



VEŚAVĀṬĪVARṆANAM – THE BROTHEL DESCRIBED IN VĀMANA BHATṬA BĀṆA'S VEMABHŪPĀLACARITAM

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Abstract

The paper throws light on the settlement of the harlots in Triliṅga janapada during 15th century A.D. during the rule of the king Vema of the Reddi dynasty narrated in *Vemabhūpālacaritam* by Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa. It also depicts the behavioural pattern of harlots, their mothers and the procuresses.



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Introduction -

Vemabhūpālacaritam also known as *Vīranārāyaṇacaritam*, is a work from the world of Sanskrit prose literature. It is a composition of a poet from Āndhra, named Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa, who lived in 15th century A.D., under the Reddi king Vema of Koṇḍavidu¹. In this work, he narrates the exploits of Reddi king Vema *alias* Vīranārāyaṇa, the son of Pedda Komaṭīndra² who ruled over Triliṅgas³ with its capital Addaṅkī⁴. *Vemabhūpālacaritam* is consists of four *ucchavāsas*. First *ucchavāsa* talks about the origin of Reddi kings of Addanki, king Prolla's hunting expedition in a forest. The second *ucchavāsa* deals with the love flourished between king Prolla and princess Anantā, daughter of Tukhkhāraghaṭṭa, the king of Vikramasimhanagarī. The third *ucchavāsa* tell about the marriage of the princess Anantā and king Prolla. She gave birth to five princes. Among these five Māca begot three godlike sons. Among them Pedda Komaṭīndra being superior by virtues influenced other kings and ruled the earth. Pedda worshipped Indra and by his grace, he got a son named Vema, He celebrated his birth with the *Indradhvaja Mahotsava*. In course of time, Vema was coroneted. And, the fourth *ucchavāsa* describes Vema's conquest in all directions.

About Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa –

The colophon describes Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa as '*gadyakavisārvabhaumasya vatsakulatilakasya mahākaverabhinavabhaṭṭabāṇasya śrīvemabhūpāle*'. This reveals that Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa designates himself as the supreme prose writer, ornament of Vatsa dynasty and most significant he calls himself modern Bāṇa (supreme sovereign of Sanskrit prose romance in 7th century A.D.) and his ambition is to be reckoned as foremost among the Sanskrit prose writers.

The contribution of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa to the world of Sanskrit literature is as follows⁵ -

Dramas

- *Śṛṅgārabhūṣaṇabhāṇa*
- *Pārvatīpariṇayanāṭakam* (the authorship of this drama is disputed)
- *Kanakalekhākalyāṇam*,
- *Uṣāharaṇam*
- *Bāṇāsura Vijayam*

Epics and khaṇḍakāvya

- *Nalābhyudayam*
- *Rāghunāthacaritam*
- *Hamsasandeha*
- *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*

Lexicons

- *Śabdacandrikā*
- *Śabdaratnākara*
- *Bṛhadratnākara*

In the field of prose romance, Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa's ambition was to emulate Bāṇa of *Kādambarī* fame.⁶ His resolve was to remove the deep rooted fame that, after Bāṇa, there was no poet capable of writing fine prose. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa very proudly designates himself as Abhinava Bāṇa, vows that his composition will give immense joy to the scholars as there is harmonious blending of the subject of narration i.e. heroic exploitation of great king Vema and poet's style.⁷

Vemabhūpālacaritam is welcome addition to a comparatively small number of prose works in Sanskrit. It treats the exploits of Redḍi king Vema, who ruled over Triliṅgas. This description is in fourth chapter of the *Vemabhūpālacaritam*. The king, after successfully completing his *digvijaya* wanders through *Veśavātī* which is part of Dakṣārāmapurī⁸.

Vemabhūpālacaritam abounds in the picturesque descriptions. We come across plenty of descriptions of morning, night, summer, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities and so on. But the description of the *Veśavātī* is quite unique as we hardly find any description of the settlement of the harlots in such an extensive manner.

Earlier references of *gaṇikās/veśyās* –

Before looking into the description of *Veśavāṭī* in *Vemabhūpālacaritam*, it would be interesting to view the earlier references to *veśyā* and *gaṇikā*. *Śabdakalpadrumaḥ* gives peculiar explanation saying that ‘*viśanti kāmukā yatreti*’.⁹

Sanskrit literature has no inhibition in mentioning or describing the courtesans attached to the palace, to manor houses of the nobles especially merchants and to the brothels. Though *Amarakoṣa*, the metrical lexicon gives *vārastrī*, *gaṇikā* and *veśyā* as the synonyms, the *vārastrī*, *Rūpājīvā* or *rūpadāsi* was not accomplished in art like the *gaṇikā*, her only stock of trade was her beauty and charm.¹⁰

The institution of courtesans is taken for granted in epics.

*Priyavādi priyakathā sphuṭā dakṣā jitaśramā |
ebhirguṇairsā saṁyuktā gaṇikā parikīrtitā ||*¹¹

In the chapter on *Gaṇikādhyakṣa* in *Arthaśāstra* in we get detailed information on prostitution organized by the state and the 6th chapter of *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsāyana deals exclusively with courtesans.¹² The Gupta period was noted for its wealth and promotion of arts. Such references are found in Kālidāsa, Bāṇa and Śūdraka. Kālidāsa the great poet of India depicts main visiting courtesans. He writes about the courtesans dancing in the temple of Mahākāla in Ujjain. Sanskrit play *Mṛcchakaṭikam* deals with the life of noble courtesan Vasantasenā. Vasantasenā stands as a shining luminary among the *gaṇikās* described in classical Sanskrit literature.

