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*Vijayāṅkā, Vikāṭānitambā, Avantisundarī – modern Sanskrit dramas of V. Raghavan
in the context of contemporary Sanskrit literature.*

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Abstract

Vijayāṅkā, *Vikaṭānitambā*, *Avantisundarī*, collectively known as *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, are three short Sanskrit plays written in the 20th century in Sanskrit by Venkataraman Raghavan – a distinguished Sanskrit scholar. Until now, there were no research projects or translations of any of these plays. The subject of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* is the author's portrayal of the imagined lives of three Sanskrit poetesses from the past. One of the most important issues of these plays is Sanskrit poetics, which was also a major area of scholarly interests of Dr. Raghavan. Therefore, in order to investigate these dramas properly, they have been studied within a broader context encompassing V. Raghavan's academic achievements as well as the history of Sanskrit theory of literature. An outline of the dramatic output of Dr. Raghavan is also provided, which portrays him as a modern Sanskrit dramatist.

The dissertation also tackles a problem of contemporary Sanskrit literature, which is a field somewhat neglected by scholars. Sanskrit has a very peculiar status. Although it is not commonly used as a spoken language, people still choose it as a medium of their literary creativity. The dissertation is also an attempt to take a stance in the discussion, whether Sanskrit can be considered a dead language, or whether there is still life in it.

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Introduction

Sanskrit never ceased to be used as a medium of literature. According to the 2011 census less than 24 000 Indian citizens declare it as their first language. The number of citizens that declare it as their first, second or third language, equates to circa 2,4 million speakers, which is less than 0,2% of the population of India.¹ Despite Sanskrit often being called a dead language, its literature continues to be created. Sheldon Pollock, in his famous article “The Death of Sanskrit” claimed: “Sanskrit literature could hardly be said to be alive if it had ceased to function as the vehicle for living thought, thought that supplemented and not simply duplicated reality.”² Sheldon Pollock also states that in the second millenium Sanskrit literature lost its importance and its proper ‘life’. He justifies his point by stating that the number of Sanskrit writers decreased, their outputs were often known only locally, and their works were not as notable, creative and simply not as good as the works of their predecessors. He explores the “death of Sanskrit literary culture as a historical process.”³ However, not all Indologists share this view. In their article “‘A Cloud Turned Goose’: Sanskrit in the vernacular millennium,” Yigal Bronner and David Shulman point to the important role of Sanskrit in the second millennium: “Sanskrit participated along with the vernaculars in the project of inventing and elaborating distinctive regional cultures and identities.”⁴ Jürgen Hanneder, in the article “On ‘The Death of Sanskrit’”, argues with the opinion presented by Sheldon Pollock, bringing other issues to our attention. One of his

1 <https://censusindia.gov.in/> The official website of the Census of India provided by Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

2 Sh. Pollock, “The Death of Sanskrit.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 392–426, p. 414. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696659>.

3 Ibidem, 395.

4 Y. Bronner, D. Shulman. “‘A Cloud Turned Goose’: Sanskrit in the Vernacular Millennium.” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (March 2006): 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001946460504300101>, 6.

arguments is that Pollock is not familiar with the most recent works of Sanskrit writers, so he is not entitled to evaluate the quality of their output.⁵

One cannot deny that the creation of literature in Sanskrit has been ongoing. A question may be raised why a modern writer would choose to write in an ancient language, especially when he or she writes about modern matters. A famous Sanskrit poetess of the 20th century, Pandita Kshama Rao⁶, answered this question in the preface to her poem in Sanskrit *Uttarasatyāgrahagītā*:

I have been often asked why I do not write in a ‘living’ language and my reply has been that any language in which one can write on a modern subject is a living language and Sanskrit, therefore, is as much alive as any other language spoken in India. (...) Sanskrit has lived for thousands of years in spite of numerous foreign invasions and will live as long as India lives.⁷

This passage, although written much earlier than Pollock’s article, could serve as an excellent answer to the question asked above. There is no doubt that the number of Sanskrit writers as well as the number of recipients of their works decreased over the time as the number of Sanskrit speakers decreased. What is more, their works are usually known only in specific circles. However, the question of literary value of those works is, and perhaps will, remain open, as long as the literature in this language continues to be created.

General purpose and outline of the dissertation

The aim of this research is to investigate three one-act plays written in the 20th century in Sanskrit by Venkataraman Raghavan (1908–1979). He was not only a renowned Sanskrit scholar dealing with poetics and dramaturgy, but also a musicologist, a poet, and a playwright writing in two languages: his mother tongue Tamil and Sanskrit. The

5 J. Hanneder, “On ‘The Death of Sanskrit’” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 308–309. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24664154>.

6 See page: 137

7 K. Row, *Preface*, in K. Row, *Uttarasatyāgrahagītā* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs LTD. Publishers, 1948), IX.

core of the discussed plays – *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* – is how their author imagined lives of three Sanskrit poetesses from the past.

In order to properly analyse the three plays, collectively known as *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī*, the life, scholarly interests and achievements of their author, Dr. Venkataraman Raghavan, must be examined; therefore, the first chapter of this dissertation is devoted to this subject. The three dramas contain a great number of references to various aspects of the Sanskrit poetics, which was the playwright's main field of research and academic interests. He is an author of numerous publications devoted to this subject, some of which were truly pioneering and influential. Hence, the academic achievements of Dr. Raghavan require analysis in order to evaluate how they influenced him as a playwright. Moreover, the Sanskrit drama had a great importance in the life of V. Raghavan. He was interested in this field as a scholar, a performer and a propagator of Sanskrit theatre in modern India. He conducted meticulous research to revive this performative art in a form as close to the original one as was possible. Thus, this aspect of his life also needs to be investigated because, presumably, it had a great impact on Dr. Raghavan as a writer.

The second chapter of the thesis is devoted to the Sanskrit dramas written by V. Raghavan. This section begins with a subchapter describing the typical structure of a Sanskrit play. Furthermore, this chapter provides a broader context of modern Sanskrit literature for the analysis of *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī*. It presents an image of Dr. Raghavan as a Sanskrit playwright and draws conclusions about his dramatic output. In this chapter, special attention was paid to the play *Anārkalī*, which is the most famous and considered to be the best play of V. Raghavan.

As the heroines of *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī* were Sanskrit poetesses, and the contributions of women to the Sanskrit literature are often neglected by the scholars, the third chapter of the dissertation briefly describes the achievements of women in the field of Sanskrit literature. This part is only a short sketch of the female input to the Sanskrit literature, and it is not an exhaustive study on the subject. A comprehensive and holistic study of the topic would require more extensive research and much more content than included in this section. Nevertheless, it provides a background for the fourth chapter of the thesis devoted to the counterparts of the heroines of *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī*. In this chapter, the biographical information about the characters of those three plays was collected and

analysed. Additionally, some poems attributed to Vijayāṅkā, Vijjā, Vikaṭānitambā and Avantisundarī, which were not incorporated into the plays of Dr. Raghavan, were translated and analysed.

The fifth chapter focuses on the genre of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, which the author calls *prekṣaṇaka*. This chapter collects historical information on the genre and analyses those plays in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Sanskrit theory of literature. It also explores what innovations in the structure of plays were introduced by their author, and which traditional elements of Sanskrit dramas he decided to keep.

In the sixth chapter, references to the Sanskrit poetics found in *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* are analysed. The passages from the plays containing remarks on various issues of the Sanskrit poetics are quoted and translated. They are also evaluated in the context of relevant treatises and theories of Sanskrit drama. This chapter provides a broad context of issues, terminology and works mentioned in the three plays. Moreover, it presents a comparison between Avantisundarī's opinions on certain problems presented in *Kāvyaṃimāmsa* of Rājaśekhara and retold in the play of Raghavan.

In the seventh chapter, the three plays are analysed with the use of the feminist literary approach. In this section the gender inequalities presented in *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are explored. The heroines in these plays are educated and talented ladies who lived and thrived as poetesses in a patriarchal world. Thus, it is intriguing how their situation was portrayed by a 20th century male writer.

The next chapter is devoted to the language of the plays and it explores the text of the plays according to different linguistic aspects typical for contemporary Sanskrit literature.

The final chapter presents conclusions and results of the research. This part summarises the outcome and presents the discussed plays in the broader context of modern Sanskrit dramas, taking into consideration the background of the scholarly achievements of Dr. V. Raghavan. The work is accompanied by the Appendix, which contains the transliteration (IAST) of three plays by V. Raghavan along with my own translations. I treat each of my translations as independent, and therefore each of them is

provided with footnotes that are intended to serve as introductions to the conventions of *kāvya* literature and theories of Sanskrit literature. In this way I continue the didactic mission of Raghavan, for this must have been his aim – to popularize the knowledge of classical Sanskrit poetry and ancient literary theories, and to continue these traditions.

Methodology

The major methods employed in this dissertation belong to philology, in the *sensu lato* as intended and promoted by August Boeckh in his *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, posthumously published in 1877, namely the discipline of accounting for the sense of texts and even “knowledge of what is known” (“Philologie ist das Erkennen des Erkannten”)⁸ within a historical perspective. Thus, the works at stake will be examined according to the Sanskrit theory of literature and Sanskrit theory of drama as well as their language. As the plays of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* inevitably belong to the immense realm of Sanskrit literature, this approach is crucial to determine their place and position in this field. By comparing the dramas and their structures to the rules set by theoreticians of Sanskrit literature, it is possible to find out which of these elements are kept from the vast tradition of Sanskrit dramaturgy and which are innovations introduced by Dr. Raghavan.

The second important methodological approach in the research on *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* is biographical and historical criticism. This approach analysing the biography of the author and determining the relationship between the writer’s life and his literary output is still important for many researchers.⁹ *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* is related in numerous ways to the academic activities and research of its author. Therefore, it is essential to investigate those links and determine how V. Raghavan presented Sanskrit literary theories in his literary works. Moreover, it must be remembered that the author of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* was also actively engaged in the revival of Sanskrit theatre in contemporary India. This experience might have also influenced him as the creator of Sanskrit literature,

8 A. Boeckh, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, herausgegeben B. von Ernst, (Leipzig: Teubner 1877), 10.

9 For instance see: J. J. Benson, “Steinbeck: a Defense of Biographical Criticism.” *College Literature* 16, no. 2 (1989): 107–16 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25111810>.

particularly because he had the first-hand information on which features of Sanskrit dramas are appreciated by the public, which elements create difficulties whilst staging those plays, and what makes them easier to produce them on stage.

Last, but not least, an important methodology used for this dissertation is feminist literary criticism “to counter the unquestioning acceptance of ‘man’ and male genius as the norm.”¹⁰ It must be remembered that the historical counterparts of *Prekṣaṇakatravī*’s heroines were characters quite extraordinary in Indian history. They were all educated, bold and talented women who became appreciated and renowned in patriarchal culture. Although the fields of Sanskrit poetry and poetics were almost exclusively dominated by men, through their works they managed to become fairly well known and appreciated. Therefore, it is interesting to observe how they became portrayed by a contemporary male writer, from the perspective of feminist literary criticism.

A comment on notation of proper names

The names of historical figures who lived before the 19th century are written in transliteration appropriate for their respective languages. Meanwhile, the names of the persons living from the 19th century onwards are anglicised. This choice is motivated by the fact that many of them used the anglicised version of their names and the authoress of the dissertation wants to respect their preferences in this matter.

The names of the Indian royal dynasties are written in their anglicised version. The names of the cities and geographical names are as well provided in their anglicised versions. In case of names of towns and cities that have been relatively recently changed¹¹, the authoress applies the name which was used at the time she refers to. When such a name appears for the first time, an explanation is provided in a footnote.

10 “From the beginning feminist literary criticism was keen to uncover its own origins, seeking to establish traditions of women’s writing and early ‘feminist’ thought to counter the unquestioning acceptance of ‘man’ and male genius as the norm.” S. G. Plain, S. Sellers, *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

11 For example, in 1996 the name of Madras has been officially changed to Chennai by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Similar situation happened in Thanjavur which used to be called Tanjore. These changes were motivated by discontinuing the naming given to those places by British colonizers.

1. Dr. Raghavan

1.1 Early life and background

Venkantarama Raghavan was born on the 22nd of August 1908 in Tiruvarur, Tamil Nadu. Growing up in this heritage town without any doubts influenced him a lot. It is an important religious and cultural centre of the region.

Tiruvarur has a very long history. It was a capital of king Ellalan of Chola dynasty, who ruled from c. 205 BCE till c. 161 BCE. Later it remained an important centre of the Chola empire and it became the capital once again, during the reign of Kulōttuṅka Cola I (1070–1120 CE), when the town emerged as a centre of Śaivism.¹ After the fall of Cholas, Tiruvarur lost its importance and prestige. Two dynasties, the Pandyas and the Hoysalas, were fighting for power in this region and the town was caught in a fight between them. Tiruvarur flourished again and regained its status as a cultural centre during the rule of the Nayakas² and Marathas.

The town is mentioned in the *śaiva* canonical work written c. 7th–8th century CE called *Tēvāram*³, because of the Tyāgarāja Temple. The temple was listed as one of the 275 *śaiva* temples praised by Nayanars⁴ as the greatest *śaiva* temples located mainly in Tamil Nadu. The complex of Tyāgarāja Temple covers the area of almost 81 000 m²,

1 P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian shrines: illustrated* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991), 215.

2 Nayakas were originally military governors under the Vijayanagara Empire. After its fall, several of them declared themselves independent rulers. One of the branches of Nayakas' dynasties became rulers of Thanjavur kingdom of Tamil Nadu in the 16th and 17th centuries. See: K. Naboru, *A Concordance of Nayakas: The Vijayanagar Inscriptions in South India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

3 *Tēvāram* is a collection of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta *bhakti* hymns attributed to the three most prominent *śaiva* Tamil poets (Nāyaṅmār) of the 7th and 8th centuries Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar. The poets not only depicted their individual devotion to Śiva, but also engaged a community of believers through their songs. *Tēvāram* contains 796 hymns of 8284 stanzas. These hymns continue to be devotionally sung in contemporary times in many Śiva temples of Tamil Nadu.

4 Nāyaṅmār is a group of 63 saints living in Tamil Nadu during the 3rd to 8th centuries CE, who were devoted to Śiva. Along with the Ālvārs, their contemporaries who were devoted to Viṣṇu, they influenced the Bhakti movement in early medieval South India.

which makes it the 13th largest Hindu temple in India, and the 17th in the world. The temple is called after its main deity. The icon represents Śiva, his consort Umā, and one of their sons – Skanda - sitting together on a throne. This image is called *somāskanda*, and therefore it can be said that the Tyāgarāja is a *somāskanda*, but with requirement of the cult and strongly connected to it.⁵ The history of the temple traces back to the Pallava dynasty, which initiated the complex c. the 7th century CE. Its main part was built during the Chola dynasty in the 9th century, and the later expansions are attributed to Vijayanagar rulers of the Sangama dynasty (1336–1485 CE), the Saluva dynasty (1485–1505) and the Tuluva dynasty (1491–1570 CE).

Tiruvarur is still considered as a holy place for the Hindu devotees, especially for those from the state of Tamil Nadu, and it is a popular place to visit during festivals. The temple is particularly famous for its processional chariot, which with the weight of 300 tons and height of 90 feet is the largest one in Tamil Nadu, and one of the largest in India.⁶ The atmosphere of this place influenced a lot Raghavan, who was always a very religious and orthodox man. Performing daily rituals and ceremonies was an important part of his life. His family was obligated to send young men to pull this chariot during festivals; therefore, he took part in such celebrations very often.⁷

Tiruvarur is connected with music, which was one of many passions and subjects of scientific interest of Dr. Raghavan. The town was a traditional centre of culture, particularly dance and music, as those were performed by Devadasis⁸ associated

5 R. Ghose, *The Tyāgarāja Cult in Tamilnāḍu: a Study in Conflict and Accomodation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2016), 11–12.

6 “Arulmigu Thiyagaraja Swamy Temple,” Arulmigu Thiyagaraja Swamy Temple, Tiruvarur, access: 1.06.2021, <http://thiyagarajaswamytemple.tnhrcce.in/festival.html>

7 N. Ramani, *V. Raghavan: a monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014).

8 Devadasi – in South India female artists who from a young age were dedicated to serve in temples and worship their deities for the rest of their lives. They were usually considered to be married to the deity and could not marry a man. Originally, they were educated adepts of art, especially dance and music, and had a considerably high social status; however, during the British rule in India temples lost patronage and financial support from local kings. Therefore, Devadasis lost their traditional means of support and gradually became sex workers. James G. Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of*

with the Tyāgarāja Temple. Tiruvarur culturally flourished especially during the 17th century, when it belonged to the area ruled by the Thanjavur Maratha kingdom. In the earlier period of this dynasty, the main deity of the Tyāgarāja Temple was considered as its patron – later rulers shifted to Śiva of the Bṛhadīśvara Temple from Thanjavur. Therefore the Tyāgarāja Temple flourished under the patronage of Thanjavur rulers. The royal court and the temple cooperated closely and the artistic exchange between them was mutual, which resulted in enriching both temple and court performances.⁹

This town is the birthplace of the Trinity of Carnatic music¹⁰ – Tyagaraja (1759–1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (1775–1835) and Shyama Shastri (1763–1827). The trio of musicians and composers, known also as Three Jewels of Carnatic music, changed the face of this style and began a new epoch in its history. Tyagaraja composed around 2000 pieces and each of the other musicians about 200 pieces. All songs composed by Tyagaraja were written in Telugu. Muthuswami Dikshitar wrote mainly in Sanskrit, but also in Manipravalam,¹¹ and Shyama Shastri used mainly Telugu, and sometimes Sanskrit. The compositions of this trio were very popular, especially those by Tyagaraja,

Hinduism, 2 Volume Set. (New York; The Rosen Publishing Group, 2002). See also: S. C. Kersenboom *Nityasumaṅgalī: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998).

9 S. C. Kersenboom, *Nityasumaṅgalī. Devadasi tradition in South India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 40–43.

10 As is well known, Carnatic music (known also as Karnatak music) is one of two main music traditions that evolved from classical Indian music. It is strongly connected with the southern part of India. The other main stream of classical Indian music is Hindustani music, which comes from northern India and from the 12th century was influenced by Arabic and Persian music. Around the 16th century there was a clear distinction between south and north styles, although the main principles (like *rāga* and *tāla*) remained the same in both of them. Carnatic music puts main importance on vocal and most songs are written to be sung, but even if instruments are used alone, they are played in a way that imitates singing, which is called *gāyaki*. Also fewer instruments are used than in musical forms from northern India, and the main performer of a music group is usually a vocalist.

11 Manipravalam is a hybrid language which mixes Sanskrit lexicon and morpho-syntax of a local language.

who composed generally emotional *kṛtis*¹² devoted to Rāma. Pieces of Dikshitar and Shastri were considered scholarly and hard to understand.¹³ All three of them were characterized by great creativity as they composed new *rāgas*¹⁴ and *tālas*¹⁵ and introduced innovations in existing ones.¹⁶

The childhood of V. Raghavan was far from perfect. He lost his parents at the age of 7 and was raised by the elder sister of his mother, Kamalamba. She took care of Raghavan and his siblings and provided them with traditional Sanskrit education under the surveillance of Pandit Sengalipuram Appaswamy Śastrigal. V. Raghavan also learnt Sanskrit in more modern way, as a second language in his school. He mentioned two women who influenced him a lot and encouraged him to learn Sanskrit. The first one was Sundari Patti, old friend of his mother who mastered Sanskrit and could use this language to converse with pandits. She often checked his progress in learning it and read with him some works in Sanskrit. The other one was Kutty Ammal – a distant member of his family, who mastered Sanskrit and specialised herself in Vedānta. Many years later Raghavan wrote about both ladies in the article about women Sanskritists in

12 *kṛti* is a format of musical composition typical to Carnatic music. It is the most important of the melodic group of compositions and the longest format of Carnatic song. *kṛtis* have an elastic form and are restricted by few rules; therefore, they give a lot of scope for composer's creativity.

13 P. Sambamoorthy, *Great Composers, Book I* (Madras: Indian Music Publishing House, 1978), 5 – 6.

14 *rāga* is a concrete melodic framework of at least five notes. The specific notes within a *rāga* can be reordered and improvised by the musician; nevertheless, the artist is still limited by the constraints of its established form. Each *rāga* traditionally has an emotional significance and symbolic associations such as with season, time and mood. It is a specific and cardinal attribute of the classical Indian music tradition. There are over 200 recognized *rāgas*; however, only about thirty are usually used. James G. Lochtefeld. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 2 Volume Set. (New York The Rosen Publishing Group 2002), 545.

15 *tāla* is a term used in classical Indian music. It refers to a musical meter; that is any rhythmic beat or strike that measures musical time. It can be established either as an accompaniment to music or dance, or played on a drum as a solo instrument. This rhythmic system is exceedingly rich and complex, and therefore requires years of study and practise to master. Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 683.

16 Sambamoorthy, *Great Composers. Book I* 5 – 6.

Tamil magazine *Kalaimagal*.¹⁷ It is possible that their influence drove his interest towards women writing in Sanskrit.

1.2 Education and university career

When Raghavan was to begin studies at the Madras Presidency College, Sanskrit was not his first choice. He wanted to study botany; however, “owing to the communal politics in the state at that time, which had seriously affected college-admissions, Raghavan could not get a seat in Botany.”¹⁸ He was admitted into the Intermediate Course and studied Ancient History, Logic and Sanskrit. Raghavan chose to continue the latter during his M.A. studies, under the supervision of Mahāmahopādhyāya (Professor) S. Kuppuswami Sastri.¹⁹ The future scholar graduated the Presidency College in 1930 with 3 College Prizes and 5 University Medals. In 1931 Raghavan became an assistant of his mentor, Professor S. Kuppuswami Sastri, at the Madras University. After his death, Raghavan, together with other disciples of his teacher, formed in 1944 The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute (KSRI). Raghavan became secretary of this institution and held this position until he passed away in 1979.

Raghavan was associated with the University of Madras. Before he joined the Sanskrit Department there, he worked briefly in the Sarasvati Mahal Manuscript Library²⁰ in Tanjore (Thanjavur).²¹ But it was the University of Madras where he

17 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: a monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 12– 13.

18 Ibidem, 14.

19 Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri (1880-1943) was a prominent Sanskrit scholar from India, who dealt primarily with Indian philosophy. He was a professor at Madras Presidency College, editor of numerous Sanskrit texts, founder of the Oriental Research Institute, and a member of the All India Oriental Conference since its beginning in 1919. In 1921 Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri started the Journal of Oriental Research, Madras and the Sanskrit Academy, Madras. In 1927 he was awarded with a title Mahāmahopādhyāya for his achievements. In 1935 the Madras University undertook under his editorship the preparation of the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*. In 1944 in Madras a research institution was founded and named after him. See also: P. K. Gode, “Mahāmahopādhyāya Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri (1880 – 1943).” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 24, no. 3/4 (1943): 279-81.

20 Sarasvati Mahal Manuscript Library, known also as The Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library, is one of few still existing medieval libraries in the world and one of the oldest in Asia. It was probably established in the end of the 16th century. It flourished under the rule of the Maratha King,

worked almost all his life. First as a Ph. D. student, then as a research scholar, as a professor, and finally as a head of the department till 1968, when he retired. During his presidency, the department was usually referred as “The Raghavan’s Department”. As a scholar, he dealt with many different subjects, like Indian Aesthetics, Sanskrit drama and theatre, musicology, manuscript studies. He is an author of approximately 120 books and 1200 articles.²²

1.3 Personal life

In 1938 Dr. V. Raghavan married Sarada (1922–2008), who became mother of their four children: Kalidas, Charudattan, Priyamvada and Nandini. After his death, Sarada undertook the responsibility of seeing through his pending works, and with the help of his students, she managed to publish some of them. She was the initiator of Dr. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts – a non-profit organization established to commemorate Dr. Raghavan by supporting and propagating Sanskrit language and its literature, Indian culture and heritage, with a special reference to *bharatanāṭyam* and Carnatic music.

The children of Dr. Raghavan were associated with his scholar interests. His eldest son, Kalidas, although a chemical engineer by profession, for numerous years was associated to Samskrita Ranga and took part as an actor in performances of many Sanskrit plays directed by his father. Later he became a president of the organization. Priyamvada, the first daughter of the scholar, is a veteran *bharatanāṭyam* exponent. She was a student of famous *bharatanāṭyam* performers T. Balasaraswati and K. Ganesan. She took part in staging Sanskrit dramas as an actress in Samskrita Ranga in the years 1958–1968. She is also a trained Carnatic vocalist. Priyamvada became engaged in

Serfoji II. He was an eminent scholar and took a good care of the library, enriching it with vast number of manuscripts from all India. Today the library, with more than 49 000 manuscripts and over 65 000 books, possess one of the most important collection in India. <https://serfojimemorialhall.com/saraswati-mahal-library.html> [access:10.11.2021].

21 The city of Tanjore was renamed as Thanjavur in the 1980’. Thus, in the dissertation it will be called “Thanjavur” if a text refers to the city from the year 1980, and as “Tanjore” in the context of British India and times up to 1980.

22 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: A Monograph in English on Modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 3.

promoting Indian culture abroad as she opened the first school of *bharatanāṭyam* in Montreal. The second son of Dr. V. Raghavan, Dr. R. Charudattan, although became a plant pathologist and presently is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Florida, also devoted significant part of his life to staging Sanskrit dramas. Nandini Ramani, the younger daughter of Dr. Raghavan, is a renowned *bharatanāṭyam* exponent, trained just like her sister by notable teachers T. Balasaraswati and K. Ganesan. She has been trained as a vocalist of Carnatic music by Prof. B. Krishnamoorthy and T. Mukta. Nandini Ramani is a well-known *bharatanāṭyam* artist and teacher, dance critic and writer touching on various topics of performing arts and Indian culture. Like her siblings she used to be engaged in Samskrita Ranga as an actress; however, nowadays she became the secretary of the organization. She was granted with the Award from Central Sangeet Natak Akedemi, New Delhi and remains a member of certain committees of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.²³

Dr. V. Raghavan was a religious man. Religious ceremonies were very important to him. While performing rituals for his ancestors, he honoured not only his deceased family members, but also his guru Prof. S. Kuppaswami Sastri. He shared a close friendship with Jagadguru Shri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswamigal²⁴ the 68th head of the Kāñcī Kāmakoti Pīṭha,²⁵ with whom he disputed for hours numerous subjects from the fields of Indian religions, heritage, and Sanskrit literature. The scholar was very devoted to the sage. Dr. V. Raghavan was very interested in finding forgotten great scholars, and traditionally learned men, who were experts in *vedas*, Hindu traditions, Carnatic music, *bharatanāṭyam* and other art forms. The scholar believed that

23 The biographic information on Dr. V. Raghavan 's children comes from the official website of Dr. V. Raghavan 's Centre for Performing Arts, access: 10.05.2021, <https://www.drVRaghavanCentre.com/>.

24 Jagadguru Shri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswamigal (born Swaminathan Sharma, 1894– 1994) also known as the Sage of Kanchi or Mahaperiyava was the 68th Jagadguru Shankaracharya of the Kāñcī Kāmakoti Pīṭha.

25 Kāñcī Kāmakoti Pīṭha is a Hindu monastery, which is believed to be founded by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya – an Indian philosopher, who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedānta. It is located in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, near a temple dedicated to goddess Kāmākṣī (known also as Kāmakoti).

they were important part of Indian heritage. Therefore, he sought them, met them, and later frequently recommended them for institutional positions, fellowships or honours.²⁶

Dr. V. Raghavan was both traditionalist and modernist. On the one hand, he had a great belief in astrology and frequently used the help of astrologers, on the other he believed in science and technology. He appreciated the international dimension of English and therefore he chose to write numerous important publications in this language. He also cooperated with many foreign scholars and taught foreign students. Some of his students became well-known and respected scholars.

1.4 Contribution to the studies on Indian aesthetics

Raghavan is the author of many publications on various aspects of Sanskrit literary theory. However, the two most important works of his authorship in this field are *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*²⁷ and *Studies on Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*.²⁸ *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*²⁹ accompanied Raghavan almost from the very beginning of his scientific career. This treatise was the subject of his doctoral dissertation. The book *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* was published for the first time in 1940 (the publication was supported by the Maharaja of Mysore), and in 1978 its fourth edition was published, revised and expanded by the author. Therefore, this undertaking can be called his lifetime project.

Śṛṅgāraprakāśa is a truly comprehensive treatise. It consists of 36 chapters and discusses almost every aspect of the theory of Sanskrit literature. For this reason, it is frequently called the encyclopaedia of Sanskrit poetics or *alaṃkāraśāstra*. It is no wonder that the scientific description made by Dr. Raghavan is a very vast publication,

26 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: A Monograph in English on Modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 22–28.

27 V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras: Vasanta Press, 1940).

28 V. Raghavan, *Studies on Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, (Madras The Adyar Library. Adyar, 1942).

29 This first work on poetics by Dr. V. Raghavan is devoted to the renowned *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, which is a voluminous treatise on Sanskrit poetics and dramaturgy written by Bhoja (reigned c. 1010–1055 CE), an Indian king from the Paramara dynasty. It consists of 36 chapters, and concentrated mainly on *rasa* theory, with a special reference to the *śṛṅgārā rasa*.

as it covers the whole treatise. There were earlier publications on Bhoja's treatise, but none of them covered whole *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*. Raghavan presented an detailed analysis of the treatise. When the work was published for the first time, the theory of Sanskrit literature was not very well-known branch of Indology, unlike for example Indian philosophy.³⁰

Raghavan discussed the structure of the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, presented the detailed content of each of its chapters, and made an elaborate analysis of the content of the treatise. He also presented in detail various aspects of the *alamkārasāstra* raised by Bhoja, discussing not only his views, but also recalling opinions on the subjects of various theorists. Thanks to such a synthesis, Raghavan showed how the views of theoreticians on a given subject were formed before and after Bhoja, which opinions cultured King Bhoja agreed with and developed, and which he opposed. He presented special chapters on complete history of *guṇas*³¹ and *doṣas*.³² Raghavan showed how *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* influenced later authors. In his analysis, he took into account Bhoja's second treatise on poetics, *Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharāṇa*,³³ and compared both works and their views, with particular reference to their approach to rasa theory, because Bhoja's views on this matter were unique. Raghavan dedicated a chapter to discuss the relation between the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the works of Bhoja. He covered several important subjects not related directly to *alamkārasāstra*, like for example the 64 arts and love festivals as described in *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, or comparisons and śastraic discussions the author included in his works. The last and the longest chapter of *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* concentrates on the works and authors cited by Bhoja. Apart from abundance of different poems and dramas used by the King, this chapter is particularly interesting

30 P. V. Kane, "Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa" review of *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* by V. Raghavan, *Indian Literature* 7, no. 2, 1964, 126.

31 *guṇa* – see page 195.

32 *doṣa* – see page 199.

33 *Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharāṇa* is a treatise on Sanskrit for poetic and rhetorical compositions, written by king Bhoja in the 11th century.

because of the quote from *Brhatkathā*,³⁴ which is the longest preserved text in Paishachi.³⁵ While researching on this treatise, Raghavan was able to use a lot of manuscripts unpublished at that time. Therefore, for the publication of the *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, he prepared a critical edition of the most relevant parts of the text of the treatise.

According to P. V. Kane,³⁶ this work of Dr. Raghavan was significant for many reasons. Firstly, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* is the largest and the most comprehensive known works on Indian poetics. What is more, when Raghavan published it, the work of Bhoja was not published in full extend. Finally, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* is a true encyclopaedia dealing with not only various subjects of the theory of Sanskrit literature, but also many related topics. It also cites numerous works of Sanskrit poetry and drama. P. V. Kane emphasized that this work of a polymath to be analysed in the right way needed an encyclopaedic mind, like the one of Dr. Raghavan.³⁷ Because of the size of Raghavan's work and the amount of information it contains made his mentor Prof. Kuppaswami

34 This is the famous lost work *Brhatkathā*, allegedly written in Paishachi by Guṇāḍhya. It is known through its adaptations in Sanskrit – the *Kathāsaritsāgara* by Somadeva, and the *Brhatkathā* by Kṣemendra, both written in the 11th century in Kashmir.

35 Paishachi (*paśācī*) is a literary language mentioned in several Prakrit and Sanskrit grammars. It is generally grouped with the Prakrits, with which it shares some linguistic similarities. See: A. N Upadhye, “Paiśācī Language and Literature.” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 21, no. 1/2 (1939): 1–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41688434>.

36 Pandurang Vaman Kane (1880–1972) was a renowned Indologist and Sanskrit scholar. He is best known for his *magnum opus* – *The History of Dharmasāstra. Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India*. This monumental work consists of five volumes (the first one was published in 1930 and the last one in 1962) and about 6500 pages in total. In 1963 he was rewarded with Bharat Ratna, which is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India. P. V. Kane was also awarded with Sahitya Akademi Award and the title *mahāmahopādhyāya*. In 1974 the Asiatic Society of Mumbai commemorated him by establishing the Mm. Dr. P.V. Kane Institute for Post Graduate studies and Research. a prestigious award called *Mahāmahopādhyāya* Dr. P.V. Kane Gold Medal is given every three years by Asiatic Society of Mumbai to a scholar for an outstanding contribution in the field of Vedic Studies, Dharmasātra Studies or Sanskrit Literature Studies.

37 Kane, “Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa” 1964, 125.

Sastri compare the importance of this work for modern scholars to the importance of Bhoja's work at his time.³⁸

Raghavan also prepared the first critical edition of the text of *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*. He worked on it during Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship of the Government of India³⁹ in the years 1968–1971. To prepare this edition he studied almost 50 manuscripts from the libraries from all over the world.⁴⁰ This edition was selected by Prof. Ingalls of the Harvard University to be published as a part of *Harvard Oriental Series*. Therefore, Raghavan continued to work on *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* during the last day, and even during the last hour of his life. He died on the night of 5 April 1979 because of a heart attack, while working on this edition. He did not manage to prepare the publication completely – his wife Sarada with help of scholars, who were his former students, completed the index and reference notes. Therefore, it can be said that Raghavan and *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* were bonded for life.⁴¹

Raghavan's second major publication on Sanskrit literary theory - *Studies on Some Concepts of Alaṅkāra Śāstra* – was published for the first time in 1942. As the author himself stated in the preface to this book, this is a kind of complement to his research in *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*. In seven chapters of this publication, he deals with topics such as *lakṣaṇa*,⁴² the use of *alaṅkāras* in Sanskrit literature, *svabhāvokti*,⁴³

38 S. Kuppaswami Sastri, Foreword. In V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, (Madras: Vasanta Press., 1940).

39 The Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship is conferred by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund to the Indian citizens carrying out scholarly research in India. The Jawaharlal Nehru Trust Scholarship U.K. was founded by Admiral Lord Mountbatten of Burma in 1966 as a testimonial to the India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru after his death in 1964. The organization offers one fellowship each year and it is open for scholar of every discipline. "The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund," The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, access: 15.05.2021, <http://www.jnmf.in/> (The official website of the The Jawaharlal Nehru Trust Scholarship U.K).

40 T. V. Vasudeva, "Prof. V. Raghavan's contribution to manuscript studies," in *Punaranmeṣaḥ*, ed. N. Ramani (Chennai: Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts, 2009), 6.

41 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: a monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 33–45.

42 *lakṣaṇa* in *kāvya* means a feature of the body of poetry (*kāvyaśarīra*) – words forming the poem – which makes it beautiful.

bhāvika,⁴⁴ *rīti*,⁴⁵ *vṛtti* in *kāvya*,⁴⁶ *camatkāra*,⁴⁷ *aucitya*,⁴⁸ and analyses the titles of theoretical-literary treatises and the Sanskrit terms used to describe literary theory. Many of these concepts were first discussed in greater detail in this publication. According to Raghavan himself, it was the first study in which the topic of *lakṣaṇa* was explored, similarly, according to the author, *aucitya* has never been properly discussed in any publication. Moreover, it was in this work that Dr. Raghavan first conducted a comparative analysis of *rīti* and literary style in Western terms.

Another important contribution by Raghavan to the study of Sanskrit literary theory is his research on the theory of *rasa*,⁴⁹ in particular the number of *rasas* and *śāntarasa*. He was one of the first researchers to take up this topic. Bharatha in *Nāṭyaśāstra* mentioned 8 *rasas*, while later commentators added the 9th *śāntarasa*. Dr. Raghavan, in the publication *The Number of Rasas*,⁵⁰ attributed the 9th *rasa* of *śānta*

43 *svabhāvokti* is a natural description, speech deprived of unusualness, uncommonness, figurative deviation of the usual poetic expression.

44 *bhāvika* – a term introduced by theoretician Bhāmaha which means a quality of prime necessity which all good poetry must possess in its whole length. It gives a poem the ability to live before eyes of its reader.

45 *rīti* is a literary manner, a style. The theory of *rīti* was introduced by Daṇḍin (7th–8th century) and developed by Vāmana (8th century), who considered it as the soul of poetry. It relies on concepts of *guṇa* (merit) and *doṣa* (defect) of a text. Vāmana distinguished three styles the *vaidarbhī* (which was the superior one), the *pāñcālī* and the *gaudīya*. See also page: 202.

46 *vṛtti* is a style of expressing speech in dramatic action. There are four styles of acting: *kaiśikī* – graceful, *bhāratī* – verbal, *sāttvatī* – grand, *ārabhaṭī* – expressive. According to V. Raghavan this dramatic concept passed into *kāvya*.

47 *camatkāra* means astonishment, surprise, delight, aesthetic experience, which constitutes the essence of poetry.

48 *aucitya* – fitness, suitability, decorum; in *kāvya* there is a rule stating the appropriateness of the place and functions of poetical elements. According to it, all elements of a poem should harmonize with each other, for example the choice of poetical embellishments should fit with the emotions which the author intends to express in his work. See also page: 233.

49 See page: 189.

50 V. Raghavan, *The Number of Rasas*, (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1940).

to Udbhaṭa,⁵¹ a Kashmiri poet of the late 8th century CE. According to his speculations, the 9th rasa became predominant due to being the central theme in the dramas and poetry of some Buddhist and Jain writers. As it was noticed by Prof. C. Rajendran in the review⁵² of this position: “A close perusal of the Number of Rasas reveals the encyclopedic nature of Dr. Raghavan ’s mind: there is no text untouched, and no source unexplored in reconstructing the history of ideas related to the evolution of the concept of Rasa in Indian aesthetics, especially as related to the question of *śāntarasa*.”⁵³

Dr. Raghavan undertook a task of critically editing the different versions of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It was a project of *Gaekwad Oriental Series*, Baroda, but unfortunately he passed away before he could complete it. However, he managed to collect extensive materials on this subject, which were ready for him to use.

1.5 Studies on manuscripts

One of the most important projects undertaken by Dr. Raghavan was working on the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*. The aim was to collect information about Indian manuscripts available in different libraries, museums and private collections in India and abroad. The project started in the end of 1935 at the Madras University. It was not the first attempt to create such a collection. During the years 1891–1903 German scholar Theodor Aufrecht⁵⁴ published the three-volume *Catalogus Catalogorum*. The

51 Udbhaṭa is one of the earliest known theorists of Sanskrit literature. His only fully preserved work is *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha*, which consists of six chapters and concentrates exclusively on the alaṅkāras.

52 C. Rajendran, “The Number of Rasas by V. Raghavan.” review of V. Raghavan, *The Number of Rasas*, (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1940), available at academia.edu

53 Ibidem, 6.

54 The first attempt to catalogue all Indian manuscripts built on former catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts created by Aufrecht from collections of Bodleian Library in Oxford, Trinity College in Cambridge, and libraries in Florence, Leipzig, and München was the renowned *Catalogus Catalogorum*, published between 1891 and 1903. It is noteworthy that it was realised by Simon Theodor Aufrecht (1822–1907) a German Indologist and comparative linguist of Jewish origin born in Leschnitz, Prussia (now Leśnica in Poland). He studied at the University of Berlin. He assisted Max Müller in the preparation of the edition of the *Ṛgveda* with Sāyaṇa’s commentary. From 1862 until 1875, he was a professor at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and later he was appointed to the chair of Indology at the University of Bonn and worked there until 1889.

work consists of, in alphabetical order, names of authors, their works in the field of Sanskrit literature, and all manuscripts, which were then available. The publication was a milestone in the field of manuscript studies, but the material revealed in the next few decades was so massive that the Aufrecht's work needed to be updated. Dr. Raghavan took part in this project and during the years 1953–1954 he visited numerous libraries and research institutions in Europe as a representative of the Madras University. There he surveyed their manuscript collections and discovered over twenty thousand uncatalogued manuscripts. While working on the project, he surveyed public and private libraries in India, museums, palaces and private collections. The project members were working on about 400 catalogues and collections, while the *Catalogus Catalogorum* of Theodor Aufrecht included only 98. Therefore, the outcome of this work was another milestone in the field and a truly useful tool for other researchers.

Dr. Raghavan's work in the field of manuscript studies did not end with finishing *The New Catalogus Catalogorum*. In 1957, while working in the Sanskrit Commission,⁵⁵ he once again travelled to numerous Indian libraries and museums preparing a report on preserving and utilization of manuscripts. During this time, he studied about 100,000 manuscripts, and brought to light little-known works on Sanskrit poetics, music, and dance. In 1964 he visited many universities and research institutions in USA and Asia, where he examined about 3,500 manuscripts, found 2,000 uncatalogued manuscripts, and prepared an inventory of Indian sculptures and paintings abroad. He was also sent by the Government of India on delegation to study and catalogue manuscripts collected in the USSR.

Dr. Raghavan worked also on critical editions of some Sanskrit works. The most noteworthy is probably the critical edition of *Śringārāprakaśa*, which was mentioned earlier. The other important treatise he worked on is *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* of Saint Akbar

55 The Sanskrit Commission was appointed by the Government of India in the year 1956 to explore the state of the Sanskrit education and its all aspects. It undertook a survey to numerous libraries of the facilities for Sanskrit education in universities and other institution, examining traditional system of Sanskrit education in order to determine its elements which could be useful in the modern system of education and make proposals to promote studying and researching Sanskrit. *Report of the Sanskrit Commission 1956-1957*, (Delhi: Govt. of India Press, 1958).

Shāh.⁵⁶ This work, ascribed to a Muslim author, is a translation of a text in Telugu, supposedly written by the same person.⁵⁷ The treatise is an elaborate work on different types of heroines (*nāyikābheda*).⁵⁸ The critical edition is based on two manuscripts. One of them was found by the scholar in the Government Oriental Library in Mysore, the other in Maharaja Serfoji Sarasvati Mahal Library in Tanjore. In the publication, Raghavan included 116 pages of introduction in English, while the text itself is on only 55 pages. In the introduction he discussed the authorship of the treatise, works cited in it, its historical background and detailed explanation on heroines and heroes and their classification in Sanskrit poetics. Raghavan has shown not only the typology presented in *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* but also differences between their images in different works on *alaṅkāraśāstra*. He also presented the view on *nāyikas* and *nāyikās* as given in treatises in other Indian languages and in paintings. Raghavan also dealt with literature on dance from Andhra, contribution of Saint Akbar Shah's predecessors Kīrtidhara and Bhaṭṭa Taṇḍu.⁵⁹

Another noticeable work edited by Dr. Raghavan is *San̄gītasārāmṛta* of king Tulaja I of the Maratha dynasty of Tanjore. Edition of this treatise on music and dance proved the expertise of Raghavan in this field, which was also his great passion. Similarly to his other publication, he also included here an elaborate introduction on the author, manuscripts he worked on and subjects raised in the treatise. Among other significant texts of Dr. Raghavan are editions of *Nāṭakalakṣanaratnakośa* of

56 Saint Sayyid Shāh Kalīmullāh Husainī, known also as Saint Akbar Shāh and Baḍe Šāhib, was a scholar dealing with linguistics and philosophy, and a poet, who flourished in the late 17th century in Hyderabad.

57 On the authorship of *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* see also V. Raghavan, "Introduction," in *Śṛṅgāramañjarī of Saint Akbar Shah*, ed. V. Raghavan, (Delhi: Hyderabad Archaeological Department Publication, 1951), 39.

58 As it is known, *nāyikābheda* is a classification of kinds of heroines typical for Sanskrit literature. It appeared for the first time in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and was developed by later theorists of Sanskrit poetics. Theoreticians distinguished for instance eight varieties of heroines depending on their current relationship with her lover. These types of heroines were illustrated not only in literature, but also in sculptures, painting and classical Indian dances.

59 V. Raghavan, "Introduction." *Sṛṅgāramañjarī of Saint Akbar Shah*. ed. V. Raghavan, (Delhi: Hyderabad Archaeological Department Publication, 1951).

Sāgaranandin – work on Sanskrit drama, and *Nṛttaratnāvalī* of Jāyasenāpati – an important source on dance from the year 1254. The scholar also intended to critically edit *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva. He collected materials for these projects, but he did not manage to complete them.

1.6 Contribution to the studies on Indian literature

Dr. V. Raghavan wrote numerous papers and books about different aspects of Sanskrit literature. However, the most important publication written by him on this subject is *The Indian Heritage: An Anthology of Sanskrit Literature*.⁶⁰ It was published as part of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works in the Indian Series. This volume concentrates on exploration of Sanskrit literature from the point of view of Hindu culture. The author selected phases which were “responsible for the moulding of the concepts and values and for the formation of the attitudes and ideologies that are fundamental to Hindu culture.”⁶¹ The publication consists of two parts. The first one is an introduction in which the author extensively discusses different phases of the Sanskrit literature beginning from the *vedas*. The second part comprises of selections of passages from important texts translated by the author. Therefore, for the second section Dr. V. Raghavan selected some philosophical parts of the *vedas* and *brāhmaṇas*, representative passages from the *upaniṣads*, *āraṇyakas*, and a few sections from the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali from the *dharma* literature. Moreover, he included there condensations (chosen fragments representing the whole work) of the two epics and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, extracts from the *Bhagavadgītā*, and a large number of prayers including in full the Thousand Names of Viṣṇu from the *Mahābhārata*. Among them Raghavan annotated numerous passages from the religious literature, which are still used in everyday prayers by Hindu devotees. The publication is also well-known for the literary artistry demonstrated by the author in the translations.

Dr. Raghavan is also an author of many translations of important Sanskrit texts. Among them, a notable example is a condensed version of the *Mahābhārata* translated

60 V. Raghavan, *The Indian Heritage: An Anthology of Sanskrit Literature. Selected and translated by V. Raghavan*, (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Culture, 1956).

61 V. Raghavan, “Author’s Preface,” in V. Raghavan *The Indian Heritage: An Anthology of Sanskrit Literature. Selected and translated by V. Raghavan*. (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Culture, 1956), XI.

into English.⁶² He also created a condensed translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.⁶³ Both of these volumes consist of Sanskrit text in *devanāgarī* followed by English translation. Together with a condensed version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (translated by Prof. P.P.S. Sastri) they make a set *The Great Triad* brought in by the same publisher G. A. Natesan. All three of these texts were condensed “in a poet’s own words” by Pandit A. M. Srinivasachari. It was an ambition of the publisher to bring in these three important texts of Indian literature and popularize them by including an English translation.⁶⁴ With the same publisher, Dr. V. Raghavan published a volume *Prayers, Praises and Psalms. Selections from the Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Gita, Puranas, Agamas, Tantras, Kavyas and the Writings of the Acaryas*, and others. It is a comprehensive collection of religious lyrics extracted from a wide range of texts, starting from the *vedas*, to the latest examples of *stotras*.⁶⁵ They are provided in the *devanāgarī* script and followed by their English translation. Dr. V. Raghavan was responsible not only for rendering the texts into English, but also for choosing the texts for the publication. The volume includes also a foreword written by Mahatma Gandhi himself.

Dr. V. Raghavan devoted a lot of effort on research on the *Rāmāyaṇa* inside and outside of India. In his book *The Rāmāyaṇa in Greater India*,⁶⁶ the scholar explored the impact of the Sanskrit epic in fifteen countries of Asia. He traced different versions of this text and its echoes in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, former Kingdom of Khotan, Burma, Philippines, Malaysia, and

62 *The Mahābhārata* trans. Dr. Raghavan, (Madras: G.A. Natesan & C.O., 1935).

63 P. S. Sivaswami Ayer, “Foreword,” in *Srimad Bhagavata translated by Dr. Raghavan*, (Madras: G.A. Natesan & C.O., 1937), iii.

64 Sivaswami Ayer, “Foreword,” in *Srimad Bhagavata translated by Dr. Raghavan*, iii.

65 *stotra* is a hymn of praise or an ode designed to be melodically sung. It can have a form of a prayer, a description, or a conversation; however, it is always characterised by a poetic structure. It may be a simple poem expressing praise and personal dedication to a deity, composed by an unknown author or an elaborated poem concerning spiritual and philosophical doctrines written by an intellectual religious leader. N. A. Nayar, *Poetry as Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), IX–XI.

