



MAJOR COMMENTARIES ON SUKASANDESA: A SURVEY

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After Kalidasa wrote *Meghasandesam*, many dramatists followed the path trodden by him and wrote a large number of messenger poems in his manner. Among them, Lakshmidasan is considered as important because of his fame and parlance. If Kalidasan's *Meghasandesam* could be considered as the emperor among messenger poems, Lakshmidasan's *Sukasandesam* could be considered as a prince. It gained much popularity and fame in Kerala.

There situated a temple named Tripootamangalam in the north of Vellarappally in Kanniyannur Thaluk. This locale was under the rule of Kochi Government and this place is 2/3 miles away from Kalady. North to the police station in Thripoothamangalam, situated Kariangampallymana. Now the temple is adopted by the Government. The people of this Mana had the authority to do the rituals in the temple. A Brahmin from Kariangampally is the author of *sukasandesam*. The verse shows that the poet lived before the beginning of Malayalam era 713 or Kali 3213

लक्ष्म्यारङ्गे शरदि शशिनः सौधशृङ्गे कयोचित्
प्रेम्णा यूनोस्सह विहरतोः पेशलाभिः कलाभिः।
द्वारा सेधः क्व नु हतविधेर्दूरनीतः स तस्याः
श्रान्तस्वप्ने शुक्रमिति गिरा श्राव्यया सन्दिदेश।¹

These verses say that the era of the poet is AD 666. But this assumption is not accurate. It is not sure that during that time, there existed 'Taliyath illam' and they handled the powers as described in *Sukasandesam*. Thus it can be said with surety that the time of Lakshmidasan is not 666 AD year.²

There is a prevalent story about Lakshmidasan. He was mentally challenged in his childhood. Thus his teacher decided to berate him without completing his studies. Lakshmidasan's mother become sad but the intelligent woman said to the teacher.

Understanding the words of the mother the teacher continued to teach Lakshmidasan. And he became a great scholar and a poet. One of his famous poems as follows:-

विद्याभिलाषकूपितां निजबालसख्या
तन्द्रा कथंचितदनुनीय समीपनीतां।
चेतोहरां प्रणयिनीमखिलेन्द्रियेष्टां
निद्रां प्रसादयिदुमध्य नमस्करोमि।³



The poet wrote the poem when he was a child. The line निजबालसंख्या तन्द्रा shows that the poet was very lazy during his childhood. Thus it is sure that he wrote the verse when he was a child.

Like *Meghasandesam*, *sukasandesam* also has two parts Purvabhaga and Utharabhaga. The former part deals with the description of the messenger about the path to the heroine's house and the latter part deals with the depiction of heroine's house and the message.

Because of bad luck the hero of *Sukasandesam* happen to live at Rameswaram for some time. From there the hero sends a message to his beloved.

वितालंम्बरि विचरित्रं व्यक्तमाभाषितं श्र 14

The parrot's ability to fly and talk is known to all. The poet gives directions to the parrot to reach his beloved. He gives the route from Rameswaram to Trikannamathilakath. He advises the parrot to pass Rameswaram, Thamaraparna River and the kingdom of Pandya Kings near the shore of the river. The place is known as Manaloor. From there the path divided in to two to left and right. The path which navigates to the left is zigzag and confusing, but still, the poet directs his parrot through that way to Kerala. Thus the poet shows his love for his country. The verse as follows:-

ब्रह्मक्षेत्रं जनपदमथ स्फीतमध्यक्षयेदा
दर्पादर्शनं दृष्टतरमूर्षज्जामदग्न्यास्यभहवाः।
यं मेदिन्यां रुचिरमरीचोत्तालताम्बूलवल्ली
वेल्लकेरक्रमुकनीकरान् केरलानुदगुणन्ति॥⁵

There in Kerala, the poet directs the parrot through different places like, Kanyakumari temple, Maruthva hill, Sucheendram temple, Sripadmanabha temple, Kazhakootam etc.,. After this, the poet sends the parrot to Kollam, which is the kingdom of Koopakadeeswarans. Then the parrot crosses the two lakes, astamudi lake, Kayamkulam lake and reaches Kayamkulam.