Caturbhāṇi (Śṛṅgārahāṭ) a collection of four *bhāṇas* by different authors, all belonging to the 5th century C. E. describes courtesans and different types of clients visiting them.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa, in his *Kādambarī* refers to *veśyālāpa* (the manner of speaking of harlots) and *bandhakī dhārṣṭya* (audacity of a harlot)¹³. Following his ideal Bāṇa, who has described *veśyālāpa* and *bandhakī dhārṣṭya*, Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa in *Vemabhūpālacaritam* has narrated *veśavāṭī*. The length and manner of the description of courtesans, their mothers and procuresses indicate the widespread prevalence of this institution in the society. It seems that the institution of *gaṇikā* was a distinguished feature of the society. However, the deceitful and cunning nature of harlots is emphasized in the present text. This is because they were surrounded by shrewd persons who knew how to take advantage of the favorable situation. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa describes the *Veśavāṭī*, a dwelling place of *gaṇikās*. He not only gives detailed behavioral pattern of *gaṇikās* but their greed for money, their acting to attract people,

their dalliances, etc. He also describes the state of their mothers who have become like old female monkeys and the *kuṭṭīnis* (procuresses) who are equally greedy and control the whole business.

Veśavāṭī

The narration of *Veśavāṭī* begins after the king offered his services at the temple of Bhīmeśvara in Dakṣārāmapurī. The king is accompanied by Vidūṣaka, his bosom friend who describes the *Veśavāṭī* which was present in the vicinity of Bhīmeśvara. It goes as follows -

*Kiñca eṣā tu jagatprasiddhā tṛtīyapuruṣārthajanmabhūmiḥ,
nikhilajanayauvanaphalanirveśāsālā, rāgalatālavālamaṇḍalī,
dhanikadhanaluṅṭhanakāntārapadavī, ratipatirāgarājyappravartanāsthānamaṇḍpikā,
gurukulamanangavedādhyayanasya... |¹⁴*

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa calls the *Veśavāṭī* as very famous abode of third objective of the life that is *kāma*, a school to experience the fruit of youth for all the people, the water basin for creeper of love, the forest where the wealth of wealthy people is stolen, a royal court of kingdom of the God of love. He describes it as the *gurukula* for the learning the Veda of *Anaṅga*. Here he refers the learning of love sports as the Veda of *Anaṅga*.

The *Veśavāṭī* was visited by the king where every courtyard of the home had images of Rati and Madana under the tree of *Aśoka*; the city resembled eyes of people which show various pictures of *karaṇas* (love postures) drawn on the walls of front doors. The courtyards were decorated with the *rangāvallī*. It was resonant with the sweet humming of honeybees which were unsteady on account of the fragrance of the fresh liquor in the pitchers brought in every house, the various sounds during love sports mingled in the jingling sound of bangles in both the hands of harlots which were extended frequently as the sign of hospitality to the paramours. On account of the arguments and quarrels of the mothers and the procuresses for liquor, the whole surrounding was so much full of hue and cry that it had as if deafened the ears of all.

The *Veśavāṭī* was full of fragrances of excellent sandalwood, saffron, musk brought by the wealthy people. Lingering there, out of curiosity, many poor people were satisfying themselves by observing the drawings of fights of goats, cocks and *kapiñjala* birds drawn in the courtyards. The gregarious lowly villagers with their uncontrolled ego were quarrelling, fighting, telling stories in the courtyards of the prostitutes.

*sakālameghapanktiriva kālāgarudhūmamaṇḍalaiḥ, sadugdhārṇavavīciriva
dukūladhvajapaṭaiḥ, sarākārajaniriva pramathaparīṣadiva bhūtidhāriṇī,
sudharmeva mahanīyāmbaramaṇivasunikarabhūṣitā, vividhayuvativibhramaprabhavā
virājate veśavāṭī*¹⁵

The settlement was having dark circles created by burning of *kālāgaru*, resembling rows of timely clouds. It was having the silk banners which were like the waves of milky ocean. The city looked beautiful on account of the veil of rays due to pearls which were as bright as full moon night, like the cluster of rays reflecting from various jeweled ornaments from thousands of the bows of Indra. On account of the lewd persons and the fragrance of sandal paste, the *Veśavāṭī* was imitating the slopes of Malaya abounding in sandal wood and snakes. On account of excellent *gaṇikās* residing there, it was like a royal way to the pleasure garden for the elephant in the form of Madana. On account of series of fragrances of various blossoms it was like an illusion for *madhupas* (bees) just like on account of series of liquors of various blossoms it was like an infatuation for the *madhupas* (drunkards). Just as the cave in the hell exhibits *bahubhujāṅgabhoga* (many skins of snakes) the settlement displayed *bahubhujāṅgabhoga* (several experiences of lustful people). Just as Alakā city was inhabited by Lord Dhanada (Kubera), this city was inhabited by *dhanadas* (wealthy people). Just as the army of Sugrīva was full of *gavākṣas* (monkies), this city was full of *gavākṣas* (windows). Just as the spring season was nourishing *pallavas* (foliage), the city was nourishing *pallavas* (lustful people); possessing *bhūti* (prosperity) just like troops of *pramathas* (gaṇas of Lord Śiva) smeared with *bhūti* (ashes). Just like the assembly of *sudharmā* (gods) decked with the *ambaramaṇivasunikara* (sun and eight *vasus*¹⁶), this dwelling was decorated with *ambaramaṇivasunikara* (multitude of excellent cloths, jewels, riches); the settlement of harlots looked beautiful with the graceful movements of the several young women.