66 V. Raghavan, *The Rāmāyaṇa in Greater India*, (Surat: South Gujarat University, 1975).

even Siberia. The author points out similarities and differences between particular variants and explains how different adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* emerged and how they became part of local folklores. He illustrates also local dramas based on the Indian epics.⁶⁷ Dr. Raghavan explores this topic also in another book – *The Greater Rāmāyaṇa*. It contains lectures delivered by the scholar under the Professor L. Venkataratnam Endowment in 1971. The title of the publication refers to the expansion of this text outside the Indian tradition. Therefore, the author explores the impact of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the Sanskrit literature, Buddhist and Jain writings, literature in other Indian languages, the visual arts and also the influence of this text on Indian culture and civilization. In this volume, Dr. V. Raghavan once again studies the impact of the *Rāmāyaṇa* outside the country of its origin. He also discusses relations between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the other Sanskrit epic – the *Mahābhārata*.⁶⁸ Similar subject was undertaken by the scholar in the publication titled *Some Old, Lost Rāma Plays*,⁶⁹ where he explores the dramas with plots based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Dr. V. Raghavan also edited a volume *The Rāmāyaṇa Tradition in Asia*,⁷⁰ which contains papers presented at the International Seminar on The *Rāmāyaṇa* in Asia, held in Delhi in the year 1975. The publication contains also a paper by Dr. V. Raghavan titled *The Rāmāyaṇa Tradition in Sanskrit Literature*.

1.7 V. Raghavan as musicologist

V. Raghavan wrote more than 150 articles on music alone. His academic output in this field has been recently collected and published in two books: *Isai Katturaigal* in Tamil and *Collected Writings on Indian Music* Vol. I, II, and III. Both publications were brought out in 2007 by Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts. These articles present broad spectrum of Indian music and deal with its different aspects. He wrote about the history of Indian music and its early traces in texts, about musical instruments

67 A. N. Raina, “Review of Kakatiya Journal of English Studies:” Vol. I No. 1 March 1976. [(Rabindranath Tagore Special Number)]. *Indian Literature*, 20(5), 115–117. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24158369>

68 V. M. Bedekar, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 55, no. 1/4 (1974): 257-67.

69 V. Raghavan, *Some Old, Lost Rāma Plays*. (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1961).

70 V. Raghavan (ed.), *The Rāmāyaṇa Tradition in Asia*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1980).

and about style of various composers and showed how they influenced each other. Raghavan edited and published treatises on music, new songs he found in manuscripts, as well as documented oral musical traditions. In 1933 he brought to light the *bhāgavatamela nāṭakam*,⁷¹ a village operatic theatre from Melattur, in the state Tamil Nadu. He was among the earliest scholars who witnessed those performances. Raghavan described numerous little known and unknown music instruments that he found during his travels all over India. Dr. Raghavan also compared Hebrew music, its styles and content to the South Indian Kauthuma Style of the *Sāmaveda*.

Raghavan's passion for music was strongly related to his home town, which, as mentioned earlier, was also a birthplace of so-called the Trinity of Carnatic Music. The scholar not only devoted to those musicians some academic papers, but he also created poem about one of them. *Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita Carita Mahākāvya* tells the story of life and career of Muthuswami Dikshitar. In this work Raghavan incorporated numerous facts from the history of Carnatic music, many of which he discovered himself. As he wrote about Dikshitar's pilgrimages, he exposed traditions from temples visited by the composer. Raghavan adopted several passages from Dikshitar's songs and incorporated them into his *mahākāvya*.⁷² For this work in 1958 he was awarded with the title of *Kavi*

71 *bhāgavatamela nāṭakam* is a form of dance-drama developed from the more ancient classical Indian dance form Kuchipudi, originated in the village Kuchipudi in the current state Andhra Pradesh. After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire (1565) about 500 Brahman Bhagavata families: poets, musicians, dance masters, court dancers etc. moved to the kingdom of Tanjore Nayaks seeking their patronage. The king Acyutappa Nayaka (1572 – 1614) granted them land and a village called after him Acyutapuram (now Melattur). These families maintained the tradition of dance-drama performances, which was developed in the Bhāgavatamela Nāṭakam. a performance takes place on the ground next to a temple and starts after dawn. All roles are played by male Brahmans. The dramatic form consists of speech and songs interpreted by mime and dance. The communication is also in the form of expressive gestures – *mudrās* and *hastas*. Stories used in Bhāgavatamela Nāṭakam come usually from Hindu Epics and Purāṇas. a performance employs a music in Carnatic style. See also: R. Devi, *Dance Dialects of India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 66 – 76.

72 *mahākāvya*, also known as *sargabandha*, is a genre of Sanskrit epic poetry. It consists of a variable number of cantos, each composed in a metre appropriate to its particular subject matter. The characteristic feature of *mahākāvya* is that each stanza can be separated and stand alone, although is designed to be a part of a narration. Each stanza presents a complete image or thought. The genre is

Kokila by Jagadguru Shri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswamigal. It became a signature title of Dr. V. Raghavan. He composed several other verses about Dikshitar, who was his favourite composer, and created a verse and a song *kr̥ti* on Tyagaraja and Shyama Shastri, two other members of the famous trio. Raghavan wrote an extensive introduction to the publication containing songs of Tyagaraja translated into English⁷³ and wrote a monograph on him,⁷⁴ which was realised after his death. The scholar published a book in Tamil and English about the life of Dikshitar only.

Dr. V. Raghavan was interested in music not only as a scholar but also as an artist. He composed numerous pieces and wrote Sanskrit verses for musical interpretation. Some of his works were set to music by accomplished musicians, like Sri Vidwan B. Krishnamurthy⁷⁵ and Smt. R. Vedavali.⁷⁶ Both of them were associated with

characterized by descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, the seasons, the rising of the sun and moon, games, festivals, weddings, embassies, councils, wars, and triumphs.

Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaḍarṣa* 1.15–19:

“Composition-in-Cantos is a long poem (Mahakavya) and its definition is being given [now]: Its opening is a benediction, a salutation, or a naming of the principal- theme; It springs from a historical incident or is otherwise based upon some fact; it turns upon the fruition of the fourfold ends and its hero is clever and noble; By descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, seasons, and risings of the moon or the sun; through sportings in garden or water, and festivities of drinking and love; Through sentiments-of-love-in-separation and through marriages, by descriptions of the birth- and- rise of Princes, and likewise through state-counsel, embassy, advance, battle, and the hero’s triumph, Embellished; not too condensed, and pervaded all through with poetic sentiments and emotions; with cantos none too lengthy and having agreeable metres and well- formed joints, And in each case furnished with an ending in a different metre—such a poem possessing good figures-of-speech wins the people’s heart and endures longer than even a kalpa.”

Translation: S. K. Belvalkar, *Kāvyaḍarṣa of Daṇḍin. Sanskrit Text and English Translation*, (Poona: The Oriental Book-supplying Agency, 1924)), 27 -28.

73 C. Ramanujachari, V Raghavan, *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*, (Madras: The Ramakrishna Mission Students’ Home, 1957).

74 V. Raghavan, *Tyagaraja*, (New Delhi Sahitya Akademi, 1983).

75 Vidwan B. Krishnamurthy (born 1932, died 2021) was a renowned teacher of Carnatic music, vocalist, musicologist and researcher. He was teaching in Teachers College of Music run by the Music Academy. He is a recipient of numerous awards, like Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Sangita Kala Acharya title from the Music Academy, Madras, Best Musician award from the Tamil Nadu Govt.

Madras Music Academy and Samskrita Ranga. Sri Vidwan B. Krishnamurthy composed music for Sanskrit plays put onto stage by Dr. V. Raghavan. Both of them were frequently performing music during the spectacles. Moreover, both of the musicians composed music to verses written by Dr. Raghavan.⁷⁷

Dr. V. Raghavan composed numerous songs on many various occasions. For example, he wrote a song titled *Śyāmāśāstrin Namostute* to commemorate the two hundred years anniversary of birth of Śyāma Śāstri, which was celebrated at the Madras Music Academy. According to his biography, written by his daughter, Nandini Ramani, he was the actual author of lyrics of *Maitrīm Bhajata*,⁷⁸ song which was performed at the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, by M.S. Subbulakshmi.⁷⁹ According to his daughter, the piece was created at the request of Jagadguru Shri Chandrasekharendra, who is usually claimed as the author of the song, and the music was set by Vasant Desai.⁸⁰ At the request of the president of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,⁸¹ he composed a song on Bhāratamātā – The Mother India. It was performed for the first time by Vidwan B. Krishnamurthy with a dance interpretation by

Music College. He was a teacher of music of both daughters of Dr. V. Raghavan. See also: V. Karpagalakshmi, “B. Krishnamoorthy: a devoted teacher of Carnatic music”, *SRUTI* May 2015.

76 Vidushi R. Vedavalli (born 1935) is a Carnatic vocalist. She had been teaching for numerous years the Teacher's College of Music of the Madras Music Academy before becoming Professor of Vocal Music in the Government College of Music Adyar. She received numerous awards, like the Sangeetha Kalanidhi, awarded by Madras Music Academy in 2000, which is considered the highest award in Carnatic music, and Sangeetha Kalasikhamani title awarded by the Fine Arts Society, Chennai in 1995. See also <https://sites.google.com/site/rvedavalli/> (a personal website of Smt. Vidushi R. Vedavalli).

77 V. Karpagalakshmi, “B. Krishnamoorthy a devoted teacher of Carnatic music”.

78 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 50 – 51.

79 Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi (1916 – 2004) was a Carnatic vocalist from Madurai. She was the first musician ever to be awarded the Bharat Ratna (the highest Indian civil award), the first Indian musician to receive the Ramon Magsaysay award, and the first Indian to perform at the United Nation General Assembly.

80 Vasant Desai (1912–1975) was an Indian film music composer.

81 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) was an Indian academic, professor, philosopher, and politician. He served as the first Vice-President of India (1952–1962) and the second President of India (1962–1967).

Raghavan's older daughter Priyamvada in 1960 at the Summer Music and Drama Festival organized by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Dr. V. Raghavan's interest in music was also expressed in a form of criticism. During 30's and 40's of the 20th century he reviewed music, dance and drama performances in the monthly magazines on fine arts *Sound and Shadow* and *Triveni*. For this activity he took a pseudonyms "Bhāvuka" and "Bhāva Rāga Tāla".⁸²

While describing the output of Dr. V. Raghavan in the field of Indian music, it has to be mentioned that he was the secretary of Madras Music Academy from 1944, until his death in 1979. This renewed institution was inaugurated on 18 August 1928 and was one of the first music academies in South India. Madras Music Academy has been playing a crucial role in promoting, encouraging, reviving and researching on Carnatic music and *bharatanāṭyam*. The latter is a classical Indian dance form, which in the 1930s was nearly extinct and was preserved with a great help of Madras Music Academy. A part of the institution is a college called the Teachers College of Carnatic Music, where students are trained under the supervision of prominent musicians. Madras Music Academy organise numerous events promoting South Indian music, like conferences, concerts and competitions for musicians. It recognises the most outstanding contributors to this field by granting them awards established by this institution. The most famous title given by Madras Music Academy are Sangeetha Kalanidhi, which is bestowed annually to a Carnatic musician, and Nritya Kalanidhi – a title for prominent classical Indian dancers. There are awards for musicologists and teachers of music and dance with the best results. Another important activity of Madras Music Academy is running a library holding rare books, manuscripts, tapes and records. It is called Sri K. R. Sundaram Iyer Memorial Library. After Dr. V. Raghavan has passed away, his family donated a large part of his personal book collection to this library.

Dr. V. Raghavan gave his first presentation at the Madras Music Academy as a research student presenting a paper on "Some Names in Early Saṅgīta Literature". In 1934 he became an Executive Committee Member, in 1942 he became Joint Secretary,

82 A. Kailash, "Dr. V. Raghavan's Contribution to Dance," in *Punaruṇmeṣaḥ* ed. Nandini Ramani (Chennai: Dr. V. Raghavan Centre of Performing Arts (Regd.), 2009), 26–41.

and finally a Secretary in 1944. Dr. V. Raghavan actively took part in creating the *Journal of the Music Academy, Madras* – a renowned publication which has been realised by the institution from 1930. In 1935 he became the Managing Editor, then he was a fellow Editor with Sri T. V. Subba Rao from the year 1939 until the year 1957, when he became the Editor-in-chief.

Dr. V. Raghavan had a very high esteem for the Madras Music Academy and he put a lot of effort for it to thrive. Therefore, he contributed to it mostly by his own writings and research on practical and theoretical aspects of music and dance, but also by organizing and promoting conferences and reporting their sessions in the columns of *The Hindu*. Thanks to his contacts and position in the academic world, he could invite a lot of eminent musicologist to speak at the institution's events.

Among scholarly contributions Dr. Raghavan provided for the Academy, the most important are: English introduction to the Sanskrit text of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta* of King Tulaja I, edition of the Telugu text the *Saṅgīta Sārasangrahamu*, introduction to the *Saṅgīta Sudhā* of king Raghunatha of Tanjore and introduction to four volumes of the Tamil edition of the *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradaṛṣīnī* of Śrī Subbarāma Dīkṣta. He wrote numerous articles for the Academy's Journal, and among them about 40 concern various *saṅgīta* literature from different traditions, periods and parts of India. Raghavan wrote on music writers from Orissa, made a research in Karnataka, the Deccan, and all over South India. He provided numerous papers about the Trinity of Carnatic music and other well and lesser-known composers. While working with manuscripts, he discovered some forgotten compositions of various musicians, for example Bhadrācala Rāmdas, Ānai Ayyā, Merattur Kāṣinātha and others. He wrote for the Academy's Journal about rare musical instruments and their references which he found in textual sources.⁸³

1.8 The contribution of Dr. V. Raghavan to studies on dance

The interest that Dr. V. Raghavan held for Indian dance began in his youth. In the town where he grew up from a very young age he could observe *bharatanāṭyam* performances. The second factor that brought his interest into this area was his close

83 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 77 – 83.

association with notable performers and scholars who likewise researched the field of Indian dance. Dr. Raghavan, in his academic work concerning dance, wrote mainly on *bharatanāṭyam*. He covered both the theoretical and the practical side of this art. Some of his numerous articles on this matter have been collected by the Dr. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts and published as *Splendours of Indian Dance*. There are papers on technical aspects of this art, but some of them also concern and review the *bharatanāṭyam* scene in the 1930s. The scholar covered the history of this art from its roots and evolution to the most recent development. Dr. Raghavan shared knowledge about *bharatanāṭyam* by giving lectures about it in All India Radio, Madras. These talks were collected and published in a book called *Nāṭṭiyakkalai* (in Tamil, The Art of Dance).

A very important publication of Dr. Raghavan on *bharatanāṭyam* is a book *Bharatanāṭyam* written in Tamil and released in 1956. It is a technical book in which he collaborated with famous dancers T. Balasaraswati⁸⁴ and K. Ganesan.⁸⁵ The publication includes photographs of all the basic exercises of the style presented step by step by his

84 Tanjore Balasaraswati (1918–1984) was a renowned Indian dancer, who promoted *bharatanāṭyam* and made it famous. From a very young age she was trained in dance and Carnatic music and debuted at stage in 1925. In 1934 she became the first *bharatanāṭyam* dancer who performed outside of South India. From the 1960s she intensively travelled and performed abroad in East Asia, Europe and North America. She established her own *bharatanāṭyam* school in association with the Music Academy in Madras. T. Balasaraswati was awarded with Padma Bhushan in 1957 and Padma Vibhushan in 1977 – the third and the second highest civilian honours given by the Government of India. She was also awarded by the Madras Music Academy with the Sangita Kalanidhi and by The Indian Fine Arts Society with the Sangita Kalasikhamani award in 1981. See: “Tracing Balasaraswati’s journey”, *The Hindu*, access: 15.04.2021 <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/dance/tracing-balasaraswatis-journey/article22689812.ece>, “T. Balasaraswati” *Dr. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts* access: 15.04.2021 <https://www.drvraghavancentre.com/t-balasaraswati-1918-1984/>.

85 K. Ganesan (d. 1987) was a distinguished teacher of dance and music and also a composer. He is particularly known for working with Tanjore Balasaraswati. K. Ganesan was coming from the famous Thanjavur Nattuvanar family, which was involved in teaching *bharatanāṭyam* and Carnatic music from many generations. His father K. Kandappan Pillai was the first teacher of T. Balasaraswati. See: “Tracing Balasaraswati’s journey”, *The Hindu*, access: 15.04.2021 <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/dance/tracing-balasaraswatis-journey/article22689812.ece>, “T. Balasaraswati” *Dr. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts* access: 15.04.2021 <https://www.drvraghavancentre.com/t-balasaraswati-1918-1984/>.

older daughter Priyamvada, who was a *bharatanāṭyam* dancer. Therefore, this publication can be considered not only as a manual for the beginning adepts of the art but also as a guidebook for new enthusiast and a *vade mecum* for connoisseurs. The book was the first such publication in the field and became a great success. In the first print Southern Languages Book Trust released 5000 copies in four southern languages (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada) which were sold in a record time.⁸⁶

A renowned *bharatanāṭyam* dancer Tanjore Balasaraswati was closely associated with Dr. V. Raghavan. Their friendship started around the year 1938 when the scholar reviewed her recital in the magazine *Sound and Shadow*. Her influence inspired Dr. Raghavan to take efforts in establishing a *bharatanāṭyam* school affiliated to the Madras Music Academy, which was created in 1953. She became a private dance teacher of his daughters, Priyamvada and Nandini, who trained this dance form from their early childhood and became illustrious dancers and propagators of this art. Dr. Raghavan was involved in the practical aspect of *bharatanāṭyam*, as the author of compositions in Sanskrit written specially for performances of Tanjore Balasaraswati and his daughters. For example, he composed a *śabdham*⁸⁷ on Goddess Karpagambal,⁸⁸ which was performed by Tanjore Balasaraswati for the first time during her tour in USA and was widely acclaimed. Furthermore, he wrote another *śabdham* for the occasion of bicentenary of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, which was danced by his daughter Nandini and sung by R. Vedavalli at the Madras Music Academy.⁸⁹

86 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 60–61.

87 *śabdham* in *bharatanāṭyam* is a piece that juxtaposes dramatic and abstract dance. It is a third number of a standard program called *mārgam*, in which there are seven elements. It is the first piece in the program, in which *abhinayas* are introduced. *Śabdham* usually expresses a devotion to a deity or a king through the narratives of praise. The song mostly describes the qualities and rare deeds of the deity or the king and it ends with words “salamure” or “namostute” expressing the salutations to the praised one. Most of *śabdams* are sung in *kāamboji rāga* or *mālikā rāga*. There are also long, narrative *śabdams*, which are separately danced and interpreted. Sunil Kothari, *Bharata Natyam*, (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1997), 96–97.

88 Karpagambal is a form of the goddess Pārvaī and the female consort of Lord Kapālīśvara – the aspect of Śiva worshipped in the Kapaleeshwarar Temple, in Mylapore, Chennai.

89 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 59.

Although Dr. V. Raghavan concentrated mainly on *bharatanāṭyam*, he authored numerous articles on other dance and dance-theatres traditions. Among them there are papers concerning *bhāgavatamela*, *yakṣagāna*, *kathakali*, *vīthī bhāgavatam*, *kaṇḍyan* dance, dance and drama of Sri Lanka, and last but not least *kūṭiyāṭṭam*. The last tradition was brought for the first time from the temple precincts to the urban platform in 1962 by Samskrita Ranga – an organization he had created. Among contributions made by Dr. Raghavan to Indian dance studies there are also editions of numerous texts on dance, such as *Nṛttaratnāvalī* of Jāyasenāpati.

1.9 The cooperation of Raghavan and Milton Singer

Dr. Raghavan worked closely with Milton Singer (1912–1994) – an American anthropologist and expert on Indian culture. The scholars met in 1954, when Raghavan was already a renowned and well-established academician. He offered his help to the anthropologist and assisted him as a guide and as a translator, when the American scholar was working on field studies to his book *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization*. The anthropologist accepted Raghavan’s views as an autodeinition of Indian civilization and canonized his vision as the paradigmatic form of the Great Tradition.⁹⁰

The Sanskrit scholar introduced Singer to the world of Smarta Brahmins, the sect to which he belonged. Smarta Brahmins are followers of the 8th century Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. They were the educated elite and during the British rule on the Indian Subcontinent, they became the interpreters and intermediaries between the British and Indians. Singer saw them as capable of describing the Great Tradition and recognized this group as the leading representatives of it. Thus, he relied on Raghavan, who became his guide and advisor during his field studies.⁹¹

90 As it is well known, great tradition and little tradition are terms introduced by the sociologist Robert Redfield to differentiate between the major, enduring components of a religious tradition and the appropriation of them at folk levels. A great tradition is a learned and literate tradition, which preserves the leading system of thoughts of a civilization.

91 M. Hancock, “Unmaking the ‘great tradition’: Ethnography, national culture and area studies”, *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 4:3-4, (1998) 343-388, DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.1998.9962595

In India during the 1950s and 1960s the central government tried to propagate a Sanskritized high culture as a hegemonic, unified, national culture. Raghavan participated in these efforts, often representing the Great Tradition of India to foreign scholars. He also opted for Sanskrit to become the national language of India.

He envisioned an integrated Indian culture, centered around Hinduism, and used Sanskrit sources to document its crucial features—its performing arts, ritual practices, and basic values. He also suggested that by installing Sanskrit as the medium of both popular discourse and state ceremony, e.g. in anthems, oaths, mottos, and so forth, a citizenry shaped by values of Indian culture would be formed. Sanskrit was thereby conceived as the means for creating a new national subject a tradition-infused, modern citizen.⁹²

According to Raghavan, Sanskrit has integrating capacity because of its centrality in the literature and thought of the country. Of course, he did not want to replace Hindi or any other language with Sanskrit, but to ensure that it will be taught in all schools across the country.

Raghavan supported the official nationalism propagated by the Indian government. Nonetheless, his views were used also by Hindu nationalists to support the Hindutva.

For Raghavan, Sanskritic culture was the ground of Indian nationhood, thus he advocated Sanskrit as a national language and claimed that the use of Sanskrit was tantamount to a process of subject formation consistent with modern Indian citizenship. Raghavan's work, moreover, illustrates the ideological conjuncture of official nationalism and Hindutva. In the 1960s Raghavan found an audience among the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, India's major Hindu nationalist organization. Subsequently, appropriated by RSS publicists, Raghavan's Sanskritic national imaginary was used to extend Hindutva's social base among urban elites.⁹³

92 Ibidem, 364.

93 Ibidem, 372.

Therefore, Raghavan's thoughts and support of Indian elite nationalism influenced the work of Milton Singer and in consequence shaped the image of Indian culture among western scholars.

1.10 Dr. V. Raghavan as a writer

Dr. V. Raghavan was interested in Sanskrit literature not only as a scholar but also as an artist and a writer. As his daughter Nandini Ramani mentioned in his biography, he wrote several hundreds original verses. She describes him as *āsukavi*, which means a poet who can quickly and spontaneously compose a poem.⁹⁴ He wrote about various topic. Among his literary output there are poems on nature's beauty, like the one on the charms of the Kaveri river, which he composed in the year 1943. He created verses on Devī Kanyākumārī and Swami Vivekananda to commemorate the inauguration of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumaru on the 2nd September, 1970. During his numerous travels abroad Dr. V. Raghavan used to compose poems about important personalities of each place he visited. He wrote a set of three stanzas on Leo Tolstoy after visiting the Yasnaya Polyana – a memorial museum created in a former estate of the Russian novelist. Another interesting piece of Dr. V. Raghavan is a set called *Kālah Kaviḥ*. It consists of eight stanzas in which he rendered into Sanskrit diverse proverbial sayings and quotes of famous authors from different parts of the world and different epochs: Walter Scott, Oliver Goldsmith, William Shakespeare, John Ruskin, Tamil poet Subramaṇyā Bhārati and some excerpts from Persian writings. Dr. V. Raghavan composed also numerous verses to commemorate religious occasions. The scholar is also an author of some poems devoted to the Trinity of Carnatic Music, which were mentioned earlier. Among them, the most important is *mahākāvya Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita Carita Mahākāvya*.⁹⁵

Dr. Raghavan wrote several plays in Sanskrit. Among them the most notable are *Anārkalī*, *Vimukti*, *Pratāparudravijaya*, *Viḍambana*, *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, and *Punarunmeṣaḥ*. He also translated into Sanskrit two plays written by Rabindranath Tagore: *Vālmiki Pratibhā* and *Naṭī Pūjā*. Additionally, Dr. Raghavan wrote numerous

94 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 75.

95 *Ibidem*, 74–76.

dramas in Tamil. They have mostly historical or social themes, and some of them are written according to the rules recommended for Sanskrit drama. Some of them have been collected and published by Dr. Raghavan's Centre for Performing Arts in a volume called *Vaṅṅa Malargal, a Collection of Tamil Short Stories and Plays* in the year 2005. As a dramatist, Dr. V. Raghavan utilised the knowledge collected for the academic purposes. The plays of his authorship are written with an observation of the rules of classical Sanskrit drama; however, he also introduced some innovations.⁹⁶ Dr. V. Raghavan used his academic knowledge not only while he constructed the scheme of his dramas but also while he was creating the plot.

1. 11 Propagator of Sanskrit drama in modern India

One of many passions of Dr. V. Raghavan was Indian theatre. He was not only an author of numerous publications on Sanskrit drama but also an ardent promoter of the cultivation of this art in modern India. Although Sanskrit theatre must have been a vivid and very developed phenomenon in ancient India, it slowly lost its importance over time. According to the scholar there were two most important reasons for its decline: linguistic and literary. They were connected to the growth of the middle and modern Indo-Aryan languages. The outcome of it was that the numerous artists decided to choose them as the media for their literary output, and as a result numerous theatrical forms were created in regional languages. They employed similar techniques and themes, and used the vernacular languages which made the Sanskrit drama redundant. In addition, new types of composition emerged. They employed a great number of elements of Sanskrit theatre; however, they were concentrated mostly on songs and dance. Another reason for the diminishing importance of Sanskrit drama, according to Dr. Raghavan, was that a lot of families of dancers and actors migrated from India. The most important and the most famous Sanskrit plays were translated or adapted into modern Indian languages, and they were successfully performed in such form.⁹⁷

Nonetheless, it has to be said, that Sanskrit drama has not declined completely. Even in contemporary India some plays are written in this language. Sanskrit dramas

96 See: Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

97 Raghavan, *Sanskrit Drama. Its Aesthetics and Production*, 108– 110.

began to be performed at some modern universities for the occasions of conferences. Dr. Raghavan supported the idea of the renaissance of Sanskrit drama. To propagate Sanskrit theatre and Sanskrit as a spoken language, the scholar formed on the 16th November, 1958 on the occasion of the First All India Kālidāsa Festival at Ujjain,⁹⁸ an association called Samskrita Ranga. With a group of enthusiasts he staged several Sanskrit plays, including some of his own works, on a stage as well as on radio. Another aim of this organization was to support research, release publications, organize lectures and exposition concerning the field of Sanskrit drama, and allied theatre forms in India and South East Asia.

Although Samskrita Ranga was officially established on the 16th November 1958, its founders were in fact already working together on this matter for some time. This is evidenced by the first production of Sanskrit play by the members of Ranga, which took place on 26th November 1958 at the very same the First All India Kalidasa Festival at Ujjain. The play chosen for the first spectacle was the *Mālāvikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa. Dr. V. Raghavan was involved even in preparing the scenography for the performance. With help of a classical artist, Kalasagaram Rajagopal, he created a set of posters based on a representation of the Sanchi Stupa's arch on a backdrop. It was supposed to imitate a background of the palace of Agnimitra. Music for the dancing parts of the show was performed in *rāgas*: *mālavī*, *usenī* and *vasantā* and the dance was choreographed by T. Balasaraswati and K. Ganesan. Some of the verses of the play were extracted and chosen to be sung from behind the curtain. Vocalists were accompanied by *vinā*, flute and *mṛḍaṅga*. The *rāgas* were chosen with a view to the suitability of

98 The All India Kālidāsa Festival, known also as Kalidas Samaroh, is organized every year from 1958 in Ujjain (the city Kālidāsa described in details in his works). It was inaugurated by Surya Narayan Vyas (1902 – 1976), a famous astrologer, who received the Padma Bhushan 1958 for his contribution to astrology. In the festival take part numerous famous scholars, dancers, musicians and other artists. The festival consists of spectacles of Kālidāsa's plays in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, spectacles of other dramas, dance recitals, exhibitions of art, and seminars devoted to Kālidāsa and his output. From the year 1979 the Kalidasa Samaroh is organized by the Kalidasa Akademi in collaboration with Vikram University under the patronage of the department of culture Government of Madhya Pradesh. "Kalidasa Samaroh", Kalidasa Sanskrit Academy, access: 10.05.2021, <https://www.kalidasacademy.com/>

context, sentiment, season and time of day. Furthermore, characterization and costumes were chosen to be possibly the most adequate to the ancient Sanskrit theatre.⁹⁹

The same spectacle was presented five more times under the supervision of Dr. Raghavan: in Bhopal on 27th November 1958, on the 33rd Conference of Music Academy in Madras on December 1959, at the Congress Grounds, Teynampet, Madras on 3rd March 1960, at the Summer Drama Festival in New Delhi on 10th May 1960 (the play was produced along with a short play *Punarunmeṣah* by Dr. V. Raghavan), and at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society in New Delhi on 11th May 1960. The association Samskrita Ranga came back to this play in the new millennium and staged it three times: in Chennai in 2002, at the Kālidāsa Festival in Ujjain in 2003, and in Chennai in 2004.¹⁰⁰

The next drama produced by the Samskrita Ranga was relatively new *Snuṣāvijaya* of Sundararājakavi (1841–1904), presented at the 1st anniversary of the association on 29th November 1959. The organization staged also *Vikramorvaśīya* of Kālidāsa at the Kālidāsa Festival in Ujjain on 3rd March 1960 and at the 34th Conference of Music Academy in Madras on 4th January 1961. The association staged also *Bhagavadajjukīya* ascribed to the King Mahendravarman I¹⁰¹ at the 2nd Annual Day under the joint auspices of Samskrita Ranga and Madras Natya Sangh held at Museum

99 G. Venkataraman, “All for the love of Sanskrit”, *The Hindu*, <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/theatre/the-saga-of-samskrita-ranga/article25505933.ece> [access: 16.10.2021].

100 The list of dramas staged by the Samskrita Ranga is published on the official website of the organization: <https://www.drvraghavancentre.com/samskrta-ranga/>

101 Mahendravarman I (c. 600–630 CE) was a king from the Pallava dynasty, which from 275 CE to 897 CE ruled a significant part of South India (mostly parts of the present states Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), and had a capital in Kanchipuram. During the reign of Mahendravarman I the Pallava kingdom was in an almost constant war with its neighbours at the West – the kingdom of Chalukyas of Badami, under the reign of king Pulakeśin II. Mahendravarman I was a great patron of art and architecture and also a painter, musician and dramatist. There are two Sanskrit plays ascribed to him: *Bhagavadajjukīya* and *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana*. H. Kulke, D. Rothermund, a *History of India*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 120–123.

Theatre, Madras on 15th December 1960, and at the Indo-French Cultural Festival of the East-West Week in Madras on 17th December 1960.

The Samskrita Ranga staged also dramas written by its founder and president. The first play written and staged by Dr. Raghavan was *Punaruṇmeṣah*, which was presented at the Summer Drama Festival in New Delhi in 1960. Another significant drama put on stage by the association was *Natir Pūjā*, written by Rabindranath Tagore and translated into Sanskrit by Dr. V. Raghavan. It was presented under the auspices of Madras State Tagore Centenary Committee at Museum Theatre in Madras on 2nd September 1961. The staging of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa at the Fourth Kālidāsa Festival in Ujjain on 22nd November 1961 was a great success – it was acclaimed the best performance of the year and it was also awarded for the best production. Additionally, it was staged in Bhopal on 23rd January 1961 and at the 35th Conference of the Music Academy, Madras on 5th January 1962. *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* became one of the most frequently staged plays of the Samskrita Ranga. Later it was staged also in 1984, twice in 1994 (at the Narada Gana Sabha in Chennai and at the Kālidāsa Festival in Ujjain), in 1995 (at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha), and in 1997 (at Malayalee Club, Chennai).¹⁰²

The subsequent play staged by the organization was *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti, presented twice: in the Museum Theatre on 29th June 1962 and on the 36th Conference of Music Academy, Madras on 5th January 1963. Then came time for presenting another original play written by Dr. V. Raghavan. It was *Vimukti*, staged for the first time at the Annual Day of the Samskrita Ranga on 1st December 1963. It was staged only one more time, in 1987. In the following years the association produced several other plays: *Āgamaḍambara* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (for the drama training course of the Madras Natya Sangh in 1964), *Svaśrūvijaya* of V. K. Subrahmanya Sastri (Theatre Workshop Programme of Madras Natya Sangh Drama Training Course in 1965), *Palāndumaṇḍna* of Harijīvana Miśra of Jaipur (1966), *Madhyamavyāyoga* and *Dūtaghatokaca* of Bhāsa (1967).

102 S. S. Janaki, “Dr. Raghavan’s Contribution to Drama”, *Samskrita Ranga Annual XIII* (Chennai: Samskrita Ranga, 2008), 77 – 86.

On the 1st November 1968 at the Dr. V. Raghavan's *Ṣaṣṭyabdapūrti* Celebrations,¹⁰³ another play of his authorship was staged by Samskrita Ranga. This time it was *Anārkalī*. This drama later has been staged numerous times: at the International Sanskrit Conference at New Delhi in the year 1972, in Chennai in the year 1989 (only selected scenes), at Bharat Kalachar in Chennai in the year 1997, at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in the year 1997, at the 10th International Sanskrit Conference in Bangalore in the year 1997, and finally at the Samskrita Ranga's Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Chennai on 23rd of August 2008.¹⁰⁴

In total, the Samskrita Ranga put on stage more than fifty Sanskrit plays. Among them a very significant one was the performance of *Avimāarakam* of Bhāsa at the International Women's Year Celebration in the year 1976. This play was presented with only female cast. Some other plays staged by the association were: *Vikramorvaśīyam* of Kālidāsa (1969, twice in 1999, at the Narada Gana Sabha and at the Kālidāsa Festival in Ujjain), *Mudrārākṣasam* of Viśākhadatta (1971), *Karpūracaritabhāṇa* (1974), *Navagrahacaritam* of Ghaṇaśyāma (1978), *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaktibhadra (1981, 1991, 1992 and 2006), *Padmaprābhṛtaka* of Śūdraka (1981), *Karṇabhūṣana* of Anūrūpa (1981), *Kundamālā* of Dinnaga (1987 and 1988), *Svapnavāsavadattā* of Bhāsa (1989), *Vālmīki Pratibhā* – a Sanskrit adaptation of Ravindranath Tagore's Bengali play – translated by Dr. Raghavan (1990, 1996 and 2004) *Mattavilāsa Prahasana* of the king Mahendra Varman I (2006).

Dr. V. Raghavan was a producer of Sanskrit Magazine in All-India Radio, and especially for this program he wrote or adapted and produced some Sanskrit plays. Dr. Raghavan himself took part in performances, usually as *sūtradhāra*; however, during the radio performances he also took some other roles. He took the role of Sage Kaṇva of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, accompanied by his daughters – Priyamvada as

103 *ṣaṣṭyabdapūrti* also spelled Shashtiabdha Poorthi or Shashti Poorti is a celebration of the 60th birthday. It marks the completion of half the years of one's lifetime as in Hinduism, 120 years is considered the life span of a human being. The sixtieth year in one's life is a significant milestone, a memorable turning point, a touching reminder of the rich, mellowed life that would unfold in the years to come.

104 S. S. Janaki, "Dr. Raghavan's Contribution to Drama", 84.

Śakuntalā and Nandini as Sarvadamanā. He also played the role of Upāli in *Naṭīr Pūjā* with Priyamvada as Naṭī.¹⁰⁵

There are numerous difficulties with staging an ancient Sanskrit drama in a traditional way in modern times which the Samskrita Ranga had to face. Firstly, there was no trained group of actors which could present a properly prepared spectacle and demonstrate acting techniques or a proper characterization. What is more, Sanskrit theatre was a total theatre involving integrated speech, dance, music, make-up and other crafts. Troupe members had to be professional artists and undergo a long, intensive and comprehensive training before they were ready to perform. In the times of Dr. V. Raghavan there were no teachers or performers from whom one could receive such training. The closest and at that time the only surviving theatre tradition was *kūṭiyāṭṭam*; nevertheless, it was restricted to specific, close environment. In fact, it was Dr. V. Raghavan and the Samskrita Ranga who contributed to the first performance of *kūṭiyāṭṭam* outside of Kerala in 1962, which took place in Madras¹⁰⁶ (Chennai).¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, no ancient playhouse survived, although there are descriptions of different kinds of playhouses in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*,¹⁰⁸ which are an asset for modern performers. Another problem was designing the production for contemporary spectators. The audience should not only understand the language, but also be able to understand the meaning implied through the systematic language of *abhinaya*,¹⁰⁹ which were essential to properly read the production.¹¹⁰

105 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: a monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 32.

106 *The Samskrita Ranga Annual III 1961 – 1962*, (Madras: Samskrita Ranga, 1963), 89.

107 Madras was renamed into Chennai in 1996, thus in the context of the time before the renaming will be referred as *Madras* and in the context of the time after the year 1996 it will be referred as *Chennai*.

108 The second chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes three types of playhouses: asymmetrical (*vikr̥ṣṭa*) with a rectangular acting area, square (*caturaśra*) and triangular (*tryaśra*) with square and triangular acting areas. Possibly they were used for producing different types of plays.

109 *abhinaya* is the art of expression used in Sanskrit theatre to communicate meaning of the drama and lead a spectator towards a particular sentiment (*rasa*). Through *abhinaya* an actor can portray the extended interpretation of state and condition of his character in particular situation of the plot. There are four types of *abhinaya*: *aṅgika* (physical expression), *vācika* (vocal representation), *āhārya* (costumes

The actors who took part in productions of Samskrita Ranga, apart from Raghavan's family, were usually young people well educated in Sanskrit, but also Sanskrit teachers and adepts of classical Indian music and dance. Although Dr. Raghavan prepared original stage props to bring in the proper mood and ambiance,¹¹¹ especially for the earlier productions, the whole show depended mainly on the speech, gestures, and movements. The members of the Samskrita Ranga association were trained in accordance with directions set by Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The knowledge of Sanskrit theatre allowed Dr. Raghavan to guide the actors in the terms of, for example, voice modulation and body movements. In the theory of Sanskrit drama there are specific prescriptions instructing actors precisely how they should move on stage. Neither Sanskrit drama nor classical Indian dance relied solely on improvisation but on the regular, constant interpretation.

Dr. Raghavan also trained the troupe in various ways of delivering the text (*pāṭhya*), which are called the *pāṭhyaguṇas*. Bharata presents in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* three registers of the voice – low, middle and high which correspond to chest, throat and head resonance. They should be used according to type of character, situation and emotion. An actor should also pay attention to *varṇa* – modulation, which could be raised, lowered, combination of raised and lowered or shaking. The usage of *varṇa* depends on the emotion which prevails in a particular situation. Bharata described also intonation (*kāku*) which is about the voice manipulation. There are also six *alaṃkāras* – ornaments of the voice: loud, waxing (heated or excited), subdued, low, fast and slow. The ancient theorist described in which situations each of them should be used. For example, slow is used in scenes of love, pathos, cogitation, intolerance, envy, suffering because of long-term sickness, distress, astonishment, embarrassment, mental preoccupation and when a character speaks of something that is not clear. There are also three kinds of tempo,

and make-up), *sattvika* (emotion communicated to the audience through the performer's own inner emotions). T. Mehta, *Sanskrit Play Production in Ancient India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), 131– 186.

110 Shanta Gandhi. "A Sanskrit Play in Performance: The Vision of Vāsavadattā," in *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, ed. Rachel Van M. Baumer, James R. Brandon, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 110–140.

111 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: a monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 44.

which should be applied according to the *rasas*. Therefore, moderate tempo is for love and laugh, slow for pathos and fast for heroism, wonder, fear, terror and disgust. There are also six other ways of moderating speech on stage: pause (*viccheda*), swaying and attractive delivery of speech *arpaṇa*, gradual release from the above leading to a finale (*visarga*), continuity (*anubandha*), rising gradually and smoothly over three octaves (*dīpana*), ascending in the same way to a low key (*praśamana*). They should be applied according to different *rasas*; however, in certain situations it might be necessary to use more than one of them.¹¹² These rules set by Bharata show how difficult and complex was preparing a troupe for a spectacle. A producer had to not only train his actors in all of these techniques but also study the text of drama and choose right techniques for different scenes. Therefore, it required a lot of work with the text itself before a stage manager was to start directing the actors.

Dr. Raghavan in his work *Sanskrit Drama. Its Aesthetics and Production* among many other subjects wrote about preparing an ancient Sanskrit play to be staged for modern audience. This may give an indication about how spectacles produced by Samskrita Ranga looked like and how the scholar justified innovations, which he introduced. Dr. Raghavan pointed out that some plays need to be abridged and edited, and he had done this himself with the dramas produced by the Samskrita Ranga on stage and on the radio. The main problem was not only the length of the plays but also their verbosity and long prose passages, which can be found for example in works of Śūdraka and Bhavabhūti. This fact supports the theory that in ancient India during one night spectacle only one act of a play was presented and it took several days to present the whole play. Apart from the lengthy text of drama, a spectacle also included music, dances and repeated gestures (*angika abhinayas*), which made each act last longer. Therefore, he pointed out that some scenes, episodes or even an act should be carved out from the original text, edited and mounted to be put together in a relatively short form which was suitable to be presented before a modern audience. He also claimed that it was possible that such practices were implemented by *sūtradhāras* for some ancient spectacles.¹¹³

112 Raghavan, *Sanskrit Drama. Its Aesthetics and Production*, 69–71.

113 *Ibidem*, 38–39.

Dr. Raghavan believed the crucial factor of a successful reconstruction of a Sanskrit spectacle in modern times was the knowledge of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. According to the scholar, the treatise should be studied by authors of contemporary Sanskrit plays and by actors staging them. They all should have a vast knowledge of the classical Sanskrit dramas, such as those of Kālidāsa. He thought that Sanskrit plays should be produced with indigenous techniques and artistic resources rather than with techniques imitating the Western way of theatre.¹¹⁴

Although a great deal of theoretical knowledge on Sanskrit drama and its performances was preserved in treatises on dramaturgy, a large part of ancient stage techniques was lost. Therefore, to reconstruct a Sanskrit spectacle Dr. Raghavan drew some elements from other dance-drama traditions preserved in different parts of India. The most helpful were *kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *kathakali*; however, some extensive lyrical *abhinayas* were recovered also from *kathak* and *bharatanāṭyam*. He also mentioned that some ancient Indian theatrical techniques might be practised outside India in numerous theatrical forms maintained in different countries of South-East Asia where the cultural hegemony of India used to be spread. Therefore, while he was deciding about how spectacles of Samskrita Ranga should look like, he looked also outside of India.

A large part of the ancient stage technique, which has either been lost or has become attenuated in India, lives in the theatres of South-East Asia, over which in the palmy days of the cultural hegemony of India over the Orient, Indian epics, art and drama spread. The whole of South-East Asia appears to have grown into a civilization raised solely on the two Indian epics and dance-dramas based on them. The system of music as harnessed for drama and of instrumental compositions designed for creation of atmosphere and accentuation of emotion, have to be recovered from the *Gamelan* of the Javanese and Balinese *Wayangs*. From Java and Bali, we have to take also the several animal gaits that Bharata speaks of. In the classic Chinese drama, presented in gesture and song, there is not only the preservation of the elaborately codified system of *gati* or gaits appropriate to different characters, but a considerable part of our *āṅgika* and *citra abhinayas*. These as well as the *Noh* of Japan, the *Khon* of Thailand, the *Rāmāyaṇa* dance of

114 Ibidem, 110.

Laos, the Cambodian Ballet, the Burmese *Pwe*, and the *Kandyian* dance outside our country, preserve for us chapters of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, as also forms like the Shadow and Puppet plays which are no longer alive to any appreciable degree in the modern country. The most important of these recoveries from South-East Asia will be those exercises from young age which form the foundation of this art, where again we are at a great handicap.¹¹⁵

This passage from *Sanskrit Drama. Its Aesthetics and Production* shows how vast research was conducted by Dr. V. Raghavan in order to recreate the stage production of Sanskrit Drama in the most accurate way.

In the same work Raghavan also explained why he believed that Sanskrit drama is a form of art perfectly suited for radio performances. Sanskrit playwrights had to pay a lot of attention to the spoken word and put less focus on the action. As the goal of a Sanskrit play is to evoke *rasa* in the spectator, usually an incident was not to be shown on stage but rather depicted by a character of a play at the same time showing his emotional reaction to it. What is more, according to Bharata's rule, each character entering the stage should be previously indicated and described by a character who is already on the stage. Although Sanskrit drama does not observe the unity of place as the Greek theatre, scenes can be set in any background and do not need any specific scenography. Even if scenes are set in mid air, on stage it is indicated by certain conventional movements and hints in texts. Therefore, it can be easily presented even on the radio. To demonstrate that Sanskrit plays are well suited for radio, he provided the production of the drama *Avimārika* of Bhāsa, which he made for a radio performance. This play belongs to the genre *bhāṇa* and therefore it is a long monologue of the hero who goes through a city in order to complete a certain task. As he passes different locations, he speaks and describes where he is and what he sees, and each portion of his speech is governed by its location. Otherwise, his observations and emotions would not be understood. Therefore, this genre of Sanskrit drama can be

115 Ibidem, 110–111.

adapted into a radio performance quite easily. Raghavan summed it up by conclusion that: “All Radio playwrights should study the Sanskrit Bhāṇa technique well.”¹¹⁶

As a musicologist, Dr. Raghavan supervised the music of his spectacles. The music constantly accompanied the performance, as the play was integrated with songs and instrumental music. He claimed that he took the ideas how to employ music in the performances from Sanskrit texts on music and theatre which describe this subject in details. It was an important part of a spectacle also in performances of Samskrita Ranga and therefore numerous eminent musicians, like for example T. Balasaraswati and K. Ganesan, accompanied the spectacles produced by the association.¹¹⁷

According to Dr. V. Raghavan, a great advantage of Sanskrit theatre is the fact that it does not require any stage crafts, scenography or stage mechanics. It relies on the realism in the subjects of costumes and speech, but also accepts the limitation of the stage and relies on different ways to express elements, which cannot be shown easily on stage. Although modern technology can resolve those problems with mechanisms such as lights and crafted scenography, they also make spectacles more expensive and complicated to produce, especially outside a proper, well-equipped theatre, while classical Sanskrit play can be easily performed everywhere, even in a small village in a countryside. Thus, it makes this form of theatre more inclusive for the society, and it may revitalise dramatic activity and re-establish it as an essential part of the life of Indian society. In revitalizing Sanskrit theatre Dr. Raghavan also saw a possibility to bring back indigenous theatrical forms from the different region of the country.¹¹⁸

After the demise of Dr. V. Raghavan, the Samskrita Ranga continued its work on promoting Sanskrit drama. As it was indicated earlier, the association produced numerous plays after the death of its founder. Two renewed Sanskrit scholars were members of the Samskrita Ranga since its beginning, Dr. S. S. Janaki and Dr. C. S. Sundaram. Dr. S. S. Janaki became the president of the association and held

116 Ibidem, 40.

117 N. Ramani, “Samskrita Ranga – Torch Bearer of Sanskrit Drama,” *The Samskrita Ranga Annual XIII*, New Delhi: 2008, 148–153.

118 Raghavan, *Sanskrit Drama. Its Aesthetics and Production*, 46–48.

this position until she died in 1999. Then Dr. C. S. Sundaram became the president, and currently the position is occupied by R. Kalidas, the son of Dr. V. Raghavan. From the year 1987 the position of the secretary is held by Nandini Ramani, the daughter of Dr. V. Raghavan.