From there the parrot visits Pututhuruthi, Kdalthuruthi and crosses Muvattupuzha River, and seeks the blessing from Lord Mhavisnu in Thathruthiri village. The poet praises the scholars especially the genius, Subrahmanyam Namboothiri who lives in that village. Puliayannoor is a tantrik family. Subrahmanyam Namboothiri belongs to pulayannoor mana. Then the poet asks the parrot to seek the blessings of lord thrikkakara appan and to cross Periyar river to reach thiravanchikulam. At thiravanchikulam, the parrot has to visit the famous Siva temple Jayaradeswara and bhadrakali temple at Kodungallor and he reaches back at thrikkannamatilakath.

There are seven well known commentaries on *Sukasandesam*.



1. Varavarnini

A Keralite named Dharmagupthan is the author of *Varavarnini*. The title is given as *Varavarnini* because it depicts the caliber of the damsel and description of the object to be portrayed, opines the commentator. The commentary describes 12 types of responses that are a must in a messenger poem. They are –

1. आदिवाक्यम् – introductory statement
2. दौत्ययोजनम् – commissioning of the messenger.
3. ब्रज्याङ्गदेशना – Instruction about the route to be followed by the messenger.
4. प्राप्यदेशवर्णनम् - Description of the destination
5. मन्दिराभिज्ञापनम्- . Identification of the house.
6. प्रियासन्निवेशविमर्शनम् - Description of the beauty of the heroine.
7. अन्यरूपतापत्तिसंभावना - Supposition of the change of the shape of the body of the heroine.
8. अवस्थाविकल्पनानि - Supposition of the different moods
9. वचनारम्भः - Beginning of the speech of the message.
10. सन्देशवचनम्- The words of the message
11. अभिज्ञानदानम्- . Giving of the identification.
12. प्रमेयपरिनिष्ठापनम्- The conclusion of the subject.

Varavarnini is divided into 13 phases/parts. The first part is in the form of अवतरणिका. And the last part is in the form of प्रमेयनिष्ठारूप. We can understand an overall gist of Sukasandesa from the preface of *Varavarnini*. Preface is the most beautiful and worthy part of *Varavarnini*. This is an unpublished work. A manuscript is available at Thiruvananthapuram Oriental Manuscript Library.

2. Chinthathilakam

It is authored by a scholar named Gouridasa and his biography is unknown. It is believed that he was a disciple of Vasudeva. With the following verse, *Chinthathilakam* begins.

वासुदेवपदाम्भोजपरागपरमाणवः।

परिशोधितमञ्चेतोमुकुराः यान्तु सन्ततम्।⁶

The author says about the characteristics of this commentary like this. *Chinthathilakam*, as the name implies is a fine work.

3. Vyakruthi

It is of anonymous authorship. He speaks about 12 prakaranas in a messenger poem. It is difficult to say whether *Varavarnini* or *Vyakruthi* is ancient. But in



Vyakruthi the author describes some novel things about the heroine Ranggalakshmi. We get this information from the line

स्फुटमविदधत्यत्भुदाङ्गी यदान्ये।
सङ्गीदार्थप्रणय नविदः प्रेक्षका रङ्गलक्ष्म्याः॥⁷

He also mentions that she was a dancer. The poet has used लक्ष्म्यारङ्गे in the beginning and दर्शनान्तलक्ष्मीः in the end. Thus it is sure that the name of the heroine is Lakshmi.

वाणी वीणावसहचरी वाणीनीनां शीखायाः॥⁸

The above mentioned line is in *sukasandesa* is also remembered here

वाणीनी नर्त्तकी मत्ता विदग्धवनीतासु चा⁹

This verse shows that the word Vanini means dancer. Among the various commentaries of *Sukasandesa* a prime position can be give to *Vyakruthi*

4. Padarthadipika

It is another analysis of *Sukasandesa*. It can be believed that, it is authored by a Keralite. Some verses, in the beginning and at the end of the analysis are given below. The verses in the beginning are given below.

आलोक्य मातुः कुचयोर्युगं यः शङ्काकुलः स्वं तरसा करेणा।
कुम्भद्वयं संस्पृशति प्रशस्तं स स्यान्मुदे वस्सततं गजास्थः॥
मन्देत्तरेतरधियामवलम्बनार्थं सन्देशकाव्यकठिनार्थमहाहृदेषु।
व्याख्यामयीं सुललितामवलम्ब्य यष्टिं निर्मातुमारभ इहास्तु गुरुप्रसादः॥¹⁰

Padarthadipika is neither voluminous nor scanty. The author has given particular importance in the description of key terms. Thus the title is apt. In the text, in most places, analysis is limited to the description of words. In some places the deeper meanings of particular words are discussed thoroughly. In this matter, the author of *Padardhadipika* surpasses all other commentators. It is clear that the author has an absolute knowledge in grammar and other sectors of language. The author has the competence to describe the reuses of the verses lousily and lucidly.