***Gaṇikājātīḥ* - Description of harlots**

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa calls the *gaṇikājāti* as *samastajanasukhaparamparāprasūtiḥ*¹⁷ (the origin of all the traditions of pleasures of the entire world). He says that *gaṇikājāti* was procreated from five fundamental elements to lure world viz, *mohanacūrṇa* (powder of infatuation representing *Prthvī*), *madirārasa* (intoxicative liquor representing *āpa*), luster of *yogadīpikā* (light and energy of the lamp in the form of copulation representing *teja*), *mahendrapīṅcikāpavana* (breeze created using feathers of magic – representing *vāyu*),

viṣavallīkuḍmalāntarākāśa (space inside the bud of poisonous creeper – representing *ākāśa*). The creator is none the else but the Lord Cupid. (p. 196)

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa also gives description of the graceful movements of *gaṇikās* in order to attract the people and their deceitful nature. They considered that easily gained wealth of *śrotriya* (*brāhmaṇas*), wealth received from forefathers, wealth of old people, young people, ugly people, innocent people, proud people, ascetics, villagers, etc as their own. Thus, they left none from their trap. They pretended to accept the wealth against their desire with great difficulty. Having kept purposefully secret relationship with all kinds of people like goldsmith, barber, washer-man, tailor, weaver, trader, drunkard, butcher, garland maker, with the false greatness, saying that she didn't touch the one who was not high - born. (p. 197)

*Kasyacitkarāvalambanam ekena saha saṁlāpam, anyasya vilokanam aparasmāi
dūtikāpreṣaṇam itarasya sandeśaśravaṇam anyam prati mandasmitam cānusandhāya
yugapadeva sarvānāvarjayantī, abhijātamapyanālocya taruṇamapyavigaṇyā
sundaramapyanavalokya sarasamapyanādr̥tya paṭutaramapyacintayitvā śūramapyanavekṣya
snigdhampyaparigr̥hya kṛtopakāramapyavicārya dhanāśayā yam kancana nikṛṣṭamapi
dhanikameva ārādhayantī...*¹⁸

Gaṇikā would attract many of their clients variously; e. g. by holding somebody's hand, talking with another man, sending messages through *dūtikā* and listening messages of another, with gentle smile towards other, ignoring high born, not even counting youths, not even looking at handsome, neglecting even excellent, not even thinking of experts, not even looking at braves, not even considering lovable, not considering even who has obliged, worshipping only wealthy people even though they are vile in nature.¹⁹ When the robbed wealth was taken away, she would shed crocodile tears with no sorrow at heart. She would pick up some pretext for preventing the arrival of those who were called by her. She would earn fame by offering big gifts to the wealthy people obtained from vile persons. She would serve her own purpose by creating difference of opinions amongst lustful persons. She would collect half munched betel leaf from one, used clothes from the other, flower garlands from somebody else, and ornaments from still other person and offer them to the lewd persons with a gentle smile on her face.

This surely reminds us of the *Lakṣmīmada* in *Kādambarī*.²⁰

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has made excellent use the names of metres while describing the beauty features of *Gaṇikā* –

‘keśeṣu sragdharā, vilāseṣu lalitā, vīkṣaṇeṣu hariṇī, vacasi mañjubhāṣiṇī, rūpe rucirā, sware mattakokilā, nitambabimbe pṛthvī, caivam sandarśtānekasuvṛttāpi durvṛttāvalambinī...’²¹

The harlots were like ‘sragdharā’; on account of garlands in hair (srak - dharā); ‘lalitā’ on account of their beautiful dalliances, ‘hariṇī’ on account of being deer eyed; ‘mañjubhāṣiṇī’ on account of their sweet words; ‘rucirā’ on account of their bright beauty, ‘mattakokilā’ on account of their melodious voice, ‘pṛthvī’ on account of their big circular hips. Thus, though displaying all good characteristics (suvṛttā), in reality the harlots possess a very wretched character (durvṛttā).

He depicts elaborately the characteristics of *gaṇikājāti* in a very interesting manner. *Gaṇikājāti* has been compared with many natural phenomenon as well as many mythological characters –

guḍāliptaśīleva antaḥkathināpi bāhye rasaleshamavahayantī, ratiriva pradyumnanuraktā, bhūmiriva bhujāṅgabhogasangiṇī, kamalinīvānubhūtakarikarakṣobhā, nāvīkīva kṛtajanapratāraṇā, vāraṇagaṇḍasthalīva bindumatī, samarodyateva tīkṣṇanakharā...’²²

Like *guḍāliptaśīlā* (a kind of stone which is soft outwardly but hard inside) she was soft outwardly but harsh inside, like Rati who loved Pradyumna (Madana), she loved *pradyumna* (wealthy people), like earth who is always in the company of *bhujāṅga* (snake) she is always in the company of *bhujāṅga* (lewd people), like the tides in the huge ocean reveals the *maṇitarāṇa* (floating of the jewels) she reveals *maṇita raṇam* (murmuring sound at the co-habitation), like the crystal which holds *rucci* (luster), she holds *rucci* (love) towards every man, like *raktākaraṣiṇī* (leech) who sucks blood, she attracts the persons inspired by love, like *daṇḍaka* forest thronged with *chitrakūṭa* (colourful mountains) she is full of *chitra kūṭa* (illusions), like a forest endowed with *mayūrapadaśāśa* (peacocks and rabbits) she has *mayūrapadaśāśa* (specific scratch marks by the nails), like the ideology of *cārvāka* not believing in *jātibheda* (differences in caste) she did not look for *jātibheda* (differences in caste), like the *śarad* (autumn) which has *khaṇḍābhra* (small clouds) she wore *khaṇḍābhra* (specific scratch marks by the nails), like the seashore decked with *pravālamaṇi* (corals) she was decked with *pravālamaṇi* (specific marks), like ascetics wearing *koupina* (loin cloth) pursued the knowledge of ātman (ātmanurakta - who is interested in atman) she reduced *ātmanurakta* (involved in her) to *koupina* (penniless state), like *kamalinī* (lotus creeper) suffering from *karikarakṣobhā* (anger of trunk of elephant), *kamalinī* (beautiful lady) suffers from *karikara* (specific scratch marks by the nails), like a sailor woman (*nāvīkī*) carrying

people to other shore (*pratāraṇa*), that beautiful lady (*nāvīkī*) did *pratāraṇā* (cheating), just like the *gaṇḍasthala* (temple of excellent elephants) contain *bindu* (pearls), they had *bindu* (specific marks of teeth) on *gaṇḍasthala* (their foreheads), she had sharp nails like a warrior holding sharp weapon ready for war. (p. 200)

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has correctly depicted *gaṇīkā*'s ability to bring the complete transformation in the nature of a person, e.g.-

‘*Vivekino 'pi jaḍān, vratino 'pi kāmukān, dhanikānapi nirdhanān, lubdhānapi pradatrṇ, śāntānapi sāhasikān, mugdhānapi vidagdhān, prakṛtisthānapyunmattān, dhīrānapi cañcalān, cakṣuṣmatopyandhān, śrutimatopi badhirān ācarantī....*’²³

Gaṇīkās treated thoughtful persons like the stupid, vowed persons like lustful. They rendered wealthy people to popper, transformed a greedy into the donor, a composed into rash one, an ignorant person into a learned person, converted a genuine person into insane, a patient person into a fickle one, a person with clear sight into a blind one, making even the person with good hearing capacity into deaf.