What is more, its members put a lot of effort and introduced numerous innovations to improve the spectacles. Such situation occurred in 1989, when Dr. S. S. Janaki advised the Samskrita Ranga to prepare a *nāṭyaśālā* – a proscenium theatre. It was designed by Goverdhan Panchal, a specialist in ancient theatre according to the outlines set by Bharata. It consists of platform (*vedikā*) at the back, two curtains for entry and exit, *raṅgaśīrṣa* and *raṅgapīṭha* – the main scenes, with supplementary acting area called *mattavāraṇī*.¹¹⁹

The association periodically publishes a volume called the *Samskrita Ranga Annual* devoted to the topic of Sanskrit drama. It is supposed to be published annually; however, the volume published in the year 2008 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of its foundation is only the 13th publication. Each volume contains a collection of articles on Sanskrit drama and related topics. A significant part of output collected in the *Samskrita Ranga Annual* was written by Dr. V. Raghavan. Even after his demise, the association kept adding to the publication his archival papers – previously published, as well as unpublished ones. The *Samskrita Ranga Annual* also contains reports from the activity of the organization in previous period. Some volumes contain Sanskrit texts of new plays. For example, in the *Samskrita Ranga Annual* III from the year 1963, one can find *Rasalila, a Musical Playlet* and *Kamasuddhi – a One Act Sanskrit Play*, both written by Dr. V. Raghavan. There are also translations of Sanskrit plays into Tamil – for example, in the *Samskrita Ranga Annual* VII, from the year 1979, there is a translation of *Dūtaghaṭokaca* by Bhāsa rendered into Tamil by Dr. V. Raghavan and Priyamvada Sankar. In these publications also photography from the spectacles produced by the Samskrita Ranga can be found.

119 Ramani, “Samskrita Ranga – Torch Bearer of Sanskrit Drama,” 148–153.

1.12 Other activities

Another passion of Dr. V. Raghavan was cinema. Therefore, he involved himself in writing scripts for movies. He wrote the dialogues for Tamil film *Sītā Kalyāṇam* (*Sita's Wedding*) released in 1934. Its plot is woven around the well-known episode of *Rāmāyaṇa* about the *svayamvara*¹²⁰ of Sītā and her wedding with Rāma. The scholar travelled to Kolhapur where the movie was shoot to see the set and to give some advice to the producers. This movie is famous because it was the film debut of musicians Papanasam Sivan,¹²¹ S. Rajam¹²² and Veenai S. Balachander,¹²³ who later became very popular in the South Indian film industry. Dr. V. Raghavan was also asked to recite inaugural benedictory verses in the beginning of the film *Mughal-e-Azam* released in 1960 by the actor Prithviraj Kapoor, who played the role of Emperor Akbar. This idea was not realised; however, *Mughal-e-Azam* remained one of the most beloved films of Dr. V. Raghavan.¹²⁴

120 *svayamvara* was a practise in ancient India, according to which a girl could choose a husband from a group of suitors either in a public contest between of them or simply by selecting him from an assembly. The bride-to-be and her suitors should belong to the same *varṇa*.

121 Paapanaasam Raamayya Sivan (1890 – 1973), was an Indian singer, composer of Carnatic Music, and film score composer for Tamil and Kannada cinema in the 1930s and 1940s. He composed numerous, mainly devotional songs in Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu. In 1962 Sangeet Natak Akademi (India's National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama) awarded him with the Sangeet Naatak Akademi Fellowship.

122 S. Rajam (1919–2010), was a renowned Indian Carnatic musician, singer, painter, and in his early years also an actor. He was a member of Madras Music Academy and music supervisor of All India Radio.

123 Sundaram Balachander (1927– 1990), was an Indian *vīṇā* player, music composer, poet, and a film-maker. He not only directed and produced his movies, but in some of them he also starred and composed music for them. In 1982 he was awarded with Sangeetha Kalasikhamani, by The Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai, which is granted every year for an expert Carnatic Musician. In the same year he was awarded Padma Bhushan, which is the third highest civilian award in the Republic of India.

124 Ramani, V. *Raghavan: A Monograph in English on modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 45–46.

2. Dr. V. Raghavan as a playwright – an analysis of dramas of his authorship with a special reference to *Anārkalī*

Dr. V. Raghavan was both a scholar and a creative writer. He has made contribution to the development of research in the field of Sanskrit drama and theatre. Dr. Raghavan wrote on various aspects of Sanskrit theatre such as its technical side, performance, music and dance employed into performances, etc. With the organization Samskrita Ranga created by him, he made another contribution to this field as a practitioner and a propagator of this art in contemporary India. Nevertheless, his input as a modern Sanskrit playwright should not be neglected nor forgotten. Apart from *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, Dr. V. Raghavan is the author of the following Sanskrit plays: *Anārkalī*, *Pratāparudravijaya* or *Vidyānāthaviḍambana*, *Vimukti*, *Rāsalīlā*, *Lakṣmīsvayaṃvara*, *Kāmaśuddhi*, *Punaranmeṣa*, *Āṣāḍhasya Prathamadivase* and *Mahaśvetā*.

In this chapter the majority of Sanskrit dramas written by Dr. V. Raghavan are discussed in order to provide a background for detailed analysis of the plays *Vijayānkā*, *Vikaṭanitambā* and *Avantisundarī*. However, the most attention has been paid to the *Anārkalī*. The first reason for it is that, similarly to the dramas on Sanskrit poetesses, its main character is a woman. Additionally, the plot of *Anārkalī* combines historical and fictional characters and events. The heroine of this play can be described as a liminal figure, because it cannot be determined whether she was a real or a legendary person.

The second play which is analysed in detail is *Pratāparudravijaya*. This is motivated by the fact that it also mixes historical figures and earlier Sanskrit literature with imagination and poetical creativity of the author. What is more, the *Pratāparudravijaya* has as its background a treatise on poetics, and, as it was shown in the Chapter I, the Sanskrit poetics was the most important field of research for Dr. V. Raghavan.

The rest of the plays are discussed in a brief way in order to demonstrate the diversity of themes and subjects undertaken by their author and to show his versatility as a playwright. The broader scope of analysed plays also allows to create a more accurate image of Dr. V. Raghavan as a writer and to draw more general conclusions about his literary output. Thus, a bit more attention is devoted to *Vimukti*, which as an allegorical play stands out among his other works. In this way, a more accurate

background for the analysis of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikāṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* would be provided.

2.1 Structure of a Sanskrit play

Sanskrit dramatic compositions have typical characteristics which are true for most of the plays. Among those factors are: defined structure, plot, length, characters which appear in a drama, etc.

Usually, Sanskrit plays do not start with the main text, but with a benediction (*nāndī*). It usually praises a deity, Brahman, king, or other royal patron of the author. It adds to a performance formality, sanctity and the guarantee that the show would be protected from any adversities. The *nāndī* is succeeded by a prologue (*prastāvanā*), which is performed by a stage manager (*sūtradhāra*) and usually a member of cast, for example an actress (*naṭī*) or actor (*naṭa*). They pass to the audience basic information about the play, its character and its author. It also sets the tune for the actual performance. The *prastāvanā* is a link between the reality and the show.¹

A Sanskrit play consists of acts, called *aṅka*. Each of them should depict a change in the situation of the hero and therefore cause the plot to develop. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, events of one act should take place during a single day.² It can start at dawn and end at sunset. However, certain events, like a battle, can take more time. Thus, they are often reported by minor or secondary characters to the hero or heroine. There were no rigid rules restricting a place of action. Locations could change multiple times in one act. During a performance, actors indicate a transition to another place performing symbolic movements. In texts there are numerous descriptions of locations in which the action currently takes place – it helps the audience to follow the action and

1 F. P. Richmond, “Characteristics of Sanskrit Drama”, *Indian Theatre*, ed. F.P. Richmond, D. L. Swann, P. B. Zarilli, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsisadd Publishers, 2007), 63–65.

2 The *Nāṭyaśāstra* XX.23: “An Act should cover incidents that can take place in course of a single day, it should relate to the Germ of the play and should proceed without a hindrance of the routine duties.” Translation: *The Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed of Bharata Muni* trans. Manmohan Ghosh, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950), 359.

imagine its background.³ The stage, its decorations and requisites were simple and sparse; thus, there was no need to redecorate the scene during a show.

A plot of a Sanskrit drama should present a hero who struggles to obtain something and finally achieves his goal. This aim should be related to one of the *puruṣārthas* – objects of pursuit in human life which are: righteousness (*dharma*), pleasure or love (*kāma*), prosperity (*artha*) and liberation (*mokṣa*).

The Sanskrit theory of dramaturgy provides numerous suggestions for constructing a plot of a play (*itivr̥tta*). Among them are five stages of development – *avasthās*. This category constitutes the base of a plot and it concentrates on pure action (*kārya*) and its linear aspect.⁴ The first of *avasthās* is *ārambha* – beginning, when hero starts to desire to achieve something. This leads to the stage called *prayatna* in which the hero undertakes some effort to secure the objects of his desire. Next comes *prāptyāśā* – hope of obtaining the goal after having overcome obstacles, *niyatāpti* – certainty of success after overcoming some specific obstacle and *phalāgama* – the moment of attainment the object of desire.⁵

Apart from the *avasthās*, there are also five elements of the plot called *arthaprakṛtis*. They are not parallel to the *avasthās* in any way, and they describe nature of the subject-matter. Among them, the first is *bīja* – a seed, whence springs the action, then is *bindu* – a drop, which spreads out as oil in water – the course of drama. Then there is *patākā* – an episode, *prakarī* – an episodic incident, and finally *kārya* – a denouement.⁶ There is also a third division of the junctures of the plot – *sandhis*: opening – *mukha*, progression – *pratimukha*, development – *garbha*, pause – *vimarśa* and conclusion – *nirvahaṇa*. They are parallel to the *avasthās*.⁷

3 Richmond, “Characteristics of Sanskrit Drama”, 71 – 75.

4 M. K. Byrski, *Methodology of the Analysis of Sanskrit Drama*, (Delhi, Varanasi: Bharatatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1997), 23.

5 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 297 – 298.

6 Ibidem, 298–299.

7 Ibidem, 298.

The theoreticians of Sanskrit drama divide characters of a play in numerous ways. The broadest and the most general division categorizes them according to their origin and merits or flaws. The highest category (*uttama*) includes characters of noble origin; noble character: brave, righteous, guiltless, well-educated and proficient in various arts. The second class (*madhyama*) is for figures who are also well-educated, but their character is not so noble as the characters of the *uttama* category. The lowest class (*adhama*) is for characters of limited intelligence, quarrelsome, greedy, invidious, inelegant, brutal and unscrupulous. To this category belong such figures like servants, maids, messengers and eunuchs.⁸

A text of a typical Sanskrit play consists of dialogues in prose and verses. Although the majority of texts is written in Sanskrit, certain characters use different languages. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* and later treatises on Sanskrit drama determine which language is proper for which characters. Sanskrit should be used by gods, kings, Brahmins, generals, ministers, and other educated persons. It can be spoken by a chief-queen and daughters of ministers, but this rule was not observed in practice.⁹ It can be also used by Buddhist nuns, courtesans, artists and others on special occasions. Other characters should be speaking Prakrits.

The theory of Sanskrit drama lists four demeanours (*vṛtti*) – means of communication. There are three *vṛttis* referring to bodily demeanours. The first of them is *sāttvatī vṛtti* – the conscious style. It includes behaviour and gestures performed in a highly technical, precise and well-ordered way. The *kaiśikī vṛtti* – the delicate style is spontaneous and graceful, well-suited for expressing emotions. The *ārabhaṭī vṛtti* – the violent style – is filled with anger and agitation. The graceful style is appropriate for the erotic sentiment, the conscious style heroism, wonder and fury, and the violent style for the sentiments of fury, horror and terror. There is also *bharatī vṛtti* – the verbal demeanour, for which the speech is the main medium of expression. It is suitable for

8 L. Sudyka, “Gatunki dramatu staroindyjskiego,” in *Teatr Orientu. Materiały z sesji naukowej* ed. P. Piekarski, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Medycyna Praktyczna 1998), 77 – 78.

9 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 355.

men, and women should not be employed in it. It also requires highly literary language.¹⁰

A typical Sanskrit play ends with a benedictory stanza, concluding the whole play, the so called *bharatavākya*. This is a compound of the words *bharata* – actor and *vākya* – speech.¹¹ Thus, it can be translated as a *speech of an actor*, and indeed it should be recited by the chief actor. However, it is not a part of his role. a *bharatavākya* typically invokes peace, happiness, prosperity of a king and his kingdom, learnt Brahmans and sacred cattle. This final stanza occurs in most Sanskrit plays, but not in all of them.¹²

2.2 Anārkalī

The play *Anārkalī* is based on an undoubtedly interesting, but not confirmed by reliable sources, story of love between a slave girl and a Mughal prince Salīm – future emperor Jahāngir.¹³ Her name was Anārkalī, which served Raghavan as the title for his play. She paid the highest price for her love for the prince – she was sentenced to death by burying alive in a wall of Lahore Fort. According to the tradition, when Salīm became an emperor, he ordered to build a beautiful, monumental tomb¹⁴ for his beloved one.

10 Byrski, *Methodology of the Analysis of Sanskrit Drama*, 11 – 13.

11 It can be interpreted as the “speech of Bharata”, that is a benediction honouring the sage Bharata. Monier-Williams, Monier. *A Sanskrit-English dictionary: etymologically and philologically arranged with special reference to cognate Indo-European languages* by Sir Monier Monier-Williams... [et al.] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 747.

12 “Bharatavākya” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature: A-Devo*, ed. A. Datta, (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2003), 453.

13 Names of the Persian origin are written according to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online at <https://www.iranicaonline.org>.

14 The supposed tomb of Anārkalī is an octagonal Mughal structure built in the early 17th century in Lahore. Originally it was the place in the middle of a pomegranate garden. Although it is unknown who is buried in this tomb, the inscription on the grave suggests that it may be a person very dear to Jahāngir. The building was used by the successive British and Sikh rulers. It was converted into a protestant church, a cantonment, a store house and residence in different stages of history. Nowadays, it is usually referred to as the Tomb of Anārkalī. A. Désoulières, “Images of Lahore (Panjab) in Historiography and Cinema (Urdu and English), Myth and Reality”, *Sustainable Cities Proceedings of the Papers Presented*

The tragic and romantic narrative seems to have all the criteria for becoming a great success: a couple who cannot fulfil their love due to social differences, a conflict between love and obedience for family and a sacrifice of love for duties of statehood.

This story has been told for ages in many different versions, and inspired a lot of artists, who rendered it in multiple ways. The first contemporary author who retold the legend and made it famous was a dramatist writing in Urdu, Sayyid Imtiyāz ‘Alī Tāj.¹⁵ He wrote a drama *Anārkalī* in 1922, and rewrote it in 1931, because the first version was heavily criticized, and it was not appreciated by the theatres. *Anārkalī* was inconsistent with the most popular trends of those times in Urdu drama. Nevertheless, the second edition was an instant success. The play is frequently called “a milestone” in the annals of Urdu drama, and it is one of the most important and well-known Urdu plays.¹⁶

The story of *Anārkalī* and the drama based on it was willingly rendered by numerous Indian and Pakistani film producers. Therefore, many films in different Indian languages were produced in India: *Anārkalī* (also known as *Loves of a Moghul Prince*), directed by Prafulla Roy and Charu Roy (1928, silent), *Anārkalī*, directed by R. S. Choudhury (1928, silent, remade in 1935 in Hindi), *Anārkalī*, directed by Nandlal Jaswantlal (1953, Hindi), *Anārkalī* directed by Vedantam Raghavaiah (1955, Telugu), *Mughal-e-Azam* directed by K. S. Asif (1960, Hindi), *Anārkalī* directed by Kunchacko

at Consortium for Asian and African Studies (CAAS) 4th International Conference National University of Singapore, 28-30 January 2013, (Tokyo: Office for International Academic Strategy, 2014), 87 – 102.

15 Imtiyāz Alī Tāj (1900–1970) was a dramatist from Lahore who wrote in Urdu. His best known plays are *Anārkalī* (1922, 1931) and *Cacā Chakan* (1926), which is a comedy for children with themes of satire and humour. He also translated into Urdu numerous Shakespeare’s plays including a *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He was engaged in drama criticism, he wrote radio plays, novels, short stories and several film stories, some of them directed by him. Sayyid Imtiyāz ‘Alī Tāj contributed to numerous Pakistani magazines and radio programs. On 19 April 1970, the dramatist was murdered in his sleep by an unknown assassin. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature: devraj to jyoti*, ed. A. Datta, (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1988), 1117.

16 A. Désoulières “Religious culture and folklore in the Urdu historical drama *Anārkalī*, revisited by Indian cinema,” in: *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema. Recasting classics* ed. Heidi R.M. Pauwels (London, New York: Routledge 2007), 123–146.

(1966, Malayalam), *Akbar Salīm Anārkalī* directed by N. T. Rama Rao (1979, Telugu). There is also a Malayalam version of *Anārkalī* from the year 2015, directed by K. R. Sachidanandan (professionally credited under a pseudonym, i.e. Sacy), which is a contemporary romantic thriller slightly based on the Anārkalī legend. The story was also adapted few times in Pakistan. For example, there is a film directed by Anwar Kamal Pasha in 1958 and an Urdu television drama of the 1980s, both titled *Anārkalī*.¹⁷

However, the best known is most probably a Bollywood film *Mughal-e-Azam* from 1960. As Nandini Ramani, daughter of Dr. Raghavan mentioned in his biography, it was one of the most favourite movies of her father.¹⁸ Although the play was published in 1972, its major part was written much earlier, in 1931.

2.2.1 The legend and the historical facts

According to the versions of the story of Anārkalī established at a certain point, she was a concubine of Akbar or a woman belonging to his harem. Her name means a pomegranate blossom.¹⁹ Quite possibly she was a favourite of the emperor. As one of the variants of the story has it, she was born as Sharif un-Nissa; however, she was also known by the name of Nadira Begum. The girl is said to be a courtesan from Lahore, who had an illicit affair with prince Salīm, the oldest son and heir of Akbar. The couple met in palace in Lahore, which was frequently visited by Mughal emperors.²⁰ When the emperor, while looking into a mirror, noticed that the woman smiled back at Salīm, he lost his temper and ordered to immure her alive in a wall of the fort. After Salīm

17 Désoulières, “Religious culture and folklore in the Urdu historical drama *Anārkalī*, revisited by Indian cinema,” 123 – 124.

18 Ramani, *V. Raghavan: a Monograph in English on Modern Sanskrit Scholar*, 46.

19 *Anar* is the Persian word for “pomegranate” and *kali*, is a Hindi term for “flower bud.”

20 Lahore (now the capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab and the second largest city in Pakistan) was an important site during the reign of the Mughal empire and flourished under its rule. It was due to its strategic location between the Mughal territories and the strongholds of Kabul, Multan, and Kashmir. Akbar used it as his headquarters for his expeditions against Kashmir, Sind and Kandahar during the years 1584–98. Jahāngir established Lahore as his capital from 1623, and it continued as such for most of the reign of Shah Jahān. P. Jackson, P. A. Andrews, “Lahore (Lahawr),” in *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*, ed. C. Edmund Bosworth, (Leiden, Boston: Brill 2007), 299–304.

ascended the throne, he decided to build a monumental tomb for Anārkalī to commemorate his love for her. Some versions of the story also include the mother of Anārkalī, Jillī Bao. According to these tales, few years earlier Akbar promised Jillī Bao to fulfil one of her wishes. Consequently, she used this advantage to save her daughter’s life. Akbar agreed to secretly let her free, but she had to remain hidden from Salīm.

According to the preface to Imtiyāz ‘Alī Taj’s play, this legend was well-known among the Urdu-speaking urban class of Lahore,²¹ the city where the author spent most of his life. Interestingly, there is a tomb in Lahore, but, as mentioned above, there is no direct evidence of who was actually buried in the *Tomb of Anārkalī*. On the grave there are two dates – 1008 AH (1599 AD), which is interpreted as a year of death of the buried one, and 1024 AH (1615 AD) – possibly the year of completing the tomb. As Akbar died in 1605 AD, the construction of the tomb was finished during the reign of Jahāngir, 10 years after demise of his father. On the sides of marble sarcophagus there is also engraved a Persian couplet taken from the 13th century Persian poet Saadi Shīrāzī:²²

ta qayamat fukar goyim kard gar-e-khavif ra

ah gar man baz binam ru-e-yar-e-khavif ra

Ah! could I behold the face of my beloved once more,

I would give thanks to my God until the day of resurrection.²³

On the North side of the sarcophagus there is an inscription enlisting the 99 names of Allah and a *majnūn salīm-i akbar* - “The madly-in-love Salīm, [son of] Akbar.”²⁴

21 A. Désoulières, “Religious culture and folklore in the Urdu historical drama Anārkalī, revisited by Indian cinema,” 127.

22 Sa‘dī, also spelled Saadi, byname of Musharrif al-Dīn ibn Muṣliḥ al-Dīn, (c. 1213–1291, Shīrāz, Iran), who was a Persian poet, one of the greatest figures in classical Persian literature. His best known works are *Bustan* (The Orchard) completed in 1257 and *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden) completed in 1258.

23 The transliteration and translation quoted after Désoulières, 2007, 128. The translation comes originally from S. M. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, (Lahore: New Imperial Press 1889), 187.

24 The transliteration and translation quoted from E. Koch, “The Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus or The Album as Think Tank for Allegory,” in *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World, Volume 27* ed. Gülru Necipoğlu, Karen Leal (Leiden: Brill 2010), 277–312.

According to Ebba Koch, Jahāngir perceived himself as a hero from an old Arabic tale known as Layla and Majnun. This story tells about the love of a poet Qays b. al-Molawwaḥ b. Mozāḥem, who was in love with a woman named Layla since they were children, and he frequently mentioned her name in his poems. Father of Layla refused to give his permission for marriage with the poet and separated the lovers. The separation only increased the affection of Qays and the local community started to call him *majnun* – mad, possessed by jinn. Then Majnun left his family and started to wander the neighboring desert. He lived in the wilderness surrounded by pacified animals and composed poetry on his beloved one. Although his family tried to arrange marriage between Qays and Layla, the girl’s father refused and forced her to marry another man. Majnun stayed in the wilderness, where he could sometimes be seen singing poems about his beloved Layla to himself or writing in the sand with a stick. The girl, although married, stayed faithful to her true love, and secretly visited him to sing poems together. Some years later Layla’s husband died, and she was free to marry Majnun. However, he was unable to deal with the real possibility of being with her and refused retreating back to the desert. Heart-broken Layla died of grief, Majnun collapsed while visiting her grave and also died. Lovers were buried side by side and reunited in heaven. This story gained great popularity and was frequently used in poetry and art.

In the inscription Jahāngir described himself as a man obsessed because of tragic love which cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, it can be assumed that the person buried there was very dear to Jahāngir. However, one cannot be sure if it actually is the tomb of the legendary courtesan. The inscription on the grave in the mausoleum is not the only item describing Jahāngir as Manjun. There are also pictorials presenting him in the wilderness. According to his biography, in the year 1618, he got a pair of cranes which he named Layla and Majnun. He kept them at court in his personal menagerie and observed their breeding habits for several months.²⁵

Nevertheless, the so-called tomb of Anārkālī may give another indication about the famous protagonist. It has been assumed that the legendary courtesan was in fact named after the tomb. In line with this hypothesis, *anārkālī* was either the name of the

25 E. Koch, “The Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus or The Album as Think Tank for Allegory,” 300–304.

garden in which the tomb was built later, or a name given to the tomb, because its cupola resembles a pomegranate bud. Therefore, the name of the mythical slave girl might have actually been given to her after her history was associated with the tomb.²⁶

The alleged tomb of Anārkalī is not the only place of the map of Lahore related to the legendary slave-girl. The most famous historical bazaar of the city is still named Anārkalī Bazaar, as its name derives from the nearby mausoleum. In addition, the nearby railway station is still also known as Anārkalī Railway Station.

It cannot be unequivocally verified if the legend of Anārkalī is based on facts. In the preface to his drama, Imtiyāz ‘Alī Tāj writes that he is aware of the fact that the history of the love between the beautiful courtesan and the crown prince is just an oral tradition, and it has no base in historical events.²⁷ He set his play in the year 1599, as indicated on the grave in the mausoleum; nevertheless, in this year Akbar was not even in Lahore – he marched with his army towards Burhanpur (currently in the state Madhya Pradesh), occupied the city and besieged the nearby Asirgarh Fort, because Miran Bahadur Shah refused to submit Khandesh.

There is no historical evidence of Anārkalī’s existence, and the authenticity of her story is contested among academics. There is no early information about Anārkalī in the Indian sources. The legend was mentioned for the first time in the diary of an English tourist and trader, William Finch (d. 1613), after he travelled to the Mughal Empire and visited Lahore in February 1610 – only 11 years after the alleged death of Anārkalī. He described the mausoleum and wrote that it was built for the mother of Daniyal Mirza,²⁸ the youngest son of Akbar. He also mentioned that she was immured into a wall because she had an affair with prince Salīm, who later built this tomb for

26 A. Désoulières, “Historical Fiction and Style: The Case of Anārkalī,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* vol. 22 (2007), 67–98.

27 A. Désoulières, “Images of Lahore (Panjab) in Historiography and Cinema (Urdu and English), Myth and Reality,” 91.

28 Daniyal Mirza (1572–1605) was the third son of Emperor Akbar the Great and one of his concubines. He was an Imperial Prince of the Mughal Empire who served as the Viceroy of the Deccan. He was a talented general, connoisseur of art and poetry, and a poet himself. He is said to be the favourite son of Akbar. Daniyal Mirza died in age of 33 due to problems related to alcoholism.

her.²⁹ The next mention of Anārkalī can be found in the work a *Voyage to East-India* of Edward Terry (1590–1660), English chaplain at the English embassy to the Great Mogul, who set off to India in 1616. He wrote that Akbar disinherited Salīm because of his affair with “Anarkalee”, beloved wife of the ruler. According to Terry, the emperor revoked his order shortly before his death and restored Salīm as his heir and the next ruler of the Mughal Empire.³⁰

2.2.2 The plot of Raghavan’s play

The drama *Anārkalī* starts with a benediction – *nāndī* devoted to Pārvatī, which is followed by *prastāvanā*. The *sūtradhāra* emphasizes the importance of this play as it is the first Sanskrit drama devoted entirely to Islamic culture in India. This synthesis of cultures seems to be very important for the author. It is also why he chose Akbar as the main character of his drama. The emperor is well known for his interest and respect for different cultures and attempts for creating a country united in its diversity.

The first act begins with a conversation between Akbar and his ministers. The emperor tries to find a way that would allow all his people of different religions to co-exist in peace. He is very concerned about the hatred against Hindus which is spread by radical Muslims. He comes to the realization that the only way to prevent such religious conflicts is the education of people. That is why Akbar heads for a congregation of religious leaders of all faiths, where he announces his new religion. The next act is concentrated mostly on artistic and literary achievements during Akbar’s reign. The act depicts the evident dissatisfaction of the Muslim clergy with the emperor, whom they suspect of favouring the Hindus. Akbar discusses translations from Sanskrit to Persian made at his court. He also talks about painting and music. At the end of this act, he encounters Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala³¹ – a historical character, a 16th century musicologist from Karnataka, who explains to him details of differences between various Indian music traditions. He is also entrusted with education of Anārkalī in terms of music and dance.

29 William Finch, in *Early Travels in India, 1583 to 1619*, ed. William Foster, (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1921), 166.

30 E. Terry, a *Voyage to East-India*, (London: J. Wilkir, 1655), 408.

31 See page: 77.

Akbar wants to have a trained dancer in his court, and he decides that young maid Nadira would fit perfectly for this task. The girl soon gets the nickname Anārkalī, and from this moment she is called by this name.

The next acts talk about Anārkalī and prince Salīm falling in love. They contain quite conventional scenes of lovers surrounded by nature of beautiful gardens. In the fifth act, Salīm's friend Rahim Khan finds out about their feelings and starts to plot against them. He makes an ally with a noble lady Ismad Begum, who wants her daughter to marry Salīm. Rahim Khan also tries to provoke the prince to rebel against his father and win both: the throne and Anārkalī. They know that the emperor would never allow this relationship to continue. Nevertheless, Rahim Khan wants to achieve one more goal. He does not approve Akbar's liberal policy towards Hindus, and he hopes that Salīm, as a new emperor, would be easier to manipulate. But the prince refuses and heads to see a recital in which Anārkalī takes part. The eighth act presents the recital and contains not only beautiful descriptions of dancers and singers but also a lot of information about traditional music styles. During the spectacle, Rahim Khan reveals to the emperor the secret about the affair between the prince and Anārkalī. Akbar quickly notices glances exchanged by the couple and decides to imprison the girl and sentence her to death. In the last act, a Hindu wife of prince Salīm asks the emperor to free Anārkalī. Touched by her request, Akbar agrees. The consort of the future king accepts the love between her husband and Anārkalī and gives her as a present for his birthday.

2.2.3 Raghavan's play: the legend, the history and the author's imagination

It is evident that Raghavan altered the legend to suit more his vision. The main change in the plot can be seen in the end. The author decided to give the play a happy ending, instead of following the tragic outcome of the legend. This change is mentioned in the *prastāvanā*, and it is explained by the usual absence of tragedy in Sanskrit drama. Nonetheless, there might have been also other reasons. Alain Désoulières, while depicting the most prominent version of the legend, noticed that:

The tragic end of the slave Anārkalī walled alive by order of the "cruel" Mughal Emperor fitted well the Victorian and colonial ideology that needed to justify colonial exploitation by the promise of a civilized and peaceful

rule, especially after the 1857–58 severe and cruel repression. However, the tale contradicted the well-known notion of Emperor Akbar’s clemency and sense of justice.³²

Therefore, no wonder why this version of the story was promoted by Europeans and became dominant.

Raghavan was not the only artist who decided to end his version of the legend in a more happy way. All the films based on this story had a tragic ending until the movie *Mughal-e-Azam* from the year 1960. Its director, K. Asif, decided to portray Akbar as a rigorous, but righteous and merciful ruler. He kept his word given years ago to the mother of Anārkalī when he granted her one wish. As a token of this promise, the Emperor gave her a ring. The woman used it to ask Akbar to save the life of her daughter. The Emperor kept his promise, and let Anārkalī and her mother escape through an underground tunnel. Nevertheless, the dancer had to promise to never reveal her true identity and never again try to meet with Salīm.

In Raghavan’s play it is the Hindu wife of Salīm who saves the life of Anārkalī. The motive of a devoted wife who agrees and even helps her husband to marry another woman can be easily found in classical Sanskrit literature, like for example in *Mālavikāgnimitram*. In this play of Kālidāsa, the future king Agnimitra must overcome obstacles created by jealous chief-consort in order to marry a young and beautiful girl Mālavikā, whom he loves from the first sight. Although initially the chief wife does everything to keep her husband away from the young maid, at the end she gives her to the king and gladly consents to their union.

Another parallel between the play of Dr. Raghavan and the classical drama of Kālidāsa is the importance of music and dance in both plays. In both cases the musical education of the heroine and her dance show are very important aspects. In the ancient play Mālavikā is trained by the master Gaṇadāsa and in the second act she performs a dance. The performance was arranged for the love-sick king so he could feast his eyes on her. In Raghavan’s play the performance takes place in the eighth act, and it is the

32 A. Désoulières, “Religious culture and folklore in the Urdu historical drama Anārkalī, revisited by Indian cinema,” 126.

culmination of the play – Anārkalī sends to her beloved one a secret message through her performance, and the Emperor finds out about the feelings that she and the prince have for each other. This leads to the wrath of Akbar and to the imprisonment of the heroine. Another significant message of this scene is the introduction of traditional Indian dance in the Mughal court, which serves to be another example of the coexistence of the cultures.

Raghavan explains the alteration of the legend's end in the prologue. He states that he wants his play to fit better to the rules of Sanskrit drama which do not allow a sad ending. According to Dr. G. B. Palsule, who wrote the review of Raghavan's play, it was not a good choice. He stated: "One however cannot help feeling that in so doing the author has robbed the play of powerfulness which would otherwise have been its, had he allowed the events to take their own course and to culminate in the catastrophe to which they seem to be moving relentlessly."³³ There is some truth in the statement of Dr. Palsule. The ending invented by Dr. Raghavan, although most probably inspired by one of the best known and most classical Sanskrit plays, seems to be too easy and does not fit well to the rest of the plot. The wife of Salīm never appears on the stage, she is only mentioned by the other characters of the play. Moreover, there is no information about her attachment to Anārkalī or another reason why she would like not only to save her life, but also to let her marry Salīm. It is only implied that she acted as a devoted Hindu wife. One can also notice that it was not explained why Akbar changed his mind and approved the union of his son with a palace maid. In the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, the heroine turns out to be a princess, and this fact allows the hero to marry her. However, in case of Anārkalī, nothing changed nor was revealed. Akbar seems to change his mind only because of the request of his daughter in law.

Other significant change introduced by Dr. V. Raghavan in the plot of his play is the background of the heroine. According to the legend, Anārkalī was a courtesan, but Raghavan made her a palace maid, educated in the art of dance. It is another similarity between this play and the *Mālavikāgnimitram*. In the play of Kālidāsa, the heroine,

33 G. B. Palsule, "Review of *Anārkalī. a new Sanskrit play in then acts* by Dr. V. Raghavan," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 54, no. 1/4 (1973): 301-03. Accessed June 29, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41692219>.

although a princess, is sent to the court of Agnimitra to serve the chief consort. She as well is a talented dancer, and she gives a demonstration of her skills at the royal court.

Nonetheless, there might have been also another reason for Raghavan to change the background of Anārkalī. In the rumours passed by European travellers, the heroine was a concubine of Akbar, and therefore there was a possibility of Oedipus conflict between Salīm and his father. Nevertheless, this motif would be contradictory to the *aucitya*, in this case the suitability of themes in *kāvya*. It is plausible that Raghavan decided that it was not appropriate content for Sanskrit drama. On the other hand, he was not the first author who modified the background story of Anārkalī. Imtiyaz Ali Taj portrayed the heroine as a dancer of low social origin. The same was done by the scriptwriters of the films based on the legend. Therefore, they also tailored the legend to avoid the Oedipus conflict.

A reader of the play of Dr. V. Raghavan may have an impression that the love story of Anārkalī and prince Salīm is just an excuse for presenting certain ideas. A lot of attention is given to Akbar and his philosophical thoughts on different religions and art. The spirit of cultural integration and religious tolerance is genuinely exposed through the whole play. Akbar and his ministers focused mostly on the integration and peace between Hindus and Muslims. However, in the artistic disputes of the Emperor and Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala on northern and southern styles of music, they focused on unity of North and South Indian culture. One can easily notice that although Anārkalī is the main heroine and the title character of the play, she does not appear on the stage until the third act. Earlier, she is briefly mentioned in the end of the second act. It even can be stated that the Emperor is the main character of the play, and the love story is just a pretext to present his visions of a country with many cultures coexisting in peace.

2.2.4 Historical figures of *Anārkalī*

The main historical character of *Anārkalī* is Akbar – Abu'l-Fatḥ Jalāl-a-dīn Moḥammad Akbar, popularly known as Akbar the Great, the third Mughal emperor who reigned from 1556 to 1605. Although his reign was successful on many fields such as military, economics and administrative, in the play Dr. Raghavan concentrated on his religious policy and interests in art. The scholar presented the Emperor as a fair ruler and a protector of all subjects, concerned about their welfare regardless of their beliefs.

Akbar started his reign as an orthodox Muslim suppressing Muslim communities accused of being unorthodox. Nonetheless, later he was influenced by Sufi traditions and his views on faith shifted. During his later reign Akbar made numerous moves in order to preserve the unity of his kingdom and to win support of his subjects regardless of their religion. He was famous for his liberal ideas and tolerant religious policy. The emperor considered followers of different faiths as equal and therefore believed that as a ruler he should treat all of his people equally.³⁴ For this reason, in 1564 he ended *jizya* – a *per capita* yearly tax paid by permanent non-Muslim subjects in Islamic states which implies that only Muslims are considered as proper citizens of the state, while the rest of population is merely tolerated. In his administration, he offered numerous high-rank positions to Hindus. The Emperor assigned positions in his administration motivated only by abilities and competences of officers. Akbar also revoked the prohibition of constructing temples in honour of various gods, which led to building many Hindu temples in whole kingdom.³⁵

Another important mark of religious tolerance of Akbar was marrying Rajput princesses, which led to alliances between the emperor and their clans. Such marriages between Hindu princesses and Muslims rulers happened also earlier, but it was Akbar who made them prestigious for Hindu clans. The wives of Akbar had full religious freedom, which was extended to their relatives, who entered the Mughal court as nobles. They were treated evenly to Muslims and were often given high ranks in army or administration. This situation not only strengthened political ties between Mughals and Rajputs, but also led to integration of cultures and exchange of ideas between them.³⁶

Akbar's religious tolerance was also connected to his patronage of arts. He supported artists of different faiths; therefore, his patronage allowed numerous Hindu

34 J. Kieniewicz, *Historia Indii*, (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1980) 340 – 350, F. Lehmann, "AKBAR I," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/7, pp. 707-711; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbar-i-mughal-india>

35 A. Kuczkiewicz-Fraś, "Akbar the Great (1542–1605) and Christianity. Between religion and politics," *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia* 3 (2011) <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/ochc.1025>

36 S. Chandra, *History of Medieval India*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007), 243 – 244.

art forms, including classical music and dance, to develop and thrive. It also made possible to blend Hindu and Muslim styles, which resulted in emerging new, enriched styles. The Emperor also supported certain forms of Brahmanical learning and commissioned translation of Sanskrit works into Persian.

Introducing a policy of mutual understanding and reconciliation among believers of different religions was both a political move leading to preserve peace in his kingdom and a part of Akbar's personal philosophy. In 1575 the emperor ordered to build at the court of Fatehpur Sikri the *Ibādat Khāna* – House of Worship. It was a debating house for religious disputes in which took part philosophers and spiritual leaders of different faiths. The emperor believed that every religion contains truth and in 1582 he established a new faith called *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*. It was a synthesis of different religions based on their most common premises. The cult never spread outside the Mughal court and Akbar did not tried to force to convert his subjects.³⁷

Muslim fundamentalists and nobles opposed Akbar's policy of religious tolerance and promoting Hindu believers in high ranks of administration. This opposition against Akbar's policy of tolerance was motivated not only by religious reasons, but also by the fear of losing influence and power in the empire. The centralization of power in the emperor's hands and his growing position were yet other reasons why he gained a lot of adversaries in his own country. Akbar also cut expanses spent on religious purposes. In 1580 in the eastern part of his empire a rebellion broke out, and Muslim orthodox leaders declared Akbar a heretic. In addition, after introducing *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* the emperor was accused of heresy by Muslim orthodoxes.³⁸

The image of Akbar as a fair, understanding and wise ruler who respected all his subjects, regardless of their faith and origin, has been perpetuated in contemporary Indian culture. Films like *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008) in a large way contributed to creating such picture of the emperor in the public mind. However, this image can be far away

37 Ibidem, 256.

38 J. Kieniewicz, *Historia Indii*, 349 – 350; F. Lehmann, "AKBAR I," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1/7, 707-711; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbar-i-mughal-india>.

from the truth. Between the court of Akbar and Rajput rulers occurred many tensions, such as the siege and surrender of Ranthambhor fort, which led to the public submission of Rao Surjan of Bundi to Akbar.³⁹

Among historians there are also opinions that religious tolerance of Akbar was motivated primarily by political calculation. He employed it to build a strong and united country, not because of his compassion and esteem for different religions.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, he became an archetype of strong, wise, fair ruler, great administrator and military commander. He is still perceived as a king who stood up discrimination, tried to bridge religious and linguistic divisions and was able to fight back his adversaries, despite contemporary attempts to downplay its importance in favour of Pratap Singh I, Rajput king of Mewar (r. 1572–1597).⁴¹

Salīm, the eldest son of Akbar, is another historical character of the play. His mother was Mariam-uz-Zamani, nowadays known as Jodhā Bāī,⁴² a Rajput princess and a daughter of Raja Bharmal of Amber. Salīm was named after Shaikh Salīm Češtī, a Sufī saint of Češtī order. The sage was a holy man, whose blessing was believed to help Akbar with having a son. Previous children of the Emperor died in infancy. In the play of Raghavan, Salīm is portrayed as loving and obedient son, although in the

39 C. Talbot, “Justifying Defeat: a Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 55, No. 2/3, *Cultural Dialogue in South Asia and Beyond: Narratives, Images and Community (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries)* (2012), 329 – 368.

40 Kieniewicz, *Historia Indii*, 349 – 350, Lehmann, “AKBAR I,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/7., 707-711; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbar-i-mughal-india>

41 Examples of downplaying the importance of Akbar can be found in: M. S. Sharma, “How Akbar went from great to not-so-great,” *The Times of India*, 24.05.2015, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/deep-focus/how-akbar-went-from-great-to-not-so-great/articleshow/47402293.cms> [retrieved on 26.10.2021].

42 The name “Jodhā Bāī” means “Lady from Jodhpur” and it appeared as referring to Mariam-uz-Zamani for the first time in James Tod’s *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, a colonialist history from the beginning of the 19th century. However, it implies that the queen was from Jodhpur, while in fact she was a princess from Amber. Thus, it is likely that it was a mistake, and originally the name referred to Jagat Gosāī, wife of Jahāngir, who was Rajput princess from Jodhpur. A. D. Jhala *Royal Patronage, Power and Aesthetics in Princely India*. (London: Routledge, 2011), 119.

seventh act he is provoked by his friend Rahim Khan to rebel against his father. Rahim Khan implies that this is the only way the prince can win his beloved one, as their union could never be approved by the emperor Akbar. Nevertheless, Salīm rejects this proposal. In reality, Salīm revolted against Akbar in 1599. The Emperor, who was engaged in a war in Deccan, ordered his eldest son to conquer Mewar. Salīm not only disobeyed this command, but also proclaimed himself an independent ruler of Allahabad. Akbar came back to Agra and in 1602 ordered to bring from Deccan his army commanded by Abu'l-Faḡl, who was assassinated by Salīm's order. Nevertheless, in 1603 Akbar decided to officially acknowledge Salīm as his heir and the next emperor, although numerous consultants of Akbar advised him to hand over the country to Ḳosrow Mirza (1587–1622), the eldest son of Salīm. Yet, when Akbar died in 1605, he left the throne to Salīm.⁴³ The new emperor Nur-ud-din Muhammad Salīm, who is known by his imperial name Jahāngir, was concerned about his position. Therefore, when his son Ḳosrow Mirza rebelled and tried to seize the throne, he defeated him, and then blinded and imprisoned him for the rest of his life. As an emperor, he relied mostly on his ministers in the terms of ruling the country and focused on art and pleasures.

It can be concluded that the image of Salīm as an obedient and loving son, which was created in *Anārkalī*, is inconsistent with historical reality. The prince in the play is advised to rebel against his father, but he decided not to do this. However, the history shows that Salīm was able to rebel against this father and that he did it.

Among the Akbar's minister, the most significant is Abu'l-Faḡl 'Allāmī, (1551–1602). He joined the court of Akbar in 1575. He became one of so-called *navaratnas*⁴⁴ –

43 Kieniewicz, *Historia Indii*, 347 – 349; Lehmann, "AKBAR I," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/7, 707-711; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbar-i-mughal-india>.

44 *Navaratna* in Sanskrit means literary nine jewels. This term was applied to nine most extraordinary persons serving on king's court. Among *navaratnas* there were artists, musicians, poets, and scholars. The most famous *navaratnas* are those from the court of the legendary Vikramāditya, who ruled in Ujjain. They are listed in the work *Jyotirvidābharāṇa* attributed to Kālidāsa, who allegedly was as well one of *navaratnas*. The authorship of the text is very dubious and many scholars believe that it was written much later. M. Srinivasachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974) 94 – 111. This term is also applied to nine gems representing nine planets of the Solar System. It is interesting that the concept of was used at the court of a Muslim ruler.

the most extraordinary persons of the court. He was the grand vizier and the author of *Akbarnāma*,⁴⁵ the official biography of Akbar, and a Persian translation of the Bible.⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that in the biography of Akbar there is no mention about Anārkalī. Similarly, *Jahāngirnāma*,⁴⁷ the autobiography of the successor of Akbar – Jahāngir, does not mention the legendary courtesan.

Abu'l-Faẓl had a great influence on Akbar's policy in terms of religious tolerance and sovereignty. He combined different political traditions to create the theory called Padshahat (Badshahat). It means "an established owner", as *pad* stands for stability and *shah* stands for owner.⁴⁸ Padshahat therefore means powerful, established owner who cannot be eliminated by anyone. According to this theory, a sovereign is blessed by god, and serves as his agent. Therefore, he had an absolute power in his kingdom, and the final decision in the most important matters of his country. Nevertheless, Abu'l-Faẓl ibn Mubarak believed that an ideal country should be poly-religious, and none of faiths should have a special status. The sovereignty was above all religions, and the ruler could not discriminate his subjects because of their faith. a king should highlight and promote good qualities of every religion. Therefore Abu'l-Faẓl proposed the idea called Sulh-i kul. It is an Arabic term which means "peace with all," or "universal peace." It was based in the Sufi philosophy and it discusses tolerance and peace between believers of different religions. According to Abu'l-Faẓl, an ideal king

45 *Akbarnāma* is the official chronicle of the reign of Akbar written in Persian. The work was commissioned by the emperor to his court historian and biographer, Abu'l-Faẓl. It followed the *Bābornāma*, the more intimate memoir by his grandfather, Bābor, founder of the dynasty, and his father Homāyun, whose biography *Homāyunnāma* was written by his sister Golbadan Begom. Similarly to its predecessors, it was made in the form of manuscripts adorned with numerous miniature paintings.

46 Abu'l-Faẓl was also an important historian. More on his work in this field see: H. Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), 41 – 61.

47 *Jahāngirnāma*, also known as *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, is an autobiography of Mughal emperor Jahāngir. It was written in Persian and followed *Bābornāma*, *Homāyunnāma* and *Akbarnāma*, memoirs of his great grandfather and father. Jahāngir described his life up to the year 1624. Apart from details of his reign, he included also more personal information about his family and his views on art.

48 Kamla, "Abul Fazl: Governance and Administration," in *Indian Political Thought themes and thinkers*, ed. Mahendra Prasad Singh Himanshu Roy (Delhi, Chennai, Chandigarh, Pearson: 2020), 44.

should not depend on religious persons in matters concerning administration and justice system. The minister was also very concerned about social stability.⁴⁹

It can be presumed that the thoughts of Abu'l-Faẓl not only influenced Akbar as a sovereign, but also were employed in the play of Dr. Raghavan. The main theme of *Anārkalī* is the unity between believers of different religions and different cultures.

It is noteworthy that Abu'l-Faẓl was assassinated by the order of prince Salīm. The assassination took place in the year 1602, so Akbar lost his trusted minister and friend in the last years of his reign. The minister openly criticized and opposed establishing prince Salīm as the heir of Akbar.⁵⁰ Although both Salīm and Abu'l-Faẓl are important characters of the *Anārkalī*, Dr. Raghavan did not speak about their relation and mutual animosity.

One more person described as the ornament of the Akbar's court, i.e. the *navaratna*, became a character of the play of Dr. V. Raghavan. It was Raja Mānasimha I (1550–1614), a trusted general of Akbar. He was a son of Bhagvāndās and therefore a brother of the first wife of prince Salīm – Man Bāī. He led the Mughal army in numerous important battles. Mānasimha as well had an influence on the religious thoughts of his emperor. His father Bhagvān Dās was invited to the court in Fatehpur Sikri in 1582 to discuss *Dīn-i Ilāhī* and was the only one who opposed it. Furthermore, Mānasimha refused to convert to the new religion and remained a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

Abd-Al-Qāder Badā'ūnī (1540–1615) – the first Grand Mufti of India, historian and translator of Sanskrit works, including *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmayaṇa* into Persian is another historical figure of the play. His works on history are one of the most important historical sources on Mughal India. He appears in the second act of *Anārkalī* leading a group of Muslims criticizing Akbar's policy of religious tolerance. In fact, in one of his most important works, *Tarikh-i-Badayuni* (Badayuni's History), he severely criticized reign of Akbar. The first volume of the work is devoted to reign of Bābor and Homāyun, and the second focuses on Akbar's reign up to the year 1595, when *Tarikh-i-*

49 Ibidem, 42-54.

50 Ibidem, 42-54.

Badayuni was written.⁵¹ Abd-Al-Qāder Badā'ūnī disagreed with numerous reforms of Akbar; however, he especially criticized his religious tolerance and his attitude towards Hindus.⁵² To summarize, Dr. Raghavan was historically accurate creating the mentioned scene.

In the play, the person who saves Anārkalī is referred as *bhaṭṭinī* – a royal lady or *mahārājahindusnuṣā* – the Hindu daughter-in-law of the Emperor. Prince Salīm had many wives, among them several of Hindu background. Nonetheless, the wife chosen by Raghavan to save Anārkalī was probably a Rajput princess Manbhāvatī Bāi (c. 1570–1604). She was known as Shah Begum and Man Bāi, and she was the mother of the eldest of his sons, who was supposed to inherit the throne, which gave her an important position. Hence it is a parallel to the *Mālavikāgnimitram* – in the play of Kālidāsa it was the chief consort whose action led to the marriage of the lovers. Perhaps it was Kālidāsa's play which inspired Raghavan.