The text has an anonymous authorship. The text never received popularity as it is unavailable to the reading public. The manuscript of *Padarddadipika* was found from the library of Karanathy varyyam, in payyoly. This is detailed in *Samskruthasahithya Charitham*, by Vadakkamkur. The manuscript is nearly 250 years old.

Vilasini

Manaveda 2, a scholar from Kozhikode is the author of this commentary. Among the commentaries of *Sukasandesa*, this has a prime position. He has divided the message poem in to different chapters based on subject matter.



The depth and scientific nature of the commentary can be proved using an example.

अभ्यासाधभिमानाच्च तथा सप्रत्ययादपि।
विषयेभ्यश्च तन्त्रज्ञा विदुः प्रीतीं चतुर्विधाम्॥¹¹

It says that there are four types of

शब्दादीभ्यो बर्हिभूता या कर्माभ्यासलक्षणा।
प्रीतीस्साभ्यासीकी प्रोक्ता मृगयादीषु कर्मसु॥¹²

This verse is composed in accordance with this science.

शृङ्गोद्गस्ताम्बरमतीपृथुं शैलमारूढ्य सह्यं॥¹³

This verse describes the above mentioned idea...

Next is

अनभ्यस्तेष्वपि पुरा कर्मस्वविषयात्मिका।
सङ्कल्पाल् जायते प्रीर्तिया सा स्यादाभिमानकी॥¹⁴

This is the indication for this 'prithi'

चुम्बन् बिम्बाधरमतइतश्चालयन् भृङ्गदृष्टी-
रातन्वानःस्तनभुवी नखोल्लेखनं दाडीमेषु।
पक्षोल्लेखैः परिविगलयन् पुष्परेणूत्तरीयं
भ्रातः स्वैरं श्रीयमनुभवेस्तस्य वप्रस्थलीषु॥¹⁵

This poem is written based on

नान्योयमिति यत्र स्यादन्यस्मिन् प्रीतिकारणे।
तन्त्रज्ञैः कथ्यते सा तु प्रीतिस्सम्प्रत्यायात्मिका॥¹⁶

Third one is Subrathyaya prithi.

The below poem in written based on this prithi.

शैले तस्मिन् शबरसदृशां दामगुञ्जाफलानां
हारीकुवर्चुरसि हरिणीयूधरोमन्दफेनैः॥¹⁷

The commentator has timed to speak about the science behind each slokas while describing them in detail. While describing ideas which have resemblance to ancient stories, the commentator has tried to incorporate those stories along with commentary. Manaveda had endeavored well to detail the *Sukasandesa* using his commentaries and tried to evolve the possible meaning of the verse

Tippani

Tippani is authored by Keralavarma Valiyakoyi Thamburan and later Vishakhan Thirunal combined and published it along with his English tippani later in (1867-1946).



Sukasandesavyakhya

K Rama Pisharoti has composed an exhaustive commentary.

Conclusion

The *Sukasandesa* composed in a chaste and dignified style is not easily palatable to an average reader. Even to a commentator it poses a challenge. Being a sandesakavya it deals with geographical, historical, and cultural aspects of the region. Only a Keralite could explain these factors satisfactorily. Many editions and translations of the work are available to the public. But most of the early commentaries remain unpublished.

END NOTE

1. *Sukasandesa* 1.1
2. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V 1 p -305
3. *ibid*
4. *ibid*
5. *Sukasandesa* 1.34
6. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V1 P-319
7. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V2, P-568
8. *ibid*
9. *ibid*
10. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V 3 p-348
11. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V1, P-316
12. *ibid*
13. *ibid*
14. *Kerala samskritha sahitya charitham* V1, P-318
15. *ibid*
16. *ibid*
17. *ibid*

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3. *Sukasandesa of Lakshmidasa*, Nagpublishers Gawahar Nagar Delhi,1985
4. *Sukasandesa*, Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, Kamalalaya Book Dipo Trivandram.
5. *Sukasandesa*, Madam Paramswaran Namboothiri, National Book Stall Kottayam, 1968.