The poet has depicted characteristics of *gaṇīkājāti* as follows –

*āvāsasthalī corāṇām, viśrāmabhūmirdhūrtānām, āśrayabhūrātātāyinām, rangamaṇḍpikā madhupāyinām, darśitendrāṇīvilāsāpi navāsavasaktā, kṛtrimajanmabhūmi ' khyātigarīyasī gaṇīkājāti ' |*²⁴

Gaṇīkājāti was habitat of thieves, refuge of shrewd persons, shelter for the murderers, drinking pavilion for the drunkards, storehouse of frauds, mine of the falsehood, water basin of the improper conduct, and residence of the undesirable tasks. She was cheater of the cheaters, thief of the thieves, tempter for even the temptations, deceiver of the deceivers. Though she was *sa-kapaṭa* (fraudulent) she had greed for gold coins and valuable clothes (*niṣka – paṭa*), like *śyāmā* (night) waiting for *vasumat* (sun), she (*śyāmā* – lady with dark complexion) waited for *vasumat* (wealthy person), she was *rucirā* (having radiant complexion) but did not possess praiseworthy *vṛtta* (character). In spite of exhibiting dalliance like *Indrāṇī* they were not involved towards Indra (*Vāsava*) and displaying coitus (*Indrāṇīvilāsa*²⁵ – sexual posture) they were fond of new fresh liquor (*nava - āsavasaktā*), the land of birth of falsehood this *gaṇīkājāti* possesses great popularity.

Description of the mothers of *gaṇīkas* -

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa does not stop at the description of *gaṇīkājāti*, but he goes on to describe the mothers of *gaṇīkas* with rather harsh words. According to him, the mother (of *gaṇīkā*)

was *kuṭilahṛdayā* (crooked at heart) like an enraged old female monkey (who doesn't allow anybody to come in the vicinity). Like thorn fencing to the sugarcane farm she protected her daughter (by restricting the entry of the undesirable persons). Her loose fallen breast bearing old nail marks imitated the leather bellow. She was expert in giving dry smile. Expecting money from lustful paramours, it was not possible to agitate her by hundreds of salutes and praises by them. Due to marks on the breast it appeared that they had sinful heart on account of grabbing away money from many youths. Her grey hair imitated the full bunch of white flower on dry old creeper which she dyed with hair dye. Her cheeks were marked with the scars of beating by hands of lustful people who were enraged due to her habit of picking up a quarrel for no reason and driven away by the procuress. Her body was weakened due to various physical tricks in order to take away the wealth of the paramours. She had sour throat caused by continuous quarrels with neighbours every moment. Her body figure was full of wrinkles representing lines of snatching away the money of wealthy people. She was skilled in honouring paramours who used to give various types of wealth, cloths, gold and jewels continuously day by day. She would extract plenty of wealth from every passerby, showing him her daughter's child and telling him repeatedly, 'this one is born of you, hence give some ornament to him'. She was like the moving whirlwind to ward off the heat generated by the activity of earning money. She was like the teeth of the dog in showing the expertise of her daughter. Like a dog she would exhibit her shining teeth only to narrate her daughter's virtues.

The mother of *gaṇikā* has been compared by the poet with many unpleasant standards of comparison.

*Upamā kālarātreḥ, udāharaṇamamangalānām, mātṛkā piśācīsargasya,
manorathasiddhirvairupyasya, akālapalitodgatiryuvajanakeśagrahaṇasya, peṭikā
kiṇamaṇidhāraṇasya, naṭī vaikṛtanāṭakasya, ...*²⁶

She was like the night of destruction at the end of the world, an example of inauspicious things, the birthplace of creation of goblin, an accomplishment of the ugliness, moving tent of bad conduct, a disputatious woman for the law of Cupid, a female monkey showing fickle-mindedness, obstruction in the path of prostitution, lightning without the clouds for fulfilling the intentions of lewd people, the instructor of fraudulent techniques, an expounder of the science of deception, a bamboo stick to drive away poppers, a robber of the wealth of the wealthy people, a broom to wipe away good values, a grayness of hair brought untimely in

youth, the box to hold the gems of the marks, an actress of the disgusting drama, full of illusions like the nocturnal female demon, exploiting the paramours (*pallava*) just like the summer wind drying up the foliage (*pallava*), just as the tongue of *Rāhu* who swallows the whole moon (*sakalacandra*) she would seize all the gold (*candra*), having crooked behavior like the female snake, she was like the tail of the dog which never become straight, she was dreadful for *bhujāṅga* (lewd person) just like a female mongoose who is terrible for the *bhujāṅga* (family of snakes), she was terrible for paramours, generating terror among the assemblies of paramours.