The chief consort of Salīm could have a good reason to let her husband marry Anārkalī. At Mughal court a king had numerous wives, who competed with each other.⁵³ As the chief consort saved the girl's life and introduced her to the harem, she could count on her loyalty in the future. In the same time, she gained the favour of the prince for herself. Her religious background is also significant in the context of the whole play and its message, which is unity and peace between members of different religions, especially Muslims and Hindu. It is easy to notice that all of the most important characters in the Raghavan's play are Muslims. However, the happy ending and the happiness of all the main characters are possible only because of the action of a Hindu woman. In this way, the amicability and understanding between members of

51 For more about work of Abd-Al-Qāder Badā'ūnī as historian see: H. Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar*, 89 – 110.

52 A. S. Bazmee Ansari, "Badā'ūnī, Abd-Al-Qāder" *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. III, Fasc. 4, 364-365, available online at <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/badauni-abd-al-qader-b> accessed: 27.10.2021.

53 According to Abu'l-Faẓl, to the harem of Akbar belonged around 5000 women. English traveller, Thomas Coryat, who visited India in the early 17th century, claimed that Jahāngir had 1000 wives, while William Hawkins, who also visited the court in similar time, stated that he had 300 wives. H. Mukhia, *The Mughals of India*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 113–114.

these two religions are not only disputed by the characters of the play, but also shown in action.

Man Bāi was not the only Hindu wife of Salīm. The prince was also married to another Rajput princess Mānavatī Bāi (1573–1619), known by her royal title Jagat Gosāi and popular names Jodh Bāi and Tāj Bibi. She was also a very important historical figure, as she was the mother of Salīm’s successor – the emperor Shah Jahān. However, it seems like she was a favourite of Jahāngir for a short period of time. Even her son was taken from her and raised by the chief wife of Akbar, Ruqaiya Sultan Begum. Thus, the position of Man Bāi as a chief consort of Salīm (a mother of the firstborn son and a first woman he married) could be crucial for Raghavan. However, she is not an important character in the play, as her name is never mentioned.

One of the most important characters of Raghavan’s play is Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala. He is portrayed as an expert in the field of music and dance employed on the Mughal court. He is bestowed a task of teaching Anārkalī the art of Indian dance.

Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala was an accomplished musicologist who lived during the second half of the 16th century. He wrote four treatises on music: *Sadrāgacandrōdaya*, *Rāgamālā*, *Rāgamañjarī*, and *Nartananirṇaya*. In the first three works he dealt with music and the related subjects. The fourth work *Nartananirṇaya* provides instructions and information for musicians of all kinds: singers, dancers, and players of musical instruments. Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala was from Satanur village of Bangalore district in Karnataka. He was associated with the court of the Farooqi dynasty⁵⁴, which was the ruling dynasty of the Khandesh sultanate from its origin in 1382 till its annexation by the emperor Akbar in 1601. The musicologist mentioned them as his patrons in his work *Sadrāgacandrōdaya*. His other work *Rāgamañjarī* was written under the patronage of Mādhavasimha, son of Bhagvān Dās and brother of Mānasimha. In the treatise,

54 More about this dynasty see: <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faruqi-dynasty>

Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala mentions those three Rajputs, calling the brothers *two arms of Akbar*.⁵⁵⁵⁶

In *Nartananirṇaya* Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala mentions that he had been writing this book to please Akbar (*akbaranṛparucyartham*).⁵⁷ Thus, the work was probably composed at the request of the Mughal Emperor. The musicologist must have met Akbar while serving under Mādhavasimha. The Emperor and the Rajput prince shared a great number of common interests, such as culture, art and religion. Thus, Akbar spent a lot of time in his company. As a consequence, Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala probably became associated with Mughal court.⁵⁸

In the play the musicologist is introduced by a musician as an author of *Rāgamañjarī*; however, he also mentions that he has a desire to create a treatise on dance called *Nartananirṇaya*, adding that he wants to write it with one purpose on mind: *akbaranṛparucyartham – to please Akbar*. Therefore, he uses the quote from the actual work.

Another important historical figure is Tānsen (c. 1500–1586 or 1589). He was an Indian musician, composer, vocalist and poet who was a significant figure in the North Indian tradition of Hindustani classical music. He was famous for his *dhrupad*⁵⁹ and

55 R. Sathyanarayana, “Introduction,” in Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, *Nartananirṇaya Critically Edited and Translated with Commentary by R. Sathyanarayana Vol. I*, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), 15 – 22.

56 *akbarakṣonīpateḥ svau bhajau (Rāgamañjarī, 1.3d)*, quoted from R. Sathyanarayana, “Introduction,” in Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, *Nartananirṇaya Critically Edited and Translated with Commentary by R. Sathyanarayana Vol. I*, 17.

57 Sathyanarayana, “Introduction,” in Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, *Nartananirṇaya Critically Edited and Translated with Commentary by R. Sathyanarayana Vol. I*, 19.

58 Sathyanarayana, “Introduction,” in Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, *Nartananirṇaya Critically Edited and Translated with Commentary by R. Sathyanarayana Vol. I*, 19.

59 *Dhrupad* is the oldest known genre of major vocal styles associated with Hindustani classical music and also related to the South Indian Carnatic tradition. Traditionally it consists of four sections and recurring refrain. Its themes are typically related to philosophical and devotional subjects, however, some of them were composed to praise kings and patrons. See: V. R. Caudhuri, *The Dictionary of Hindustani*

rāga compositions and for his vocal performances. Numerous legends and stories mixing historical facts with fiction arose around his life, and therefore it is difficult to distinguish history from fiction. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he gained a great fame, which drew the attention of Akbar. When he was already a mature and well-known artist, the Mughal emperor invited him to join his court. In 1562 he accepted the proposal and joined Akbar's court becoming one of the *navaratnas*.

There are more historical figures which were woven into the plot of his play by Dr. Raghavan, such as Rāja Ṭoḍar Mal (1500–1589) – the Finance Minister of Akbar's Empire and one of *navaratnas*, or Abu'l-Fayẓ, popularly known by his pen-name, Fayẓī (1547–1595) – a poet and a scholar, who was the elder brother of Akbar's historian Abu'l-Faẓl. Nevertheless, their roles in the drama are less significant.

Undoubtedly Dr. Raghavan put a lot of effort to make this play historically accurate. In the play we meet historical figures – the courtiers of Akbar, members of his family and artists. However, if one looks closely at dates, things are not so clear anymore. First, the dates inscribed on the so-called tomb of Anārkalī would indicate that she died in 1599. This date was also used by Imtiyaz Ali Taj in his play. Nonetheless, Tānsen died at least 10 years before the year 1599, in 1586 or 1589 (the date of his death is not clear). There is one more argument supporting the theory that the story of Raghavan's play could not be placed in the year 1599. In this year Salīm started his rebellion against his father, so portraying him as a good son would be impossible, but could be treated as an imagined “‘what if’ story”. On the other hand, it is uncertain whether the tomb belongs to the legendary courtesan, or even doubtful if such a character ever existed. Reasoning in this way, Raghavan could have chosen the earlier years of Akbar's reign. Or, regardless of the dates, the scholar decided to mention those personalities at the court who were the most interesting for him.

There is no doubt that the historical background of the play is truly refined. Although the main love story is most probably a legend, the author portrayed historical characters with details and accuracy. He must have used his poetical imagination to

Classical Music, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2000), 33; R. Sanyal, R. Widdess, *Dhrupad: Tradition and Performance in Indian Music* (Ashgate, SOAS Musicology Series 2014) 1–38.

create the personalities of his characters; however it was done on historical bases. The employment of numerous historical figures and incorporation of historical details creates an impression that his narration of the past in the play is consistent and it allows the reader or viewer to immerse better in the plot. What is more, in a way the play has an educational aspect, because it presents an actual philosophy and politic of Akbar. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that, as a Sanskrit play, *Anārkalī* is intended to a refined and educated spectator. There is no doubt that such viewer must already have at least basic knowledge on Akbar, as unquestionably he is one of the most important individuals in India's history. Therefore, a spectator may appreciate the historical details of the play, but probably learns nothing new about Akbar's court.

2.2.5 Possible inspirations for the play

As Raghavan indicates in the preface to the play, although it was published in 1972, a major part of the play was written in 1931 – the same year that Imtiyāz Alī Tāj published the revised version of his *Anārkalī*. Therefore, it is possible that he heard of it, read it, or even watched some films available at that time. Imtiyaz Ali Taj mentioned that at his time the legend of the courtesan was still well known in Lahore; however, Raghavan, who was born and who grew up in Tamil Nadu, possibly could have heard of it only through other media. There are some similarities between the Urdu and the Sanskrit play. For example, in both of them *Anārkalī*'s dance plays a very significant part and is a culmination moment of both plays. Moreover, the heroine is presented as a very talented dancer. On the other hand, the drama of Imtiyaz 'Ali Taj concentrates on the tragic romance, while a large part of Raghavan's work is focused on the background of the story – namely the Akbar's court. This feature of Sanskrit *Anārkalī* distinguishes it from any other adaptation of the legend. Nevertheless, the major difference between both dramas is in fact their endings. It might have been an original intention of Raghavan to change it, but it also might have been inspired by the famous movie *Mughal-e-Azam*, as it is known that the author knew and admired this film. This was the first theatrical adaptation of the legend that presented an alternative ending in which Akbar lets the heroine free.

Another possible source which influenced the construction of the play is *Mālavikāgnimitram* of Kālidāsa, which was mentioned earlier. Raghavan possibly took from it the idea of the chief consort eventually reuniting her husband with another bride

and making the happy ending possible. Also, in both plays there is a significant role of heroine's dance admired by the hero. Other similarity is that the main character – Agnimitra is not yet a king, but a governor ruling under his father, just like Salīm in the play of Dr. V. Raghavan. What is more, the play of Kālidāsa combines history and poetical imagination, as Agnimitra (r. 151–143 BCE) and his father Puṣyamitra (r. 180–151 BCE) are historical rulers of the Shunga dynasty.⁶⁰ Another parallel between the *Mālavikāgnimitram* and the *Anārkalī* is the fact that both dynasties pictured in the plays were not indigenous and struggled with religious differences between them and some of their subjects.⁶¹ Those parallels were without any doubts noticed by such meticulous scholar as Dr. V. Raghavan. Thus, it is very likely that the *Mālavikāgnimitram* was one of the most important inspirational sources for the author of the *Anārkalī*.

In the preface to his play Raghavan mentions two paintings which inspired him to write *Anārkalī*. The first one comes from the Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata* by Abu'l-Faẓl and presents a conversation between the representatives of different religions. The second portrays Jahāngir having dialogue with a Hindu sādhu in his hermitage. Both paintings were used in the play. The first one is represented in the first act, and the second one is depicted in the second act.⁶² Dr. Raghavan also included an impressive bibliography, which was his base to create personalities of historical characters and to capture an atmosphere of Akbar's court. He primarily used biographies of Akbar and Jahāngir, but also he exploited historical works written in Mughal times as well as works of modern historians. Due to this extensive research he

60 A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature Vol. 3: The Early Medieval Period (Śūdraka to Viśākhadatta)*, (Delhi – Varanasi – Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 126 – 129.

61 The King Puṣyamitra seized the throne after he assassinated Bṛhadratha – the last ruler from the Maurya dynasty. According to the Buddhist scriptures, he was a strong opponent of Buddhism, although historical evidence shows that during the reign of the Shunga dynasty, on their territory emerged numerous important Buddhist structures, and according to the inscriptions, the rulers bestowed a lot of money to Buddhist communities. Puṣyamitra reportedly was a Brahmin, and unlike Mauryas, he favoured Brahmanism instead of Buddhism. The Shunga dynasty continued ruling for 112 years, but not much is known about rulers after Agnimitra. Kieniewicz, *Historia Indii*, 122 – 124; Kulke, Rothermund, *a History of India*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 73.

62 V. Raghavan, "Preface," in V. Raghavan, *Anarkali. A New Sanskrit Play in Ten Acts* (Madras: The Samskrita Ranga, 1972), x – xi.

achieved his goal of creating a historical Sanskrit play presenting the atmosphere of Mughal court.

Scholarly preoccupations and personal interests of the author had a significant impact on the play. As it has been demonstrated in Chapter I, Dr. V. Raghavan had a great passion for Indian music and dance, and it is clearly visible due to the choice of characters featuring in the play and the subjects they discuss. The plot also allows to incorporate a dance show with live music while staging the play. Finally, his extensive knowledge of Indian literature allowed him to take inspirations from such distant literary work as *Mālavikāgnimitram* of Kālidāsa and *Anārkalī* of Sayyid Imtiyāz ‘Alī Tāj.

2.2.6 *Anārkalī* as a play for a modern viewer

There is no doubt that *Anārkalī* is a historical play; however, the author also included a message valid for contemporary India. Through this drama, Dr. Raghavan presented integration of two cultures on many levels. It seems like the court of Akbar is a perfect background for presenting such an idea. The Mughal court was a place of meeting of numerous cultures. It attracted Muslim, Brahmin and Jain intellectuals, artists from different parts of the world such as Transoxania, Oxus, Mongolia, Tabriz,⁶³ representatives of various religions and philosophies. During the reign of Akbar, Jahāngir and Shah Jahān emerged and flourished a complex, multilingual culture. Those Mughals bestowed their patronage and support on scholars and artists regardless of their background. They were willing to explore other cultures with respect and great esteem.⁶⁴

The idea of the peace between different cultures is especially emphasised in the moment of the plot when Akbar talks about the harmonious coexistence of people of different faiths or in the passage where he is even accused of favouring Hindus over

63 Sathyantarayana, “Introduction,” in Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, *Nartananirṇaya Critically Edited and Translated with Commentary by R. Sathyantarayana*, Vol. I, 19.

64 See: A. Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2016).

Muslims. The fact that he described a Muslim ruler and his court in the play speaks for itself. This message of the play is expressed in the best way in the *bharatavākyam*:

vāñībhāvukayor ivāstu saḥṛdor yogah śubhaḥ preyasoh

saurājyena mitho vinā matabhidā jīyād idaṃ bhāratam |

madhyejanmamṛtīha kandukasamaṃ vyāhanyamānān imān

*asmān mocayatād ramāpurapatiḥ tyāgapraṭiṣṭhaḥ śivaḥ ||*⁶⁵

Long live this India, with no dissenting opinions and good government!

Let a happy connection be for a pair of tender lovers as it is in the case of music and words full of passion.

May Śiva, whose foundation is renunciation, the Lord of his beloved's abode,⁶⁶

liberate us, thrown here like a ball between life and death.⁶⁷

The message of peace between Hindus and Muslims must be considered with regard to the fact that Raghavan started writing the play in 1931, before the Independence of India and the Partition of British India and he finished it long after these events. After the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, British government employed divide and rule policy underlining differences between religious communities in India and encouraging Indian Muslims to oppose against the Hindu majority. In the years leading to the partition, Muslim political leaders, such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, became more and more concerned about the position of Islam in independent India and started to demand a separate country.

65 V. Raghavan. *Anarkali. A New Sanskrit Play in Ten Acts* (Madras: The Samskrita Ranga, 1972), 87.

66 It is likely, that this line can also mean: "Śiva Tyāgarāja, the Lord of Thiruvapur". The compound *ramāpura* would then stand for Thiruvapur, which is known also as Kamalālayakṣetra. The words *ramā* and *kamalā* can both refer to the goddess Lakṣmī. What is more, both Śiva Tyāgarāja and the goddess Kamalambigai Amman are worshipped in the Tyāgarāja Temple in Thiruvapur, the hometown of Raghavan. I owe this suggestion to Prof. C. Rajendran.

67 All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Nevertheless, some other political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi opposed this idea and opted for united India. Therefore, the initial message of the play might have been connected to Gandhi's vision on unity of religions and a vision of united Indian nation.

In 1972, when *Anārkalī* was finally published, the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India was still a topical issue. There is a long history of religious riots in the Indian subcontinent after the Partition,⁶⁸ which might have inspired Dr. Raghavan to continue his work on this play. The conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India never ceased completely and there is still a necessity for promotion of integration and intercommunal harmony. This makes the drama *Anārkalī* important work even today – almost 50 years after it was published.

2.2.7 Genre and structure

The play *Anārkalī* belongs to a classic genre of Sanskrit drama, which is called *prakaraṇa*. The author stated it in the preface to the play; therefore, there is no doubt about the intentions of the author.

Prakaraṇa is often called the second, after *nāṭaka*, most important genre of Sanskrit drama. Indeed, *nāṭaka* is the highest of the ten main forms, and *prakaraṇa* resembles it in numerous ways. Both genres should consist of five to ten acts, both should contain all *rasas* and include all five *sandhis* (junctures). According to Bhārata, the dominant *rasa* of *prakaraṇa* should be *śṛṅgāra rasa* (erotic sentiment); however, Dhanaṃjaya allows also *vīra rasa* (heroic sentiment). The main differences between these two genres are types of plot and types of characters. The plot of *nāṭaka* should be drawn from tradition or mythology, while the plot of *prakaraṇa* should be invented by

68 The most significant examples of religious riots in India were Direct Action Day, known also as Great Calcutta killings in 1946 (over 4000 people were killed during 72 hours), the massacre of Muslims in Jammu in 1947 (an estimated 20,000–100,000 Muslims were massacred), large-scale killing of Muslims following the Operation Polo – Annexation of Hyderabad, anti-Muslim riots in Kolkata in the aftermath of 1950 Barisal Riots and 1964 East-Pakistan riots, 1969 Gujarat riots, 1984 Bhiwandi riot, 1985 Gujarat riots, 1989 Bhagalpur riots, Bombay riots, the Nellie massacre in Assam in 1983, Gujarat riots in 2002, 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots (at least 62 deaths). R. Khaliq, “Timeline of major communal riots in India”, published on 22.06.2020, accessed 28.10.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/timeline-of-major-communal-riots-in-india/1745756>.

the author. The hero of the first genre should be a god, a king or a royal sage, while the hero of the latter should be a Brahmin, a minister or a merchant.⁶⁹

The main doubt about the genre of the play is its plot. The theme of *Anārkalī* was not entirely invented by Dr. Raghavan. It is a composition based on sources like the narrative passed orally mainly in Lahore, historical facts, earlier literature and films, as well as author's imagination. However, it is a story about a courtesan which is the crucial element and the base for building the plot. On the other hand, it seems like the plot of *Anārkalī* suits more to *nāṭaka*. The main characters of the play belong to royalty and also are historical figures. Therefore, this also suits the requirements of *nāṭaka*. What is more, the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, to which parallels and similarities of *Anārkalī* has been shown earlier, is a *nāṭaka*. This play also combines historical figures of rulers from Shunga dynasty with fictional events and characters.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the author himself classified the play as *prakaraṇa*. Perhaps one of the reasons for it was that, contrary to classical *nāṭakas*, *Anārkalī* is not based on Hindu mythology nor on Hindu epics, but on a legend concerning relatively close events and Muslim characters. Moreover, a courtesan as a heroine suits the requirements of *prakaraṇa*. Another reason might be that the author introduced many changes into the original legend, mixing it with historical knowledge and his own imagination on certain matters. However, a famous *prakaraṇa* ascribed to king Śūdraka⁷¹ – the *Mṛcchakaṭikā* – possibly also combines historical and fictional events. Although the play focuses on the love between Cārudatta and courtesan Vasantasenā, it also tells a story of a rebel against

69 A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practise* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 345 – 346.

70 Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature Vol. 3: The Early Medieval Period (Śūdraka to Viśākhadatta)*, 126 – 129.

71 Śūdraka is an Indian playwright, to whom ascribed are three plays: *Mṛcchakaṭikā*, *Vīṇāvāsavadattā* and *Padmaprabhṛtaka*. He is dated between the 3rd and the 5th age CE (after Bhāsa and before Kālidāsa). According to information from the prologue of the *Mṛcchakaṭikā* he was a king; however, there is no historical information about him. Some scholars speculate that he might be a ruler from Abhira dynasty. There is also a theory stating that the real author of the plays ascribed to the King Śūdraka was one of his court poets. R. N. Dandekar, *The Age of Guptas and Other Essays*, (Delhi: Ajanata Publications, 1982), 121 – 124.

King Pālaka led by a young cowherd Āryaka, who becomes a new king after Pālaka's death. It is very likely that in this story an echo of historical events can be traced. Thus, there could be also *prakaraṇas* with plot echoing historical events.

Anārkalī has a very classical structure of a Sanskrit play. It begins with *nāndī* – benediction addressed to Parvatī, followed by *prastāvanā* – prologue - in which *sūtradhāra* discusses with *kāryadarśin* (superintendent) the play and its importance. Then there are ten acts in which there are clearly seen the five stages of development of the plot – *avasthā*, five elements – *arthaprakṛti*, and five junctures – *sandhi*. In the play along with dialogues there are verses. Nonetheless, one may notice that the main love story starts relatively late. The lovers do not know each other before the fourth act when they accidentally meet in a garden, and Anārkalī introduces herself as a maid. The hero starts to desire to obtain something. Therefore, this is the moment of beginning (*ārambha*) which is the first *arthaprakṛti*. Hence, the introduction of the main thread of the plot happens relatively late. This was caused by giving a significant part of the plot to Akbar, his religious politics and development of arts in Mughal India.

The author followed the rules of Bharāta on incidents which should not be directly presented on stage.⁷² For example, the viewers learn about suicidal attempt of Anārkalī and her miraculous saving from the speech of Puṇḍarika Viṭṭhala, who informs about this events prince Salīm.

2.2.8 Reception of *Anārkalī*

Anārkalī is a play written by Dr. Raghavan that was the most frequently staged by the Samskrita Ranga. According to the official website of the organization its premiere took place on Dr. V. Raghavan Ṣaṣṭyabdapūrti Celebrations (60th birthday) in Museum Theatre in Madras on the 1st of September 1968, and later it was staged six more times. Therefore, it can be assumed that it was the most popular play written by Dr. V. Raghavan. The edition, instead of foreword includes short recensions written by

72 Bharata, *Nāṭyaśāstra* XX.19: "Feats of anger, favour, grief, pronouncing a curse, running away, marriage, commencement of some miracle and its actual appearance, should not be made directly visible in an Act." Translation: M. Ghosh, *The Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed to Bharata Muni Vol 1*. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1951), 358.

the eminent guests who had seen the first production of the *Anārkalī*. They generally praised the spirit of integrity visible in the play and the involvement of Dr. Raghavan and his organization in promoting Sanskrit drama in modern India. Nevertheless, there were also less appreciative reviews of the play.

Dr. G. B. Palsule wrote a review of *Anārkalī*, which was published in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. He as well praised the motif of the integration of cultures and the work in the field of promoting Sanskrit drama made by Dr. Raghavan and Samskrita Ranga. He also appreciated the language and the style, which according to him was very classical. However, he managed to find a few examples of influence of the modern languages in the text. He also noticed that the *prastāvanā* is too long and that the acts are too short (after act three), which resulted in constant dropping of the curtain during the performance.

Nevertheless, according to his opinion, the main shortcoming of the Raghavan's play is that it has two almost rivalling themes: the love story and the cultural integration on Akbar's court. Dr. G. B. Palsule also pointed out that there are too many details presented in the dialogues which are irrelevant to the plot and which are redundant to the whole play. The specific descriptions of places and meticulous analysis of different music traditions are of course historically accurate and well executed, but they drew attention from the main theme, and they diminished the dramatic effect of the play as a whole. Dr. Palsule in his review also considers the consequence of changing the end of the legend from the tragic death of the heroine to the happy reunion of the lovers. According to his statement "the author has robbed the play of powerfulness, which would otherwise has been its."⁷³ Nevertheless, the final judgement of Dr. Palsule of the *Anārkalī* is positive.

2.3 *Pratāparudravijaya*

Pratāparudravijaya, is also known by the name *Vidyānāthaviḍambana* – The Parody of Vidyānātha. While writing this play, Raghavan was inspired by a much earlier text – *Pratapārudrīya* written by Vidyānātha in the 14th century. It is the second-longest play

73 Palsule, "Review of ANARKALI, A new Sanskrit Play in ten acts, by V. Raghavan," 301.

written by Dr. V. Raghavan. It appeared for the first time in Samskrita Pratibhā, VII. ii, 1968, but one year later it was also published separately.

2.3.1 *Pratapārudrīya*

The treatise *Pratapārudrīya*, known also as *Pratapārudrayaśobhūṣaṇam*, written by Vidyānātha is a work on poetics, and it is at the same time a praise of King Pratāparudra, also known as Vīrarudra, from the Kakatiya dynasty. He ruled in the eastern part of Deccan and had capital in Warangal. In the last decade of the 13th century and at the very beginning of the 14th century, the king undertook a series of successful military expeditions. His victories became an inspiration for illustrative stanzas composed by Vidyānātha and incorporated by him into his treatise on poetics. This work is based mostly on *Kāvyaṣaṣṭakā* and *Daśarūpa*, and it consists of three parts: definitions (*kārikā*), explanations, (*vṛtti*) and illustrations (*udahāraṇa*).⁷⁴

All the illustrations depicting technical aspects of poetics and dramaturgy were composed by Vidyānātha and they all praise King Pratāparudra and his military expeditions in a very exaggerated way. They present a local king as the mightiest and the most important ruler in the world. What is more, they are written in extremely conventional and monotonous style. Therefore, although the treatise is a very comprehensive and complete work dealing with the entire field of Sanskrit literary theory and dramaturgy, the endless praise on Pratāparudra makes it difficult and tiring.

As Dr. Raghavan mentioned in the preface to his play, he was introduced to the treatise of Vidyānātha during his MA studies. He remarked that this compact and comprehensive work was very useful to introduce students to the fields of poetics and dramaturgy. However, the endless praises on almost the same subject were monotonous, even for a student so interested in the poetics as him. The exaggerated eulogy also provoked him to mock it by creating a parody. Therefore, during his classes, Dr. Raghavan started composing similar verses, full of exaggerated praises miming the

74 P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, (Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Bnarsidass, 1962), 293–295.

style of Vidyānātha. Later, in 1931, he came back to these stanzas and decided to incorporate them into a drama.⁷⁵

The last part of the *Pratāparudrīya* of Vidyānātha includes a drama titled *Pratāparudrakalyāṇa – The Marriage of Pratāparudra*, which is intended to be a model example for *naṭaka*. It consists of five acts. The play describes a *digvijaya*⁷⁶ of the young prince Pratāparudra. He marches with his army in four directions and conquers numerous countries. When he returns after the victorious expedition, he is crowned as the king and he marries the Earth.

2.3.2 Plot of *Pratāparudravijaya*

The *Pratāparudravijaya* begins with a conversation between two citizens of the capital of Pratāparudra's kingdom – Ekaśilā (Warangal). The king is with his army on a military expedition and the marching soldiers cause so much dust that it covers the Sun with a dark cloud. Early darkness causes many mistakes in the daily routine of all people in the capital. Misled citizens undertake evening activities while it is actually still very early. The dust causes trouble also for gods, as it reaches heaven. The waters of Gaṅgā become muddy as they are filled up with the dust, and because of the darkness Madana is unable to collect flowers. Even Indra and Śacī lose their sight when dust goes into their eyes, and blinded Śacī falls into a pool.

The second act starts in a deep forest, where the enemies of Pratāparudra now live, because he banished them from the conquered lands. There are so many of them that there is not enough wild fruit and roots for Yogins. The dust risen by Pratāparudra's army causes more and more problems to deities, humans and animals. Nonetheless, in

75 V. Raghavan, "Preface," in V. Raghavan, *Pratāparudra-vijaya or Vidyānātha-vidambana. a Parody in four Acts*, (Punarvasu: Madras, 1969), xiv.

76 Digvijaya is a Puranic ritual in which a king displays his sovereignty and authority by conquering all four quarters of the world. The ceremony was usually undertaken by rulers, who wanted to distinguish themselves and their dynasties from the previous rulers. In South India it was practised at least through the Vijayanagara period. C. Simons, *Devotional Sovereignty: Kingship and Religion in India*, (Oxford University Press, 2020), 228.

Amarāvati, the situation is even more serious. The realm of Indra is veiled in darkness. Therefore, demons use a chance to attack, kidnap Śacī and destroy Amāravatī.

At the beginning of the third act, gods ask Śiva for help and he tells them that the only one who can defeat demons is the greatest devotee of Śiva – no one else than king Pratāparudra. Therefore, Mātali, Indra’s charioteer, brings the King to Amāravatī. Pratāparudra greets the gods and approaches the demons. The King emanates a shining lustre (*pratāpa*), and when he is close to demons, this light automatically destroys them.

In the last act, Indra once again loses his sight, because he gazed into the lustre of Pratāparudra when he destroyed the demons. Other gods try to cure him, but then Pratāparudra, now veiled in a soft and cold glory – *kīrti*, approaches them. This glory spreads everywhere like the ocean of milk and cures the eyes of Indra. All the gods gather in Amarāvati and find out that clouds of dust and darkness were caused by the power of Pratāparudra. Then, a celestial voice suddenly speaks and announces that Pratāparudra should be crowned as the king of Amarāvati and should rule together with Indra. After the coronation, the poet Vidyānātha is asked by the gods to pronounce the benediction.

2.3.3 Pratāparudra as the hero of Raghavan’s play

Pratāparudra (r. c. 1289-1323), also known as Rudradeva II, was the last ruler of the Kakatiya dynasty⁷⁷ of India. He ruled the eastern part of Deccan, with his capital at Warangal. The King ascended the throne after his grandmother Rudramadēvi.⁷⁸ The first

77 The Kakatiya dynasty was a royal family that ruled in eastern Deccan between the 12th and the 14th century. Their territory consists mostly of modern states Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and parts of Karnataka and southern Odisha. Their capital was Warangal, then known as Orugallu or Ekaśilā in Sanskrit. Early rulers of this dynasty served as vassals to Rashtrakutas and Western Calukyas until the year 1163, when Pratāparudra I gained sovereignty. See: C. Talbot, “Kākatiya dynasty”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. K. Fleet, G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, E. Rowson. Consulted online on 28 October 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_32934>

78 Rudramadevi was one of a few independent female rulers in a history of India. She ruled as the Kakatiya monarch in the years 1263-1289. She was appointed as the next monarch by her father, king Gaṇapati, who had no son. She probably ruled jointly with him for several years. She undertook successful military expeditions against neighbouring countries and plausibly even died in battle against a Kayastha chief Ambadeva. Rudramadevi was mentioned by Marco Polo in his records. C. Talbot,

half of his reign was truly successful. Pratāparudra defeated the rebellious chiefs who had asserted their independence during his predecessor's reign. What is more, he achieved military successes against the neighbouring countries.

During the second part of his reign, he slowly lost the power he had gained before. In 1310, the kingdom of Pratāparudra was attacked by the Muslim Delhi Sultanate, and the King was forced to become a tributary of the Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji. The king stopped paying the tribute after the death of the Sultan, which resulted in the new invasion of the sultanate in 1318. New Sultan Mubarak Shah again made him pay the tribute. However, after the death of Mubarak, Shah Pratāparudra once again stopped paying the tribute. Subsequently, the enraged new sultan Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq ordered an invasion, which in the year 1323 ended the reign of Kakatiya dynasty and incorporated their kingdom into the Delhi Sultanate. The king Pratāparudra was sent to Delhi and most probably died on the way.⁷⁹

In the play of Dr. V. Raghavan the King Pratāparudra is presented, similarly to the work of Vidyānātha, as the most powerful ruler on whole Earth. But Dr. Raghavan does not stop at the line drawn by Vidyānātha. He takes the praises to the point of absurdity. The king Pratāparudra is portrayed as an incredibly and impossibly powerful, strong, generous, brave man. In fact, the whole play and all characters presented in it have only a single purpose – to highlight the hero and his amazing features.

2.3.4 Genre and structure

The play is described by the author as *vidambana*, which means imitation, derision, ridiculousness, mockery, profanation. Therefore, in this context it can be translated as parody. Although the play observes all rules of Sanskrit drama, it does not belong to any traditional genre. Humour and satire are present in the Sanskrit literature even as early as in Vedic sources, and they have been present throughout the long course of the

Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 133–139.

79 P. V. P. Sastry, *The Kākatiyas of Warangal*, (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1978), 128 – 139.

history of Sanskrit literature in numerous genres.⁸⁰ In the realm of Sanskrit drama, the genres most related to comedy are *prahasana* and *bhāṇa*. Nevertheless, a direct parody of another piece of literature, or better say, certain literary conventions, seems to be a novelty in Sanskrit literature.

The term *viḍambana* is also connected with *ḍombikā* (or *ḍombī*) – a type of dance, in which an actor or an actress does not conceal his own person. He shows this character only through the acting in dance. The usual purpose of such show is to please king or princes – the actress praises them, as she was secretly in love with them.⁸¹

In the preface to the *Pratāparudravijaya*, Dr. Raghavan refers to the *cāṭukāvya* – a court poetry concentrated on praising a royal patron. This type of poetry is often characterized by images of king’s qualities created in a very exaggerated manner. It frequently seems like poet strayed away from the main idea and got lost in the image created to highlight a king’s quality which he initially wanted to describe.⁸² Therefore, in a way, Dr. Raghavan, although refers directly only to *Pratāparudrīya*, ridicules a whole type of poetry.

Dr. Raghavan in the preface to the *Pratāparudravijaya* underlined also another important matter. His goal was to: “make the Kavipraudhoktimātranīṣpanna-vastu into a Lokasiddha-vastu and work out the consequences of the same into a humorous theme.”⁸³ Therefore, the plot of the play explores the outcome of huge amount of dust raised by a marching army as a real incident, not as a poetical figure. The final act also depicts the results of Pratāparudra being recognised by deities as the most powerful, brave and strong; to put it shortly, just the best person in the whole world. The author took metaphors frequently used in court poetry, treated them literary and obtained

80 See S. K. De, “Wit, Humour and Satire,” *Aspects of Sanskrit Literature*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1959), 257–289.

81 See also: A. K. Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature Vol. 1 Literary Criticism*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), 156 – 157.

82 V. Raghavan, “Use and Abuse of Alamkāra in Sanskrit Literature,” *Studies on Some Concepts of the Alamkāra Śāstra*, (Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Center, 1973), 86.

83 Raghavan, “Preface,” in V. Raghavan, *Pratāparudra-vijaya or Vidyānātha-viḍambana. A Parody in four Acts*, xvi.

a ridiculous image. Therefore, he created a humorous story built on absurdities, which are an outcome of grossly exaggerated eulogies.

Dr. Raghavan has undeniably created a truly one of a kind plot for this drama. The storyline is original; however, it is based on historical work and again its hero is the well-known figure in the history of India. Although this is a modern play, the author employed a great number of motifs conventional for *kāvya*. It is especially seen in the first act, in the scene presenting a conversation between Indra and Śacī when the god speaks about the resemblance of his beloved to a creeper. This drama consists of four acts and a short *prastāvanā*. It contains 47 stanzas, all composed by Dr. Raghavan. The author composed verses in many different meters. It can be easily noticed that the playwright had a great knowledge about *kāvya* and Sanskrit drama and their technical aspects, but had also a lot of poetical creativity.

2.4 Some other Sanskrit dramas of Dr. V. Raghavan

2.4.1 *Rāsalīlā*

The drama *Rāsalīlā* was performed for the first time in December 1943 in All India Radio, Madras. It was published twenty years later in 1963 in *The Samskrita Ranga Annual III 1960–62*.⁸⁴ The term *rāsalīlā* refers to the traditional story represented in Hindu scriptures, such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,⁸⁵ describing Kṛṣṇa dancing with

84 U. Satyavrat, “Dr. V. Raghavan as a Playwright,” *Samskrita Ranga Annual XIII* (New Delhi: Samskrita Ranga, 2008), 70 – 76.

85 It is noteworthy that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, known also as *Śrīmād Bhāgavatam* or briefly *Bhāgavata* is one of the most important scriptures of Vaishnavas and one of eighteen *mahāpurāṇas* – the great *purāṇas*, dating back to the period between 800 and 1000 CE, represents a crucial inspirational source for the drama *Rāsalīlā*. As is well known, this *Purāṇa* consists of approximately 18000 verses (it depends on the recension) and discusses various subjects, like cosmology, astronomy, genealogy, geography, legend, music, dance etc. and it consists of twelve chapters – *skandhas* – of which the most significant seems to be the tenth as it is almost one quarter of the whole text. It is entirely devoted to Kṛṣṇa and it tells numerous legends about him, which gained great popularity. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is also considered as one of the most important sources of movements of devotion (*bhakti*) towards Kṛṣṇa. Thus, it is only natural that Dr. Raghavan would resort to this text to religiously and literally ground his drama. See also: L. Rocher, *The Puranas*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 138–151; E. F. Bryant, *Krishna: a Sourcebook*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press US, 2007), 111–133.

Rādhā and other *gopīs* in the forest of Vṛndāvana. The *rāsalīlā* is also a devotional folk dance-drama from North India, mainly Braj region and Manipur. It is based on the scenes from Kṛṣṇa's life, particularly on his plays with *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana and his love to Rādhā.⁸⁶

The plot of Raghavan's play is also woven around the theme of Kṛṣṇa and *gopīs* (milkmaids). The drama begins with recitation of a śloka from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which describes the *rāsalīlā* of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana during a winter night. The god enters the stage playing flute, and the charming melody attracts *gopīs*, who run away from their homes to Vṛndāvana. The girls and young women leave everything - their parents, husbands and children. They hear nothing but the Kṛṣṇa's flute. The next scene describes *gopīs* admiring the god on the bank of Yamunā river. They want to make garlands for him, but Kṛṣṇa asks them to pick beautiful flowers and give them to *gopī* Vaijayantī, who makes out of them a beautiful garland. Kṛṣṇa thanks the *gopīs* for the contribution, and each of them feels important. As each of the girls is sure that she has exclusively conquered the heart of the hero, the omniscient god suddenly disappears in order to punish them for their pride. The next scene concentrates on unsuccessful quest for Kṛṣṇa. One girl, who spent some time with the god, reveals that she felt very important because of it and she asked him to carry her, because she was tired. In this moment Kṛṣṇa disappeared. In the beginning of the fourth and the final scene *gopīs* wail missing their beloved one. After they lost their pride, Kṛṣṇa comes back to them, and they all dance happily together.

The play *Rāsalīlā* consists of four scenes called *prekṣaṇakas*. Its Sanskrit title given in *The Samskrita Ranga Annual* is: *Rāsalīlā nāma prekṣaṇakam – a prekṣaṇaka called Rāsalīlā*. Therefore, the play belongs to the same new dramatic genre as *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*.⁸⁷ This short play does not have any prologue. It begins and ends with a speech of *grānthika* – a narrator. As narrator does not usually appear in dramas, this is a very peculiar feature of this play. *Grānthika* does not only recite the first and the last stanza of the play. His role is more important. He

86 Richmond Farley P.; Darius L. Swann; Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Indian theatre: traditions of performance*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 197.

87 On the genre *prekṣaṇaka* see page: 177.

describes the scene at the beginning of the play, and he sums it up at the end. In this way the author avoided a long exposition and quickly introduces the background of the story.

The *Rāsalīlā* of Dr. Raghavan contains not only verses written by the author, but also some stanzas taken from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. He chose verses from the *Bhāgavata* that suit best the plot he composed. Dr. Raghavan also added indications of the *rāgas* in which stanzas should be sung during the performance. In the *ślokas* composed by the author, the implications are incorporated into their text. For instance, in stanza ‘*jagau kalam vāmadṛśāṃ manoharam*’⁸⁸ the last word indicates a need of using the *manoharī rāga*.⁸⁹

At the beginning of the play Kṛṣṇa is portrayed as a romantic character. He enjoys playing music on his flute and spending time with beautiful girls. Nevertheless, this changes when due to his omniscience he learns about *gopī*’s pride. The picture of him is suddenly altered. He reveals his true nature as an omnipotent god. The *gopīs* can be described as a collective protagonist. Most of them are not introduced by name. They also behave in the same way. They portray souls separated from the god – *paramatattva*, seeking to connect with him, suffering when they cannot be with him because of their flaws, and rejoicing when they can be with him again.⁹⁰

2.4.2 *Lakṣmīsvayamvara*

The one act play *Lakṣmīsvayamvara* was published in the Samskrita Ranga Annual II, 1959. It was produced in All-India Radio, Madras in August 1959, on the occasion of *Varalakṣmīvrata*.⁹¹⁹²

88 V. Raghavan, “Rāsalīlā,” *The Samskrita Ranga Annual III 1960 – 62* (1963), 71.

89 Satyavrat, “Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright,” 72.

90 U. Satyavrat, *Sanskrit Dramas of 20th Century* vol. I (Delhi: published by the author, 1971), 324–326.

91 A Hindu festival devoted to propitiation the goddess Lakṣmī. It is especially popular in the South India. It is performed by women in the sake of well being and good fortune for them and their whole families. On this occasion they make offerings with fruits, sweets and flowers and present them to idols of the goddess adorned festively.

The plot of the *Lakṣmīsvayaṃvara* is based on the myth of the churning of the ocean of milk (*samudramanṭhana*), or more precisely, on its version from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. After the *nāndī* is recited, on the stage appears *paurāṇika*, that is a Brahmin well read in the Purāṇas, who introduces the plot. His role is very similar to the role of *grānthika* in *Rāsalīlā*. He also describes the previous events, which cannot be shown on stage, or staging of which would be too long. He tells the audience the core of the myth. Indra and other Devas were defeated by demons because of Durvāsā's curse. Then Devas decided to ask for help Viṣṇu. The god advised them to make an ally with Asuras and together obtain the *amṛta* – the heavenly nectar of immortality. With the aid of Viṣṇu, who takes the form of Kurma – a turtle – they churn the ocean of milk.

Before the *amṛta* was finally obtained, other products emerged from the ocean, such as poison, which was drunk by Śīva, Candra – Moon presented to Śīva, *kaustubha* – the most valuable jewel given to Viṣṇu, and two beautiful goddesses: Lakṣmī and Varuṇī. Both goddesses attract Devas and Asuras' attention. Demons at first claim Lakṣmī, but gods persuade them to take Varuṇī, and quickly organize *svayaṃvara* for Lakṣmī, who chooses Viṣṇu to be her husband. She is very proud of it and she considers herself as the most fortunate woman in the universe. Meanwhile the *amṛta* is obtained and Viṣṇu orders the rest of gods to drink it while demons are focused on Varuṇī, but they intercepted the jar with nectar. Viṣṇu comes up with a plan to regain *amṛta* and to punish Lakṣmī for her pride. He takes the form of Mohinī – the most beautiful woman - and approaches the demons. Enchanted Asuras cannot restrain themselves, and when she asks them for the *amṛta*, they easily give it to her without any question. Therefore, the nectar is regained for the gods, they drink it and become immortal. In addition, the pride of Lakṣmī is tamed and she becomes more humble.⁹³

The play depicts two contrasting images: the one of the gods and the one of the demons. The demons are argumentative and passionate. They are easily distracted by appearance of two beautiful goddesses, and quickly focus all their attention on them. Meanwhile, the self-possessed gods still work concentrated on obtaining *amṛta*.

92 Satyavrat "Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright,"73.

93 Satyavrat, *Sanskrit Dramas of 20th Century* vol. I, 322–323.

Demons' uncontrolled passion for women is shown as their weakness and it is used against them. Finally, it prevents them from drinking the nectar and gaining immortality.

The *Lakṣmīsvayaṃvara* also includes a similar message to the *Rāsalīlā* – both plays show female figures who think they are special in the eyes of god and are punished for their pride. Another similarity is that both are based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and both are described by U. Satyavrat as “operas,”⁹⁴ because music was a very important part of both of them.

2.4.3 *Kāmasuddhi*

The play *Kāmasuddhi* presents a similar history to the ones depicted in *Rāsalīlā* and *Lakṣmīsvayaṃvara*. It was also published in 1963 in *The Samskrita Ranga Annual III 1960–62*, and it was also performed in the All-India Radio, Madras.⁹⁵

The drama starts with a dialogue between a poet and his friend. They talk about a play recently written by the poet, which is to be staged. The poet reveals that he was inspired by the work *Kumārasaṃbhavam* of Kālidāsa. Then on the stage appears Rati and Kāma and the proper play begins. The goddess is enraged because of her husband's behaviour and he is not able to comfort her. She accuses Kāma of causing havoc in the world, such as arousing desire in ascetics, which he particularly enjoys. The god sends his friend Madhu to cheer her up, but he fails and Rati begins to practice severe penance. Meanwhile, Nandin looks for a person who could endure even more austere penance than Parameśvara, and he finds out that this person is Rati. Parameśvara appears next to the goddess, blesses her, and explains to her that due to her devotion and endurance this form of Kāma, destined to be destroyed by the fire of his third eye, will be reborn with better qualities and able to stay sober. Then they will be blessed with children: Śama and Tuṣṭi. Here the play ends with *bharatavākya* recited by Parameśvara.⁹⁶

94 Satyavrat, *Sanskrit Dramas of 20th Century* vol. I, 322–323; Satyavrat “Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright,” 70 – 76.

95 Satyavrat, “Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright,” 74.

96 Satyavrat, *Sanskrit Dramas of 20th Century*, vol. I, 327–333.

The play *Kāmasūddhi – The Purification of Kāma* is in fact an allegorical drama. The names of the heroes also represent abstract concepts: *rati* – love, *kāma* – passion; desire, *madhu* – spring, *śama* – peace, and *tuṣṭi* – satisfaction. Therefore, it might be as well interpreted in this way: with a help of god, love can tame desire and only then it is rewarded with peace and satisfaction. It also seems like desire not tamed by love has a destructive power. When Rati argues with Kāma, she says that when she is not attached he does not cause happiness, and he is known to people who suffer because of him as *māra*.⁹⁷ This word can mean *death, killing*, but also *passion of love*. It is also one of the epithets of Kāma. However, in the Buddhist tradition the term refers to Māra – demonic king who tempted meditating Buddha and drew him away from the enlightenment. To achieve this goal he used his daughters, who as beautiful women tried to seduce Buddha. His efforts were unsuccessful and Buddha continued his meditation. Therefore, in this context the term *māra* is used as a destructive passion which brings no happiness but misery and even death. Just like demon Māra when he tried to use desire to destroy the efforts of Buddha.

In the play Rati is disgusted by Kāma’s misbehaviour. Although she cannot tolerate his wrongdoings, she remains a devoted wife and undertakes an extremely severe penance to help him. Then she promises to obey her husband when his conduct is changed to righteous and chaste. It is possible that she represents an ideal Indian wife, which would be appropriate for the modern times. She is deeply devoted to her husband and she is willing to suffer for his sake; on the other hand, she is not always-obedient, silent wife, but she judges his behaviour, and she does not stay calm when she does not agree with him. What is more, she makes an effort to change him, and finally makes him a better person. And this is the attitude that brings a reward.

Although the play is inspired by the *Kumārasambhavam* written by Kālidāsa, the core of the plot was invented by the author. Dr. V. Raghavan also decided to impose the allegorical meaning on the story. Therefore, although it is still based on earlier literature,

97 katham nāma tatra śubhaḥ pramodaḥ sampadyeta, yatra na ahaṃ ratiḥ baddhabhāvāsmi | tvam adya kaḥ api unmādaḥ vyādhirtā janānām | mriyante ca janāḥ tvayā parākrāntāḥ, yataḥ manye, tvam api māra iti prathase lokeṣu |

V. Raghavan, “Kāmasūddhiḥ,” *The Samskrita Ranga Annual III 1960 – 62* (1963), 82.

its creative aspect is far more significant than in the case of *Rāsalīlā* and *Lakṣmīsvayaṃvara*, which merely retell older stories in a new way.

2.4.4 *Vimukti*

The two-act-long play *Vimukti* was staged twice: at the 5th Annual Day of the Samskrita Ranga at Dharma Prakash, Madras on December 1, 1963 and again in Madras on September 10, 1987. It was published in the *Samskrita Pratibha*, New Delhi, 1964 (32 pages).⁹⁸ It is an allegorical farce with characters representing abstract, philosophical concepts. The play belongs to the genre *prahasana*, which is often rendered in English as a comedy. This type of play is characterized by a plot invented by the author, two junctures (*sandhi*) – *mukha* (the first juncture, where the desire of the hero originates), and *nirvahaṇa* (the last juncture, where the hero fulfils his desire). Many authors of treatises on Sanskrit drama, such as *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, *Nāṭalakṣaṇaratnakośa* and *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, claim that *prahasana* should have only one act; however, the others provide the statement that it can have more acts.⁹⁹ Therefore, Dr. Raghavan's *Vimukti* undoubtedly fits into the definition of the genre.

