**Banabhatta**



Banabhatta was the Asthana Kavi in the court of King Harsha Vardhana who reigned from C. 606- 647 CE in North India first from Sthanishvara (Thanesvar), and later Kanauj. Bana’s principal works include a biography of Harsha, “the Harshacharita” (Deeds of Harsha) and one of the world’s earliest novels “Kadambari”. Bana died before completing the novel and it was completed by his son Bhushanbhatta.  Both these works are said to be noted texts of Sanskrit literature. The other works attributed to Bana are Chandikasataka and a drama, the Parvati Parinaya.

**Early Life**

The life history of Banabhatta is very interesting and he went on to become a renowned Sanskrit scholar. His father's death caused him an emotional setback and he became a wanderer but after sometime came back to his village. Upon his return, he received a letter from the cousin of King Harsha. King Harsha was camping near Manitara at that time. After meeting with him, Banabhatta became an instant favorite of King Harsha. The public library in Aurangabad, Bihar, the real birth place of Banabhatta, still has manuscripts of Banabhatta's work archived in it.

We are told detailed account regarding Banbhatta’s ancestry and early life can be reconstructed from the introductory verses attached to the Kadambari and the first two Ucchavasas of the Harshacharita, while the circumstances behind the composition of the Harshacharita are described in the third Ucchavasa of the text.

**Major Works**

This poetic genius wrote one of the most famous and earliest novels, known as Kadambari. It is a biographical work of Harsha and Kadambari. A very famous Sanskrit pun about Kadambari is as follows: Kadambari Rasajnaanaam aahaaropi na rochate. This means that while one reads the Kadambari, one becomes so engrossed in it that even food is forgotten. It is a very famous oratory pun used in Sanskrit.  
  
Bana has written novels like Harsha Charita, Kadambari, Chandikasataka and Parvatiparinaya. It is said that he died before he could finish Harsha Charita and his son, Bhusanbhatta, finished his work. Although, there is not much that can be critically acclaimed about Chandikasataka and Parvatiparinaya but it is said that he used to receive many rewards and accolades from King Harsha, as an appreciation of his work and talent.

One of the most famous and earliest novels is Kadambari by Banabhatta as mentoned above. A very famous Sanskrit pun about Kadambari is as follows: “Kadambari Rajnaamam aahaaropi  na rochate”. This means that while one reads the Kadambari, one becomes so engrossed in it that even food is forgotten. It seems, it is a very famous oratory pun used in Sanskrit.

Although there is not much that can be critically acclaimed about Chandikasataka and Parvatiparinaya, but it is said that Banabhatta used to receive many rewards and accolades from King Harsha as an appreciation of his work and talent.

**Writing Style**

After studying his major works, it is quite apparent that his grammar is impeccable and he uses a lot of figure of speech in his work. His prose was generally melodious and rhythmical. His peculiar style was to use longer verses, comprising of short and crisp words. The sharpness in his writing style and his patent use of figure of speech has inspired many a writers after his time. With his writing in Harshacharita and Kadambri, Banabhatta pretty much proved it that he writes in a Brahmin centric way.

In these lines Bana is presenting a Brahmin view point on the people of Savara. In order to describe the people of Savana, Bana creates a scenario of the battle field and gives us a picture of brahmins against the average public with non-brahmin stature in the society. He is trying to say that the ones with no knowledge (which was considered to be the birth right of only brahmins) are the state enemies but are not the powerful ones. He tags his enemies (or the other) as knowledge-less beings, therefore taking away from them the right to a graceful existence like himself and 'his people'.  
  
This is just to show how caste centric Bana's writing and perspective was. His pro-brahmin writing style along with his extravagant writing style drew a lot of criticism towards him from his fellow courtiers. They decided to shame him and decided to go to the king and tell him that he had done some non-brahmin things in his past. The news of slander and character assassination reached to Bana and his friends. This proved to be a hamper in the way of earning Bana the much awaited royal patronage; the king was upset and asked for a personal meeting with Bana. Upon meeting the king, Bana sincerely talked to the king and told him that he had been true to his faith, knowledge and values all along. There was so much sincerity in his words that the king was moved and honored him with great hospitality and lots of rich rewards.

As regards Banabhatta’s writing style we gather that his grammar was impeccable and he used a lot of figure of speech in his works. His prose was generally melodious and rhythmical. His peculiar style was to use longer verses, enriched by short and crisp words. The sharpness in his writing style and his patent use of figure of speech has inspired many a writers after his time with his writing Harshacharita and Kadambari.

Banabhatta pretty much proved it that he wrote in a Brahminical way in his prologue to both the books.  Bana had tried to trace his Brahmin lineage and had given it a heavenly aspect, tried to prove that Brahmins have originated directly from the Gods. He, it is learnt, used to use clear demarcation between the Brahmins of the society and the rest of the general public. For example this following piece of writing from Kadambari shows: “Oh, they lived a life devoid of knowledge. Their life is condemned by wise men. They eat the flesh, honey, which is forbidden in the civilised society.”

This shows how caste centric Bana’s writing and perspective was. His pro-Brahmin writing style along with his extravagant writing style drew a lot of criticism towards him from his fellow courtiers. They tried to disgrace him by complaining to the King that he had done non-Brahmin things in the past. The news of slander and character assassination spread by the rivals reached Bana and his friends.

This proved to be a hamper in the way of earning Bana the royal patronage. The king was upset to hear this about his favourite scholar. He asked for a personal meeting with Bana. Bana sincerely told the King that he had always been true to his faith, knowledge and values of truth. There was so much sincerity in his words that the King was very much moved and honoured him with great rewards.

The Public Library in Aurangabad, the real birthplace of Banabhatta, still it seems has the manuscripts of Banabhatta’s works archived in it. Piroo village of Haspura block in Aurangabad, Bihar, is the real birthplace of Banabhatta. It is interesting to note that the present day villagers are Muslims who claim to be descendants of Banabhatta and call themselves Bhumihar Pathans.