Description of *kuṭṭinī*

After depiction of *gaṇikā* and her mother, as if that was not enough, the poet goes ahead to depict the procuress. He describes procuress as expert in the fraudulent behavior. The procuress was expert in the fraudulent behavior, knowing the vulnerable points to bring together and separate paramours and maids. The marks of nail on the sides of her breasts were functioning like script to invite the paramours. She wore artificial flowers in her curly hair, wearing clothes only on her lower limbs, whose body was painted with the beetle nut colour given by lustful men and women, causing to melt the heart as hard as rock by hundreds of imaginary schemes of deceitful words. Her surrounding was eloquent on account of the hundreds of the sweet words uttered by paramours overpowered by Lord Cupid. She was carrying on her body at proper places the marks of teeth namely *samūḍha*, *ucchūnaka*, *bindu*, *pravāla*, *maṇimālā*, *bindumālā*, etc. She was an expert in art of pacifying the angry paramours. She was a scholar in creating dislike between the couple of paramours who were enamoured with each other like Rambhā and King Nalakubera²⁷. She would create fear and discomfort among the connoisseurs of high born ladies, innocent like deers. They were highly honoured by people who knew the laws of Cupid on account of the rift that they would create during love sports with other women, looking graceful on account of dalliances shown by various harlots, fortunate of love sports which was uncommon with other women, expert in various *karaṇopacāras* (postures of love making), knower the heart of hero. ‘She (*gaṇikā*) is the very essence of Lord Cupid, owing to her only, the third objective of human life that is *kāma* becomes successful’ saying thus, she (procuress) would channelize the extremely purse proud people to a particular courtesan. Allowing the scabby paramours only to praise her dalliances (not allowing to come ahead for love making), dealing only with her own work, pleasing with various sexual enjoyments those who have been accepted by her mistress.

‘Upādhyāyī kapaṭaśāstrāṇām, sandhānakaraṇī mithunānām, adhyāpikā
kandarpanigamānām, ācāryā kāmukākaraṣaṇavidyānām, upadeṣṭri
smarabandhakaraṇānām...’²⁸

‘Klībasyāpi puṁstvamutpādayantī, nīrasasyāpi rasam janayantī, nirvikārasyaṅpi
vikaāramāpādayantī, kathinasyāpi mārḍavam kalpayantī...’²⁹

She is said to be the preceptor of the science of fraudulence, joiner of the hearts of lovers, teacher of scriptures of Cupid, teacher of art of attracting the lustful people, instructor of *bandhakaraṇa* (posture of love), the proclamation of sexual enjoyment along with the sound of drums, toll fees in various dealings with men, the lightning flash for the enjoyment of *kāmapuruṣārtha*, actress of the *tāṇḍava* dance of incomparable sex act, creating manliness even in an impotent, creating interest about sex in uninterested person, creating fault in faultless person, giving softness to hard person. Even though she was beautiful like a lake with lotuses, good people were not interested in her, constantly moving like a cloud, to and fro like a swing, extracting money from both the sides (from paramours as well as the courtesan) just like words exploit meanings in the pun (*śliṣṭaśabda*); like a female fox always indulged in cheating; like a bitch desirous of the left over food; she indulged with the men who were used by others; like a snake charmer skilled in subduing snake, she was expert in acquiring lewd persons, like the demon Śambara, she would assume various illusions, like the eye ball of crow (which can be moved as per necessity), she would serve the purpose of both (courtesan and paramours).

General Analysis

The description of *gaṇikā* and their associate entities occupies almost eight pages of the prose romance, which is quite unproportionate to the expanse of the present text. Probably, the poet was keen on giving something which is not very commonly found in Sanskrit works. The depiction of the harlots and the hierarchy within the institution in so much detail, shows not only power of observation of the poet but also that how institution of prostitution formed the important strata of the society. However, the supervisory authority like *gaṇikādhyakṣa* as described in *Arthaśāstra* is not mentioned in this description.

Knowledge of *Kāmasūtra* -

The poet has described in detail the various love positions like *bandhakaraṇa*, *udāharaṇa*, *karaṇa*, *Indrāñvilāsa*, etc which shows his study of *Kāmasūtra*. He has given many names of

love bites *bindumālā*, *samūdha*, *ucchūnaka*, *pravālamaṇimālā*³⁰ and nail scratches like *nakhamayūra*, *karikara*, *khaṇḍābhra*, *vāraṇagaṇḍabindu*, etc.³¹

Figures of speech –

These kinds of descriptions offer an opportunity to poets to show their poetic skills and knowledge. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has very well utilized this opportunity by using many figures of speech while describing the settlement of the harlots.

*Anuprāsa*³² -

*tuṅgaharmyaśṛṅganihitagāṅgeyakumbhapiṅgalimaliptagaganavithibhiranilataraṅgitairanaṅ
gadhvajapaṭairnirantarasaratakhinnāḥ... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 195)*

Here we can see the repetition of *anunāsikas* i. e. *na, na*, etc. which creates rhythm.

Rupaka - *Gaṇikājāti* is called as

*‘āvāsasthalī corāṇām, viśrāmabhūmirdhūrtānām, āśrayabhūrātātāyinām, rangamaṇḍpikā
madhupāyinām, ākaraḥ kapaṭānām, khaniranṛtānām, ālavālanācārāṇām,
nivāsasthānamakāryāṇām...’ (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 200)*

Here, the poet imagines the complete identity between the harlots and the dwellings of thieves, the refuge of shrewd persons, the shelter for the murderers, drinking pavilion for the drunkards, the storehouse of frauds, the mine of the falsehood, water basin of the improper conduct, and the residence of the undesirable tasks.

*Śleṣa*³³ -

The description of *veṣavāṭī* is full of puns. The use of pun at places has made his description more enjoyable. An example is quoted below -

*prasavaparimalahāriṇīmmālikā madhupakulavyāmohasya, pātālaguheva
prakaṭitabahubhujaṅgabhogā, alakeva dhanadādhiṣṭhitā, sugrīvaparṭaneva sagavākṣā,
vasantavanavallīva pallavollāsinī, pramathapariṣadiva bhūtidhāriṇī, sudharmeva
mahanīyāmbaramaṇivasunikarabhūṣitā, vividhayuvativibhramaprabhavā virājate veṣavāṭī...
(Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 196)*

The pun can be seen of the following words –

Madhupas – 1. Bees 2. Drunkards

Bahubhujaṅgabhogā – 1. Skins of snakes 2. Several experiences of lustful people

Dhanada - 1. Kubera 2. Wealthy people

Gavākṣas – 1. Monkeys 2. Windows

Pallavas – 1. Foliage 2. Lewd people

Bhūti - 1. Prosperity 2. Ashes

Ambaramaṇivasunikara – 1. The sun, the moon and eight vasus 2. Multitude of excellent cloths, jewels and riches.