The main character – a Brahman named Ātmanātha – represents soul (*puruṣa*), his wife Trivarṇinī (Three-coloured) symbolizes matter (*prakṛti*), and their sons: Laṭakeśvara (the Lord of rascals), Calaprotha (One with running mouth), Śuṅḍala (Long-nosed), Dīrghaśravas (Long-eared), Ulūkākṣa (Owl-eyed) and Kaṇḍula (Itchy) are mind and five senses. Their house is the body and city they live in is the material world. Trivarṇinī's mother – Māyāvātī – represents illusion (*māyā*), and her three sisters: Candrikā (Moonlight), Śoṇitā (Blood-red) and Hastinī (Heavy) are the three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The Svāmin stands for god, and Daṃṣṭrin is Yama or Dharma.¹⁰⁰

The *Vimukti* starts with a prologue in which the *sūtradhāra* and his assistant highlight the allegorical meaning of the play. The first act starts with Ātmanātha trying

98 Satyavrat, "Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright," 75.

99 More in: M. Karcz, "Prahasana, czyli kilka słów o komedii sanskryckiej," *Uroki Upojenia (Mattavilāsa) Mahendrawikramy Warmy*, ed. L. Sudyka (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2018).

100 Satyavrat, "Dr. Raghavan as a Playwright," 70 – 76.

to call his family to organize the household chores for the day. The first one who appears is Ulūkākṣa, whose main occupation is gazing at women. They talk about Calaprotha, who already went to the market to buy some food. Then comes Śuṅḍala telling his father that Dīrghaśravas is currently occupied discussing music with local piper. Ātmanātha is enraged about his sons' disobedience and his wife's absence. When she comes home and she hears critical words from her husband, she gets furious. She yells at Ātmanātha and asserts her position as the one who has the power over the house and over all Ātmanātha's actions. He wants to calm himself outside, but his wife forbids him to leave their house.

Then comes the eldest son, Laṭakeśvara and three sisters of Trivarṇinī. The woman greets them all, except Candrikā. Ātmanātha remarks that he cannot stand Śoṇitā and Hastinī, and in contrast with his wife, he is fond of Candrikā.

Laṭakeśvara starts arguing with his father about organizing the family life and their maintenance. He lets Ātmanātha leave and takes over ordering his brothers to find suitable occupations for themselves. The brothers do not like this idea, and Trivarṇinī, wanting to protect them from any inconvenience, decides to earn livelihood herself. When she and Laṭakeśvara check on their house, they discover that it immediately needs a repair. Apparently, in the whole Maricikānāgarī (the City of Mirages) there is hardly any house in good condition.

The second act starts with Ātmanātha thinking about his favourite sister-in-law at the riverbank in the evening. Then Candrikā comes and they briefly meet because suspicious Trivarṇinī also appears there. Ātmanātha wants to avoid another quarrel with his wife and hides Candrikā in a nearby *maṭha*. Nevertheless, the couple starts to fight and passing people sympathize with the poor Brahman. The quarrel is interrupted by Daṃṣṭrin, who brings orders from Svāmin – the ruler of the Maricikānāgarī. He tells them that the most damaged houses in the city are to be destroyed, and their house will be pulled down next morning.

The baffled Trivarṇinī tries to find a solution to save their house and asks other citizens about the mysterious Svāmin. No one has ever seen him; they argue if he has an authority over the houses in the city, and some of them even deny his existence. Ātmanātha is comforted by a citizen who tells him that although his current house is to

be destroyed, Svāmin will give him soon a new one. Then Daṃṣṭrin appears in the house of Ātmanātha, announcing orders from Svāmin to arrest the sons of Ātmanātha and his two sisters-in-law: Śoṇitā and Hastinī. Two women are to be thrown into river, and boys are sentenced to fast and to serve Svāmin.

Not knowing what he should do, Ātmanātha decides to throw himself into the river, but he is stopped by the old man from the nearby maṭha. He reveals to the Brahman that he suffers from a delusion put in his mind by his mother-in-law. The sage cures him with a mantra, which also affects Trivarṇinī and changes her behaviour. The remorseful wife runs towards her husband, apologizes to him and wants him to marry her sister Candrikā. The sage reveals his true identity – he is the mysterious Svāmin.

The plot of the play clearly refers to the views presented by the Yoga school of Indian philosophy. In the *bharatavākya* recited by Ātmanātha, the allegorical meaning of the play is once again highlighted. Brahman reminds the spectators the philosophical concepts represented by main characters.

īśvaras tvam, puruṣo 'smi, gṛham iha me dehaṃ, sa daṃṣṭrī yamaḥ,

sā bhāryā prakṛtiḥ, guṇā bhagīnikāḥ, māyā ca tāsāṃ prasūḥ |

ṣaṭ putrā mana indriyāṇi, nagaraṃ lokaḥ, vimuktyai tataḥ

sattvasthā prakṛtiḥ, tathā prahasanaṃ dṛṣṭvā janā jānatām ||¹⁰¹

You are the God, I am a soul, the house is body, this Daṃṣṭrin is Yama,

The wife is Matter, the sisters are *guṇas*, and illusion is their mother,

Six sons are mind and senses, city is the world, therefore for the liberation

Matter [must be] firm in goodness. May the people having seen this comedy understand it.

101 Satyavrat, *Sanskrit Dramas of 20th Century*, vol. I, 196.

It is clear that Dr. Raghavan used here a terminology typical for *sāṅkhya* and *yoga*; however, the presence of *īśvara* – god – suggests that he referred to the second philosophical school or to the theistic current of the Sāṅkhya darśana. The character of Svāmin very well represents the *īśvara*. In the Yoga system, god is only a special *puruṣa*, like Svāmin in the *Vimukti* is just an extraordinary man. The god is not a creator of the world, he does not reward for good and punish for bad deeds, he cannot grant liberation. However, he can help a soul and remove obstacles which stop it from attaining *vimukti*.¹⁰²

Trivarninī represents *prakṛti*, as in *yoga* philosophy *prakṛti* consists of *triḡuṇa*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. At the beginning she is fonder of Śoṇitā – *rajas* and Hastinī – *tamas*, but Candrikā – *sattva* only is liked by her husband. This also has a reflection in Yoga philosophy. At the end of the play Ātmanātha marries Candrikā – because *mokṣa* is a state of liberation where *sattva guṇa* predominates, and more *sattvic* souls are closer to achieve it.

The comedic story of a man who cannot cope with his shrewish wife and disobedient, indolent sons, and is additionally harassed by unwanted visits of his sisters-in-law, and who is coursed by mother-in-law has also another, philosophical meaning. It is a representation of a man whose soul is being deceived by an illusion and entangled in the material world, due to his senses which are constantly attracted by some impulses. All he wants is liberation (*vimukti*); however, although he struggles for it, he cannot achieve it alone. Only with a help of god he achieves the liberation after his body dies.

2.5 Conclusion

It is clearly visible that the plays written by Dr. V. Raghavan are firmly rooted in the tradition of Sanskrit drama. His plays observe the most important rules and have typical structures. The most evident proof is *Anārkalī*, which has almost a textbook construction. Nevertheless, he introduced some innovations into his plays. The most apparent novelty is the use of a single language – Sanskrit. Contrary to the rules set by Bharata, it is a medium of speech for all kinds of characters which appear in his plays.

102 Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1997), 162.

As a playwright, Dr. V. Raghavan usually took inspiration from his academic interests. Themes of his plays such as music, dance, Sanskrit poetics or literature overlap with fields of research of their author demonstrated in the Chapter I. There is no doubt that his scientific background influenced Dr. V. Raghavan also as a writer. The scholar blended his poetic creativity with his scientific knowledge and attitude.

Dr. V. Raghavan clearly preferred historical or literary themes for his dramas. Although, in most cases, he did not invent the plots entirely by himself but based them on historical events, literature, and legends, his dramas are original and innovative. In his plays he tried to popularize knowledge on different subjects like Sanskrit poetics, musicology, dance, history, philosophy. The plays are addressed to educated readers or audiences who are able to appreciate them and have the knowledge to identify their allegorical meanings.

3. A brief *herstory*¹ of Sanskrit literature

Although plays written by Dr. V. Raghavan are devoted only to three Sanskrit poetesses, namely Vijayāṅkā, Vikaṭānitambā and Avantisundarī, they refer to the neglected and forgotten for a long time part of Sanskrit literature written by women. As history of Sanskrit literature is usually presented in almost entirely male-oriented way, it might be useful to propose a chronicle focusing solely on its female contributors and presenting the output of the most significant and prominent Sanskrit authoresses.

It must be noted that this is only a brief sketch of the contribution of female writers to Sanskrit literature. There is no doubt that this chapter does not cover the whole subject and makes no claim to be exhaustive and definitive. It is included to present a background of the historical figures, used to create the heroines of the plays *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*.

3.1 Early examples of women's writings in India

Over the centuries Sanskrit poetry was a field dominated by men. Nevertheless, there were women who created literature in ancient and medieval India. First traces of their output can be found in *Ṛgveda*. Among the authors of the hymns, there are twenty-seven *ṛṣis* with female names called Brahma-vādinīs. However, we cannot be sure if they were real authors of hymns ascribed to them, especially that some of the names of these female seers can be questioned. They belong also to deities, mythological figures or even natural phenomena. Aditi, Indrāṅī, Urvaśī, Yamī, Yamī Vaivasvatī, Rātri, Saramā Devaśunī, Sārparājñī, Sūryā, Sāvitrī are names of goddesses and mythological characters. For example: Yamī and Indrāṅī are unnamed wives of gods Yama and Indra, Sārparājñī means the Queen of Snakes and Saramā Devaśunī is a mythical female dog who helped Indra to retrieve cows stolen by demons. Some other names, like Śrī, Medhā, Dakṣiṇā and Śraddhā, are merely personifications of abstract ideas. Uncertain is also the identity of a female seer named Vāc Āmbhṛṇī. The word *vāc* can stand for the

1 Herstory is a term for history accenting the role of women and told from a feminist point of view or told from a woman's perspective. The term 'herstory' was created by modification of the word "history", as part of a feminist criticism of customary historiography, which is usually written as "his story", i.e., from the male perspective.

sacred, well formulated speech of ṛṣis, which enabled them to compose magically effective hymns. Therefore, just like Dakṣiṇā and Śraddhā it would be a reference to a performance of ritual.² *Vāc* can also refer to Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, to abstract Śabda Brahman or to *śakti* as the principle of primeval energy. Nevertheless, some scholars see her as a real female seer, daughter of another ṛṣi – Ambhṛṇa.³

Therefore, there are only nine (or ten, if *Vāc* is also included) potential real female authors of Ṛgvedic hymns. They are Apāla Ātreyaī, Godhā, Ghoṣā, Kākṣīvatī, Romaśā, Lopāmudrā, Viśvavārā Ātreyaī, Śacī Paulomī, Śaśvatī Āṅgirasī. However, there are still doubts if they really wrote hymns ascribed to them. In many cases they are interlocutors in the hymns, and therefore some scholars believe that this is why those hymns were ascribed to them.⁴

The most significant contribution to *Ṛgveda* is ascribed to Ghoṣā. She is said to be the author of two entire hymns of the tenth book (10.39-40), each consisting of fourteen stanzas. Her family had a quite long tradition of ṛṣis – both her father, Kākṣīvat, and her grandfather, Dīrghatamas, composed several hymns praising the Aśvins. Although she was high-born, she remained unmarried for a long time. According to one of her hymns, she suffered from leprosy and because of that she could not find a husband. According to the legend, after she worshipped the Aśvins with her hymns, they cured her condition and she was able to get married. Her son Suhasta also composed Vedic hymns. The first hymn written by Ghoṣā is a devotional hymn praising the Aśvins. The second one is much more personal, because it expresses her intimate wishes and desires: anticipation for a married life. She most probably experienced those emotions herself, as due to her condition, she was waiting for a long time to get married. Nevertheless the aim of both her hymns was to invoke the Aśvins, who cured her disease. Then she got married and had a son Suhasta, to whom the next Ṛgvedic hymn

2 M. Witzel, “Female Rishis and philosophers in the Veda?,” *Journal of South Asia Women Studies* 11(1), (2009), <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/9886300> 3 – 4.

3 S. K. De, “Women-seers in Vedic Literature,” *Aspects of Sanskrit Literature* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1959), 178–179.

4 Witzel, “Female Rishis and philosophers in the Veda?,” 6.

(10.41) is ascribed.⁵ However, it is still not clear if she was a real author of the hymns. Ghosā appears as an interlocutor in the hymns and therefore it is possible that she was quoted by a true author, and the hymns were later ascribed to her because they contain her name.⁶

According to M. Witzel, a female Vedic seer whose authorship is the less doubtful is Śacī Paulomī - the authoress of the hymn 10.159, which belongs to the appendix of the tenth book of the Ṛgveda. It is a hymn of an Atharvavedic character connected with sorcery and which is much different from traditional Ṛgvedic hymns. And even in this case there is no certainty if it was indeed written by a woman.⁷

In the Vedic period position of women in the Indian society was relatively high, and it gradually decreased with time.⁸ There are descriptions in the eighth and tenth book of the *Ṛgveda* of husband and wife jointly performing rituals and reciting mantras together. Some mantras are to be recited jointly by a husband and wife; therefore, women had to know at least some of them. Since they are “necessary ritual participants not only in the domestic but also in the solemn rites”, although they “were barred, at least theoretically, from studying the Veda”, it is self-evident that at least “they were not prevented from hearing it or indeed from speaking Vedic mantras”.⁹ Moreover, women even “can sometimes undertake solemn rituals all by themselves” – for example, Apālā performs a soma pressing in *Ṛgveda* 8.91.¹⁰ What is more, Brahmin girls were educated

5 De, “Women-seers in Vedic Literature,” 178–179.

6 Witzel, “Female Rishis and philosophers in the Veda?”, 9.

7 Ibidem, 9 – 10.

8 A. S. Altekar, *The Position of Woman in Hindu Civilization*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1995), 1 – 33.

9 See: S. W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife. Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 10; 14; fn. 22 p. 261.

10 See: Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife*, 38; 240. H.P Schmidt, *Some Women’s rites and Rights in the Veda*, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1987), 1-29.

in *vedas*, while daughters from Kshatriya families got to know how to use bow and arrows.¹¹

Another trace of knowledgeable women in the Vedic period can be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It contains two stories of women, who were able to engage in philosophical dispute with a sage Yājñavalkya. It seems that they “played an important part in religious debates in ancient India”.¹² The first of them is his wife Maitreyī. Before renouncing the world, the sage wanted to divide his wealth between his two wives. Then Maitreyī started to ask him about the nature of immortality. Yājñavalkya was pleased with her curiosity and gave her an explanation. The second woman who appeared in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* as a seeker of the truth is Gārgī Vācakanvī, daughter of the sage Vacaknu. She participated in brahmodya, a philosophic debate organized by King Janaka of Videha as an official representative of the *Ṛgveda* tradition with her fellow clansman Dṛpta Bālāki. During such discussion, she challenged the sage Yājñavalkya (who represents the White Yajurveda tradition) and questioned him so profoundly that he stopped her by saying that if she asks too many questions her head would fall off. Nevertheless, she still sought for opportunity to ask two more questions. At the end of the philosophical debate, she acknowledged her defeat,¹³ but it is clear that she advances a hypothesis – namely that “even brahman may ultimately be derived from something else” – which later *upaniṣads* such as *Śvetāśvatara-* and *Kaivalya-Upaniṣads* will explore with speculative success.¹⁴

Another example of women’s writing in ancient India is the *Therīgāthā*. It is the first in India (and perhaps also in the world) collection of works written exclusively by women. The word *therī*, which literary means ‘elder’ in Pali, is a honorific term for a Buddhist nun who is at least 10 years after her *upasampadā* – the rite of higher ordination. This anthology, which title means *Songs of the Elder Nuns*, dates back to the times of Buddha, as some of these nuns were probably his contemporaries. Therefore,

11 A. K. Singh, *Education & National Character* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2008), 26.

12 S. Cohen, *Text and Authority in the Older Upaniṣads* (Leiden: Brill 2008), 83.

13 De, “Women-seers in Vedic Literature,” 178–179.

14 See: Cohen, *Text and Authority in the Older Upaniṣads*, 290.

the poems were composed around 5th – 4th century BCE, but they were written down much later, probably around the year 80 BCE. The songs were composed not in Sanskrit, but in Magadhi Prakrit and then written down in Pali. The collection includes 522 stanzas which were composed by elder Buddhist nuns. They are ascribed to 101 nuns, of whom three are unnamed. They are mostly testimonies describing how their lives were changed due to Buddha's teaching, and telling about daily lives of their authors.¹⁵ The poems are autobiographical writings of nuns concentrating on attaining the enlightenment. They are unique accounts of women in early Buddhist tradition and present numerous different women's roles in ancient Indian society.¹⁶ It is also probably a unique example of a group of texts written by women and included in the official religious canon.¹⁷

The *Therīgāthā* is accompanied by a commentary *Paramatthadīpanī* by Dhammapāla. It reveals the history of the authoresses, providing information also about their past lives and their spiritual journeys. It also describes circumstances of how they attained enlightenment. The same commentary also contains information about the authors of *Theragāthā* – a similar composition written by male elder Buddhist monks.¹⁸

3.2 Some early Indian poetesses writing in vernacular languages

The input of female writers can be also found in the earliest example of South Indian Literature, collectively known as the Sangam (*caṅkam*) literature. It is a group of texts written in Tamil plausibly between 3rd century BCE and 3rd century CE,¹⁹ and compiled

15 K. Lalita, S. Tharu, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* Vol. 1, (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1991), 65.

16 J. Gruszevska, "Pieśni mniszek (Therīgāthā) – Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze", *Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych*, Kwartalnik 3/2016, 73.

17 K. R. Blackstone, *Women in the footsteps of the Buddha. Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā*, (Delhi: Routledge, 2000), 1.

18 Lalita, Tharu, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* Vol. 1, 65.

19 According to Kamil Zvelebil, a more accurate date for the origin of the Sangam Literature is between 100 BCE and 250 CE (K. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1974) 9–10 with footnotes). H. Tiekens stated that the Sangam poets described the world of so-called Sangam period (which he dated between 200 BCE and 500 CE), but they lived after this period. See:

into anthologies around the mid 8th century CE. Sangam includes 2381 poems, and 154 of them were written by women. At least 30 of 473 poets were females; however, the actual number of poetesses who contributed to the Sangam literature may be higher, as about 102 poems are anonymous.²⁰ The Sangam literature can be divided into two categories: *akam*, whose primary theme is love, and *puṛam* – which is mostly about war. Both types of poems present different images of women. In the first one, women are depicted as young, beautiful and ready for love. The other one portrays them usually as mothers of grown up sons, widows or courtesans. Female poets contributed to both of those groups of poems.²¹

The greatest poetess of Sangam literature is Auvaiyār, who wrote 59 poems – 33 of them belong to *puṛam* type, and 26 to *akam*. According to the legend, she was a court poetess of the rulers of the Tamil country. A great number of her poems are about a chieftain Vallal Athiyamān Nedumān Añji. She is said to travel across the country from one village to another composing songs for pleasure of farmers and other villagers.

When the literatures in vernacular Indian languages started to flourish in the Indian Subcontinent, women as well started to take part in those literary traditions. Starting with Kāraikkāl Amamaiyār (born as Punītavatī) women continued to participate in the *bhakti* movement and compose devotional poetry in regional languages. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyaṛ literary means *The Mother from Karaikal*, which is the place she was born in. The poetess lived in the 6th century in South India, and she was one of Nayanmars (*nāyaṇmār*)²² – a group of 63 saints and poets devoted to Śiva. Although Kāraikkāl Amamaiyār married a rich man, her life was not happy – he mistreated her

H. Tiekens, “Old Tamil Caṅkam Literature and the So-Called Caṅkam Period.” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 40, no. 3 (October 2003): 247–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001946460304000301>.

20 U. Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th century* (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008), 27.

21 Lalita, Tharu, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* Vol. 1, 65.

22 Nayanmar is a collective term for 63 saints and poets devoted to Śiva who lived in Tamil Nadu during the 3rd to 8th centuries CE. They profoundly influenced *bhakti* movement in South India. Nayanmars repudiated caste, sect and creed in the sphere of society and worship. Their devotional output is collected in anthologies called *Tirumurai*. S. N. Sadasivan, a *Social History of India*, (New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2000), 150–151.

and finally left her. Then she was wandering from one temple to another until she reached Tiruvalangadu where she obtained liberation. In her poetry she presents herself as a humble devotee of Śiva, who was her only joy in life, as from the world she got mostly suffering and pain.²³ Apart from Kāraikkāl Amamaiyār, among Nayanmars there were two other women: Maṅkaiyarkkaraciyaṅ and Icaiṅṅaiyār.

Among Alvars (*ālvār*),²⁴ twelve saints-poets from South India who were devoted to Viṣṇu, there was also one woman – Āṅṅāḷ. The poetess was known also as Godādevi, Nachiyar or Kothai and she lived most probably in the 8th century.²⁵ According to a legend, she was found in a tulusi grove by Periyālvār – another Alvar who became her foster father. She became to be recognized as an incarnation of Viṣṇu's consort. Traditionally, she was married to Viṣṇu and absorbed into his icon in the Srirangam Temple.²⁶ Āṅṅāḷ is worshipped as a goddess in numerous temples in South India. She is considered as an incarnation of Lakṣmī or Bhūdevī.

Āṅṅāḷ is often recognized as the most important among the Alvars. According to the tradition, she could not stand marrying a man and vowed to marry her beloved god.²⁷ She is the authoress of two literary works, both of which express rich philosophical, religious, and aesthetic content. The first of her works is *Tiruppāvai* –

23 S. K. De, *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399: From Courtly to the Popular*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), 31 – 32.

24 As is well known, the Alvars were group of twelve poets–saints who lived between the 6th and the 10th century CE in South India. Many of them travelled from one temple to another singing hymns praising Viṣṇu. They came from various social strata. Their literary output consists of four thousand songs written in Tamil. The poems of the Alvars, have been collected into compilation titled *Nāḷāyira Divya Prabandham*. The hymns are not arranged in the chronological order but are divided into four sections each containing about one thousand verses. V. Narayanan “Tamil Nadu: Weaving Garlands in Tamil: The Poetry of the Alvars,” in *Krishna. A Sourcebook*, ed. E. F. Bryant (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 187 – 204.

25 K. N. Chitnis, *Medieval Indian History*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2003), 116.

26 G. D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131 – 132.

27 V. Narayanan “Tamil Nadu: Weaving Garlands in Tamil: The Poetry of the Alvars,” in *Krishna. A Sourcebook*, ed. E. F. Bryant (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 187 – 204.

a poem consisting of 30 hymns in which the poetess imagines herself as a *gopī* who passes time with Kṛṣṇa, dances for him and exchanges garlands with him. This is a symbolic act of marriage in which she refuses to marry a man and devotes her life and all her love to worshipping the god. The scene of transformation of a devotee into a bride longing for love of her lover became central to the Vaishnava tradition and even male devotees took the role of the bride.²⁸ The second literary work of Āṇṭāl is *Nācciyār tirumōḷi* which means: *Sacred Sayings of the Goddess*. It consists of 143 hymns narrating different stages of love for the god. The main part of the work describes various ways she tries to unite with Kṛṣṇa. The poetess is overwhelmed by desire and yearns for the love of the god. In some of these poems she expresses her feelings and devotion in sensual, erotic way.²⁹

Poetry written by women in vernacular languages flourished also outside of Tamil Nadu. In the 12th century some poetesses influenced by *bhakti* movement appeared also in Karnataka. This process was closely related to the *vīraśaiva* movement also known as the *liṅgayat* movement. It contradicts domination of Brahmanas and discrimination against other social strata. Although Lingayats accept certain Vedantic principles, they reinterpreted them and rejected the sanctity of the *vedas* and the authority of Brahmanas. They renounced castes, pilgrimages and sacrifices. Lingayats recognize Śiva as the eternal principle, self-existing and beyond all attributes. The only image of Śiva which they could worship was a *liṅga* – depiction of the god in a pillar form which represents phallus, but also the cosmos. It is a symbol of fertility, life and regeneration.³⁰

One of early poetesses of Kannada literature was Akka Mahādēvi (c.1130–1160), known sometimes as Mahadeviyakka. She was born in Udatadi, a village in present state Karnataka, and was probably introduced to *vīraśaiva* movement at a young age. According to a popular legend, one day she was spotted by a local king Kauśika, who

28 M. Ramanan, “Āṇṭāl’s ‘Titupāvai,’” *Journal of South Asian Literature* 24, no. 2 (1989): 51-64. Accessed September 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40873090>.

29 Ramanan, “Āṇṭāl’s ‘Titupāvai,’” 52.

30 R. Dalal, *Hinduism: An Alphabetical Guide*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2010), 223 – 224.

desired to marry her. However, he was a Jain, and therefore she could not agree to this marriage. Some of her poems tell the story of her rejecting the proposal in a dramatic way. By refusing marrying Kauśika, she also resigned from spending her life in luxury. As a true ascetic, she wandered naked from temple to temple across Karnataka searching for her divine lover. Some legends say that her whole body became covered by hair to protect her. Harassed by men along her way, she finally reached Kalyana. There she met two *vīraśaiva* saints: Basava and Allama, about whom she composed numerous hymns. Their philosophy also influenced her beliefs, which is reflected in her poetry. From there she travelled north until she reached Kadali in Srisailam where she died.³¹

The poetry composed by Akka Mahādēvi belongs to a genre called *vacana*. They are religious lyrics wrote in Kannada. The *vacanas* evolved in the 11th century and became widely popular in the 12th century. They are written in simple and vivid rhythmical prose, and their goal is to popularize religious and philosophical truths.³² The *vacanas* have form of brief paragraphs with epigrammatic and allusive theme.³³

About 350 poems are attributed to Akka Mahādēvi. The works of her authorship can be traced through a specific *aṅkita*. It is a particular term many poets of the *bhakti* movement used to address their god. Akka Mahādēvi referred to Śiva as *Cennamallikārjuna*. It can be translated in various ways, such as *Lord, white as jasmine* or *Mallika's beautiful Arjuna*.³⁴ The poems of Akka Mahādēvi often tell about her alienation – from society, material world, social expectations toward women, relations

31 Lalita, Tharu, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* Vol. 1, 79 – 79.

32 R. Narasimhacharya, *History of Kannada Literature*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988), 17.

33 E. P. Rice, *A History of Kannada literature*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, Oxford university press, 1921), 56.

34 The first translation was proposed by A. K. Ramanujan, the second by S.J. Tharu and K. Lalita, who believe that it is more accurate. S.J. Tharu, K. Lalita, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present Vol. 1*, (New York: The Feminist Press at The City Univeristy of New York, 1991), 78.

with men which are unsatisfying for her. She described her union with Śiva in a very erotic way.³⁵

Another lady who contributed to vernacular religious literature was Tirukkōḷūr penpiḷḷai (“the woman from Tirukkōḷūr,” c. 12th). She was an authoress of the *Tirukkōḷūr penpiḷḷai rahasyam*, a work very popular among the *śrīvaiṣṇavas*. Among this community, although it was very egalitarian towards women, emerged only few works written by female authors. This text consists of rhetorical questions asked by an unknown woman in reply to Rāmānuja’s question about why she was leaving the sacred town of Tirukkōḷūr, which he wanted to reach. The authorship and date of *Tirukkōḷūr penpiḷḷai rahasyam* is uncertain; however, the *śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition ascribes it to a woman.³⁶

3.3 Classical Sanskrit poetesses

Women continued to participate in the literary tradition of India also in the epoch when *kāvya* has flourished on the Indian Subcontinent. Sanskrit literature in early medieval period was a field definitely dominated by men. Even female characters in Sanskrit dramas as a rule do not usually speak Sanskrit. This refined language was reserved for high class characters, and women, children and men of low birth use the colloquial language – Prakrit. According to Bharata, these were only women from the elites such as queens, courtesans and some female artists as well as goddesses and *apsarās*. However, in Kālidāsa’s play even *apsarās* like Menakā and Ūrvaśī and queens or princesses like Mālavikā and Dhāriṇī speak only Prakrit. Therefore, according to Shalini Shah, it can be said that Sanskrit poetry of that period was a gendered literature, and it was written for men and by men. She also points out that there is no female equivalent

35 V. Ramaswamy, "Rebels, Mystics or Housewives? Women in Virasaivism." *India International Centre Quarterly* 23, no. 3/4 (1996): 190-203. Accessed September 7, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23004619>.

36 S. Anandakichenin, “The Female Voice and the Crossing of the Boundaries of Scholarship: a Note on the Rahasyam of the Lady from Tirukkōḷūr, with a Complete, Annotated Translation,” *Cracow Indological Studies* Vol. XXII, No. 1 (2020), 95–134 <https://doi.org/10.12797/CIS.22.2020.01.05>

to terms *rasika* and *sahṛdaya*.³⁷ Nevertheless, some women managed to create poetry, which was well received and widely appreciated. Rājaśekhara in the tenth *adhyāya* of his treatise on poetics *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsa* mentioned that women can be poets as well as men:

*puruṣavat yoṣito 'pi kavībhavyeṣu | saṁskāro hy ātmani samavaiti, na
straiṇaṁ pauṛuṣam vā vibhagam apekṣate | śrūyante dṛśyante ca
rājaputrayo mahāmātyaduhitaro gaṇikāḥ kautukibhāryās ca
śāstraprahatabuddhayaḥ kavayaś ca*³⁸

Women can be poets as well as men. Mental impressions are gathered in the soul, there is no need to divide men and women. There are heard and seen princesses, daughters of ministers, courtesans, and wives of artists, who are learnt and accomplished in science and who are poetesses.

From this passage it is clear not only that the theorist did not discriminate women's abilities to write literature but also that there were numerous female poets writing in Sanskrit. According to Rājaśekhara, Sanskrit poetesses in general belonged to higher strata of society; however, this phenomenon was not only restricted to royal courts.

Although in this period girls' education was not as common as in the Vedic times, the richest and most cultured aristocratic families were still providing education for their daughters. Girls were not allowed to study Vedic literature; however, they learned Sanskrit and Prakrit and knew works composed in these languages. They were also studying fine arts like painting and dancing, as well as skills useful in running a household. Women's education was usually finished before they got married; however, some of them managed to continue learning even after the wedding. Some of them became poetesses and composed poetry in Prakrit as well as in Sanskrit. Certain educated women, like Avantisundarī, the wife of Rājaśekhara, were also interested in

37 Sh. Shah, "Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7th to 13th Centuries C.E.," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 2008, 5 – 6.

38 Rājaśekhara, *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsa*, ed. C. D. Dalal, R. A. Sastry, (Baroda: Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 1934), 53, lines 14 – 16.

literary criticism. There were even women who dealt with medicine, like Rūsā, whose medical treatise was translated into Arabic.³⁹

Very little is known about the lives and output of Sanskrit poetesses who wrote kāvya. There are about forty names of Sanskrit poetesses and about 200 poems attributed to them. A great number of their works were lost or remained only in pieces. Some of their single verses have survived quoted in several treatises on Sanskrit poetics, where they are used as examples to illustrate literary figures, and in anthologies collecting the most beautiful stanzas. However, there are several issues connected with these verses. First, their genre cannot be determined. It is impossible to determine if preserved verses were independent single-stanza poems called *muktaka*, or if they were parts of bigger works which were picked by authors of anthologies because of their outstanding literary merits. Another problem is that particular stanzas attributed to women in some anthologies were ascribed to different authors or cited as anonymous in other collections. Since they were also attributed to the male poets, in many cases we cannot be sure if they were really written by women. Shalini Shah points out several cases in which the authorship is rather dubious. One of such verses is the one which starts with the words *gate premābandhe* attributed to Vijjikā by Vallabhadeva in *Subhāṣitāvalī*. Śrīdhardāsa also quoted this verse in *Saduktikarṇāmrta*, but he gave credits for it to Amaru. It is also compiled in *Amaruśataka*, of course attributed to Amaru.⁴⁰

The fact that verses of women writers were quoted in many anthologies and treatises on poetics proves that their literary skills and creativity were valued by the theoreticians of Sanskrit literature. Poetesses were also complimented by their male counterparts. In anthology *Sūktimuktāvalī* there are verses written by Rājaśekhara which praise Sanskrit and Prakrit poetesses. He states that Vijayānkā (who is by some scholars

39 A. S. Altekar, *Education in Ancient India*, (Benares: Nand Kishore & Bros, 1944), 204 – 224.

40 Shah, “Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7th to 13th Centuries C.E.,” 2 – 3.

It must be noted that there are different recensions of *Amaruśataka*. There are four different versions of the anthology: Bengali, southern Indian, western Indian and a mixed version. They have different length, as they contain from 96 to 115 stanzas (only about half of them is present in all versions). See: S. Lienhard, a *History of Classical Poetry*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1984), 92.

identified with Vijjā) is the Sarasvatī of Karnāṭa and she is second to Kālidāsa in the *vaidarbhī* style.⁴¹ He also praised Śīlābhāṭṭārikā because she commanded the *pāñcālī* style in such degree as famous poet Bāṇa⁴².

śabdārthayoḥ samaḥ gumphaḥ pāñcālī rītiḥ ucyate |

śīlābhāṭṭārikāvāci bāṇoktiṣu ca sā yadi||

ke vikaṭānitambena girāṃ gumphena rañjitāḥ |

nindanti nijakāntānāṃ na maugdhyamadhuraṃ vacaḥ ||

sarasvatīva karnāṭī vijayānkā jayati asau |

*yā vaidarbhaḡirāṃ vāsaḥ kālidāsād anantaram ||*⁴³

It is said [that] the *pāñcālī* style strings equally sound and meaning.

If so, [it is present] in Śīlābhāṭṭārikā's speech and in Bāṇa's words.

Are those charmed by the garland of Vikaṭānitambā's speech,

Do not ridicule the naive sweetness of their loved ones' speech

Like Sarasvatī, she – Vijayānkā of Karnāṭa, triumphs,

the one who is the abode of the *vaidarbhī* style, just after Kālidāsa.

It is clear that Rājaśekhara appreciated the output of the poetesses. He compared Śīlābhāṭṭārikā and Vijayānkā to the most famous and renowned Sanskrit poets. Especially the Vijayānkā of Karnāṭa received extraordinary praise. Not only was she

41 For detailed analyse of *vaidarbhī* and *pāñcālī* styles see page: 202.

42 Eminent Sanskrit poet, dramatist, and a prose writer. He was a court poet of North Indian King Harṣavardhana (the 7th century). One of his best-known works is *Harṣacarita* – the biography of his patron king Harṣa. A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol.4, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994). 1–51.

43 Bhagadatta Jalhaṇa, *Sūktimuktāvalī*. ed. E. Krishnamacharya, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 47, verse 91 – 93.

compared to Kālidāsa, but also, according to Rājaśekhara, she mastered the *vaidarbhī* style, which was believed to be superior.

Rājaśekhara was not the only one who noticed and praised Sanskrit poetesses. Another verse, which is attributed to poet Dhanadadeva, mentions Śīlābhāṭṭārikā, Vijjā, Mārulā and Morikā who were skilled in writing *kāvya*, and therefore deserve great respect.⁴⁴

Śīlābhāṭṭārikā is believed to be the most prominent of Sanskrit poetesses. Her works were collected and cited by numerous important compilers of Sanskrit literature. Therefore, as many as forty-six poems of her authorship have been preserved. She lived probably in the 9th century, but little is known about her life. In one of her poems she mentions river Narmada. Hence, at least a part of her life she must have spent in its vicinity. One of her verses describes a king, whom J. B. Chaudhuri identifies with king Bhoja,⁴⁵ which also suggests that she lived in North India. There is also a theory identifying her with 8th century queen Śīlā Mahādevī, wife of king Dhruva from the Rashtrakuta dynasty.⁴⁶ However, there is no compelling evidence to support these assumptions.⁴⁷ Her verses were frequently quoted by major anthologists and

44 S. Banik Pal, “Some Women Writers and Their Works in Classical Sanskrit Literature: a Reinterpretation,” in *Asian Literary Voices: From Marginal to Mainstream*, ed. Philip F. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 150.

45 Bhoja (reigned c. 1010–1055 CE) was a king from the Paramāra dynasty. His kingdom was centred around the Malwa region in central India. He was a patron of arts, literature, and sciences, and an expert in Sanskrit literature. Numerous literary works are attributed to him, among which the most important are *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* and *Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharaṇa*. For more information see: *M. Singh Bhoja Paramāra and His Times*, (Delhi, Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1984) W. Cox, “Bhoja’s Alternate Universe,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22, no. 1 (2012): 57–72.

46 The Rashtrakuta dynasty was a royal family ruling large parts of the Indian subcontinent between the 6th and 10th centuries.

47 P. B. Padma, *The Position of Women in Mediaeval Karnataka*. Prasaranga, University of Mysore, 1993), 169.

theoreticians of literature. They are not only beautifully written and melodious but also realistic and marked with psychological insight.⁴⁸

The poem which starts with words *yaḥ kaumāraharaḥ* is one of the most known verses written by Śilābhaṭṭārikā.

yaḥ kaumāraharaḥ sa eva varas tās candragarbhā niśāḥ |
prnmīlannavamalātīsurabhayaḥ prauḍhāḥ kadambānilāḥ ||
sā caivāsmi tathāpi cauryasuratavyāpāralīlāvidhau |
*revārodhasi vetasītarutale cetaḥ samutkaṅṭhate ||*⁴⁹

For this is the same bridegroom, who took away my virginity, these are the same nights of spring,

and these are the strong winds from the kadambas, scented by the opening white jasmynes,

And I am the same. Yet for the rite of the play of engaging in stolen lovemaking

on the bank of the Revā under the cane trees my thoughts are eager.⁵⁰

The speaker of this poem is a woman who recalls the beginnings of her marriage. Her memories seem to be very beautiful and happy. Although later they both find themselves in the same place, she doesn't feel the same way. Time spent with her husband doesn't give her as much joy as previously. Now, she is longing for secret meetings with somebody else. This verse provides a vivid nature depiction. It is not necessarily an abstract situation created by the author, but it seems to have some kind of personal

48 J. B. Chaudhuri, *The Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1941), XXXV.

49 Bhagadatta Jalhaṇa, *Sūktimuktāvalī*. ed. E. Krishnamacharya, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 301, verse 9.

50 Translation A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 4. *The Ways of Originality*, (Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 93.

touch.⁵¹ Supriya Banik Pal presents yet another interpretation, which was put forward by 15th century Bengali philosopher Caitanya Mahāprabhu: “He sees the speaker’s anxiety as a metaphor for the yearning of the ordinary person for achieving unity with the Supreme Lord – the Absolute, or what has been considered the controlling principle of life.”⁵²

Two of Śilābhaṭṭārikā’s verses describe a woman who sends a message to her lover through a maid.⁵³ The heroine is separated from her beloved, and because of incoming spring, she suffers even harder. Hence, she wants to meet with her lover, and she sends her maid to him, in order to arrange it. In the first verse, she instructs the girl about the appointment. Because it is a secret message, the maid is going to find the man in an isolated, dark place. From her speech, it is clear that the heroine is anxious about the meeting. She is afraid about safety of the girl and tells her to be brave and quickly come back. What is more, the heroine is jealous. She knows that her maid is a young, and probably a beautiful girl, and she suspects that it will appeal to her lover, who also is a young and fickle man. Hence, she trusts neither of them. Nevertheless, she decides to take a risk and send him a message.

51 Shah, “Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7th to 13th Centuries C.E.,” 9 – 10.

52 Banik Pal, “Some Women Writers and Their Works in Classical Sanskrit Literature: a Reinterpretation,” 151.

53 *dūti tvam taruṇī yuvā sa capalaḥ śyāmāstamobhidiśaḥ*

sandeśaḥ sa rohasya eva vijane saṅketakāvāsakaḥ |

bhuyo bhuya ime vasantamarutaḥ cetaḥ nayati anyataḥ

gaccha kṣiprasamāgamāya nipuṇaṃ rakṣantu te devatāḥ ||

śvāsaḥ kiṃ tvaritāgatā pulakitā kasmāt prasādah kṛtaḥ

srastā veṇī apī pādayor nipatanānnivī gamādāgamāt |

svedādrām mukhamātapena gamitaṃ kṣāmā kim atyuktibhir

dūti mlānasaroruhākṛtidharasyauṣṭhasya kiṃ vakṣyasi||

Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 35 – 36, verses 80 – 81.

In the second verse, the heroine talks to her maid, who just has returned from the meeting. But she is not interested in how her beloved is doing and if the meeting between them was arranged. The heroine is suspicious and keeps asking the girl about her state. The maid has messy hair and sweat on her face, breaths heavily, and part of her garment is loose. She explains to her lady, that the reason for it is that she wanted to deliver the message as fast as possible and go back to her. She gives a reasonable answer to every accusation. Nevertheless, for the heroine, it is clear that the true reason for her state is love-making with her beloved. These two verses are very realistic. If they are put together, they make a coherent story with a clear psychological aspect. Śīlābhāṭṭārikā depicted emotions of a woman who is afraid of discovering that her beloved is not committed to her. At first, she is ready to reconcile with him, but after she finds out about his betrayal, she seems to be not interested in it.

One verse of Śīlābhāṭṭārikā is particularly interesting because it reveals an approach which could be described even as feminist.

idam anucitakramaś ca puṃsām yad iha jarāsv api mānmathāḥ vikārāḥ|

idam api na kṛtaṃ nitambinīnām stanapatanāv adhi jīvitam rataṃ vā||⁵⁴

This is strange fate, men's passions agitate even in old age.

And isn't pleasure more important than life, for women in old age?

This verse is an example of a *praśnottara* – a verse consisting of question and answer. Here, the second line comments and answers to the statement expressed in the first line. The poetess claims, that women, just like men, are subjected to physical desires regardless of their age.

The Sanskrit poetesses lived and wrote in a patriarchal society. It is especially seen in the descriptions of heroines they created. They portrayed other women in the conventional manner established by their male counterparts. Thus, they emphasized features like abundant breast, tiny waist and round hips. Those are body parts on which

54 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 37, verse 83.

the male poetry focused as well as the usual objects of male desire. The poetess frequently described the beauty of their heroines, yet the only men they described were kings or gods, and they were not portrayed in a sexualized manner. Therefore, female writers followed the path of describing women for pleasure and enjoyment of men.⁵⁵

The output of Sanskrit poetesses is much different from the output of women writing in other Indian languages. The poems of Sanskrit poetesses are primarily preoccupied by love in its various aspects, while for example the poems from *Therīgāthā* undertake much more diverse subjects: daily life and chores in a household, entrapment in marriage, personal tragedies which pushed them to change their life.⁵⁶ It is also evident that the poetry written in vernacular languages by *bhakti* poetesses is very different from the output created by those writing in Sanskrit and contemporary to them. Their poetry was in keeping with conventional *kāvya*. Meanwhile, the women who wrote in vernacular languages used their poetry to demonstrate their devotion to their god and to praise him. They created much more personal, individualised poetry than their Sanskrit counterparts. Nevertheless, it cannot be stated that the female Sanskrit literature lacks originality, and that it is a mere copy of poetry written by men. Several poems seem to have some traces of personal experiences. They are also interesting as a contribution of women living in a very patriarchal world to a field dominated by man. Therefore, Sanskrit poetesses left a significant mark on Sanskrit literature.

3.4 Sanskrit poetesses of the Vijayanagar Empire

Gaṅgādevī was a Sanskrit poetess who was related to the court of the Vijayanagar Empire. She called herself a beloved of Kumāra Kampana, second son of Bukka I of the Sangama dynasty, who ruled in Vijayanagar in the years 1357–1377. Kumāra Kampana was a prince and a commander of an army who led a successful invasion on

55 Shah, “Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7th to 13th Centuries C.E.,” 19 – 22.

56 Ibidem, 25.

Campuvaraiyar in 1361 and on Madurai Sultanate in 1371. He was also a ruler of some provinces of the Vijayanagar Empire.⁵⁷

Gaṅgādevī wrote a *mahākāvya* in nine cantos called *Madhurāvijayam*, which tells the story of the conquest of Madurai Sultanate by the prince Kumāra Kampana. The initial part of the work describes the historical background of the Vijayanagar: the rule of Bukka Rāya I, the auspicious circumstances of birth and early years of Kumāra Kampana. Then the plot follows the prince as he grows up. The poetess describes his unique talents and courage. The poem continues its narration depicting the first military campaigns and victories of the young prince. He conquered Kanchipuram and spent some time consolidating his lands, ruling wisely in his provinces and rendering them prosperous. Then, he was visited by a mysterious woman, possibly a goddess. She tells him about the pitiful situations of Hindus and Hindu temples who are harassed by Muslim rulers. The goddess wants him to reclaim Madhurā and bring back glory to Hindu temples. She presents him the shining sword, previously owned by rulers from the Pandya dynasty, and gives him her blessing as she sends him for the mission. Thus, Kampana's expedition is not a usual campaign leading to extend the borders of this country, but rather a liberation mission. The last part of the *Madhurāvijayam* describes the success of the expedition, military achievements of Kumāra Kampana, who himself led his army in battle and slayed the enemy Sultan.⁵⁸

The artistry of *Madhurāvijayam* proves that Gaṅgādevī was a truly talented and well-educated poetess. The poem presents the royal court and culture of the Vijayanagar Empire from a female perspective and gives insight into certain aspects of court life, as well as family life, such as pregnancy, a new born baby, family relations. These subjects were not usually the centre of interest of male writers. The life in *antaḥpura* (women's chambers) is also depicted in a very vivid way.⁵⁹

57 B. S. Chandrababu; L. Thilagavathi, *Woman, Her History and Her Struggle for Emancipation*, (Chennai: Bharathi Puthakalayam, 2009), 230.

58 W. J. Jackson, *Vijayanagara Voices: Exploring South Indian History and Hindu Literature*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), 65 – 77.

59 L. Sudyka, *Vijayanagara. a Forgotten Empire of Poetesses. Part I. The Voice of Gaṅgādevī*, (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2013), 181 – 189.

There are scholars, who suggest that poems like *Madhurāvijayam* were in fact written by male authors, for example by court poets, who ascribed their works to their queens. However, Gaṅgādevī is never called a queen or a wife of Kumāra Kampana, and there are plenty of opportunities to mention such important fact. Judging by the poem it seems that she and the prince shared affection. Thus, she could have been an educated courtesan ‘wedded’ to him.⁶⁰

Gaṅgādevī was not the only Sanskrit poetess who flourished at the Vijayanagar court. In the first half of the 16th century Tirumalāmbā composed a work telling a story of the King Acyuta Deva Rāya (r. 1529–1542). Her status at the court is also not certain, although, just like Gaṅgādevī, she never calls herself a queen in her text. In the colophon of *Varadāmbikāpariṇaya* Tirumalāmbā proudly describes herself as a well-educated person: musician, grammarian, writer, rhetorician and connoisseur.⁶¹

In her work, *Varadāmbikāpariṇaya*, which belongs to *campū kāvya*, Tirumalāmbā tells the story of marriage of the king Acyuta Deva Rāya. She included a genealogy of the Tuluva House, who claimed their origin from the Lunar dynasty (*candravaṃśa*). The poetess speaks about military campaigns of Tuluva Narasa Nayāka, the father of Acyuta Deva Rāya, but does not mention his two brothers (Vīra Narasiṃha Rāya and Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya), who ruled before him. Although the description of Vijayanagar is short and conventional, there are long descriptions of the South India. Therefore, the text can be useful for topographical purposes because of descriptions of land invaded by the army of Tuluva Narasa Nāyaka. Her style is rather heavy and demanding, she used a lot of long compounds and rhetorical embellishments.⁶²

3.5 Some late medieval *bhakti* poetesses writing in vernacular languages

It is worth to mention Telugu poems from the *padam* tradition composed in the 15th and 16th century. They were written by men. The most significant of those poets are Taḷḷapāka Annamācārya (1408–1503), Kṣetrayya (c. 1600–1680), and Sāraṅgapānī

60 Ibidem, 27 – 31.

61 J. B. Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 6, Sanskrit Poetesses Part B*, (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1940), 56 – 61.

62 Ibidem, 62 – 63.

(17th century). The *padam* tradition was influenced by south Indian *bhakti* movement and the poems belonging to it have a devotional character and are addressed to a deity. What is unusual about them is that they are very erotic and are written from a woman's perspective. Quite often the woman speaking in a *padam* is a courtesan. In such poems a god became a customer of her. Women, especially in Kṣetrayya's poems, are learned, worldly, bold, sometimes even sarcastic. Unlike married women, courtesans are spontaneous, free, not restrained by family and duties towards it. They are certain that they can easily manipulate their divine customer – just like a devotee wishes to manipulate the god. In fact, often it is a deity who is lost or wandering in a town looking for the courtesan who did not give him her address. However, the crucial point of these poems is that the courtesans get to know the god through a physical, bodily experience. Thus, the *padams* often describe the lovemaking between a hetaira and her divine customer.⁶³

One of the most important figures of early *bhakti* literature in India is Mīrābāī. This 16th century Rajasthani princess became celebrated *bhakti* saint, famous for her absolute devotion to Kṛṣṇa and disregard for social and family conventions. Although she lived in the north-western Rajasthan, she is well known and regarded as a saint poetess throughout India till today. There are hardly any historical information about her. The oldest mention of her is a single line in the 17th century writings of Muhnot Nainsi (1610–1670), who was a chief minister under Maharaja Jasvant Singh of Jodhpur.⁶⁴ It is also an only reference to her before the 19th century, when her story drew attention of Europeans. Perhaps, it was caused because her family deliberately suppressed the story of her life. It would explain, why the memory of Mīrābāī was preserved only in popular imagination.⁶⁵ The story of her life has been told in numerous legends and hagiographies, some of details of her biography are also deducted from her

63 A. K. Ramanujan, V. N. Rao and D. Shulman, *When God is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Kṣetrayya and Others*, (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2004), 9 – 40.

