creepers, blossoms, flowers, grove and gardens, hermitages and forests, sun, moon, stars, clouds and so on. Our poet is fond of sublime, lovely, agreeable and auspicious aspects of nature. 30

CONCLUSION:-

So far as, the above mentioned topic is concerned, we may also find out the different aspects of love and nature of Buddha which is full of wisdom in vast manner as-well-as degree. Though there are several entity based on the particular religion namely Buddhism, which has the fixed and rigid backbone on the basis of truth and non-violence. Though there are several types of love and its nature has been divided by the several great scholars. The epic Saundarananda provides ample instances about the nature and love. It is recognized by the Buddhist monks and scholars that both the matter is universal. The common bodily love, which based on thirst and desires of worldly gratification, physical desire is ultimately the cause of sorrows and sufferings of human beings and all other living beings too.

Lastly, we can conclude that through Saundarananda, we have indeed for the first time an actual epic of Lord Buddha composed by a real poet. Who filled with intense love and reverence for the exalted figure of Buddha, is able to present the life and doctrine of Master one in noble and artistic way. The picture of the pleasures of love, drawn by Asvaghosa has point out his greatness as a writer. He draws touching pictures of nature in his work. There is an excellent synthesis of nature and human activities in his composition.

Notes and Refferences:-

- 20) Kalidasa: A Critical Study, Page no.211-212
- 21) ‘Gautama Buddha’, by M.H. Syed, Page no.5-6.
- 22) Kalidasa: A Critical Study, Page no. 215—217.
- 23) ‘Skt.Sahittyā Sambhar’, 9th part, Page no.13—14.
- 24) Kalidasa: A Critical Study, Page no. 221—223.
- 25) ‘Epic Saundarananda’ Chap-4, Verse no. 1—23.
- 26) “A Metaphorical Study of Saundarananda”, Page no. 31—36.
- 27) “Shisupalavadham” Page no. 56—71.
- 28) ‘Kalidasa’s Raghuvamsa’, Page no. 28—44.
- 29) “The Saundarananda of Asvaghosa” by E.H. Johnston, Page no.145—149.
- 30) Kalidasa: A Critical Study, Page no. 237—271.