Virodha –

‘*Vivekino ’pi jaḍān, vratino ’pi kāmukān, dhanikānapi nirdhanān, lubdhānapi pradatṛn, śāntānapi sāhasikān, mugdhānapi vidagdhān, prakṛtisthānapyunmattān, dhīrānapi cañcalān, cakṣuṣmatopyandhān, śrutimatopi badhirān ācarantī...*’ (*Vemabhūpālacaritam*. IV. p. 200)

Here, while noting the treatment given by the harlot to various persons, the poet observes this –

‘For her the thoughtful persons and the stupid, vowed persons and the lustful were same. She rendered wealthy people to popper, a greedy into the donor, a composed into rash one, an ignorant person into a learned person, a genuine person into insane, a courageous person into a fickle one, a person with clear sight into a blind one, deafening even the person with good hearing capacity.’

Utprekṣā³⁴ –

Viṣavallīva sevyamānā mohamāpādayantī... (*Vemabhūpālacaritam*. IV. p. 199)

The word *iva* is used in *utprekṣā*.

Stylistic Features

The whole description runs in five sentences spreading over eleven pages. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has employed *Gauḍī*³⁵ style to suit this description. The *Gauḍī* style consists of compactness of structure gained through long compounds, harsh syllables, conjunct consonants and alliteration, etc.

According to Viśvanātha, author of *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, there are four varieties of prose style – *Muktaka*, *Vṛttagandhī*, *Cūrṇaka* and *Utkalikāprāyaḥ*. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has made a judicious use of these types to suit the situations and occasions. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa is undoubtedly the master of the language and other poetic skills.

The poet has used all the styles of *gadya* in *Vemabhūpālacaritam*. In *veśavāṭivarṇanam*, *Muktaka*, *Cūrṇaka*, *Utkalikāprāyaḥ* are used judiciously at various places. However, the utmost use of *Utkalikāprāyaḥ* is seen.

The poet makes use of various statements carrying same import to convey the things more efficiently and effectively.

abhijātamapyanālocya taruṇamapyavigaṇyya sundaramapyanavalokya sarasamapyanādṛtya

*paṭutaramapyacintayitvā śūramapyanavekṣya snigdhamapyaparigrhya
kṛtopakāramapyavicārya...| (p. 198)³⁶*

Here, Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa uses words *anālocya*, *avigaṇayya*, *anavalokya*, *anādr̥tya*, *acintayitvā*, *anavekṣya*, *aparigrhya*, *avicārya* which give us clear picture of the selfish nature of prostitutes who would neglect the good and appreciate the bad for her purpose.

Citradarśī style -

The poet Bāṇabhṭa (7TH century A.D.) has painted such long drawn and fine word pictures. Following his ideal, even Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa has also drawn a picture gallery in his prose romance. In this picture gallery, we have well framed pen-portraits, one after another, in which each and every line has been minutely drawn and colours have been properly filled in. This word paintings show the wonderful accuracy of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa's power of observation and rare ability of depicting all the details of any view. In most of his long descriptions, he first gives realistic and detailed account of the scene by means of *svabhāvokti*. Then, *upamās* and *utprekṣās* are used to make thing more meaningful. And, at the end, just to satisfy the lovers of the word play, *śleṣa*, *virodhābhāsa* or *parisankhyā* are employed. Just like a painter, who would draw a bare sketch, then fill colours in it and finally use finishing touch for his piece of art. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa uses this style in his word pictures. This description of *veśavāṭī* is no exception to it.

Demerits

Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa could not resist the detailed descriptions. His descriptions are often too lengthy and his imagination knows no end. While describing the *gaṇikājāti*, he has given too detailed description of their appearance, nature, skills and changing behaviour.

Truly, the descriptions of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa seldom remain in proper limits. No doubt that they are marvelous in themselves, but sometimes they halt the movement of the story for the undesirable period. The reader curious about the storyline may lose his interest.

Conclusion

1. Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa is probably one of the foremost poets who have described the institution of the prostitution and dwelling of harlots in such an extensive manner.
2. He has given the peculiar behaviour of the harlots in the company of wealthy people as well as poor by way of describing the detailed and minute behavioural pattern of the harlots.

3. The poet has mentioned that persons belonging to every strata of the society visit the dwelling of harlots.
4. The description abounds in various tricks used by courtesans to attract the clients which suggest their vile mind residing in a beautiful body.
5. The supervisory authority like *gaṇikādhyakṣa* as described in *Arthaśāstra* is not mentioned in this description.
6. The role of *ceṭa* and *dūtikā* is emphasized. They are utilized by *gaṇikās* as well as *kuṭṭinīs*.
7. *Gaṇikās* were skilled in *dyūta* (gambling), *gāna* (singing), *kathā* (story telling). *Śukālāpa* (training the parrots to imitate human talks) was one of the means of the entertainment used by them.
8. The poet has penned too much detailed description with complex compounds and too lengthy sentences. The reader curious about the storyline may lose his interest.
9. One can say that the claim of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa to be Abhinava Bāṇa finds ground on the basis of the description of *veśavāṭī*.