64 N. Martin-Kershaw, "Mīrābāī in the Academy and the Politics of Identity, in *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India*, ed. M. Bose (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164.

65 *Ibidem*, 165 – 166.

poems. Mīrābāī is told to be very religious from her early childhood. She considered Kṛṣṇa to be her husband. Against her will she was married to Bhoj Rāj, a prince from Mewar, who soon died due to wounds he sustained in battle. According to her poems and hagiographies, after the death of her husband, in-laws of Mīrābāī tried to assassinate her, but she miraculously survived unharmed their every attempt. Various legends tell different stories about what happened to her later. She is told to live a nomadic life and die in Dwarka,⁶⁶ a city in Gujarat allegedly set by Kṛṣṇa.⁶⁷ Mīrābāī was a historical figure, however, from the various versions of her life story that have circulated, we are not able to draw a true and certain image of her. Nevertheless, as it was stated by John Stratton Hawley: “we ourselves are apt always to be searching for anything that might resemble a historical Mīrābāī”.⁶⁸

Mīrābāī was one of the most important poet-saints of the *bhakti* movement. Most of her poems are dedicated to Kṛṣṇa. She frequently described the god as the Mountain Bearer⁶⁹ and as a divine lover. Her poems are also marked with philosophical metaphors and aspects of folk poetry. Mīrābāī criticized the cast system in India and exclusion of women from certain religious practices. Thus, her poetry is marked with a feminist perspective and reflection on women’s issues in Indian culture. There is no certainty if all the poems ascribed to Mīrābāī were written by her. Just like in the case of her life, we will never be sure about their real authorship. She was certainly credited with many

66 Dwarka is a modern name of a city in Gujarat believed to be identical with Dvārakā, a city set by Kṛṣṇa.

67 More on Mīrābāī’s life and its representation in different texts, see: N. Melnikova, “Mīrābāī – a Saint or a Rebel?,” *Cracow Indological Studies. Opening up Intimate Spaces: Woman’s Writing. Autobiography and Biography in South Asia*. Vol. XX, no.2, Kraków, 2018, 27 – 46; A. Carr-Richardson, “Feminist and Non-Western Perspectives in the Music Theory Classroom: A Study of John Harbison’s ‘Mirabai Songs.’” *College Music Symposium* 42 (2002): 20–36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40374421>.

68 J. Stratton Hawley, “Preface to Paperbach Edition” *Three bhakti voices : Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in their time and ours*, (New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbach, 2005), IX.

69 The epithet Mountain Bearer refers to the myth about Kṛṣṇa, who lifted the Mount Govardhana (Sanskrit: *govardhana parvata*) to protect villagers and their cattle from heavy rain sent by Indra, who got angry because they do not offer him *pūjā*. K. D. Silva; N. K. Chapagain *Asian Heritage Management: Contexts, Concerns, and Prospects*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 180.

stanzas that she did not compose, but they showed similarity in style and theme and so became part of Mīrā's songs.⁷⁰

3.6 Poetesses of the Tanjore court

The court of Tanjore was another place where Sanskrit poetesses flourished. One of female writers associated with this place was an authoress who called herself Madhuravānī. It is probably a pseudonym and it means a lady with a melodious voice. She lived at the court of Raghunātha Nāyaka⁷¹ of the Tanjore Nayaka dynasty who reigned from 1600 to 1634. As she wrote in her work, she was chosen by the King to render into Sanskrit the *Āndhra Rāmāyaṇa* – Telugu version of the epic written by the King himself. Apart from the story of Rāma, she included a description of King and his court.⁷²

Another poetess who flourished at the court of Raghunātha Nāyaka was Rāmabhadrāmbā. She was probably a wife or a concubine of the King; however, in her works she never called herself a queen. Therefore, probably she was not a chief consort. She wrote a poem devoted to Raghunātha Nāyaka titled *Raghunāthābhyudaya*. It is a *mahākāvya* in twelve cantos. The work is designed to praise the King: different chapters describe him as a prominent and wise king, generous devotee, skilled military leader, philanthropist, and scholar. She portrayed him as a very handsome man and an excellent lover. The poetess also described the beauty of his kingdom and his daily routine. She spared a lot of space for his genealogy and prominent deeds of his

70 A. Carr-Richardson, "Feminist and Non-Western Perspectives in the Music Theory Classroom: A Study of John Harbison's 'Mirabai Songs.'" 25,

71 Raghunātha Nāyaka was the third and the most powerful king of the Tanjore Nayaka Dynasty. He ruled in Tanjore from 1600 to 1634 and is noted for his patronage on literature, art, and Carnatic music. During his reign, Tanjore became a cultural centre of South India. He himself composed a number of literary works and musical compositions. Under his rules, the country flourished economically. He also managed to expand its borders due to successful military expeditions. V. Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1942), 62 – 112.

72 M. Srinivasachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, (Delhi, Varanasi Patna, Bangalore, Madras: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 230 – 231.

ancestors. Therefore, the work is a valuable source of information on culture and history of Tanjore.

Rāmabhadrāmbā also mentioned other women from the court who composed verses in eight languages on the occasion of successful comeback of the King from his military expedition. Hence, it suggests that education of women at the Tanjore court was not uncommon. According to the poetess, women played important role at the court. She devoted a lot of space to them and their accomplishments in various fields. From the text it is clear that also Rāmabhadrāmbā was skilled in many arts, such as music, dance and cooking. She called herself *śatalekhinī* and *samayalekhinī*, which may suggest that she performed literary performance called *avadhānam*,⁷³ and she proved her skills in composing Sanskrit poetry.⁷⁴

3.7 Female writers of Sanskrit religious literature

Through the centuries women composed various texts in Sanskrit. Among them, there were poetesses who wrote poetry devoted to religious subjects, which required from them deeper knowledge and better understanding of numerous topics, such as the Vedic literature, *purāṇas*, and different branches of Indian philosophy.

In the Swat valley (now lying within the borders of Pakistan), traces of Buddhist Tantric texts have been preserved, which are believed to have been written by women from the 8th to the 11th century. Seven names of female *gurus* stand out in particular, as

73 *Avadhāna* means *concentration, attentiveness, attention* and it refers to different types of performative arts based on well developed skills like great memory and multitasking. One of the variation of this tradition is literary *avadhāna*. During such performance a poet composes stanzas according to restrictions given by questioners. See: H. Cielas, “Avadhāna: Between Art of Attentiveness and Ritual of Memory”, *Cracow Indological Studies* Vol. XIX, No. 1, 2017, 1 – 24.

74 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 6, Sanskrit Poetesses Part B*, 41 – 55.

as many as eleven works are attributed to them. Their works were originally written in Sanskrit, although it is now preserved only in Tibetan translation.⁷⁵

One of such lady writers was Bīnabāyī, who contributed to the puranic literature. Her work, *Dvāarakāpattala*, was preserved in a manuscript dated year 1518. The work mentions that she belongs to the school of Rāmānuja;⁷⁶ therefore, she must have flourished between the 12th century and the end of the 15th century. The authoress mentioned in the beginning of the text that she was a daughter of King Maṇḍalika. Plausibly she meant one of the kings from the dynasty Cūḍāsama ruling in Girnar, Kathiawar. She also mentioned that she became a chief queen of Harasiṃha; however, it is hard to determine his identity. Bīnabāyī claims that she travelled a lot and visited numerous holy places in India.⁷⁷

Bīnabāyī presents herself as a humble devotee of Kṛṣṇa, whose goal was to summarize the *Dvāarakā māhātmya*.⁷⁸ The work shows that she had an extensive knowledge of various scriptures and deep erudition. She was not only a well-educated woman but also an outstanding scholar. Her work is divided into four chapters and deals primarily with pilgrimage to Dwarka. It is based on the *Dvāarakāmāhātmya*; however, it possesses significant marks of originality; for example, in its ritualistic development. The work of Bīnabāyī concentrates primarily on rituals and therefore omits different

75 U. T. Kragh, “Chronotopic Narratives of Seven Gurus and Eleven Texts: A Medieval Buddhist Community of Female Tāntrikas in the Swat Valley of Pakistan”. *Cracow Indological Studies* 20 (2), 2018, 1-26.

76 It is noteworthy that Rāmānuja (c. 1017 – 1137), was a South Indian philosopher, theologian, and social reformer. He provided intellectual base for the practise of *bhakti* (devotional worship), organized temple worship and founded centres spreading his doctrine of devotion towards Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Nine texts are traditionally ascribed to him, among which the most important are commentaries *Vedārthasangraha* (on Vedas), *Śrī Bhāṣya* (on the *Brahma Sūtras*), and *Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya* (on the *Bhagavad Gītā*). W. Doniger, “Rāmānuja,” in *Merriam-Webster's encyclopedia of world religions*, (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1999), 904.

77 J.B. Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 3 & 4 - Dvāarakā – Pattala of Bīnabāyī & Gaṅgā Vākyāvalī of Viśvāsadevī*, (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1940), 1 – 3.

78 The *Dvāarakā māhātmya* is part of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, which consist of 44 chapters and contains description of Dwarka/Dvāarakā (the ancient kingdom of Kṛṣṇa) along with guidelines for pilgrims.

narratives told in the *Dvāarakāmāhātmya*. The authoress took some information from other *Purāṇas* and incorporated them into her own work. The *Dvāarakāpattala* also shows the poetical skills of Bīnabāyī, who composed it in simple yet elegant and graceful style. It is especially seen in the few verses in the beginning of the work.⁷⁹

Another woman who contributed to religious and ritualistic Hindu literature was Viśvāsa Devī, wife of King Padmasiṃha of the Oiniwar dynasty, also known as the Sugauna dynasty, which ruled in Mithila. She was a scholar and patron of literature and Sanskrit learning. When in 1431 the king Padmasiṃha died, Viśvāsa Devī took over and ruled the kingdom until 1443 when she passed away. She was not the first female ruler of Mithila, nor the first woman who wrote in Sanskrit on that court. Her sister-in-law, Lakhimā Devī, ruled as a regent from 1416 when her husband, Śivasīṃha, went missing in battle until 1428 when she committed *sati*. She was a Sanskrit poetess whose talents were praised in various accounts. She was famous for her wit and humour, but also for concentrating on problems existing in her contemporary society.⁸⁰

The work *Gaṅgāvākyāvalī* is sometimes ascribed to Viśvāsa Devī, although most scholars ascribe it rather to Vidyāpati Ṭhākura⁸¹ – a poet who worked under her patronage.⁸² However, according to J. B. Chaudhuri, the poet merely added some quotations and plausibly revised the work – therefore the authoress mentioned his name while thanking him. He states:

79 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 3 & 4 - Dvāarakā – Pattala of Bīnabāyī & Gaṅgā Vākyāvalī of Viśvāsadevī*, 4 – 9.

80 M. Jha, *Anthropology of Ancient Hindu Kingdoms: a Study in Civilizational Perspective*, (New Delhi: M. D. Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1997), 59 – 60.

81 Vidyāpati (c. 1380 – 1460) was a Maithili and Sanskrit poet, composer, writer, courtier and royal priest. He worked in the courts of various kings of the Oiniwar dynasty of Mithila. He wrote about five hundred of love songs, most of which were concentrated on the relation of Kṛṣṇa and Radhā, although he himself was a Śiva devotee. They have been later collected into an anthology called *Padāvalī*.

82 Theodor Aufrecht, *Catalogus Catalogorum*, vol. I, in loco. Julius Eggeling, *Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS. in the Library of the India Office*, Part III, p. 594. Haraprasada Sastri, *Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS. in the Library of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Smṛti* volume, 1925, 855., M. Jha, *Anthropology of Ancient Hindu Kingdoms: a Study in Civilizational Perspective*, (New Delhi: M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1997), 60.

The scholars who have attributed the work to Vidyāpati have not assigned any reasons for doing so. As Vidyāpati was a very great poet, and the court-poet of Mithila also during the reign of Viśvāsadevī, perhaps they thought that the work was really composed by Vidyāpati himself who assigned the authorship to the Queen, his patron, in order to please her. This is but a mere conjecture, not supported by any evidence whatsoever, internal or external; on the contrary, it goes directly against the informations furnished by the work itself.⁸³

The treatise is a voluminous work consisting of 29 chapters and possessing numerous quotations from the *smṛti* literature and the various *purāṇas*. Nevertheless, the authoress not only quoted some passages from older sources, but also tried to consolidate different traditions according to her own views. Therefore, without any doubts she was a well-educated scholar. The theme of the *Gaṅgāvākyāvalī* are various rituals concerning the river Ganga.⁸⁴

3.8 Sanskrit commentaries written by women

Women scholars also contribute when it comes to commenting on various works. One of them was Prāṇamañjarī. She is the authoress of a commentary to the first chapter of the treatise *Tantrarājatantra*, who flourished in the first half of the 18th century. Although the commentary is the only work of her authorship which was preserved (unfortunately incomplete), remaining fragments contain a lot of personal information about the authoress. She mentioned the names of her parents and of her husband Premanidhi, who as well was a writer and an author of a work entitled *Śaradātilakaṭīkā*. Prāṇamañjarī explained also the reason why she wrote the commentary on *Tantrarāja*. She lost a son named Sudarśana and she wanted to make another Sudarśana, but from her words. Thus, the title of the commentary is *Sudarśana*.⁸⁵

83 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 3 & 4 - Dvārakā – Pattala of Bīnabāyī & Gaṅgā Vākyāvalī of Viśvāsadevī*, Appendix to the *Gaṅgā Vākyāvalī*, 107.

84 Ibidem, 43 – 106.

85 J.B. Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 5, Tantrarāja Tantra with Sudarśana of Prāṇamañjarī* (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1940), XXI – XXII.

The commentary written by Prāṇamañjarī shows both her literary skills and extraordinary knowledge on the subject. Although the work of Prāṇamañjarī is relatively short, she managed to exhibit her mastery in knowledge about *tantra*. The authoress composed a very thorough commentary and explained every detail of the original text. What is more, she presented her own opinions on certain matters and she supported them with quotations from numerous other Tantric treatises. Prāṇamañjarī not only explained difficult words and dubious passages in the text, but she also interpreted the commented chapter in her own, unique way. She also demonstrated excellent skills in writing in Sanskrit and lucid style.⁸⁶

Sundarī and Kamalā were wives of poet Ghanaśyāma, who together wrote a commentary to *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* – a drama written by Rājasekhara. It is very interesting, because these two ladies wrote one commentary titled the *Camatkāratarāṅgini*, and their husband wrote his own commentary to the same play, which he called the *Prāṇapratīṣṭhā*. Ghanaśyāma was a court poet and a minister of the king Tukkoji I of Tanjore.⁸⁷ He was a prominent poet who composed poetry in many different languages. According to his own statement, he wrote 64 works in Sanskrit, 20 in Prakrit and 25 in other languages. Regrettably, most of his literary output has been lost.⁸⁸

Ghanaśyāma in his works frequently referred to his wives and praised their various talents. In his earlier works he mentioned only Sundarī; therefore, she is likely to be his first wife. He probably married Kamalā later and then started to complement them both. As J. B. Chaudhuri claims, although some of his verses are indeed well-written, his literary output is rather annoying to read:

86 Ibidem, XXII– XXV.

87 Tukkoji I alias Tulaja I (1677–1736) was the fourth Maratha ruler of Thanjavur. He was from the Bhonsole dynasty and ruled from 1728 to 1736. Tukkoji I was a patron of music – he introduced Hindustani music to the court of Tanjore and himself wrote a treatise on Indian music and dance. K. R. Subramanian, *The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore*, (Madras: Published by the Author, 1928), 37 – 42.

88 J.B. Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 1, Viddhaśālabhañjikā with Prāṇapratīṣṭhā of Ghanaśyāma and Camatkāra Tarāṅgini of Sundarī & Kamalā* (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1943), 9 – 11.

Ghanaśyāma, however, proves annoying for two reasons: (1) Lack of chronological sense; (2) extreme self-conceit. Regarding the latter, it may be pointed out that he ridicules even Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. He has nothing but contempt for all the authors of the works he comments upon and goes so far as to declare outright that he does them a great favour by commenting upon their works as by doing so he makes them immortal. Ghanaśyāma's genius was, no doubt, defiled by his excessive self-conceit; but it cannot be doubted that his commentaries deserve whole-hearted praise.⁸⁹

The two commentaries written by Ghanaśyāma and his wives are complementary to each other. The *Prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā* deals mostly with the Prakrit part of the original text and the *Camatkārataraṅgini* comments upon the Sanskrit portion. In the introductory part of the commentary Sundarī and Kamalā praise extensively their husband. They even compare him to Rājaśekhara – the ladies notice that the famous poet has wrote only three works, while their husband composed many of them. Nevertheless, they are wrong as Rājaśekhara created at least six works.⁹⁰ Sundarī and Kamalā also point that their husband could create poetry all day long unlike his famous predecessor, who claimed that the best time for composing poems is morning. The ladies often use quotes from other works, mostly those written by Ghanaśyāma. Finally, they state that no literary work is superior to those composed by their husband.⁹¹

Another lady scholar who flourished in the 18th century was Lakṣmīdevī Pāyaguṇḍa. She was a wife of Vaidyanātha Pāyaguṇḍa, a Sanskrit writer who also contributed as a commentator. The authoress gave some details about her life and family members in the introductory part of her work. Thus, it is known that her parents' names were Mahādeva and Umā, and her father was a learned man. Lakṣmīdevī wrote

89 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 1, Viddhaśālabhañjikā with Prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā of Ghanaśyāma and Camatkāra Taraṅgini of Sundarī & Kamalā*, 11 – 12.

90 There are five works ascribed to Rājaśekhara: *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*, *Bālabhārata*, *Karpūramañjarī*, *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. However, in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* Rājaśekhara claims that he wrote six works, therefore it is even possible that he in fact composed more of them.

91 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 1, Viddhaśālabhañjikā with Prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā of Ghanaśyāma and Camatkāra Taraṅgini of Sundarī & Kamalā*, 12.

a commentary on the work *Kālamādhava* written by Mādhava Ācārya.⁹² The main topic of the treatise is time. It consists of five chapters: the first is devoted to time in general, the second to year, the third to days of new moon and full moon, the fourth to remaining days in month and the last one to *nakṣastras*.⁹³

The commentary written by Lakṣmīdevī proves that she was a truly educated woman. She had a huge knowledge about the Vedic literature, *purāṇas*, astrological works, Indian philosophy, rituals and Sanskrit grammar. She elaborately explained Vedic passages incorporated into the *Kālamādhava*, but she also used several quotes to support her views or interpretation of the text. Lakṣmīdevī used quotes from other texts, such as *Kūrmapurāṇa*, *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Devīpurāṇa*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Mahābhāṣya*. She also referred to previous commentaries of the *Kālamādhava*. Lakṣmīdevī proved that she had extensive knowledge on almost every branch of Indian philosophy, and she used it well while discussing the philosophical aspects of time in the first chapter of the *Kālamādhava*. There is no doubt that she deserves to be called a lady scholar.⁹⁴

3.9 Late Sanskrit Poetesses

Devakumārikā was a wife of Amar Singh II (1672–1710) – Maharana of Mewar Kingdom (r. 1698–1710) and mother of his successor Sangram Singh II. In 1716, as a widow, she took part in consecration of the Vaidyanath Temple. The verses of *praśasti* engraved on the temple are ascribed to her, although there are also presumptions suggesting that it might have been composed by another, poet. For example, although the

92 As is well known Mādhava Ācārya, known also as Vidyāraṇya, was a Hindu ascetic and a philosopher of Advaita Vedānta who flourished in the 14th century. Among his important works are also: *Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha*, a compendium of different philosophical schools of Hindu philosophy, and *Pañcadaśī*, an important text for Advaita Vedānta. He was the 12th Jagadguru of the Śringeri Śārada Pītham (1380-1386). Mādhava Ācārya allegedly took the name Vidyāraṇya when he became *sannyasin*. He was the minister of four successive Vijayanagar kings and he intended to revive Hindu culture in the Vijayanagara Empire, as it was formed on lands previously ruled by Muslims. H. Kulke, D. Rothermund, a History of India, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 187 – 188.

93 J. B. Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 7, Kālamādhavalakṣmī of Lakṣmīdevī Pāyaguṇḍa*, (Calcutta: Published by the Author, 1941), XXVIII.

94 Ibidem, XLVII – LII.

work has plenty of information about Devakumārikā, the poet never says anything in the first person.⁹⁵

The *Vaidyanāthaprāsādaprasāsti* consists of five *prakaraṇas*. The first one tells briefly about the genealogy and history of the royal dynasty of Mewar. It mentions the most significant events and gives more details about the most outstanding rulers. The information from the text is mostly historically accurate. The second *prakaraṇa* focuses on the coronation of Sangram Singh II and then describes his military successes. The next part portrays the King and praises his merits and generosity. The fourth *prakaraṇa* concentrates on the King's family from his mother's side. It presents detailed information about the ancestors of the Queen Devakumārikā, and then it focuses on her. There is a lot of personal information on the Queen's life. The *Vaidyanāthaprāsādaprasāsti* reveals that after the death of her husband, Devakumārikā decided to devote her life to religious purpose. Therefore, she performed four *tulādānas* – ceremonies of giving to Brahmins gold or silver equalling in weight one's own body. Her fourth *tulādāna* was performed on the occasion of consecrating the temple, which is the main subject of the fifth *prakaraṇa* of *Vaidyanāthaprāsādaprasāsti*.⁹⁶

The authoress of *Vaidyanāthaprāsādaprasāsti* possessed knowledge not only on Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature, but also on history. Although, as J. B. Chaudhuri notices, the work is not flawless as it has some grammatical errors and is rather far from rhetorical excellence. It also has a great number of merits – its style is lucid and straightforward, and it presents a lot of historical information.⁹⁷

Another late Sanskrit poetess related to a royal family was Queen Lakshmi Tampuratti (1845–1909), who was a member of the Etavalattu branch from the family of the Kadattanad Rajas of North Malabar. The only work of her authorship which was preserved is *Sāntanagopālam*. The work consists of three chapters called *sargas* containing respectively 43, 37 and 50 stanzas. Thus, the whole work includes 150

95 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 6, Sanskrit Poetesses Part B*, 11 – 14.

96 Ibidem, 15 – 22.

97 Ibidem, 24 – 26.

verses. The poetess based her work on an episode from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Nevertheless, she did not merely retell the old story in her poem, she extended it, expanded the dialogues of its characters and added some poetical beautifications.⁹⁸ The plot of *Sāntagopālam* is based on a story of pious Brahmin who lost nine sons although he was praying to Kṛṣṇa to save them. After the death of his last son, he meets Arjuna who decides to help him to protect his tenth child, who is soon to be born. When the child is born, he immediately disappears and Arjuna decides to commit suicide, but he is stopped by Kṛṣṇa, who also promises to bring the child back. Thus, they both set off to meet with Hari in person and ask him directly for the life of Brahmin's child. When they reach Hari, he is pleased with their prayers and eulogies and announces that their sins are purged and grants their wish. The *Sāntagopālam* ends with a description of an overwhelming happiness of Brahmin and his wife because Hari brought back to life not one, but all of their children.

The *Sāntagopālam* is written in a simple and sweet style. The authoress avoided long compounds and excess of rhetorical devices, although the last *sarga* is abundant in *yamakas*. Lakshmi Tampuratti in her work employed numerous metres.⁹⁹ In one stanza, the poetess revealed a piece of information about her life. She composed the poem shortly after she gave birth to her son, Ravivarma.¹⁰⁰

Among the women from the Cochin Royal Family¹⁰¹ emerged (at least) three generations of Sanskrit poetesses. The earliest of them is Subhadrā, known also as Ikku

98 L. Sudyka, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Royal Ladies of Kerala. Toward a History of Women's writing in Sanskrit in the 18th- to 20th- century Kerala*, (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019), 145 – 176.

99 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 6, Sanskrit Poetesses Part B*, 24 – 26.

100 L. Sudyka, "The 'Santānagopāla' As a Narrative Opening up Intimate Spaces: Lakṣmī Tampurāṭṭi and Her Poem," *Cracow Indological Studies* Vol. XX, No. 2, (2018), 71-88. <https://doi.org/10.12797/CIS.20.2018.02.05>.

101 It is noteworthy that the Kingdom of Cochin was a small medieval kingdom and later a princely state situated in the Malabar Coast in the South-West India. Its origin is dated around the 12th century, although it gained importance in the beginning in the 16th century. The Kingdom of Cochin lasted till the year 1949 when it was disestablished and adjoined to India. Although the Kingdom of Cochin was

Amma. She was born in 1844 and died in 1921. She was married and had five children: three sons and two daughters. Subhadrā from a young age obtained good Sanskrit education, but also as an adult she was craving for knowledge. During her whole life she was in touch with numerous scholars and studied various Sanskrit texts such as *purānas* and *upaniṣads*. She composed poetry in Sanskrit and Malayalam – her mother tongue. Sanskrit lyrics of Subhadrā concerned mostly her devotion to Viṣṇu. Among her works are *Saubhadrastavam*, in which she retells in short the message of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Pūrṇatrayīśa-stotram* – devoted to different incarnations of Viṣṇu. She also composed hymn praising and describing Pūrṇatrayīśa – an image of Viṣṇu, worshipped in a temple in Tripunithura.¹⁰²

One of Subhadrā's daughters – Maṅku, born in 1884, died in 1977 – also created poems in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Manipravalam. She also was married and had five children. Some of her lyrics were collected into a publication titled *Stutiratnamālā – a garland of hymns*. The collection was dedicated to her mother, whom she greatly admired. In the opening verse she expressed this high esteem by praising Subhadrā as an accomplished poetess and a prominent scholar. *Stutiratnamālā* is a collection of eleven poems dedicated to various gods; however, she had a special affection towards Pūrṇatrayīśa. Maṅku's youngest daughter Koccāmmīni Tampurān (1913–1985) as well composed short poems in Sanskrit and Malayalam. However, she never fully developed as a Sanskrit poetess. Apart from the classical Sanskrit education, she was also educated in modern way. In a quickly changing world she could not devote as much time to practise composing in Sanskrit as her mother and grandmother did. Unfortunately, her literary output was not preserved.¹⁰³

relatively small, it has a big influence on Kerala's culture. The kings were patrons of artists and scholars and supported education in their state. The king Vīra Keralavarman (r. 1809–1828), was a Sanskrit poet himself. See also: A. Sreedhara Menon, *Studies in Kerala History*, (Kottayam: D C Books, 2007).

102 L. Sudyka, "Zapomniana poezja. Sanskrycka twórczość kobiet z rodu władców Koczynu," *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 1-2 (2016), 223 – 224.

103 *Ibidem*, 226– 229.

3.10 Sanskrit poetesses of the 20th century

Pandita Kshama Rao (1890–1954) was a truly prolific writer. She created Sanskrit works in various genres: dramas, short stories, biographies, and poems of different lengths. However, she is best known as the author of three poems devoted to the life and activity of Mahatma Gandhi. The first of them, *Satyāgrahagīta*, tells about Gandhi starting from his activities in South Africa to the Gandhi-Irwing Pact.¹⁰⁴ The second poem *Uttarasatyāgrahagīta* continues the story of Gandhi's life to his seventy-fifth birthday (1944). The last volume of Pandita Kshama Rao titled *Svarājya-vijaya* (published post mortem in 1962) is concentrated on the last years of struggle for independence.¹⁰⁵ She inspired numerous later writers, who followed her pattern and also wrote literature in Sanskrit about Mahatma Gandhi.¹⁰⁶ Pandita Kshama Rao became the Sanskrit voice of her generation struggling for independence. However, unlike many other Sanskrit writers, she was never awarded nor got the patronage of government for her achievements in the field of literature. She wrote many biographies including *Śaṅkarajīvanākhyānaṃ* about the life of her father, who was a Sanskrit scholar. She also created biographies of famous Hindu saints like Jñāneśvar,¹⁰⁷ Tukaram,¹⁰⁸ and Mīrābāī. Once again, she set the trend which was followed by great number of contemporary Sanskrit poets.¹⁰⁹

104 Agreement signed on 5.03.1931 by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Lord Irwing, Viceroy of India. It marked the end of the Salt March – the act of nonviolent civil disobedience against British rule in India. In exchange Irwing agreed to release those who had been imprisoned during it and to allow Indians to make salt for domestic use.

105 S. S. Janaki, *Freedom Fighters and Sanskrit Literature with Special Reference to Mahātma Gandhi and Subrahmanya Bhārati* (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 1998).

106 R. Tripathi, "Modern Writings in Sanskrit: a Resume," *Indian Literature* 60, no. 1 (291) (2016): 168–83. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44478926>.

107 Jñāneśvar – 13th century saint, poet, philosopher and yogi, author of *Jñānēśvarī* (commentary on *Bhagavad Gīta*) and *Amṛtānubhuva* – the oldest preserved works in Marathi language.

108 Tukaram – 17th century *bhakti* saint and poet, author of *abhāṅga* – devotional poetry praising Vithoba, manifestation of Viṣṇu worshipped in Maharashtra. More about Tukaram in R. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 129-154.

109 Tripathi, "Modern Writings in Sanskrit: a Resume," 172.

Pandita Kshama Rao wrote also numerous innovative Sanskrit works. Among them is *Vicitrapariṣadyātrā* – a poem, describing her journey of the to Trivandrum for attending the All India Oriental Conference. It is marked with a feminist discourse, as it is devoted to the journey of a lonely woman through India.¹¹⁰ She also created *Kathākaumudī* – a series of fifteen short stories in which she described the life of modern India. Her style can be described as not very sophisticated, yet readable and realistic. She employed in her works inspirations taken from modern Western literature, which for that time made them truly unique. The trend she began was continued by later Sanskrit writers; therefore, she can be called a pioneer of modern Sanskrit literature.¹¹¹

Arcanam is a collection of Sanskrit poems written by Dr. Uma Despandey (Reader in Sanskrit M.S. at the University Baroda) published in 1992. The literary output collected in this publication is really diversified. In her poems she speaks about her devotion to Kṛṣṇa, her love towards Sanskrit language and its excellency and her patriotism. She even raises an issue which is quite new for Sanskrit literature – the need of protection of the natural environment. She experimented with her poetry and even created Sanskrit haikus.¹¹²

Modern Sanskrit authoresses raise various issues. The *Bālāvidhavā* (*The Girl-Widow*) is a drama in three acts written by Leela Rao and published in the year 1993. The authoress devoted her work to an important social problem – the situation of widows in Indian society. The main heroine of the play is Pārvatī, a girl who was married as a child. Her husband died while she was still a child and she even never saw his face. Pārvatī lives with her relatives who force her to work whole days without any rest. She meets Anūp - a young man who falls in love with her and decides to marry her despite her being a widow. The second act depicts them trying to find a priest who would marry them, but they all refuse. Anūp wants them to marry in court, but Pārvatī

110 Ibidem, 174.

111 K. Krishnamoorthy, “Sanskrit Literature,” in *Modern Indian literature. An Anthology*, ed. K.M. George, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994), 355 – 363.

112 S. Ranganath, *Contribution of Women to Post Independence Sanskrit Literature*, (Bangalore: Span Print, 1995), 39 – 50.

refuses. She goes back to her home, but her family does not accept her. The play ends with Pārvaṭī leaving her house and running into darkness and Anūp rushing after her.¹¹³

The *Bālāvidhavā* raises a crucial social issue. The play is realistic; dialogues are simple and dynamic. They suit the depicted situation and emphasize the tragic position of Pārvaṭī. What is more, Leela Rao chose an issue important for women. The play has a clearly feminist overtone. The same issue was also raised in the film *Water* from the year 2005 of a famous movie director Deepa Mehta. This shows that the Sanskrit poetry could tackle and comment important social problems.

Although child marriages are banned in India (in 1927 a law prohibiting marriage of girls under 14 years old and boys under 18 years old was introduced. After India gained independence, this limit was increased twice: in 1949 for girls to 15 years old and in 1978 to 18 years for women and 21 for men),¹¹⁴ they still take place. According to UNICEF: “While the prevalence of girls getting married before age 18 has declined from 47 per cent to 27 per cent between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016 it is still too high.”¹¹⁵

3.11 Summary

In the early medieval period Sanskrit poetesses flourished in North India as well as in the South. Avantisundarī and Śīlābhṭārikā were from northern part of the Indian Subcontinent, while Vijayānkā was from Karnataka (South). However, this situation changed with time. Starting from the Vijayanagar period, more poetesses about whom we know were associated with South India. What is more, they were mostly associated with the local courts. It suggests that only women from elites could obtain Sanskrit education sufficient to create poetry. Among them were queens, courtesans, women associated with families with scholarly and literary traditions. The poetesses belonged to courts of the Vijayanagar Empire, Tanjore and the royal and aristocratic families of

113 Ranganath, *Contribution of Women to Post Independence Sanskrit Literature*, 51 – 56.

114 E. Graner, “Governing Child Marriage in India: The Protracted Reform Process,” in *Love, Labour and Law: Early and Child Marriage in India*, ed. S. Sen, A. Ghosh, (New Delhi: Sage Publishing, 2020), 63.

115 <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/end-child-marriage>

Kerala. Therefore, the smaller number of Sanskrit poetesses in the North India is plausibly associated with the rules of Muslim dynasties. The Muslim rulers in general did not support Sanskrit writers (although there were exceptions),¹¹⁶ and a progressive process of exclusion of women from social and cultural life was observable. Therefore, this may be the reason why the vast majority of Sanskrit authors flourished in southern India from the late medieval period onward.

The other difference between classical Sanskrit poetesses and their later counterparts is the change of subjects of their poetry. The authoresses of the early medieval period wrote on various matters, although love theme seems to prevail among them. The Vijayanagar and Tanjore female writers wrote mostly about their kings, court life and military expeditions, and later poetesses turned their interests towards religion. Kshama Rao is widely believed to be the most prominent Sanskrit poetess of the 20th century. The recent trends presented by female Sanskrit writers seem to be patriotism, politics and commenting on current issues.

One may also notice that a number of Sanskrit poetesses were members of the royal families from Kerala. It must be related to the social organization of this region: the matrilineal system of inheritance and marriage customs of Nambudiri Brahmins and Nayars. In a Nambudiri family only the eldest son could marry a woman from his own caste (Nambudiri women were called *antarjanam*, that is 'person inside the house') and their children were successors of the family. Younger sons could involve in unions with Nayar women, although they could not live together, and their children stayed with their mothers as well as belonged to their castes and families. Nayar women had considerable freedom. The social organization also enabled mixing of people from different social strata. What is more, in Kerala girls as well as boys received Sanskrit education.¹¹⁷

The Sanskrit authoresses contributed considerably to the realm of Sanskrit literature. They created works of various genres and concerning different subjects.

116 Such exception was the court of Akbar, in which multicultural environment was cultivated. On this court numerous Hindu and Jain intellectuals were present and created numerous texts in different languages for the request of the Emperor. See: Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*.

117 Sudyka, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Royal Ladies of Kerala. Toward a History of Women's writing in Sanskrit in the 18th- to 20th- century Kerala*, 18 – 25; 177 – 182.

Although it was not easy for women to enter into a public sphere, they managed to manifest their presence and art in the field dominated by men. It must be remembered that men were not only writers, critics and readers of Sanskrit literature, but also compilers of anthologies who decided which piece of work would be preserved. Therefore, women's presence in the field of Sanskrit literature should be recognized not as a curiosity, but as a remarkable achievement.

4. The heroines of *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī* and their historical counterparts

4.1 Vijayāṅkā

The heroine of the first play is Vijayāṅkā. Is it possible, that the author combined three historical figures to create this character? First of them, Vijayāṅkā, was mentioned by the famous poet Rājasekhara as one of the greatest poetesses. However, none of her poems was preserved in any anthology. In his play Raghavan cited ascribed to another poetess named Vijjikā. Hardly anything is known about lives of either of the poetesses. Nevertheless, Raghavan recognized Vijayāṅkā as the Chalukyan queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārika. Indeed, these three women were identified as one by some scholars,¹ whereas, the others disagree with this theory.² However, no one doubts the historicity of the authoress or authoresses of a considerable number of extant one-stanzaed poems (*muktaka*) attributed to either Vijjā (other variants: Vijjakā, Vijjikā) or Vidyā or Vijayā (Vijayāṅkā), quoted in anthologies and by the theoreticians of Sanskrit literature starting from the 9th century CE. Perhaps not all the works attributed to Vijayā, Vijjā or Vidyā are by her/their authorship. The compilers of the anthologies may have considered certain anonymous stanzas as showing similarity in style to those of our poetess(es) and described them by her/their name. In that case, however, we are not left empty-handed, but gain some information about this/these poetess/poetesses' mode of composing poetry. To understand better, it is needed to analyse information about each of these three figures.

1 For example, such information can be found in: C. K. Nagaraja Rao, "Chalukyan Queens," in *Chalukyas of Badami (Seminar Papers)*, ed. M. S. Nagaraja Rao, (Bangalore: The Mythic Society 1978), 159 – 169.

2 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, LVIII.

4.1.1 Vijayāṅkā

The heroine of Dr. V. Raghavan's play is called Vijayāṅkā. This name occurs exclusively in the verse composed by Rājaśekhara, which was also quoted in the anthology titled *Sūktimuktāvalī* composed in 1257. The compiler, a Yadava³ general named Jalhaṇa,⁴ collected stanzas of Rājaśekhara in which the poet praises Sanskrit poetesses. Among the other female writers, such as Vikaṭanitambā and Śilābhāṭṭārikā, he evidently praised Vijayāṅkā the most.

sarasvatīva karnāṭī vijayāṅkā jayatyasau

*yā vaidarbhagīrāṃ vāsaḥ kālidāsād anantaram ||*⁵

Like Sarasvatī, she – Vijayāṅkā of Karṇāta, triumphs,

the one who is the abode of the *vaidarbhī* style, just after Kālidāsa.

Rājaśekhara compares Vijayāṅkā to Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Speech. Then he comments her skills in composing poems in the *vaidarbhī* style. According to him, Vijayāṅkā follows the famous poet Kālidāsa. Indeed, it is a very high praise. The *vaidarbhī* style is recognized as the most superior way of writing, as it is the only one which possesses all ten *guṇas*. Kālidāsa is fairly established as the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist and a master of *vaidarbhī* diction. This verse shows that Rājaśekhara had a great esteem for Vijayāṅkā's poems and apparently he knew them really well. Therefore, it is very bizarre that her name was hardly ever mentioned and none of her

3 Yadava dynasty ruled c. 1100–1312 CE in the western part of the Deccan region from their capital at Devagiri (present-day Daulatabad in modern Aurangabad district, Maharashtra). K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, (Glasgow et al.: Oxford University Press, 1958), 210 – 212.

4 *Sūktimuktāvalī*, is an anthology of Sanskrit-language verses composed in the year 1257 CE. It was either authored or commissioned by Jalhana, a general and minister of Yadava king Kṛṣṇa. The compilation is particularly famous for preserving verses of Rājaśekhara.

5 Bhagadatta Jalhaṇa, *Sūktimuktāvalī*, ed. E. Krishnamacharya, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 47, verse 93.

works were preserved even in fragments. Nevertheless, there is one stanza traditionally ascribed to a poetess of this name.⁶

ekaḥ 'bhūn nalināt paras tu pulinād valmīkataś cāparaḥ

te sarve kavayaḥ strīlokaḡuravas tebhyaḥ namaskurmahe |

arvāñ ca yadi gadyapadyaracanaiś cetaś camatkurvate

teṣāṃ mūrdhni dadāmi vāmacaraṇam ahaṃ karṇāṭarājapriyā ||⁷

One was from the lotus,⁸ the other from the island⁹ and the last from the anthill.¹⁰

All these poets are masters in the world of women, we shall worship them.

If someone is lower (then them), they cause astonishment of mind by their prose or poetics composition,

I, the beloved of the Karnāṭa's King, would place my left foot on their foreheads.

In this verse, a poetess (supposedly Vijayāñkā), reveals her great respect for Brahmā, Vyāsa and Vālmīki. At the same time, she despises works that do not match the

6 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, LVIII.

7 Ibidem, LVIII.

8 Brahmā – Hindu god, one of the Trimūrti, creator of the world. According to *vaiṣṇava* accounts of creation, Brahma was born in a lotus, emerging from the navel of sleeping Viṣṇu. He is united with Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and speech, patronising poets. He is also called *ādikavi*, the first poet.

9 Vyāsa – legendary sage who is told to be the author of *Mahābhārata*, and who was born on an island on the river Yamuna.

10 Vālmīki – legendary sage, known as the inventor of śloka (the most important Sanskrit metre) and the author of *Rāmāyaṇa*. According to the legends, while he was performing a severe penance, huge anthill formed around him, and ants covered all his body. Therefore, he earned the name Vālmīki – “of anthill”.

achievements of the greatest poets. It is clear that the poetess is very confident in her skills not only as a poet, but also as a literary critic. However, the most important clue in this verse is probably that she called herself *karnāṭarājapriyā* – beloved of Karnāṭa’s King. This means that she lived at king’s court, but not necessarily that she was a queen. Polygamy was widely practised on ancient and medieval Indian courts. King had numerous wives and concubines, whose behaviour towards each other was determined by seniority. The strict hierarchy of co-wives was explained in detail in *Kāmasūtra*.¹¹ The most important wife of a king had a position of a chief queen, and she was his only consecrated consort. She took part in rituals and ceremonies and was a rightful queen. The rest of royal wives were meant just for monarch’s pleasure.¹² Apart from the wives, on royal courts there were present numerous courtesans and dancers. Therefore, the expression “the beloved of the Karnāṭa King” does not necessarily mean that this verse was composed by a wife of a king of Karnataka. However, if assumed that the author of this verse is Vijayāṅkā and she was associated with a royal court, we can start searching among the dynasties that ruled Karnataka before the 9th or the 10th century. Kadambas ruled in Karnataka from 345 to 525 CE. Their successors were Chalukyas of Badami, who were overthrown by Rashtrakuta dynasty in 753 and ruled until 982. Therefore, the spectrum of women who could potentially write this verse is extremely wide. However, among the queens of Chalukyas of Badami there is one with a name Vijayā. That is why some scholars identified our poetess as Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā (known also as Vijayā Mahādevī)¹³ and so did Raghavan in his play.

4.1.2 Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā

The heroine of the drama is portrayed as a wife of king Candrāditya. He was a historical figure, ruler from the Chalukya dynasty and, most importantly, the husband of Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā. The origin of this dynasty is not known. Most likely they were Karnataka’s

11 The second lesson of the fourth chapter of the *Kāmasūtra* is devoted to this subject. See: Vātsyāyana Mallanaga, *Kāmasūtra*, transl. and ed. W. Doniger, S. Kakar, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98 – 103.

12 S. Jain, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Women Through the Ages: Ancient India*, (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications 2003), 22 – 25.

13 *Bhaṭṭārikā* and *mahādevī* are the titles of wives of sovereign or feudatory rulers. They were often preceded by personal names.

native inhabitants; however, later Chalukyan branches put forward some stories giving them mythological roots. From the 11th century it was a common practice among the South Indian rulers to claim that their family came from other part of India and they are descendants of Solar or Lunar dynasty.¹⁴

The Chalukya dynasty's history traces back to its first historical ruler Jayasimha, who started his kingdom in the area of contemporary Bijapur. He probably was not an independent ruler, but rather a vassal of Kadamba or early Rashtrakuta rulers. Most likely, his grandson, known as Pulakesin I, was the first autonomous Chalukyan king. He established his new capital in Vātāpi (today known as Badami). The empire lasted until 753, when Kirtivarman II, the last Chalukyan king, was overthrown by Dantidurga of Rashtrakuta dynasty. In its peak the kingdom covered area from the river Narmada in the north to the river Kaveri in the south.

Chalukyas of Badami or Chalukyas of Vātāpi are called so to distinguish them from two other branches of this royal house: Eastern Chalukyas, known also as Chalukyas of Vengi, and Western Chalukyas. The first dynasty started as governors of eastern land conquered by Pulakesin II.¹⁵ After his death they separated from the Badami court and established an independent kingdom, which lasted until the beginning of the 12th century. Western Chalukyas overthrown the last Rashtrakuta king and reclaimed the land, which had belonged to the Chalukyas of Badami.

Candrāditya was a son of the most renowned Chalukyan king Pulakesin II. However, he was not the eldest son, so he did not inherit the throne directly after his father. The successor of Pulakesin II was Adityavarman, who ruled only for two years (643–645). Then he was succeeded by his son Abhinavāditya. He also reigned for a very

14 K. V. Ramesh, *Chalukyas of Vātāpi*, (Delhi, Agam Kala Prakashan, 1984), 16.

15 Pulakesin II ruled the Chalukyan empire from 610 until 642. He consolidated and significantly expanded the kingdom by numerous successful military expeditions and subduing neighboring lands. During his reign, the kingdom covered most of Deccan region. The biggest military success of Pulakesin II was defeating Harṣavardhana (590–647), whose empire was stretching over majority of North India. However, he was defeated and probably killed during the invasion of Narasiṃhavarman I from the hostile Pallava dynasty, who was defeated by Pulakesin II in his earlier expeditions. Nilakanta Sastri, a *History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, 143 – 146.

short time (645–646) and apparently died without leaving an heir. Then Candrāditya, as the oldest remained son of Pulakeśin II, ascended the Chalukyan throne. Not much can be said about him. He ruled only for three years (646–649) and then died probably leaving a minor son as a legal successor. This presumption was made on basis of inscriptions from Nerur and Kochre. Both inscriptions testify to the donation made by Vijayā and they are dated in her own regal years. Therefore, it has been assumed that after his death Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā ruled as a regent for their minor son for about five years. Candrāditya’s name occurs also on inscription of the next Chalukyan king – Vikramāditya I,¹⁶ where he is described as older brother of current monarch. It is not clear what happened to the son of Candrāditya, but very likely Vikramāditya ascended the throne after the boy died – for natural reasons or assassinated. It is also unclear how much autonomy Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā had as a regent. Perhaps she was ruling only nominally, and Vikramāditya was the one who really had the power. Both inscriptions mentioned above praise military achievements of Vikramāditya, but without giving him any royal title. Therefore, there is a possibility that he was commanding the Chalukyan army during the regency of Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā.

There is also another theory about successors of Pulakeśin II. According to it, he ruled as a governor of different provinces during his lifetime. After his death, his brothers started to fight for succession and the fight was won by Vikramāditya. However, he apparently let widow of Candrāditya to continue governing in her region.¹⁷ On the other hand, titles given to Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā and her husband in the inscriptions clearly indicate that they were the royal couple. The Queen is titled as *bhaṭṭārikā*, *mahādevī* and *mahiṣī*, which suggests that she was a chief queen. And Candrāditya is called *śrīpṛthivīvallabha*, *paramēśvara* and *mahārājādhirāja*, which are also imperial

16 Vikramāditya I (655–680 CE) was one of the several sons of the powerful Chalukya king Pulakeśin II. He restored order in the fractured kingdom and made the Pallavas retreat from the capital - Vāṭāpi. Vikramāditya I recovered most of territories which were controlled and later lost by Pulakeśin II. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, 145 – 148.

17 Nagaraja Rao, “Chalukyan Queens,” 159 – 169.

titles.¹⁸ Therefore, remembering that he was Vikramāditya's older brother, it is more probable that he ruled the Chalukyan empire as a king.

It seems that queens had an important role at Chalukyan court. They often patronized art and architecture. Women also held important positions in administration, as they governed villages, towns, provinces, and headed social and religious institutions. For example, Piriyaḱētaladēvi, wife of king Vikramāditya VI, ruled three villages, Rēvakabbarasi, wife of general Vāvaṅarasa, ruled in village Posavūru. Veṅṅele Seṭṭikavve was a ruler and security officer of Satenahalli. She promoted the ethos of traders, helped to stop looters and hooligans and even organized seminars on religion. Women administrators supported education and religion in their provinces. They also were philanthropists supporting poor by their own means or by convincing their husbands to help them. This shows that the status of women in the country of Chalukya dynasty was high and at least women from elites obtained good education. Princesses learned not only statecraft and diplomacy, but also the science of warfare and wielding of weapons. Girls were also educated in arts such as music and dance. Some of ladies associated with the court and some wives of kings were accomplished musicians and dancers who performed at the court. There were also Chalukyan queens who were poetesses – queen Lakmādēvi, wife of Vikramāditya VI, was proficient in poetry, dance, vocal and instrumental music. What is more, in the society of the Chalukyan country, girls had a lot of freedom in decision about their marriage – they could decide whom they want to marry or even to remain single.¹⁹ In such environment it would not be surprising if women were also educated in Sanskrit literature. Given the circumstances of how much freedom women got in the country of Chalukyas, Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā probably would not be stopped, but rather encouraged if she decided to compose her own poetry.

18 D. P. Dikshit, *Political history of the Chalukayas of Badami*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1941), 117.

19 J. K. Kamat, *Social Life in Medieval Karnataka*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1980), 105 – 130.

4.1.3 Vijjā

The poems used by Dr. V. Raghavan in the play *Vijayāṅkā* are ascribed by compilers of Sanskrit anthologies to the poetess named Vijjā. Therefore, even if we establish that it is possible that the mysterious poetess Vijayāṅkā and queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā can be the same person, one more question remains: is it possible that Vijayāṅkā / Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā is identical with Vijjā? There are many variants of the name of this poetess: Vidyā, Vijjikā, Vijjākā, Vijjā, Bijjā, Bijjikā. Vijjakā is a Prakrit form of the feminine Sanskrit name Vidyā.²⁰ As all of the names mentioned earlier are in fact variations of the same name, and these names are used in different manuscripts for the same stanzas, it is generally assumed that all of them were written by the same author.²¹ Although the names Vijayāṅkā, Vijayā and Vijjikā seems to be similar, their etymology is different. Vijayāṅkā and Vijayā come from noun *viyaja*, meaning triumph, victory. Vidyā (Prakrit Vijjā) comes from noun *vidyā* meaning knowledge, science. P. V. Kane in *History of Sanskrit Poetics* suggests that it is possible, that the poetess was known by her Prakrit name Vijjā, and Rājaśekhara sanskritized it as Vijayā, while others sanskritized it as Vidyā.²² He further speculates, that the word *aṅka* in the verse of Rājaśekhara is not a part of a name of the praised poetess. Kane stands, that *sarasvatīva karnāṭī vijayāṅkā* may mean: “she was as if Sarasvatī named Vijayā.” According to this scholar, it may also mean that she was using the word *viyaya* as a catch word.²³ However, an answer to the question if Vidyā, Vijayāṅkā and Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā could be one and the same person may lie in one of verses written by the poetess. She referred to the initial verse of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa*. He wrote:

20 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 4: The ways of originality (Bana to Damodaragupta)*, 421.

21 L. Sternbach, a *Descriptive Catalogue of Poets quoted in Sanskrit Anthologies and Inscriptions Volume 2 Nakula – Hevidhanesora*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1980), 446.

22 Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 129.

23 Ibidem, 132.

caturmukhamukhāmbhojavanahamsavadhūr mama |

manase ramatām nityam sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||²⁴

May the all-white Sarasvatī, who is in the lotus-mouths of Brahmā like
a white goose in the thicket of lotuses,

always stay inside my mind – lake Mānasa.

And the poetess reacted:

nīlotpaladalaśyāmām vijjikām mām ajānatā |

vrthaiva daṇḍinā proktaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||²⁵

Not knowing me, Vijjikā, dark as the petal of a blue water lily,

Daṇḍin has wrongly described Sarasvatī as all white.

Therefore, it is clear, that Vidyā must have known *Kāvyaḍarśa* and therefore she flourished after Daṇḍin or was his contemporary. When Dr. V. Raghavan wrote the play *Vijayāṅkā*, the debate about dating this theoretician of Sanskrit literature was still open. Scholars argued about the priority between Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha. The works of these two theoreticians of Sanskrit literature, *Kāvyaḍarśa* and *Kāvyaḷamkāra*, share some common features, which suggest that one author responded to the work of the other. Thus, one of the writers must have known the other treatise while writing his own work, but it was unclear which of them was the first. This question arose among scholars in the beginning of the 20th century, after the publication of *Kāvyaḷamkāra* of Bhāmaha in 1909, and it was unanswered almost till the beginning of the 21st century. Numerous renowned scholars had different views on this matter. Yigal Bronner, who summed up the research in this subject, provided also lists of the most important scholars from both sides of the discussion: “Among those arguing for Daṇḍin’s priority were eminent

24 *Kāvyaḍarśa* 1.1, *Kāvyaḍarśa of Daṇḍin*, ed. R. R. Shastri, (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), 1.

25 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 43, verse 103.

scholars such as P. V. Kane, Arthur Berriedale Keith, and K. B. Pathak. The camp maintaining Bhāmaha's priority brandished its own list of luminaries including K. P. Trivedi, Hermann Jacobi, Johannes Nobel, and Sushil Kumar De.²⁶ The scholars tried to determine who of them was first and who commented upon the other treatise, but they had different views on this matter.²⁷ Also the question when the theorists lived was not answered at that time.

The theorist was associated with the court of Pallava dynasty, who shared a border with the land of Chalukayas and were frequently engaged in wars against each other. Pulakeśin II, father-in-law of Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā also battled against the country of Pallavas, and after his death his rivals occupied Badami for thirteen years. Under these circumstances it is possible that cultural exchange took place between these two countries. If the *Kāvyaḍarśa* had been already written, with high probability it would have been available at the royal court in Badami. However, in the beginning of the 21st century, Yigal Bronner collected and revised all research on dating Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha and their relation. In the article "A Question of Priority: Revisiting the Bhāmaha-Daṇḍin Debate" he presented the results of his inquiry stating that: "We can safely assume, then, that Daṇḍin composed his *Kāvyaḍarśa* around the year 700."²⁸ Therefore, it is unlikely, but not impossible, that the queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā could have known the *Kāvyaḍarśa*. It must be remembered, that it is unknown, what happened to her, when Vikramāditya I ascended the throne. Perhaps she lived long enough to be able to read the treatise of Daṇḍin.

Now there can be no doubt that it was Daṇḍin who was later than Bhāmaha, not the other way around. What is interesting, Dr. V. Raghavan also shared this opinion, although he did not prove it definitively.²⁹

26 Y. Bronner, "A Question of Priority: Revisiting the Bhāmaha-Daṇḍin Debate," (PDF) *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. 40 (1): (29 April 2011), 68. doi:10.1007/s10781-011-9128-x

27 The arguments of scholars debating on the priority between Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin can be found in Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 107 – 108.

28 Bronner, "A Question of Priority: Revisiting the Bhāmaha-Daṇḍin Debate," 110.

29 V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras: Vasanta Press, 1978), 277.

It is therefore not impossible that the queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā and poetess Vijjā were the same person. The poetess Vijayānkā mentioned by Rājaśekhara was from Karnataka. There is no certainty about the origin of Vijjā, but the earliest attestation of her works comes from north Indian sources. The oldest anthologies quoting her verses are: Mukula Bhaṭṭa's *Abhidhāvṛttimāṭṛkā* (9th century, Kashmir), Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyaṃimāṃsā* (c. 900 CE, Kannauj), the *Kāvyaṃprakāśa* of Mammaṭa (1050 CE Kashmir), and the *Kavīndravacanasamucaya* of Vidyākara (1100-1130 CE Kashmir). However, it must be remembered, that at that time there was a great interest in Sanskrit literature and especially in literary theory in the north of India. Thus, such anthologies were compiled mostly there. What is more, the poetess described herself as "dark as the petal of a blue water lily". Therefore, she had rather dark complexion, which is more common for people from South India, for example from Karnataka. Inhabitants of Kashmir usually have light skin. This fact possibly ensured Dr. V. Raghavan in identifying Vijjā with Vijayānkā and the queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā. As verses written by Vijjā were used by Dr. V. Raghavan in his play, it is important to take a closer look at the poetess and her literary output.

As it was indicated earlier, Vijjā must have known the *Kāvyaṃdarśa* and therefore the lower limit of her life span is the end of the 7th century or beginning of the 8th century. The upper limit is established by the earliest compilation which cited her verse. Mukula Bhaṭṭa quoted her stanza *dhanyāsi yā kathayasi* in his work *Abhidhāvṛttimāṭṛkā*. The father of the compiler, Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, was contemporary to Avantivarman, King of Kashmir, who ruled from 855 to 883 CE. Her verse was also cited by Ānandavardhana³⁰ (c. 820–890 CE) in his work *Dhvanyāloka*. Therefore, it is certain that Vijjā lived between the end of 7th century and the end of the 9th century.³¹

30 As is well known, Ānandavardhana (c. 820–890 CE) was a philosopher, a theorist of literature, and a poet from Kashmir. He was the author of treatise on poetics titled *Dhvanyāloka* and the probable creator of the dhvani theory of aesthetics, which states that the soul of poetry is dhvani – the poetical suggestion. See: Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 250 – 260.

31 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, XXXVIII – XXXIX.

The extant output of the poetess consists of at least 35 stanzas which were quoted in major Sanskrit anthologies.³² Among authors who used verses ascribed to her are Bhoja, Śārṅgadhara, Jalhaṇa, Rājaśekhara, Vallabhadeva, Viśvanātha, Arjunavarman, Vidyākara, Śrīdharadāsa. Ānandavardhana quoted one of her verses (ascribed by Vidyākara *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa*, verse 808 to Vidyā) together with two verses from *Vikramorvaśīyam* of Kālidāsa as illustration to *kārikā* 2,5.³³ Therefore, it is possible that Vijjā composed longer works, but they have not survived in their entirety, only their single stanzas are extant. Perhaps, the quoted passage comes from a work similar to *Vikramorvaśīyam*. Plausibly it was also a drama.³⁴ This play is probably lost; however, there is a play, which some researchers attribute to Vijjā. It is Sanskrit play *Kaumudīmahotsava*. The drama was preserved in a single manuscript from Kerala. It was partially damaged and, what is important, had a hole in the place where the name of its author would have been. The only remaining part of the name was “-kayā”. Scholar Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi (1866–1957), while studying the manuscript, claimed to see remains of the syllable “ja” before “-kayā”, and read the ending of the name as “-jakayā”. Based on Kavi’s reading and the fact that in the space where the manuscript was punctured should fit two syllables, some scholars have theorized that the missing word is “vijjakayā” – a feminine instrumental of the name Vijjakā. Therefore, according to this theory, the *Kaumudīmahotsava*’s author is Vijjakā, which is version of the name Vijjā used by some compilers.³⁵

However, A.K. Warder disagrees with M. R. Kavi’s theory and states that there are other possibilities of female names fitting in the place, such as Morikā. Evidently, Warder did not take into account the syllable “ja” that Kavi was supposed to see. According to the scholar, there is also possibility that the incomplete word is not the

32 Banik Pal, “Some Women Writers and Their Works in Classical Sanskrit Literature: a Reinterpretation,” 152.

33 See: *The Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta Translated by Daniel H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and M.V. Patwardhan Edited with an introduction by Daniel H. Ingalls*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990), 246 – 247.

34 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 4: The ways of originality (Bāṇa to Dāmodaragupta)*, 422.

35 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 4: The ways of originality (Bāṇa to Dāmodaragupta)* 427 – 428.

name of the author or the authoress, but a word *patākayā*, which means “written with a sub-plot”. What is more, Warder, studying the language and the style of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, came to the conclusion that they match the plays written around the period of Bhāsa,³⁶ therefore, 3rd or 4th century CE. The scholar claims that the *Kaumudīmahotsava* could be written later by an author copying the style and language of his or her predecessors, but according to him, it is unlikely that such a play could be written as late as in the 8th or 9th century.³⁷ Therefore, this play will not be discussed as the output of Vijjā.

The remaining literary output of Vijjā consists of single stanzas, which may be parts of longer works chosen by compilers because of their outstanding merits. Nevertheless, they could also belong to a short, single verse poems of *kāvya* called *muktaka*. The poetess tackles various subjects in her poetry. In three stanzas she described a king, his sword, and his army. She also wrote about appreciation for the poets, the beauty of nature, rural women, and love in its various aspects. The last subject dominates her output. It seems that she was very self-confident and conscious of her poetical skills – it can be seen in the verse where she called herself the incarnation of the goddess Sarasvatī. In her works, Vijjā employed long compounds and various rhetorical figures. The poetess frequently used puns. She always strived to make her poems rhythmical and melodious.³⁸

36 Bhāsa is one of the earliest and most celebrated Indian playwrights in Sanskrit. His plays had been lost for centuries, until the manuscripts were rediscovered in the early 20th century. Thirteen plays can be ascribed to him. Most of them based on *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, although there are also different opinions about their authorship (H. Tieken, “The So-called Trivandrum Plays attributed to Bhāsa,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für Die Kunde Südasiens / Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 37 (1993): 5–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24006838>; H. Tieken, “Three Men in a Row (Studies in the Trivandrum Plays II).” *Wiener Zeitschrift für Die Kunde Südasiens / Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 41 (1997): 17–52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24007790>.)

37 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 4: The ways of originality (Bana to Damodaragupta)*, 428 – 429.

38 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, XLIV – XLV.

Vijjā composed a handful of *muktakas* about love. Very often she described a woman in separation from her lover, sometimes tormented by the rainy season. She also wrote about a heroine abandoned by her lover and about a woman sending messages to her companion. Vijjā also composed some erotic poems, which are very subtle and delicate. However, particularly interesting are two of her verses about unchaste women. In the first one we have a mother who gives her daughter pieces of advice about the marriage.

vayaṃ bālye bālāṃs taruṇimani yūnaḥ pariṇatāv-

apīcchāmo vṛddhāṃs tad iha kularakṣā samucitā | |

tvayārabdhaṃ janma kṣapayitum anenaikapatinā

na me gotre putri kvacid api satīlāñchanam abhūt ||³⁹

We desire boys during childhood, young men during youth,

and even old men during maturity, this is what protection of family is about.

With one husband only, your life begins to waste.

Daughter, never in my lineage was such a mark of chastity.

The advice given by the mother is quite unexpected. She discourages her daughter from being faithful to her husband. The mother explains that lust for men lays in the very nature of women and it doesn't change during her whole life. She openly disparages marriage, because it is contradictory to women's nature, and it is impossible for them to be faithful to their husbands. In her words, strict monogamous relationship is rather a social construct than a fulfilment of dreams of two people who are in love. Marriage is something proper to do in a certain life stage, but it doesn't mean that it must be rigidly obeyed. The mother adds that it is known that all women in her family are unchaste. It seems to be normal for her. On the contrary, what she finds abnormal is the behaviour of her daughter, who is a wife committed to her husband. This verse provides an image

39 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 45, verse 106.

which is rather striking to the reader. The older woman, from whom it's rather expected to be a keeper of social rules, is the one who encourages to break them. It is also unexpected that a mother chastises her daughter for being a good wife. However, this conversation is not necessarily about the marital infidelity. Such situation could be accepted in a polyandrous marriage, and polyandry was a practice known in India. An early example of such marriage is depicted in the *Mahābhārata*: Draupadī was married to five Pāṇḍava brothers. Till this day in India there are communities that practice polyandry. For example, fraternal polyandry is still present in villages in the Kinnaur district in Himachal Pradesh.⁴⁰ Polyandry was also practised among various communities in Kerala, such as Nayars and Tiyyars.⁴¹ There is another possibility. Perhaps this stanza is a fragment of a conversation between courtesans: mother and daughter. This is plausible, especially since such a stanza could come from a drama.

The following poem treating about a certain woman looks quite innocent, and only after close reading her true intentions can be revealed.

dṛṣṭim he prativeśini kṣaṇam ihāpy asmadgṛhe dāsyasi

prāyeṇāsya śiśoḥ pitā na virasāḥ kaupīr apaḥ pāsyati /

ekākiny api yāmi satvaram itaḥ srotas tamālākulaṃ

nīrandhrās tanum ālikhantu jaraṭhacchedā nalagranthayah ||⁴²

Oh neighbour lady, please watch my house for a moment!

Usually, the father of this child does not drink the tasteless well water.

40 For more see: S. K. Negi, H. Singh, "Marital Satisfaction and Well Being among Fraternal Polyandrous and Monogamous Tribal People of Kinnaur," *IRC'S International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Social & Management Sciences*. 2 (4), (2014).: 47–57

41 K. Gough, "2. A Note on Nayar Marriage." *Man* 65 (1965): 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2796033>.

42 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 44, verse 105.

Although I am alone, I quickly go to the river covered with mangosteens.

Let the mass of hard joints of reeds scratch my body.

The speaker of this poem is a woman, who seems to be truly committed to her husband. She leaves her child and her home under the supervision of a neighbour, she is ready to endure pain, and risk by going alone to the river just to bring tasteful water for her husband. She pictures herself as a virtuous woman and an incredibly devoted wife, who can endure every inconvenience just to please her husband. However, the last line of the poem reveals her true intentions. Fetching water is just a pretext for going to the isolated bank of the river, where she can secretly meet her lover. By mentioning scratches caused by sharp reeds, she tries to explain marks which her lover will surely leave on her body. According to *Kāmasūtra*, different types of scratching and biting are an important part of Indian *ars amandi*.⁴³ Therefore, in fact, she is *abhisārikā* – a heroine, who is on her way to meet her lover. Once again, the author plays with the reader's expectations. The first three lines of the poem provide an image of a truly committed wife, but after reading the last line, this picture changes. Then it is clear that she is willing not only to cheat on her husband but also to neglect her child in order to meet her lover. What is more, she is doing it on the pretext of being extremely loving and devoted wife. This allusion is called in Sanskrit poetics *vyañjanā* and it was a crucial issue of a *dhvani* theory.⁴⁴ It is an example of *vastu dhvani* (suggestion of an act or an idea).

The figure of an unchaste woman is nothing new in the Sanskrit literature.⁴⁵ However, it is interesting that verses so openly speaking about women's inability to be faithful and at the same time being written by a woman gained so much recognition

43 The fourth and the fifth lesson of the second chapter of the *Kāmasūtra* contain lists of different types of scratching and biting during sexual activities Vātsyāyana Mallanaga, *Kāmasūtra*, transl. and ed. W. Doniger, S. Kakar, 45 – 49, 98 – 103.

44 See page: 229.

45 In Sanskrit literature there are numerous examples of portraying unfaithful women. For example, a story about wife cheating on her husband with another man can be found in the 10th book of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. See also: Somadeva, *O cnocie i niecnocie niewieściej. Opowiadania z "Ocenau baśni" czyli "Katha Sarit Sagara" Somadewy*, trans. H. Willman-Grabowska (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1960).

from their recipients, who were predominately men. However, it must be remembered, that they could be treated only as a verses illustrating suggestion (*dhvani*) or they belonged to bigger compositions.

Another trope which was used by Vijjā is *virahiṇī* – a women separated from her lover.

meghair vyoma navāmbubhir vasumatī vidyullatābhir diśo

dhārābhir gaganam vanāni kuṭajaiḥ pūrair vṛtā nimnagāḥ |

ekāḥ ghātayitum viyogavidhurām dīnām varākīḥ striyam

prāvṛṭkāla hatāśa varṇaya kṛtam mithyā kim āḍambaram ||⁴⁶

The sky covered by clouds, the earth by fresh waters, the quarters by creepers of lightening,

the firmament by showers, forests by kutaja blossoms, rivers by floods.

Oh wicked monsoon season, tell me, why this commotion was created needlessly, [only]

to hurt one miserable, poor, and bereaved by separation woman?

The first half of this *muktaka* describes natural phenomena one can observe during a rainy season. This time of the year unleashes heavy rains bringing relief after hot and dry summer. This is a season of very violent and impressive weather phenomena such as massive, dark clouds, thunders and bright lightnings. A monsoon also brings fresh water, which causes abundance in every aspect of nature. The rainy season in *kāvya* is a typical scenery for descriptions of love and lovers in union (*sambhoga*). The ubiquitous abundance in nature enhances feelings and desires of men and women. The

46 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 46 – 47, verse 110.

monsoon season is particularly used as a background for passionate scenes of love-making.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the second part of the poem presents the picture of *virahiṇī* – a woman suffering from separation. It is not explained if she is abandoned by her beloved one, or if she is waiting for his return from a journey which is delayed by the heavy rains, and she does not know if her husband is well. This image contrasts with the scene from the first part of the verse. The season typical for love in union enhances pain of the lonely woman. She asks if all the natural phenomena occur only to torment her. The oppressor is unbridled, cruel and violent. On the contrary, the tormented woman is described with multiple adjectives underlining her poor, piteous condition. She is completely helpless in the face of the situation.

An image of an abandoned lover suffering during a rainy season is a frequent topos in *kāvya* literature. In fact, such images are present in the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic and in the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* too. In both works the monsoon season increases the sorrow of Rāma, who suffers because of separation from his beloved Sītā.⁴⁸

In another verse devoted to *virahiṇī* type of a heroine, an abandoned woman addresses directly Kāma, the god of love.

devena prathamam jito 'si śaśabhṛllekhābhṛtānantaram
buddhenoddhatabuddhinā smara tataḥ kāntena pānthena me |
tyaktvā tān bata haṃsi mām atikṛśām bālām anāthām striyaṃ
dhik tvām dhik tava pauraṣaṃ dhig udayaṃ dhik kārmukaṃ
*dhik śarān ||*⁴⁹

47 Danielle Feller, *The Seasons in Mahākāvya Literature*, (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers 1995), 145 – 147.

48 Feller, *The Seasons in Mahākāvya Literature*, 145 – 147.

49 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 46, verse 109.

Oh Kāma! First you were conquered by the god bearing the mark of the moon,

then by the Buddha with excessive power of mind, and then by my beloved traveller!

Alas! Having abandoned them, you torment me – a fragile, young and defenceless woman.

Shame on you! Shame on your masculinity, shame on your impetus, on your bow and on your arrows!

The poetess refers to two myths. The first one is a Purāṇic story about Kāma, who was assigned a task to draw Śiva from his penance and make him fall in love with Pārvatī so they could beget a son who would defeat the demon Tāraka. Kāma enraged the god who burned him opening his third eye. The second remark refers to a story of Buddha's victory over Māra – the Buddhist “Lord of the Senses”. On the night before the enlightenment, meditating Buddha was tempted by demon Māra with visions of beautiful women. He resisted temptations and prevailed over the demon. Both examples illustrate men indifferent to the efforts of Kāma and resisting the power of love in order to focus on more exalted goals. Similarly, the beloved of the woman withstood the power of Kāma, as she thinks. He is defined as a traveller, so perhaps he is a merchant who went away on business and abandoned his lover.

In the second part of the poem, the woman depicts her miserable situation and curses Kāma and everything linked to him. She is tormented with all sorts of feelings: passion, sorrow, love, disappointment. Therefore, her emotional and physical condition is different from that of the calm, calculating and indifferent men referred to in the first half of the stanza. There is a clear distinction between the two genders and their susceptibility to love and desire.

The poetry composed by Vijjā reveals that she was a very well educated, self-confident and talented poetess. Unlike other female *kāvya* writers, whose poetry was usually characterized by a simple and sweet style, she was not afraid to employ long

compounds and high-sounding effects.⁵⁰ It shows her mastery over the language and theory of Sanskrit literature. One of her specialities seems to be dhvani – poetical suggestion. Vijjā also frequently employed twists playing with reader’s expectations and using puns and imbuing her works with puns and humour. Some of her *muktakas* are highly conventionalized, but there are also some verses which are marked with feminine perspective.

From the English preface to this play, Dr. V. Raghavan evidently was convinced that Vijayānkā and Vijjā were the same person, and her identification with Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā was probable. The same view was also presented by P. V. Kane in *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, which was published for the first time in 1923.⁵¹ Raghavan for sure knew this book and perhaps he was influenced by it. However, it is also possible, that the playwright created the heroine out of three different historical characters, about whom very little information is available. The heroine is named after the poetess Vijayānkā, about whom Rājaśekhara wrote and to whom one poem is traditionally ascribed. The majority of the poems (actually, all of them, apart from the one ascribed to Vijayānkā) used in this play as composed by the heroine created by Raghavan were ascribed to Vijjā. Moreover, through this poetess the author connected the heroine with Daṇḍin and the South India. Raghavan gave to his heroine the position and the historical background of the Chalukyan Queen Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā. It must be remembered that the information about all of those women (or just one woman) are few and vague. Combining all of them allowed Raghavan to create a consistent image of a heroine with a historically reliable background. Nevertheless, the possibility that Vijayānkā, Vijjā and Vijayā Bhaṭṭārikā were in fact the same person, cannot be excluded. It is also worth remembering that the existence of a talented Vijayānkā or Vijayā poetess is attested by Rājaśekhara and different anthologies have preserved a considerable number of *muktakas* signed by their compilers with the names Vijjā, Vijjikā, etc.

50 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, XLIV.

51 Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 128 – 132.

4. 2 Vikaṭānitambā

4.2.1 Vikaṭānitambā

Vikaṭānitambā lived probably in the early 9th century. Her name can be translated as “the one with huge (i.e. beautiful) buttocks”. Hardly anything is known about her life. According to Bhoja, she was a widow who remarried. One of her husbands was illiterate, and he was not able to even pronounce Sanskrit’s words properly:

kāle māṣaṃ, sasye māsaṃ vadati sakāśaṃ yaḥ ca śakāsaṃ |

*uṣṭre lumpati raṃ vā ṣaṃ vā tasmai datta vikaṭānitambā ||*⁵²

Who says bean, while speaking about time and “month” while speaking of crop, and “śakāsaṃ” instead of “sakāśaṃ”,⁵³

who in “uṣṭra” omits either “ra” or “ṣa”, to such a man Vikaṭānitambā was given away!

As a poetess, she was known for her simple and elegant style. In her poetry, she dealt with a handful of different subjects and employed many different rhetorical figures. However, unlike Vijjā, she avoided using long compounds.⁵⁴

Vikaṭānitambā wrote poems on various subjects; however, the majority of her verses treat about love. She described bold *abhisārikā* who is going to meet her lover in spite of dangers of the night, and *vākasajjā nāyikā* – a heroine waiting for her beloved one. She also wrote a poem in which a groom is advised by a friend about the wedding night. Although the bride is fragile and delicate, the friend tells him that he should not be too tender for her. In another verse, the speaker addresses a bee, which tries to get into a flower which is still not ready. It is a metaphor for a man courting a girl who is

52 Bhagadatta Jalhaṇa, *Sūktimuktāvalī*. ed. E. Krishnamacharya, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 47, verse 92.

53 The word *sakāśaṃ* means “towards, near” but when it is mispronounced as *śakāsaṃ* it has no meaning at all.

54 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, XLVI.

too young for it. Vikāṭānitambā also described spring from the perspective of a woman abandoned by her beloved. The beauty of this season causes her even more pain. She perceives the features of nature as vicious because they remind her about her lost love.

Some stanzas of Vikāṭānitambā are characterized by puns and erotica. The poem quoted below is an example of verse of highly sexual character.

abhihitāpy abhiyogaparānmukhī

prakaṭam aṅgavilāsam akurvati |

upari te puruṣāyitum akṣamā

navavadhūr iva śatrupatākinī ||⁵⁵

Even approached, avoids confrontation,

does not openly presents its divisions,

is unable to overcome you like a man!

The enemy's army is indeed like a newly-wed bride!

In this poem, cowardly behaviour of an enemy army is compared to a shy and inexperienced newly-wed bride. According to this verse, a timid girl avoids the encounter with her husband, does not charm him with beauty of her limbs and is too shy to perform sex in woman-on-top position.⁵⁶ Similarly, a coward army does not dare to attack even while approached, does not show its military divisions, and is unable to face a rival army in a heroic way. The double meaning of words, when applied to the hostile army and then to the virgin bride, allow to develop this comparison. The strophe shows that the poetess was neither shy nor prudish to write openly about sex. In this verse, the words have double meaning applicable to both enemy army and a newly-wed bride.

55 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 55 – 56, verses 130.

56 The choice of words in the third line of the verse is the same as in the sixth chapter of the second book of the *Kāmasūtra*, which describes woman-on-top positions. *The Kāmasūtra by Śrī Vātsyāyana Muni*, ed. Śrī G. M. Shastri, (Benares: Jai Krishna-das-Haridas Gupta, 1929), 116 – 125.

In another poem, Vikāṭānītibā addresses *kalahāntarītā nāyikā* – a heroine who had a quarrel with her lover.

anālocya premṇaḥ pariṇatim anādr̥tya suhr̥das

tvayākāṇḍe mānaḥ kim iti sarale preyasi kṛtaḥ |

samākṛṣṭā hy ete virahadahanodbhāsuraśikhāḥ

svahastenāṅgārās tad alam adhunāraṇyaruditaiḥ ||⁵⁷

Without considering the development of love, ignoring your friends,

why have you, causelessly, become arrogant towards your sincere lover?

You have brought with your own hand these charcoals with shining flames
of the fire of separation,

Now then, enough with weeping in vain!

It is particularly interesting, because the speaker in the poem does not bring any comfort to the suffering woman. On the contrary – the person admonishing the heroine claims that it is her own fault, and clearly takes the side of her lover. Vikāṭānītibā points out that the heroine became angry at her honest beloved one without any reason; hence, he has every right to become indifferent to her. Although the heroine suffers, the speaker tells her that she brought it upon herself and therefore she deserves it. What is more, Vikāṭānītibā does not offer the woman any hope, pointing out that she cries in vain. It seems that the message of the poetess included in this poem is that a lover should always treat his or her partner with respect.

Three preserved in anthologies stanzas of Vikāṭānītibā use the image of a bee courting a flower as a metaphor of a male-female relationship.

57 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 57, verse 134.

bālā tanvī mṛdutanur iyaṃ tyajyatām atra śaṅkā

dṛṣṭā kācid bhramarabharato mañjarī bhajyamānā |

tasmād eṣā rahasi bhavatā nirdayaṃ pīdanīyā

*mandākrāntā viśṛjati rasaṃ nekṣuyaṣṭiḥ samagram ||*⁵⁸

She is young, slender and with a pliant body; give up hesitation!;

No twig has ever been seen to break under the weight of a bee.

Therefore, in private you should squeeze her passionately.

A sugar cane does not release whole juice if pressed gently.⁵⁹

This verse once again has a very erotic character. Vikaṭanitambā again speaks about young, inexperienced girl; most probably a virgin. The stanza has a form of advice given to a man who is about to have a sexual intercourse with a young girl. Perhaps this advice is addressed to a groom before his wedding night. His mentor assures the man that he should not be afraid of hurting the girl and he should not limit himself during the act. The adviser mentions that otherwise the girl would not obtain full pleasure. It is an example of a *dṛṣṭānta* – exemplification. The anthology *Subhāṣitāvali* of Vallabhadeva ascribes this verse to Vikaṭanitambā.

It is clear that the poetry of Vikaṭanitambā is marked with her imprudence and directness. She was well educated and had a good knowledge on Sanskrit literature. The poetess used many images typical for *kāvya*; however, she did not merely copy them – she used them in new, interesting ways. Although there is not much information about

58 Ibidem, 57, verse 133.

59 The word *mandākrāntā* indicates its primally meaning ‘slowly advancing’ and the name of the metre used in this stanza. The metre *mandākrāntā* was commonly used in *kāvya*. It is believed to be invented by Kālidāsa, who for sure made it famous by employing it in his poem *Meghadūta*. A. S. Deo. “The Metrical Organization of Classical Sanskrit Verse,” *Journal of Linguistics* 43, no. 1 (2007): 63–114. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177028>.

her life and character, it seems from her poetry that she was a bold, independent and self-confident woman.

A completely different opinion on Vikaṭānitambā presents A. K. Warder. The scholar believes that Vikaṭānitambā is in fact title of a play and name of its main heroine. According to him, all stanzas ascribed to the poetess are in fact quotes from the drama. The play would be a comedy about a learnt widow – Vikaṭānitambā, who wants to remarry, but she is given to an illiterate husband. As an evidence to support such a theory he provides the fact that the stanza quoted below was cited by Bhoja in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* as an illustration of a particular situation in love.⁶⁰

ke vaikaṭānitambena girāṃ gumphena rañjitāḥ |

*nindanti nijakāntānāṃ na maugdhyamadhurāṃ vacaḥ ||*⁶¹

Who captivated by composition of Vikaṭānitambā's words,

would not ridicule sweet simplicity of the speech of their own beloveds?⁶²

The verse was also quoted by Jalhana as a stanza composed by Rājaśekhara. A. K. Warder claims that Rājaśekhara actually cited the *prahāsana*. According to this theory, the play is now lost, apart from few verses which are ascribed to non-existing poetess Vikaṭānitambā.⁶³ Nevertheless, it has to be noticed that Jalhana quoted this verse among other verses ascribed to Rājaśekhara which speak about female writers. Although the way Rājaśekhara praised Vikaṭānitambā may raise doubts whether he spoke about a real person, three other stanzas clearly speak on factual poetesses. The scholar compared them and their skills in composing poetry to famous and renowned poets.

60 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 3: The Early Medieval Period (Śudraka to Viśākhadatta)*, 255 – 256.

61 V. Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, in V. Raghavan, *Prekṣaṇakatrayī – Vijayāṅkā, Vikaṭānitambā, Avantisundarī. Three Sanskrit Prekshnakas*, (Madras: Sri Ramachandra Printing Works, 1956), 5.

62 This verse ascribed to Rājaśekhara comes from the anthology *Sūktimuktāvalī* (chapter 4, verse 92) compiled by Jalhana in 1257 CE.

63 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 3: The Early Medieval Period (Śudraka to Viśākhadatta)*, 255 – 256.

Therefore, it would be odd if among stanzas praising real female writers Rājaśekhara, and then Jalhana decided to include quotation from a play. The context, in which this verse is placed, supports the presumption that such a person existed. Thus, it seems to be more plausible that Vikaṭānitambā was indeed a real, historical figure, who composed poetry appreciated by theoreticians of Sanskrit literature and was cited in anthologies. An interesting approach to the problem of reality of Vikaṭānitambā was presented by K. K. Malathi Devi in *Prahasanas in Sanskrit Literature and Kerala Stage*. The scholar combined those two theories stating that the play *Vikaṭānitambā* was written by the poetess of the same name.⁶⁴ There is also the possibility that there was a famous play titled *Vikaṭānitambā* and an unrelated to it poetess, who had (or took) the same name.

4.2.2 Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi

Although majority of verses used by Dr. V. Raghavan in the play *Vikaṭānitambā* were ascribed to our poetess or about her, there is one stanza of different, and much later origin.

yasya ṣaṣṭhī caturthī ca vihasya ca vihāya |

*aham katham dvitīyā syād dvitīyā syām aham katham ||*⁶⁵

How could I be the second half of someone, for whom

vihasya is the sixth case, vihāya is the fourth and aham is the second!⁶⁶

This verse certainly was not composed by Vikaṭānitambā, and does not speak about her. It was composed by the 18th century poetess from Kerala, Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi. She was born in 1760, in the royal family of the Zamorins, who ruled from Calicut. As

64 K. K. Malathi Devi, *Prahasanas in Sanskrit Literature and Kerala Stage*, (Delhi: Nag Publishers 1995), 78 – 80.

65 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 5.

66 Although words *vihasya*, *vihāya* and *aham* seem to have endings of respectively sixth, fourth and second case, in fact they are different grammatical forms. *vihasya* is the absolutivum of verb $vi\sqrt{has}$, *vihāya* is the absolutivum of the verb $vi\sqrt{hā}$, and *aham* is the first person pronoun in the first case.

a member of a royal family, she had opportunity to get education and master Sanskrit. Although not many of Manoramā's works were preserved, she was famous for her writing skills and graceful style. She was renowned as an eminent Sanskrit teacher. Her first husband was Rama Varma, prince of Beypur. After his death, she married Brahmin Pākkattu Bhaṭṭatiri. Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi considered him as uneducated because he did not know Sanskrit grammar. It is about him that the poetess complains in her poem. Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi was a guest at the court of Kārttika Tirunāḷ Rāmavarman (r. 1758–1798), known also as Dharmaraja, during the invasion of Tipu Sultan. As the tradition has it, the king and the poetess loved each other. The couple exchanged letters with Sanskrit stanzas in which they expressed their admiration for each other.⁶⁷

The biography of Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi in some elements resembles the facts known from the life of Vikaṭanitambā. Both of them were well-educated women and Sanskrit poetesses who became widows in young age and remarried. What is more, they both had husbands who did not know Sanskrit, and they were probably equally disappointed about them. Thus, it is not surprising that the stanza written by Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi suits very well the situation of Vikaṭanitambā. These similarities in their biographies probably drew attention of V. Raghavan and made him willing to use this verse in his play on Vikaṭanitambā.

To sum up, the character of the Sanskrit poetess created by Raghavan was constructed on the basis of what we know about Vikaṭanitambā's life from Bhoja and from her poetry. In addition there is a glimpse from the life of another poetess, Manorama.. We cannot be sure about the historicity of Vikaṭanitambā and how to possibly separate the story of her life from the plot of the play. If Vikaṭanitambā was a historical figure, with so little information about the life of this authoress, adding a new detail to her legend makes the pieces devoted to her more vivid and appealing to viewer's imagination. Moreover, adding a stanza associated with a royal lady scholar from South India may be perceived as taking up a game with the recipient of this particular play. The motif itself – a wife more educated than her husband, which situation probably happened from time to time, can be seen as a kind of topos observed

67 Sudyka, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Royal Ladies of Kerala. Toward a History of Women's writing in Sanskrit in the 18th- to 20th- century Kerala*, 54 – 59.

in Sanskrit literature. One example of this type of story comes from the first book of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*⁶⁸ and it is retold by Govindasvamī (the teacher of Vikāṭanītibā) to his student to comfort her when she is afraid that she would have to marry a simple, uneducated man. It is a story of king Sātavāhana, who had a well-educated wife, although he himself did not know Sanskrit. Ashamed by her knowledge and his lack of education, he ordered to create a new Sanskrit grammar which would help him to learn Sanskrit in six months. Therefore, Śarvavarman wrote *Kālāpa* known also as *Kātantra* and *Kaumāryākaraṇa*, which is a relatively small work on Sanskrit grammar. Another example is Kālidāsa who, according to the legend, married a learnt princess although he was a simple man. Then, he acquired knowledge of Sanskrit by the help of the goddess Kālī which allowed him to compose his works. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, that Raghavan did not use a distant and fantastical realization of the motif of the educated wife and the foolish husband, but a legend connected with Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi – a woman who is still remembered in the Indian south and whose existence cannot be doubted. Thus, the prototype of the heroine of his play is a poetess whose historicity can be questioned (although Raghavan definitely recognised her historicity) and an undoubtedly historical figure. This combination adds colours to the character created by Raghavan.

4.3 Avantisundarī

The heroine of the third play of V. Raghavan is Avantisundarī. She was a wife of an eminent poet, playwright, and theorist of Sanskrit literature, Rājaśekhara, who lived in the 10th century in Kanauj. The latter served as a court poet on the court of the dynasty Gurjara-Pratihara during the reign of Mahendrapāla (c. 885–910), and his son Mahīpāla (c. 912–940), who ruled the Empire of Āryāvarta. The family name of the poet was Yāyāvara or Yāyāvarīya – with this name he frequently referred to himself in his works. The most important work of Rājaśekhara is *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*,⁶⁹ which is an extensive

68 The *Kathāsaritsāgara* (“Ocean of the Streams of Stories”) is a collection of Indian legends, and tales derived from the lost *Brhatkathā* of Guṇādhya and retold in Sanskrit by the 11th century writer from Kashmir Somadeva. C. Kunhan Raja, *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), 237 – 238.

69 The *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā* is discussed in the chapter 6. Prekṣaṇakatrāyī and Sanskrit poetics, page 209 of this dissertation. For more information on the treatise for example: H. Tiekens: “Style and Structure of

treatise on poetics and a practical guide for poets. It deals with various aspects of Sanskrit theory of literature, contains explanations about elements of good poetry, and even provides a schedule of an ideal day of a poet. Another notable works of Rājaśekhara are a play *Karpūramañjarī* written in Shauraseni Prakrit,⁷⁰ *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (*mahānāṭaka*⁷¹ retelling the story from *Rāmāyaṇa* from the moment of Sītā's *svayaṃvara* to the return of Rāma and Sītā to Ayodhya), *Bālabhārata* (a play based on *Mahābhārata* which was unfinished or only two acts of it were preserved) and the play *Vidhaśālabhañjikā* (a *nāṭikā*⁷² telling the story of love intrigues at the court of king Vidyādharamalla leading to marriage of the monarch with princess Mṛgānkāvalī).⁷³

Very little is known on Avantisundarī alone; however, some information on her can be found in the works of her husband. He mentioned her in the preface to the

Rājaśekhara's *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*. With Special Reference to Chapter X on the Relation between King and Poet," in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia. Essays in Honour of J.C. Heesterman*, ed. A.W. van den Hoek, D.H.A. Kolff and M.S. Oort. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 366-374.

70 Śauraseni Prākṛta is a Middle Indo-Aryan language and a Dramatic Prakrit. This Prakrit is the nearest to classical Sanskrit. It originated from Madhyadeśa and took its name from the Kingdom of Śūrasena, the country which lasted from c. 700 BCE till c. 300 BCE and had Mathura as its capital city. Most of the material in this language originates from the 3rd to 10th centuries, although it was probably a spoken vernacular around the 2nd century BCE. Śauraseni Prākṛta is the ordinary Prakrit of a Sanskrit drama. For more see: A. C. Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit*, (Calcutta: University of the Punjab, 1917), 5.

71 *Mahānāṭaka* – this term literary means a great *nāṭaka*, and it stands for a *nāṭaka* in ten acts.

72 *Nāṭikā* is an *uparūpaka* – minor form of drama. It can be described as a lesser heroic comedy. Its plot can be either legendary or invented by the author. The erotic sentiment (*śṛṅgāra rasa*) should be dominant and the graceful manner is appropriate for it. The hero is a king, the heroine is a member of another royal family, and the action takes place at the court, which gives an opportunity to introduce music, songs and dance into the spectacle. A *nāṭikā* usually consists of four acts; however, there are also shorter plays belonging to this genre. See: Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 233 – 234.

73 For more information about the dramatic output of Rājaśekhara, see: M. Mitra, *Studies on the Dramas of Rājaśekhara*, (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1983).

Karpūramañjarī, where he called her “the garland on the head of the Chauhan family”.⁷⁴

Stage-manager. At whose instance then are you enacting the play?

Assistant. The crest-garland of the Chauhan family, the wife of the chief poet Rājaśekhara, the lady whose husband wrote the play, Avantisundarī, — she desires us to enact it.⁷⁵

Therefore, she belonged to the Chauhan dynasty known also as the Cahamanas in Sanskrit. It was a powerful royal Rajput dynasty which ruled in the eastern Rajasthan from around the 6th century CE. They claimed that they were descendants of the Solar dynasty. They lost their power in 1192 when Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated in the second battle of Tarain by the Ghurid king Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad Ghori, and soon their kingdom was divided in two. During the 13th and 14th centuries the Chauhan Rajputs and the Delhi Sultanate fought for control on the strategic areas of Delhi, Punjab and Gujarat.⁷⁶

Therefore, Avantisundarī came from a very influential and rich family. Consequently, it is possible that she got good education in her youth. What is more, as it was shown earlier, her husband was convinced of women's capacity to write poetry which he expressed in *Kāvyaṁmāmsā*, and he knew their contribution to Sanskrit literature, which is clearly visible from the stanzas cited by Jalhana and ascribed to Rājaśekhara. Hence, it is very possible that he not only would allow his wife to continue her education but even would encourage her in her studies. Three poems in Prakrit of Avantisundarī were also quoted by a poet Hemacandra in his work *Deśināma Māla*.⁷⁷

74 A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature. V* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.(1988), 413–414; S. Parashar, Introduction. In *Kāvyaṁmāmsā of Rājaśekhara. Original text in Sanskrit and Translation with Explanatory Notes by Sadhana Parashar*, (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2000), 10 – 11.

75 Translation: *Rājaśekhara's Karpūra-mañjarī* edited by S. Konow and translated into English by Ch. R. Lanman, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1901), 225.

76 R. B. Singh, *History of the Chāhamānas*, (Varanasi: N. Kishore, 1964), 1 – 18.

77 *Kāvyaṁmāmsā of Rājaśekhara. Original text in Sanskrit and Translation with Explanatory Notes*, 138 -139 footnote.

Rājaśekhara claimed that he wrote the *Karpūramañjarī* to please his wife and she was the one to commission the first staging of this play. It is also perhaps the only case in the history of ancient Indian literature when a writer acknowledges his indebtedness to his wife for her contribution to his literary career.⁷⁸ The play is also the oldest available example of a genre called *saṭṭaka*. Later theorists like Sāgaranandin and Śāradātanaya used *Karpūramañjarī* as an illustration of a model *saṭṭaka*. It is a Prakrit composition containing numerous musical and dance items. The plot is not divided into acts (*aṅka*), but into *yavanikāntara* which literally means “between the curtains”. There were also no interludes of any kind, such as *praveśaka* or *viškambhaka*. The parts of the spectacles were indicated by the intervention of the curtain (*yavanikā*). Hence the name *yavanikāntara*.⁷⁹ The plot of *saṭṭaka* resembles the plot of Sanskrit genre *nāṭikā*; hence, its hero is a king who plots intrigues in effort to marry the heroine – a girl from another royal family, whom he is destined to marry, but due to some accident she appeared at the court as an ordinary girl. The couple must struggle against the chief queen, who at the beginning is against their union and creates obstacles they have to overcome, but finally she blesses their marriage.⁸⁰ A *saṭṭaka* should be titled with name of its heroine. Its dominant *rasa* should be *adbhuta* – astonishment.

The action of the *Karpūramañjarī* takes place at the court of the King Caṇḍavāla and Queen Vibbhamalehā. The play starts with an act containing a conversation between a *vidūṣaka* and a maid of a chief queen. The *vidūṣaka*, who is as per rule a Brahmin, is outsmarted by the wit and intelligence of the maid, which is very unusual case in ancient Indian literature. This short scene shows that the author had a great respect for women and their knowledge.⁸¹ The king’s palace is visited by a seer Bheravāṇaṃda, who, quite surprisingly, is an amateur of women and liqueur. He boasts that he has magical powers, and the King asks him to prove it and bring to the court the most beautiful woman of the world. The seer meditates, and in the audience hall

78 S. K. De, *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399: From Courtly to the Popular*, 60.

79 *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature: Devraj to Jyoti*, Vol. 2, ed. A. Datta, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), 1095.

80 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 233 – 234.

81 De, *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399: From Courtly to the Popular*, 60.

suddenly appears a beautiful, young and very surprised woman in a bathing robe. She claims to be a daughter of the king of Kuntala. The chief queen recognizes her as her cousin Karpūramam̐jarī and takes charge of her.

The plot further tells about the spring festival in which participate the Queen and Karpūramam̐jarī. Charmed by beauty of the girl the King, with the help of the *vidūṣaka*, arranges numerous situations to look at her and admire her beauty. The *vidūṣaka* and the maid of the Queen arrange also a secret meeting for the king and Karpūramam̐jarī. The couple falls in love. However, the Queen is against their relationship and tries to prevent their meetings. Nevertheless, the King tricks the Queen and marries Karpūramam̐jarī during the Banyan Sāvitrī Festival. The Queen finally agrees to their union.⁸²

The *Karpūramañjarī* contains numerous descriptions of dance sequences, which were probably enacted on scene. As S. K. De notices, it was probably connected more with a ‘popular’ dramatic tradition. The dances and music would compensate for the simple and predictable plot.⁸³ Thus it is no wonder that in the Raghavan’s play *Avantisundarī* wants to quickly stage it to see this beautiful spectacle.

The wife of Rājaśekhara was also a poetess. It is unknown if she wrote any poem in Sanskrit, because the only verses of her authorship which were preserved are written in Prakrit. They all are devoted to the subject of love.

kiṃ taṃ pi hu vīsariaṃ ṇikkiva jaṃ guru-aṇassa majjhammi /

ahidhāviuṇa gahio taṃ ahura-uttarīāe ||⁸⁴

82 Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature. 5: The bold style (Śaktibhadra to Dhanapāla)*, 426 – 440.

83 De, *A History of Indian Literature, 500-1399: From Courtly to the Popular*, 61.

84 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature. Volume 2. Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 65, verse 7.

[A lady, separated from her lover, laments]

O, merciless one! have you forgotten, alas! even that I, with my upper garment slipping off, caught hold of you by running towards you, even in the midst of my elders?⁸⁵

This *muktaka* portrays a *virahiṇī* or a woman separated from her lover or left by him. She is sure that he has forgotten her, although she gave him an enormous evidence of her love. She did not hesitate to face even the risk of being condemned as a shameless woman just to meet him. At that moment, she had no regards for any social conventions, she also did not care about any consequences. The woman was clearly desperate and ready to give up everything to be with her beloved man. But evidently, this proof of love and devotion was not enough to make him stay with her. The woman is clearly angry, as much, as she was passionate about him before. Now she curses her man, and at the same time she reminds him how much she risked and struggled for their love. Her former beloved one is evidently incapable of doing the same or even valuing her efforts.