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¹ Koṇḍāvidu is situated in Guntur district of the Indian state Andhra Pradesh. It is well known for its fort. (Wikipedia)

² श्रीमत्श्ररणकमलादवतीर्णो वर्णचतुर्थः | (*Vemabhūpālacaritam*. I. p. 3)

The Reddis belong to the fourth varṇa, i.e. śūdra. However, the title Komaṭī suggests that their allegiance to the trading community. Even today, the trading community in Andhra, Karnataka and some parts of Maharashtra use word Komaṭī to denote trading community. (Wikipedia)

³ Three liṅgas are situated on three mountains namely Kāleśvaram in Telangana, Śrīśailam in Rayalaseema and Drākṣārāmam also known as Bhīmeśvaram in coastal Andhra. (Wikipedia)

⁵ Contribution of Andhra to Sanskrit Literature. p. 499-500

⁶ बाणादन्ये कवयः काणाः खलु सरसगद्यसरणीषु । इति जगति रूढमयषो वामनबाणो ऽपमार्ष्टी वत्सकुलः ॥ (*Vemabhūpālacaritam* . I. p. 2)

Poets other than Bāṇa are lame on the path of excellent prose. This ill fame would be removed away by Vāmana Bāṇa of Vatsakula.

⁷ कविरभिनवबाणः काव्यमत्यद्भूतार्थम् भुवनमहितभूमानायको वेमभुपः |

त्रिभुवनमहनीयख्यातिमानेष योगः प्रकटयति न केषां पण्डितानां प्रहर्षः ॥ (*Vemabhūpālacaritam*. I. p. 2)

(Which intellectuals would not express their joy after seeing this wonderful prose by the poet namely Abhinava Bāṇa, on the life of the king Vema having fame in the three worlds, the hero of the great world?)

⁸ Also known as Drākṣārāma, seat of Lord Bhīmeṣvara, located in East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. (Wikipedia)

⁹ Śabdakalpadrumaḥ under entry veśā

¹⁰ वारस्त्री गणिका वेश्या रूपाजीवाथ सा जनैः | सत्कृथा वारमुख्या स्यात् कुट्टनी शम्भली समे ||
(Amarakoṣa.2.6.19.1.4)

¹¹ प्रियवादि प्रियकथा स्फुटा दक्षा जितश्रमा | एभिर्गुणैर्सा संयुक्ता गणिका परिकीर्तिता ||
(Bharatanāṭya.XXV.74)

¹² Arthaśāstra.2.27

¹³ Kādambarī. p.237

¹⁴ किञ्च एषा तु जगत्प्रसिद्धा तृतीयपुरुषार्थजन्मभूमिः, निखिलजनयौवनफलनिर्वेशशाला , रागलतालवालमण्डली, धनिकधनलुण्टारकान्तारपदवी, रतिपतिरागराज्यप्रवर्तनास्थानमण्डपिका, गुरुकुलमनङ्गवेदाध्ययनस्य... | (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 194)

¹⁵ सकालमेघपङ्क्तिरिव कालागरुधूममण्डलैः, सदुग्धार्णववीचिरिव दुकूलध्वजपटैः, सराकारजनिरिव मौक्तिकहारमयूखपटलैः, सेन्द्रचापसहस्रेव विविधमणिभूषणमरीचिसंहतिभिः, परिचितचन्द्रनामोदशिशिरा मलयगिरितटी भुजङ्गप्रचाराणाम् , सरसगणिकाधिष्ठिता विहारवनविथी मदनद्विपेन्द्रस्य, प्रसवपरिमलहारिणी मालिका मधुपकुलव्यामोहस्य, पातालगुहेव प्रकटितबहुभुजङ्गभोगा, अलकेव धनदाधिष्ठिता, सुग्रीवपृतनेव सगवाक्षा, वसन्तवल्लीव पल्लवोल्लासिनी, प्रमथपरिषदिव भूतिधारिणी, सुधर्मेव महनीयाम्बरमणिवसुनिकरभूषिता, विविधयुवतिविभ्रमप्रभवा विराजते वेशवाटी ।
(Vemabhūpālacaritam.IV. p. 195-196)

¹⁶ Dharā, Dhruva, Soma, Ahas, Anila, Anala, Pratyūṣa, Prabhāsa (Mahabhārata.Ādiparva. 65.17-18)

¹⁷ समस्तजनसुखपरंपराप्रसूतिः ...| (Vemabhūpālacaritam.IV.p. 196)

¹⁸ कस्यचित्करावलम्बनम् एकेन सह संलापम्, अन्यस्य विलोकनम् अपरस्मै दूतिकाप्रेषणम् इतरस्य संदेशश्रवणम् अन्यं प्रति मन्दस्मितं चानुसंधाय युगपदेव सर्वानवर्जयन्ती, अभिजातमप्यनालोच्य तरुणमप्यविगणय्य सुन्दरमप्यनवलोक्य सरसमप्यनादृत्य पटुतरमप्यचिन्तयित्वा शूरमप्यनवेक्ष्य स्निग्धमप्यपरिगृह्य कृतोपकारमप्यविचार्य धनाशया यं कंचन निकृष्टमपि धनिकमेव आराधयन्ती...
(Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 198)

²⁰ नाभिजनमीक्षते | न रूपमवलोकयते | न कुलक्रममनुवर्तते | न शीलं पश्यति | न वैदग्ध्यं गणयति | न श्रुतमाकर्णयति | न धर्ममनुरुध्यते | न त्यागमाद्रियते | न विशेषज्ञतां विचारयति | नाचारं पालयति | न सत्यमनुबुध्यते | न लक्षणं प्रमाणीकरोति | (Kādambarī. Pūrvabhāga. p. 226)

²¹ केशेषु स्रग्धरा विलासेषु ललिता वीक्षणेषु हरिणी वचसि मञ्जुभाषिणी रूपे रुचिरा स्वरे मत्तकोकिला नितम्बबिम्बे पृथ्वी चैवं संदर्शितानेकसुवृत्तापि दुर्वृत्तावलम्बिनी... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 198)

²² गुडालिसशिलेव अन्तः कठिनापि बाह्ये रसलेशमावहन्ती, रतिरिव प्रद्युम्नानुरक्ता, भूमिरिव भुजंगभोगसङ्गिनी, महार्णववीचिरिव मणितरणं विवृण्वती, स्फटिकशिलेव प्रतिपुरुषरुचिं दधाना, जलूकेव

रक्ताकर्षिणी, दण्डकेव सचित्रकूटा, कान्तारस्थलीव दृश्यमानमयुरपदशशप्लुता, चार्वाकवृत्तिरिव जातिभेदानपेक्षिणी, शरदिव खण्डाभ्रधारिणी, पयोनिधिवेलेव प्रवालमणिभूषिता, प्रव्रज्येव आत्मानुरक्तानां कौपिनदायिनी, कमलिनीवानुभूतकरिकरक्षोभा, नाविकीव कृतजनप्रतारणा, वारणगण्डस्थलीव बिन्दुमती, समरोद्यतेव तीक्ष्णनखरा.... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 200)

²³ विवेकिनोऽपि जडान् व्रतिनोऽपि कामुकान् धनिकानपि निर्धनान् लुब्धानपि प्रदातृन् शान्तानपि साहसिकान् मुग्धानपि विदग्धान् प्रकृतिस्थानप्युन्मत्तान् धीरानपि चञ्चलान् चक्षुष्मतोऽप्यन्धान् श्रुतिमतिऽपि बधिरान् आचरन्ती.... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 200)

²⁴ आवासस्थली चोराणाम्, विश्रामभूमिर्धूर्तानाम्, आश्रयभूराततायिनाम्, रङ्गमण्डपिका मधुपायिनाम्, आकरः कपटानाम्, खनिरनृतानाम्, आलवालमनाचाराणाम्, निवासस्थानमकार्याणाम्, वञ्चकानामपि वञ्चयित्री, चोराणामपि चोरयित्री, प्रलोभकानामपि प्रलोभयित्री, भ्रामकाणामपि भ्रामयित्री, सकपटापि निष्कपटलालसा, श्यामापि वसुमदागमनकाङ्क्षिणी, रुचिराप्यवृत्तप्लाघ्य, दर्शितेन्द्राणीविलासापि नवासवसक्ता, कृत्रिमजन्मभूमिः, ख्यातिगरियसी गणिकाजातिः ॥ (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 200-201)

²⁵ पार्श्वयोः सममूरु विन्यस्य पार्श्वयोर्जानुनीनिधद्यादित्यभ्यासयोगादिन्द्राणी ॥ (Kāmasūtra. 6. 11)

²⁶ उपमा कालरात्रेः, उदाहरणममङ्गलानाम्, मातृका पिशाचीसर्गस्य, मनोरथसिद्धिर्वैरुप्यस्य, जङ्गममण्डपिका दौःशील्यस्य, वैतण्डिकी मदनसिद्धान्तस्य, वानरी चापलगुणस्य, अर्गला वेशमार्गस्य, अनभ्राशनिः कामुकमनोरथानाम्, उपदेष्ट्री कपटतन्त्रस्य, व्याख्यात्री कपटशास्त्रस्य, वेत्रलतानिर्धननिवारणस्य, पाटचरी धनिकधनस्य, संमार्जनी सद्गुणप्रमृष्टेः, अकालपलितोद्गतिर्युवजनकेशग्रहणस्य, पेटिका किणमणिधारणस्य, नटी वैकृतनाटकस्य.... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 202)

²⁷ Rambhā is name celestial nymph. She was the wife of Nalakubera and considered as the most beautiful woman in the paradise of Indra. (Naiṣadhīyacaritam.2.37)

²⁸ उपाध्यायी कपटशास्त्राणाम्, संघानकरणी मिथुनानाम्, अध्यापिका कन्दर्पनिगमानाम्, आचार्या कामुकार्पणानाम्, उपदेष्ट्री स्मरबन्धकरणानाम्... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 203)

²⁹ क्लीबस्यापि पुंस्त्वमुत्पादयन्ती, नीरसस्यापि रसं जनयन्ती, निर्विकारस्यापि विकारमापादयन्ती, कठिनस्यापि मार्दवं कल्पयन्ती... (Vemabhūpālacaritam. IV. p. 204)

³⁰ तदाच्छुरितमर्धचन्द्रो मण्डलं रेखा व्याघ्रनखं मयूरपदकं शशप्लूतकमुत्पलपत्रकमिति | (Kāmasūtra. 3.9)

³¹ गूढकमुच्छूनकं बिन्दुबिन्दुमाला प्रवालमणिर्मणिमाला खण्डाभ्रकं वराहचर्वितकमिति दशनच्छेदकविकल्पाः | (Kāmasūtra. 5.10)

³² अनुप्रासः शब्दसाम्यं वैषम्येऽपि स्वरस्य यत् |

छेको व्यञ्जनसंघस्य सकृतसाम्यमनेकधा ॥ (Sāhityadarpaṇa. X.3.)

³³ वाच्यभेदेन भिन्ना यद् युगपद्भाषणस्पृशः | श्लिष्यन्ति शब्दाः श्लेषसावक्षरादिभिरष्टधा ॥

श्लेषः स वाक्ये एकस्मिन्यत्रानेकार्थता भवेत् ॥ (Kāvyaṇprakāśa, X.10)

³⁴ संभावनमथोत्प्रेक्ष्य प्रकृतस्य समेनयत् | (*Kāvya prakāśa*, X.4.)

³⁵ ओजः प्रकाशकैवर्णेर्बन्धआडम्बरः पुनः ||
समासबहुलगौडी वर्णेः शेषैः पुनर्द्वयोः || (*Sāhityadarpaṇa*, IX.3)

³⁶ अभिजातमप्यनालोच्य तरुणमप्यविगणय्य सुन्दरमप्यनवलोक्य सरसमप्यनादृत्य पतुतरमप्यचिन्तयित्वा
शूरमप्यपरिगृह्य कृतोपकारमप्यविचार्य... | (*Vemabhūpālacaritam*. IV. p. 198)