This verse is marked by an accurate and deep psychological insight of the poetess into a situation of an angry *virahiṇī*. In these two lines Avantisundarī told an almost complete story of a relationship. From this short stanza it is evident that in this relation the woman was emotional, passionate, burning with love. She was the one to take action and risk, and who would suffer consequences. The man, on the contrary, seems to be indifferent and inactive.

khaṇamittakalusiāe luliālayavallarīsamāthariam |

bhamarabharohurayam paṅkayaṃ va bharimo muham tīe ||⁸⁶

85 Translation: Ibidem, 118, verse 7.

86 Chaudhuri, *Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature*. Vol. 2. *Sanskrit Poetesses Part A*, 66, verse 8.

[A lover, separated from his sweetheart, says],

I remember her face,—she who was defiled only for a while,—her face,
encircled by dangling creeper-like tresses, just like a lotus bowed down
with the weight of bees.⁸⁷

The second *muktaka* of Avantisundarī portrays the opposite situation. The poetess described a *virahin* – a man separated from his beloved woman. He recalls her face surrounded by hair curling like hanging creepers. Possibly he recalls their secret meeting in forest or secluded garden. This stanza lacks the psychological insight present in the first stanza, probably because it was easier for Avantisundarī to describe the situation from the female perspective.

uvahasae earāṇim indo indīvaracchi ettāhe |

iṇdamahapeccie tuha muhassa sohaṃ ṇiacchanto ||⁸⁸

[A husband jokes with his wife]

O lotus-eyed one, possessed of youthful beauty! now having seen the beauty
of your face, Indra is mocking Indrāṇī.⁸⁹

The last survived poem of Avantisundarī presents a happy picture – a husband admiring the beauty of his wife. It is probably a witty response to wife complaining to her husband that he had not appreciated her.

The style of Avantisundarī is sweet and charming, although simple. She was able to provide a deep, psychological background in her poetry. The poems of Avantisundarī are melodious and rhythmical, due to the usage of alliteration. She did not use long compounds nor elaborated ornaments. Nevertheless, Avantisundarī for sure had an extensive knowledge on the theory of Sanskrit literature. Rājaśekhara cited her opinions

87 Translation: Ibidem, 118, verse 8.

88 Ibidem, 66, verse 9.

89 Translation: Ibidem, 118, verse 9.

on poetics three times in his work *Kāvyaśikṣā*.⁹⁰ Therefore, they must have discussed various aspects of poetry and he must have valued her views and knowledge, although he disagreed with her.

It seems that among Sanskrit theorist of literature Rājaśekhara appreciated women in the greatest extent. He acknowledged their abilities to create poetry, he praised writing skills of female poets, he valued their opinion on poetics and dedicated one of his works to his wife. It seems that he had an extraordinary respect for women, and without any doubt he did not consider them as inferior to men.

Avantisundarī is a historical character, about whom there is quite a lot of historical information in comparison to the other two heroines of Raghavan's plays. There is also a great amount of information about her husband and his literary output. There was no need for V. Raghavan to add pieces of biographies of other poetesses and notable female characters in order to reconstruct scenes from Avantisundari's life.

90 The *Kāvyaśikṣā* and its passages containing opinions of Avantisundarī, are disputed in details in the chapter 6.4 *Avantisundarī* of Raghavan and *Kāvyaśikṣā* of Rājaśekhara.

5. The genre of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*

5.1 *Prekṣaṇaka*

The plays *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are described by their author, Dr. V. Raghavan, with the technical term *prekṣaṇaka*. This term sometimes occurs in the treatises on dramaturgy among *uparūpakas* – minor types of drama. The number of *uparūpakas* varies from ten to eighteen according to different theorists, so not all of them enlisted *prekṣaṇaka*. For example, it cannot be found in the *Abhinavabhāratī*.¹ One of the theoreticians who mentioned this genre was Bhoja. Because he mentioned it among twelve *uparūpakas* in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*,² this genre was briefly described by Dr. V. Raghavan in his meticulous work on this treatise. Therefore, Raghavan characterises *prekṣaṇaka* in this way:

It is a simple representation of such episodes as Kāmadahāna, the burning of Cupid by Śiva, on the streets, in temples, etc. It seems that this is identical with the South Indian counterpart of the North Indian Holi Festival, called in Tamil Kāmantī, i.e., Kāmadahāna, in which Kāma is burnt and two parties of songsters contend in songs that Kāma is dead and that Kāma continues to be alive. The songs are called Lāvaṇi, which is a Marathi mode.³

V. Raghavan wrote about *prekṣaṇaka* also in one of his articles. He pointed out that this term has changed in meaning during the centuries.

The *prekṣaṇaka* was a show which took place in the open on streets, amidst a gathering of people, in quadrangles, and temple courtyards; it was performed by a number of persons. [...] *Prekṣaṇaka* has also been used by

1 It is noteworthy that the *Abhinavabhāratī* is the oldest known commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* written by Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1020), theoretician of Sanskrit poetics, philosopher and śaiva theologian from Kashmir. See: V. Raghavan, *Studies in Abhinavagupta's Works*, (Chennai: V. Raghavan's Centre for Performing Arts (Regd.), 2019), 99 – 170.

2 *rathyāsamājacatvarasurālayādau pravartyate bahubhiḥ |*
pātraviśeṣair yat tat prekṣaṇakam kāmadahanādi ||

Bhoja, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* in V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras: Vasanta Press, 1978), 543.

3 Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, 543.

later authors to denote any kind of irregular stage-performance, not conforming to any of the well -defined times. ⁴

K. H. Trivedi while analysing a definition from the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra says of this genre:

Prekṣaṇaka – is an incident or episode which is staged in streets, assemblies, quadrangles or temples. Kāmadhāna is its illustration.

The definition by the BP [MK: *Bhāvaprakāśana*] is very vague and ambiguous. According to the SD [MK: *Sāhityadarpaṇa*] it has one act and the hero is low-born. There is no Sūtradhāra, Samdhis are three excepting Garbha and Avamarśa. It can have all Vṛttis. ⁵

It must be noticed that in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, *prekṣaṇaka* is called *preṅkhaṇa*. Indeed, in the 6th *pariccheda* of this treatise the following description of the genre is included:

The *preṅkhaṇa* is in one act, devoid of the Garbha and Vimarsha as also of the Vishkambhaka and Praveśaka; the hero being a low person. Angry interlocution and single combats form its subject. It employs all the kinds of dramatic Action. It is without the *peculiar performance* of the Manager, the Benediction and Propitiation being performed behind the scene. ⁶

A definition of *prekṣaṇaka* occurs also in the *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa* of Sāgaranandin, a 13th century treatise on Indian theatre:

Now the *prekṣaṇaka*. All the languages are used in it. Śaurasenī predominates. It lacks the *garbha* and the *vimarśa*, but has their characteristics. It has all the styles (*vṛttis*). The *pratimukha* juncture, the

4 V. Raghavan, “Uparūpakas ans Nṛtyaprabandhas,” *Sanskrita Ranga Annual* V (1967), 31 – 42, 41.

5 K. H. Trivedi, *The Nāṭyadarpaṇa of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra. a Critical Study*, (Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1966), 201.

6 Translation: J. Ballantyne, *Mirror of Composition, a Treatise on Poetical Criticism being in English Translation of the Sāhitya-darpaṇa of Viśwanātha Kavirāja*, (Calcutta, C. B. Lewis Baptist Mission Press, 1875) 261, verse 547.

praveśaka, and the *viṣkambhaka* are not used here. Effort should be made to include in it the *parivartaka* [a member of the *pūrvaraṅga*]. It has fight and conflict and reflections on disaster. Here the director is not introduced. The *nāndī* [is to be sung]. The *upakṣepa* is to be used. For example, *Valivadha*.⁷

The theorists therefore defined *prekṣaṇaka* in very different ways. The definitions from the *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa* and the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* agree on the fact that a *prekṣaṇaka* should not have the full-fledged prologue and should have only three junctures. The definitions from the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* and the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* seem to treat about somewhat different genre, which most probably was somehow connected with god Kāma and his festival. What is more, the term *prekṣaṇaka* occurs also in the drama *Bālarāmāyaṇa* of Rājasekhara, where it refers to “a play within a play”.⁸ However, it is still a minor dramatic work, and on this point agreed all theoreticians and playwrights.

The terms *prekṣaṇaka* and *prekṣaṇa* (*preṅkhana*) are considered by A. B. Keith in *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice* separately. According to this scholar the *prekṣaṇa* (*preṅkhana*) is: “a piece in one act, with a hero of low birth, full of combats and hard words; it has no introductory scenes, and both the benediction and the *Prarocanā* are performed behind the scenes, but none of the late works which bear approximately this title conforms to type.”⁹ He wrote about *prekṣaṇaka* that this term is generally applied to plays within plays, and he mentioned few examples on independent plays belonging to this genre, such as *Kṛṣṇābhayudaya* of Lokanātha Bhaṭṭa, which was written for a procession in Kanchi.¹⁰

7 Translation: Dillon, Myles, Murray Fowler, and V. Raghavan. “The *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa* of Sāgaranandin: a Thirteenth-Century Treatise on the Hindu Theater,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 50, no. 9 (1960): 1–74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1005804>, p. 59, verse 3192.

8 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 268.

9 Ibidem, 351.

10 Ibidem, 268.

5.2 Older examples of *prekṣaṇakas*

One of a few older *prekṣaṇaka* plays is *Saugandhikāharaṇa* of Viśvanātha.¹¹ The play was written possibly in the first half of the 14th century. It is a one-act play dealing with an exploit of Bhīma to bring a *saugandhika* flower for Draupadī. The play has *prastāvanā*, and its main characters are Bhīma and Hanumān. Therefore, they are definitely not characters of low birth and the play does not suit any of the definitions of the genre. What is more, the treatise *Sāhityadarpaṇa* uses *Saugandhikāharaṇa* as an example of genre *vyāyoga*.¹² Indeed, the play certainly fits to this genre. Therefore, perhaps the author used the term *prekṣaṇaka* to describe a dramatic composition in general.¹³ Both the terms *prekṣaṇa* and *prekṣaṇaka* are derivatives of the verb root *pra+īkṣ-* “to look at, view, observe” – and in fact can mean any public show or spectacle,

Another play described by its author as *prekṣaṇaka* is *Unmattarāghava* of Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa. The date of the play is unknown, although it is possible that it was written in the similar time as *Saugandhikāharaṇa*. It is a short, one-act play; however, it disagrees with the definitions of the genre, as it has a proper *prastāvanā* presenting a dialogue between *sūtradhāra* and *nāṭī* – actress. The main characters of the drama are Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, so again under no circumstances any of them can be considered as a hero of low birth. The play is written in Sanskrit and Prakrit, which is used by all women, even Sītā. The plot of the *Unmattarāghava* is taken from the fourth act of *Vikramorvaśīyam* of Kālidāsa, and it tells the story of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa hunting for the golden gazelle, while Sītā is turned into a gazelle herself because of the

11 Although authors of the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* and the *Saugandhikāharaṇa* both have the name Viśvanātha, they are not the same persons. The author of the *Saugandhikāharaṇa* was a poet at the court of Kakatiyas of Warangal.

12 *vyāyoga* is a one-act play with plot based on a story from the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* or a puranic legend. It has a lot of characters, and it has a military theme. The main sentiment (*rasa*) is heroic (*vīra rasa*), but it can be accompanied by wonder (*adbhuta rasa*). It has three junctures: opening – *mukha*, progression – *pratimukha*, and conclusion – *nirvaṇa*. S. Cieślowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016), 101.

13 P. Sriramamurti, *Contribution of Andhra to Sanskrit Literature*, (Waltair: Andhra University, 1972), 49.

curse of Durvāsas. When Rāma returns and cannot find her, he is overcome by pain. Finally, with help of Agastya, he retrieves his beloved wife.¹⁴

Interestingly, there is one more *prekṣaṇaka* titled *Unmattarāghava*, but it is written by a different author – Virūpākṣadeva (r. c. 1404–1406), who was a son of Harihara II, a ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire from the Sangama dynasty.¹⁵ This play also has one act with a proper prologue, and it is longer than the *Unmattarāghava* of Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa. It is as well based on an episode from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and describes Rāma longing for Sītā. Nevertheless, its plot is different. It is based on the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa; however, with a major change in the plot. In the play, Lakṣmaṇa kills Rāvaṇa with the help of Sugrīva and brings back Sītā by virtue of his devotion to Rāma.¹⁶ Hence, this play does not fit any definition of *prekṣaṇaka* either.

The frames of the genre *prekṣaṇaka* are very ambiguous and unclear. Although there are definitions provided by a few theorists of Sanskrit drama and examples of the genre, they are all very different from each other and it is difficult to establish one, universal frame for a *prekṣaṇaka*. Thus, to describe the genre of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, it is needed to study the plays themselves.

5.3 *Prekṣaṇaka* in the plays of Dr. V. Raghavan

The noun *prekṣaṇaka* is a derivative from the verbal √*kṣ*, meaning: *to see, look, view, behold, look at, gaze at; observe, regard, consider*; with a prefix *pra-*, with which the verb means: *to look at, view, behold, observe, to look on (without interfering), suffer, say nothing*. The noun *prekṣaṇaka* is in neutral gender and means: *a spectacle, show*.

This strongly suggests that these texts were written with intention to stage them, and there were designed to be seen, not to be read. This aim is in fact behind any classical Sanskrit play, as Sanskrit drama belongs to *dr̥śya kāvya* – literature created to

14 Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa, *The Unmatta-rāghava*, ed. Pandit Durgaprasada and K. P. Parab, Kāvya-māla 17, (Bombay: Tukaram Javaji 1899).

15 Sriramamurti, *Contribution of Andhra to Sanskrit Literature*, 107 – 108.

16 Virūpākṣadeva, *Unmattarāghava*, ed. V. Krishnamacharya, The Adyar Library Series—No. 57 (The Adyar Library: 1946).

be seen. However, in the modern times it is difficult to stage such drama,¹⁷ and some of newly created plays can never be presented in a spectacle. Thus, it is possible, that some modern Sanskrit plays are written mostly to be read.¹⁸ Nevertheless, with *prekṣaṇakas* the case may be different. Since Dr. V. Raghavan had a relatively big experience in staging Sanskrit plays, it can be assumed that he actually wrote all of them with the intention of staging them. In fact, according to the preface included in the edition of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, the playwright claimed that he staged these dramas: “They have been played in the Sanskrit Association of the Queen Mary’s College, Madras, the Samskrita Academy, Madras, and the All India Radio. Their production at the Madras Station of the A. I. R. created a demand for them from other Stations.”¹⁹

Although the Dr. V. Raghavan Center for Performing Arts meticulously enlists on its website all Sanskrit plays produced by the Samskrita Ranga, there is no *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* or *Avantisundarī* among them. It is because they were staged before the organization was created. The Samskrita Ranga was brought to life in 1958, and the dramas were published in 1956, so they must have been produced on stage before these dates. Thus, they might be one of the first staged plays written by Dr. V. Raghavan.

Dr. V. Raghavan had an extensive knowledge on Sanskrit dramaturgy and poetics, but he was also aware of Western theatre and its achievements. As the plays about poetesses do not belong to any classical and well-defined genre of Sanskrit drama, plausibly the author introduced some innovations in their structure to make them easier to be produced on stage. Therefore, it is needed to take a closer look at the structure of those plays.

The *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are not the only Sanskrit plays written by Dr. V. Raghavan described by him as *prekṣaṇakas*. To this genre belongs also

17 On difficulties with staging Sanskrit plays in modern times see page: 42

18 The plays intended rather to be read than to be staged are called closet dramas.

19 V. Raghavan, “Preface”, in V. Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā, Vikaṭānitambā and Avantisundarī – Three Sanskrit Prekṣaṇakas*, V. Raghavan, (Madras: 1956), 2.

the play *Rāsalīlā*. What is more, it consists of four parts announced as *prekṣaṇakas* having function of a scene. The play is in one act and it is very short, even shorter than dramas on poetesses. Similarly to them, it does not include *prastāvanā* and it is written entirely in Sanskrit. Its characteristic feature is the character called *grānthika*, which may be translated as narrator. He describes the background of the scenes. *Rāsalīlā* is also described by its author in English as “musical playlet.” Indeed, the poetry in verses prevails in text, so it gives a lot of scope for the musical performance.²⁰

5.4 General remarks on the genre of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*

The *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* have the form typical for Sanskrit plays. They combine dialogues in prose with versified stanzas. However, they are breaking rules set by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in numerous ways. They lack *prastāvanā*, *nāndī* and a final benediction. In a prologue *sūtradhāra* should introduce the subject of the play, mention name of its author and its title. There is a mention about the season of the year in which action of the play takes place. The deficiency of *prastāvanā* can be explained by the shortness of the *prekṣaṇakas*. In fact, those plays are almost of the same length or even shorter than some of *prastāvanās* of the classical dramas. Thus, a prologue of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* in fact would double their length. Another reason for not adding *prastāvanā* to the play may be that there was no need to introduce a specific season. The plot of all the plays can unfold in any time of the year. What is more, in the three plays of Dr. V. Raghavan, *sūtradhāra* never appears on stage. That is why there is no chance to introduce the author and the play itself. What is more, it must be remembered that *prastāvanā* usually contains an introduction of the author of the play with praise of his talents and merits of the play. Such bold presentation is not typical in modern art and it could be strange for the contemporary public.

One of the specific features of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* is the way that most of the stanzas are introduced. Usually, the verses in Sanskrit dramas are added spontaneously to dialogue or monologue by a character, as if she or he

20 V. Raghavan, “Rāsalīlā, a Musical Playlet,” *Sanskrita Ranga Annual III* (Madras: The Samskrita Ranga, 1963), 71 – 78.

composed them on the spot. Most of the verses in the three plays are introduced as previously composed by the poetesses, and they are recited or read out by them or their lady friends. In case of the *Avantisundarī*, the characters quote pieces written by Rājaśekhara or previous theorists of Sanskrit poetic, as there are no preserved Sanskrit stanzas written by this poetess. The only moment when the verses are added to the dialogue spontaneously by characters is the end of the *Vikaṭānitambā*, when the heroine and her friends meet future husband of the poetess and comment upon his lack of knowledge of Sanskrit.

All characters of those plays speak Sanskrit, while Bharata recommended Prakrits for women and inferior characters.²¹ It is especially visible in the end of *Vikaṭānitambā*, in which even friends of the heroine, thus the figures of lesser importance in the play, speak Sanskrit. In fact, this is the only play in which appears a Prakrit-speaking character – the future husband of *Vikaṭānitambā*. The girlfriends of the heroine inform that he speaks only in Prakrit; however, in the play there is no line in Prakrit as the man ineptly tries to communicate in Sanskrit.

The dominant *rasa* in the plays is *hāsya rasa* – the comic sentiment. The dramas are not the most evident examples of implementation of this sentiment; however, all three of them have some comic elements. In the *Vijayānkā* it is the witty response of the Queen to the stanza of Daṇḍin, in the *Avantisundarī* – the heroine teasing her husband by means of puns, and in the *Vikaṭānitambā* – the dialogue between the future husband of the heroine and her girlfriends. The only other *rasa* which can be traced in the plays is *śṛṅgāra rasa*. It can be found in the relations between *Vijayānkā* and *Avantisundarī* with her husbands.

The appropriate style – *vṛtti* for these plays seems to be the verbal style – *bhāratī vṛtti*. The other styles, as it was mentioned above, are: *kaiśikī vṛtti* – the graceful style, appropriate for the erotic sentiment, *sāttvatī vṛtti* – the grand or conscious style which is

21 The *Nāṭyaśāstra* XVIII.35:

“Similarly Prakrit should be assigned to children, persons possessed of spirits of lower order, women in feminine character 2 persons of low birth, lunatics and phallus-worshippers.” Translation: *The Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed o Bharata Muni* translated by Manmohan Ghosh, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950), 359.

suitable for the sentiments of heroism, wonder and fury, and *ārabhaṭī vṛtti* – the violent style for the sentiments of fury, horror and terror.²² As most of these sentiments are absent in the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, the three styles seem not to be appropriate for those plays. On the other hand, women should not be employed in the *bhāratī vṛtti*. The *kaisikī vṛtti* is the demeanour associated with women; however, it should “bound in dance and song and on the whole it should serve the creation of the enjoyment of love.”²³ Therefore, it does not match these plays. Thus, the *bhāratī vṛtti* seems to be more suitable for the three plays about Sanskrit poetesses.

5.5 Construction of plots of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*

To determine the genre of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* in accordance with Sanskrit theory of drama it must be determined which *avasthās* are present in their plot. These stages of development of action do not entirely agree with the plot of Raghavan’s plays on Sanskrit poetesses. In the *Vijayāṅkā* and *Vikaṭānitambā*, the heroines do not strive to achieve anything. The *Vijayāṅkā* focuses completely on the conversation on Sanskrit poetics. At the end of the *Vikaṭānitambā*, the heroine is announced to be given in marriage to a man she does not want to marry. There is no mention that she dreams or wishes to have a husband, so it hardly can be recognized as a fulfilment of her desires. The only play to which some of the *avasthās* can be applied is *Avantisundarī*. The play starts with the heroine reading and appreciating the play of her husband. Hence, she wants to see it staged so she could fully admire it with music, dances etc. At the end of the Raghavan’s play, Rājaśekhara hears the drums announcing that actors are ready to produce the play on the scene. Therefore, the desire of *Avantisundarī* is to be fulfilled soon, because staging the spectacle is only a matter of time. Thus, this play includes two of *avasthās*: *ārambha* and *phalāgama*.

As the *avasthās* in the three plays have been discussed, now the *arthaprakṛtis* in their plots should be determined. In the *Vijayāṅkā*, the event setting the action off is the delivery of the treatise *Kāvyaśāstra* of Daṇḍin to the Chalukyan court. It leads to the discussion about poetic skills of the Queen and agreement that she is one of the finest

22 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 326 – 328.

23 Byrski, *Methodology of the Analysis of Sanskrit Drama*, 13.

Sanskrit poets. Thus, the play has a very simple, linear plot, in which *bīja*, *bindu* and *kārya* can be distinguished.

The *Vikaṭānitambā* starts with arrival of the teacher of the heroine. This event, just like in the *Vijayāṅkā*, leads to the analysis of the verses written by the poetess and evaluation of her progress in the field of writing poetry. However, the discussion is interrupted by the announcement of choosing a husband for *Vikaṭānitambā*. This changes the plot's course and the play now focuses on the scholarly lady who is to be married to an uneducated man. The result is that she has to marry against her will to a man mocked by her girlfriends. It seems like the plot of the *Vikaṭānitambā* combines two different stories, combined loosely with each other. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a sequence of events resulting from the preceding incidents. It seems like the author combined two unrelated with each other scenes: imagined scene from everyday life of a poet and the motif of “highly educated woman and her uneducated husband”, which develops into a scene with friends of the heroine ridiculing her future husband.

The *Avantisundarī* begins with a scene in which Rājaśekhara asks his wife about the piece she is reading. Then the couple argues for a while and starts to discuss some aspects of Sanskrit poetics. In the meantime, Rājaśekhara orders to start preparations for staging his drama. At the end, the couple goes together to see the production. In this plot one can also distinguish *bīja*, *bindu* and *kārya*, although the course of the plot is more blurred than in the *Vijayāṅkā*.

5.5.1 Types of characters

The characters of the three dramas seem to belong to category called *uttama*, as they not only have a good, even noble provenance, but also are well educated and have great merits of character, such as kindness, honesty, nobility. The only character who does not fit to this category is the future husband of *Vikaṭānitambā*. His nature is unknown, perhaps he also is a good man, but he is certainly not well-educated. Therefore, he fits rather to the middle category – *mādhyama*.²⁴

24 Sudyka, “Gatunki dramatu staroindyjskiego”, 77 – 78.

According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, heroines in Sanskrit dramas can be also ascribed to one of eight types called *aṣṭanāyikā*.²⁵ Vijayāṅkā and Avantisundarī can be described as *svādhīnapatikās* – heroines whose husbands are subjected and devoted to them. Vikāṭānitambā does not fit into any of those categories. However, in the case of these three plays it seems not proper to describe the heroines as per *aṣṭanāyikābheda*. This classification categorizes women according to their relationships with the heroes – their lovers or husbands. Vijayāṅkā, Vikāṭānitambā and Avantisundarī are not defined by their relationship with men. They are portrayed as poetesses, artists, scholars, not as objects of love and desire of men. Their relationships and emotional states play very little importance in the dramas. In this manner, it would be unsuitable to reduce them to the roles of wives and mistresses.

5.5.2 Raghavan's plays and the Aristotelian unities

It can be noticed that the plots of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikāṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are very simple. In each drama the action takes place during a short period of time within one day, and it is concentrated around one single event, and is restricted to one place. In this regard they do not at any case resemble classical plays like *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, whose action stretches over the years and takes place in multiple locations. Even Sanskrit one-act plays such as those belonging to genre called *bhāṇa* have more expanded plot, even though they take place during a single day. It seems that the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikāṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* observe the rules of the three classical unities, known also as the Aristotelian unities, which originated in the ancient Greek theatre, and were proposed for the first time by Aristotle in *Poetics*. Those rules require the application of three unities: action, place and time. According to this concept, the plot should be linear; single-thread system of events, devoid of elaborate episodic scenes and side plots. The principle of the unity of time says that the duration of the action must coincide with the duration of the show or at least be limited to one day. The principle of the unity of place says that the action of a drama should always take place in the same location.

It cannot be determined if it was the intention of Dr. V. Raghavan; however, it is a fact, that the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikāṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* in contrary to most classical

25 See footnote 56 page: 28.

Sanskrit dramas observe all of the Aristotelian unities. It must be noticed that those rules result mainly not from theoretical reflection, but from practical needs and limitations of the ancient theatre. Therefore, Dr. V. Raghavan could apply them to make his plays easier to produce on stage, not because of his extraordinary appreciation of ancient Greek dramas. The scenography and props used in ancient Indian theatre were very simple. It was up to the spectators to imagine the background of the presented events with help of the description of the poet. Dialogues and verses described where the action took place and it was considered sufficient.²⁶ There was no stage decoration, and thus there was no need to change it to represent the location of other presented events. Hence, each scene of classical Sanskrit drama could take place in different place. Nevertheless, it is possible that Dr. V. Raghavan wanted to use some elements of scenography in some of his shows and therefore created simple plays with action restricted to one location. Another reason for this might be the fact that the author used original verses written by the poetesses and among them there were no verses describing locations suiting the plots. Perhaps for this reason he decided to restrict the action to one place and possibly use scenography in case of staging them.

5.5.3 The *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānītambā* and *Avantisundarī* and the definitions of *prekṣaṇaka*

The plays written by Dr. V. Raghavan to some extent fit to the definitions proposed in the *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa* and the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*. They have a single act, they do not have prologue, and their plots do not have the third and the fourth juncture: development – *garbha* and pause – *vimarśa*. On the other hand, the plays are written entirely in Sanskrit and do not have characters of the *adhama* category, which is against the rules provided by the treatises on dramaturgy. Raghavan also applies other solutions unknown to the playwrights of the past. A playwright with such an extensive knowledge on Sanskrit dramaturgy as V. Raghavan could easily use some one act classical dramatic genre. However, he decided to create plays without any restrictions provided by the well-defined genres. Therefore, it seems that the term *prekṣaṇaka* was taken just for its general sense – something to look at that is a theatre play.

26 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 364 – 365.

6. *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* and Sanskrit poetics

Dr. V. Raghavan as a scholar dealt primarily with Indian aesthetics.¹ The work influenced his literary creativity and it is especially noticeable in the case of the *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*. Because of the fact that those plays are devoted to the literary output of Sanskrit poetesses, Dr. Raghavan could have woven into the plot a great number of terms from his main field of research. The characters of those plays analyse the poems written by the heroines and because of it they discuss numerous issues from the Sanskrit theory of literature. Thus, to analyse *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* in a full extent, the matters from Sanskrit poetics used in the plays must be discussed.

6.1 *Rasa*

The theory of *rasa* does not play an important role in any of the dramas belonging to *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*. According to the Sanskrit poetics, a literary work should be full of *rasa*. However, it seems that it was not the main aim of Dr. Raghavan to endow those three plays with *rasas*. The plays are not about the development of certain feelings but mainly about the knowledge of literature and poetic creativity, even though the comic *rasa* is constructed in the final part of the *Vikaṭānitambā* and the audience can sympathise with an educated heroine being married off to a simpleton. Nevertheless, the term *rasa* is mentioned several times in the plays when the characters talk about the Sanskrit poetics.

The first traces of the theoretical reflection on *rasa* can be found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and it was further developed in its commentary, *Abhinavabhāratī*, written by Abhinavagupta (c. 9th – 10th century CE). The term *rasa* literally means juice, nectar, taste, flavour. However, in the context of Sanskrit poetics it refers to peculiar emotional experience invoked by art on its recipient. Therefore, *rasa* can be translated as an aesthetic experience. According to this theory, a piece of art (not necessarily a text; it can be also any kind of visual or performative art) contains emotional load which can

1 An analysis of academic achievements, fields of research and scholar interests of Dr. V. Raghavan can be found in the Chapter 1, see page: 21.

induce *bhāvas* – common, human emotions or states of mind of its recipient. In this way *rasa* – subjective and personal aesthetic experience – is created.²

Bharata provided the list of eight rasas (emotions): *śṛṅgāra* – erotic, *hāsya* – comic, *raudra* – violent, *kāruṇa* – pitiful, *bībhatsa* – disgusting, *bhayānaka* – terrifying, *vīra* – heroic, *adbhuta* – amazing/wondrous. Later on, authors added to the list *śānta rasa* – peaceful; that is, originating from experience of tranquillity.

In the plays belonging to the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, the most evident reference to *rasa* doctrine can be found in the *Vijayāṅkā* when the Queen is asked to recite one of her most recent poems:

candrādityaḥ

vayam api rasakutūhalinaḥ |

[...]

vijayāṅkā

prātar guruṇā saha saṁvibhaktaraso 'yaṁ svadetatarām iti kṛtvā |

ācāryaḥ

ayi rasike! alaṁ vilambya |³

vijayāṅkā

vilāsamasṛṅhollasan musalaloladoḥkandalī

parasparapariskhaladvalayaniḥsvanodbandhurāḥ|

lasanti kalahuṁkṛtiprasabhakampitorāḥsthala

2 P.J. Chaudhury, “The Theory of Rasa,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11, no. 2 (1952): 147–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/426040>; G. B. Mohan Thampi. “‘Rasa’ as Aesthetic Experience,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24, no. 1 (1965): 75–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/428249>.

3 V. Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, in V. Raghavan, *Prekṣaṇakatrayī – Vijayāṅkā, Vikāṇitambā, Avantisundarī. Three Sanskrit Prekshnakas*, (Madras: Sri Ramachandra Printing Works, 1956), 5.

truṭadgamakasāṅkulāḥkalamakaṇḍanīgītayah ||⁴

Candrāditya

I am also curious of its taste.

[...]

Vijayāṅkā

In the morning, this flavour shared with [my] master would taste better – that is why I did it this way.

Ācārya

Oh, lady full of taste! Enough of waiting!

Vijayāṅkā

The songs of thrashing rice in mortars resound intensified by deep sighs –

inarticulate incantations – coming from fiercely shaking breasts and by high-pitched sounds

of bracelets clashing together on arms like sprouts,

moving trembling pestles, which hum softly and delightfully.

In this fragment the word *rasa* is used twice, and in both cases it refers to the Sanskrit poetics theory as well as to its primary meaning – taste. The King says that he is curious about the taste of a new poem of his wife – he wants to “try” it. When the heroine explains why she did not show her recent verse earlier, she says that she wanted to taste it together with her teacher. These sentences clearly reveal culinary connotations of this term. The word *rasikā* (m.: *rasika*) stands for a person endowed with taste; full of tastes. In the context of poetics, it means a person able to appreciate *rasa*, and therefore to fully appreciate a literary work.

4 V. Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 5.

This is certainly a reference to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, where these culinary connotations appear. To quote the explanatory passage in the famous *Rasādhyāya* after *śloka* 6.31:

*tatra vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisaṃyogādrasaniṣpattiḥ | ko dṛṣṭāntaḥ |
atrāha yathā hi nānāvyañjanauṣadhidravyasaṃyogādrasaniṣpattiḥ tathā
nānābhāvopagamādrasaniṣpattiḥ | yathā hi
guḍādibhirdravyairvyañjanairauśadhibhiḥśca śāḍavādayo rasā nirvartyante
tathā nānābhāvopagatā api sthāyino bhāvā rasatvamāpnuvantīti | atrāha
rasa iti kaḥ padārthaḥ | ucyate āsvādyatvāt | kathamāsvādyate rasaḥ | yathā
hi nānāvyañjanasaṃskṛtamannaṃ bhuñjāna rasānāsvādayanti sumanasah
puruṣa harṣādīṃścādhigacchanti tathā nānābhāvābhinayavyañjitān
vāgaṅgasattopetān sthāyibhāvānāsvādayanti sumanasah prekṣakāḥ
harṣādīṃścādhigacchanti | tasmānnāṭyarasā ityabhivyākhyātāḥ |⁵*

Rasa comes from a combination of the *vibhāvas*, the *anubhāvās* and the *vyabhicāribhāvās* (*vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisaṃyogād rasaniṣpattiḥ*). What is a (good) analogy? Here is one: Just as flavour (*rasa*) comes from a combination (*upagama*) of many *bhāvas*. For example, in the same way that beverages such as *śāḍava* (a combination of six flavours) are created (*nirvartyante*) from substances such as molasses, spices (*vyañjana*) and herbs (*ośadhi*), the permanent emotions attain the status of *rasa* when they are accompanied (*upagata*) by the various *bhāvas*. At this point someone (might) ask: What is it you call *rasa*? The answer is: (It is called *rasa*) because it can be savored (*āsvādyatvāt*). How is *rasa* savoured? As gourmets (*sumanas*) are able to savor the flavour of food prepared with many spices, and attain pleasure etc., so sensitive spectators (*sumanas*) are able to savor the primary emotions suggested (*abhivyañjita*) by the acting out of the various *bhāvas* and presented with the appropriate modulation of the voice, movements of the body and display of the involuntary reactions, and attain pleasure etc. Therefore they are called (*abhivyākhyātāḥ*) *nāṭyarasas* (dramatic flavours).⁶

5 Bharata, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Natyashastra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabharati*, ed. M. Shastri (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1971), 620, 677, 678, 680.

6 Translation by: J. L. Masson, M. V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture The Rasādhyāya of the Nāṭya Śāstra*, Vol. I, (Poona: Deccan College. Postgraduate Research Institute, 1970), 46 – 47.

An entirely different matter, which is not considered here, is the presence of *rasas* in the quoted stanzas of the poetesses. In the stanza of Vijayāṅkā given above, obviously dominates the erotic *rasa*.

6.2 *Alaṃkāra*

The word *alaṃkāra* means ornament, decoration, and in the context of poetics it refers to figures of speech embellishing poetry. The theoreticians of Sanskrit literature dealt with *alaṃkāras* in detail in their works and distinguished different kinds of them. This term was used by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, but there were later theorists who ascribed to it greater importance and who believed that *alaṃkāras* were in fact the soul of the poetry. The most important theoreticians representing the *alaṃkāra* school were Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin,⁷ Udbhata, and Rudraṭa.

In the play *Vijayāṅkā* there is shown a discussion on one of the important *alaṃkāras*.

ācāryaḥ

mahārāja! paśyatu bhavān, śloke 'tra '

*“vitanoh” iti padaṃ kuñcikeva niveśitam | tena udghāṭitāt padyāt kośādiva
artharatnāni niṣpatanti*⁸

Ācārya

My King! Please look – here, in the verse, “vitanoh” is a word placed like a key. Because of it the gems of meanings come out of the unlocked stanza like from the open treasure trove.

7 Daṇḍin was also the precursor of the *rīti – mārga* theory. In the *Prekṣaṇakātrayī*, he is presented in the context of *guṇas* and *vaidarbhī rīti*, thus in the dissertation his views are disputed in the section on references to the *rīti* school.

8 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 7.

Here, the teacher refers to an *alaṅkāra* called *dīpaka*, which, according to S. K. De, can be translated to English as an *illuminator*, or an *enlightener*, according to E. Gerow.⁹ It is a word which provides a context by highlighting or clarifying meaning of a whole poem or a stanza. It can be placed at the beginning, at the end, or in the middle of a stanza. In the poem of the Queen, to which the teacher refers, it is placed at the end.¹⁰

kiṁśukakalikāntargatam

indukalāspardhi kesaram bhāti |

raktanicolakapihitam

*dhanuriva jatumudritam vitanoḥ ||*¹¹

Pistil coming out of the bud of *kiṁśuka*

shines rivalling the edge of the Moon,

Like the bow of Kāma covered with lac and hidden among red garments

and coming out to triumph.

The word *vitanoḥ* – of *bodiless* refers to god Kāma, who after being burnt by enraged Śiva, according to some version of this story, was restored to life in a bodiless form. The hidden meaning of this poem is that the flowers of *kiṁśuka* can induce love just like the arrows shot from the bow of Kāma. In fact, Kāma’s bow, according to *Rtusamhāra*, can be made of *kiṁśuka*. The tree blossoms at the beginning of spring which is time, when love also blossoms.¹²

9 E. Gerow, *a Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*, (The Hague – Paris: Mouton, 1971), 193.

10 Cieřlikowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 208 – 212, E. Gerow, *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*, 193 – 194.

11 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 6.

12 Kālidāsa, *Rtusamhāra* 6.28: “May that Bodiless one (Cupid), the conqueror of the world, in company with Spring, ever grant you happiness – he, whose good arrow (is) beautiful mango blossom, whose bow (is) the lovely *kiṁśuka* flower, whose bow-string (is) the row of bees, (whose) spotless, white (regal) umbrella (is) the moon, whose ruddy elephant is the breeze from the Malaya mountain and whose

6.3 The *rīti* theory

In the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* one of the most exploited themes from the field of Sanskrit poetics is the *rīti* doctrine and its various aspects. The most references to this theory can be found in *Vijayāṅkā*. The action of the play begins with the delivery of *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*Mirror of Poetry*) – a treatise written by Daṇḍin to the Chalukyan court. This theorist was one of the first exponents of this school. Therefore, this event allows Dr. V. Raghavan to introduce a great number of references to the *rīti* theory.

The foremost exponent of the *rīti* theory was Vāmana (second half of the 8th century – early 9th century), the author of the *Kāvyaḷaṅkārasūtra*. However, the elements constituting this theory were much older. What is more, Daṇḍin and Vāmana referred in their works to their older predecessors, whose works had been lost.¹³ This theory puts an emphasis on *rīti* or *mārga* – a literary manner – as the most important element of poetry. The concept of *rīti* has three stages: a geographical mode of literary criticism, a stereotyped and standardized mode of literary criticism, and the one reinterpreted by Kuntaka, who related it to the character of a poet and introduced new kinds of *rītis* or styles as well as new set of merits (*guṇa*) and shortcomings (*doṣa*).¹⁴

6.3.1 *Guṇa*

One of the most important elements of the *rīti* school, which was frequently used by the characters of the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, is the term *guṇa*. It can be translated as *good quality, virtue, merit, excellence*. In the context of Sanskrit poetics, it refers to a merit of a poetic work. There are two types of *guṇas*: *śabda guṇas* – the merits of sound, and *artha guṇas* – the merits of sense. The first kind describes euphony of wording in a poem and includes issues such as sonority, low or high sound of vowels, place of articulation of consonants, harmony of syllable linkage, and combining words into compounds. Those aspects of poetry were responsible for how the poem sounds and what *rasa* would induce through its sonic layer. The second type of *guṇa* is *artha guṇa*. This term

bards are the cuckoos.” Translation: M. R. Kale, *The Ritusamhara of Kalidasa*, (Delhi – Varanasi – Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), 25 – 26.

13 S. K. De, *Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics*, (London, Luzac & C.O., 1925), 95.

14 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṅkāra Śāstra*, 147.

evaluates issues such as comprehensibility of meaning and clearness of sense. Through ages, theorists of Sanskrit literature proposed different numbers of *guṇas* and different names for them. As it was noticed by H. Ticken: “The history of the Gunas in the poetical tradition is complicated but at the same time characteristic of that tradition: what we have is a fixed set of ten terms, with each author apparently inventing the meaning of the terms all over again.”¹⁵ In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata enlisted ten *guṇas*; however, the first theoretician who gave them greater importance was Daṇḍin. He proposed ten merits, of which five clearly referred to the aspects of sound (*śabda guṇas*) and five to the aspects of sense (*artha guṇas*). His thoughts were further developed by Vāmana, who kept the names for *guṇas* proposed by his predecessors; however, he considered each of them in both aspects – sense and sound. Therefore, he in fact doubled the number of *guṇas*.¹⁶ There is no doubt that Vāmana developed the concept of *guṇas*; nevertheless, the play *Vijayāṅkā* refers specifically to the views of Daṇḍin. Thus, his classification of *guṇas* should be further examined.

Numerous references to the *rīti* school can be seen in all three dramas about Sanskrit poetesses. Heroines discuss their writings with the other characters of the plays. However, the most obvious remark can be noticed in *Vijayāṅkā* in connection with the figure of Ācārya – the teacher of the heroine. He even quotes the verse 1.41 of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa*, in which all ten *guṇas* distinguished by the theorist are enlisted.

ācāryaḥ

*mahārāja! dṛśyatām atra varṇacāturī varṇanācāturī ca | daṇḍinā
svaśāstre ullikhitā vaidarbhamārgaprāṇabhūtāḥ*

śleṣaḥ prasādas samatā mādhuryaṃ sukumāratā |

arthavyaktir udāratvam ojaḥkāntisamādhyāḥ ||

15 H. Ticken, “Aśoka’s Fourteenth Rock Edict and the Guṇa mādhurya of the Kāvya Poetical Tradition,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 156/1 (2006), 95-115, 98.

16 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 101.

iti dasāpi kāvyaguṇāḥ atra samagramullasanti ¹⁷

Ācārya

My king, please see the mastery of sound and mastery of description here.¹⁸ In his work Daṇḍin stated the vital features of the *vaidarbhī* style.

śleṣa, prasāda, samatā, mādhyura, sukumāratā,

arthavyakti, udāratva, ojas, kānti, samādhi.

[to Vijayāṅkā] Exactly these ten merits of poetry shine altogether [in this verse of yours].

In the first sentence, the teacher refers to *śabda guṇas* and *artha guṇas*, stating that the presented stanza of the Queen was endowed with both types of merits. Then he provides names of the merits quoting Daṇḍin. It must be noted that some of the names of the *guṇas* provided by different theoreticians differed from each other.

The first *guṇa* enlisted in the passage from *Kāvyādarśa* is *śleṣa*¹⁹ and it belongs to *śabda guṇas*. This term means connection, combination. As it is put by S.K. De, it is “the quality of being well knit.”²⁰ S. K. De explains that a speech should be fluent, easy to pronounce and employing a combination of syllables which is pleasant to listen. The next merit of sound is *samatā* – equality, sameness. This quality is about a juxtaposition of sounds or syllables similar to each other. Those sounds, despite their diversity, should make a sentence or stanza sound soft (*mṛdu*), rough (*sphuṭa*) or medium (*madhyama*). Thus, this merit is about uniformity of sounds, in which none of them stands out. There was also a mixed (*viśama*) structure of sounds, in which different sounds were collected together, which was considered as an opposite of *samatā*. The third *śabda guṇa* is *mādhyura* – sweetness or elegance. It is an alliteration of sounds of the same origin and

17 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 5.

18 I interpreted *varṇa* and *varṇanā* as references to the sound and meaning.

19 The term *śleṣa* can refer also to a poetic figure employing double meaning and puns in the poetry.

20 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 101.

the same place of articulation. This merit is also about avoidance of vulgarity and obscenity.²¹ Such coarseness could emerge without an intention of a writer, for example, when a random contiguity of words created a sexual innuendo. The next *śabda guṇa* is *sukumāra* (known also as *saukumāratā*). This quality is about an absence of harshness due to usage of soft sounds. It excludes harsh sounds (*aniṣṭhurākṣara*). The last *śabda guṇa* enlisted by Daṇḍin is *ojas* – force caused by presence of long compounds and mix of heavy and light syllables.²² This quality should be present primarily in prose; however, it can also occur in versified poetry when it does not interfere with the other *guṇas*.²³

The second type of merits concentrate mainly on sense of word arrangement. These qualities pay less attention to the sound aspects of literature and concentrate on its meaning. The first of them is *prasāda* – lucidity. This *artha guṇa* refers to clearness and precision of a speech. A reader should be able to easily comprehend the sense of a text, even if its author employed puns, ambiguity or uncommon words. The second *artha guṇa* is *arthavyakti* – explicitness of sense. It refers to a situation in which a text is unclear to its reader and it can bring to his mind two images, but only one of them was intended by the writer. In such case, the author should use expressions which would indicate the right meaning to the reader. The next *artha guṇa* is *udāratā* or *udāratva* – nobleness, generousness, liberality. This merit states that virtues describing something should be highlighted in a clear and expressive way. These virtues should also be very positive, praising and elevating the status of an object, an image or a person described. The fourth *artha guṇa* enlisted by Daṇḍin is *kānti* – loveliness, beauty, splendour. The speech endowed with this merit should be nice and polite, but it should not be

21 This gives the *guṇa* a dimension in both *artha* and *śabda* domains.

22 As is well known heavy syllables are those with a long vowel or with short but succeeded by a cluster of consonants, *m* or *h*; light syllables have a short vowel succeeded by a single consonant.

23 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 101 – 102; Cieślowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 241 – 245.

exaggerated. The final *artha guṇa* is *samādhī* – a transference of characteristic actions or qualities of one thing to another.²⁴

The concept of *guṇas* was developed by numerous later theoreticians. As it was mentioned earlier, the one who contributed the most to the *rīti* school was Vāmana. He considered each merit in two ways, referring to both aspects of literature: *artha* and *śabda*.²⁵ His way of understanding *guṇas* has been widely accepted by later theorists of Sanskrit poetics. However, after Vāmana there were theoreticians who had a different approach to this conception. For example, the already mentioned Kuntaka and a theorist Vidyādhara (13th–14th century), who presented a list of twenty-four *guṇas*.²⁶

6.3.2 Doṣa

Another term closely related to the *rīti* system, which occurs frequently in the three plays on poetesses, is *doṣa*. It literally means fault, vice, deficiency, want, inconvenience, disadvantage, guilt, crime. This term refers to shortcoming or flaws of a literary composition. It can be described as the second tool for a literary critic besides the *guṇas*. Although in both the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and in the *Kāvyaḍarsa* the *guṇas* are said to have their opposites, there is no one-to-one link between the *guṇas* and the *doṣas*. It is rather that some of the *guṇas* seem to concern stylistic flaws which, under certain circumstances, may be turned to a good effect. Therefore, the two lists were probably initially independent.²⁷

In *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata presents ten kinds of *doṣas*.²⁸ His opinion on this concept was interpreted by S. K. De: “Bharata holds that *guṇas* signify nothing more than the

24 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 101 – 102; Cieřlikowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 241 – 250.

25 More about Vāmana’s conception of the *guṇas*: P. C. Lahiri, *Concepts of Riti and Guna In Sanskrit Poetics*, (Dacca: The University of Dacca, 1937), 85 – 111.

26 Cieřlikowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 241 – 242.

27 H. Ticken, “Aśoka’s Fourteenth Rock Edict and the Guṇa mādhurya of the Kāvya Poetical Tradition”, 98 – 103.

28 The flaws presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, book XVI, verse 89 are: *gūḍhārtha* (another meaning included in text, which was not intended by the author), *arthāntara* (excessive digressiveness), *arthahīna*

negative condition of *doṣābhāva*, so that *doṣas* are, in his opinion, positive entities, from which the *guṇas* are known by implication.”²⁹

Bhāmaha in his *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* presents two sets of shortcomings, and each of them consists of ten *doṣas*. Among them there are those related to the poetical faults, as well as based on logical grounds. Some of them are taken from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bhāmaha also speaks about seven faults of simile. Daṇḍin accepts the second set of ten shortcomings discussed in the fourth chapter of Bhāmaha’s treatise.³⁰ According to Daṇḍin, *doṣas* were characteristics of *gauḍa mārga*.

The first *doṣa* presented by Daṇḍin is *apārtha* – incoherence, nonsense. It is acceptable only in speech of drunkards and madmen. The next shortcoming is *vyartha* – contradiction. It occurs, for example, when the effect is not due to the cause. *Ekārtha* – tautology, refers to a situation when something is repeated, but the repetition does not add anything new. However, if a repetition is valid and it adds something new to the composition, it is considered as a value. The next *doṣa* of Daṇḍin is *sasaṃśaya* – unclarity, ambiguity. It occurs when words used in a composition raise doubts, but it was not intended by a poet. *Apakrama* means disruption of syntactic order. *śabdahīna* is an occurrence of grammatical errors, such as mistakes in declination, conjugation, usage of wrong grammatical gender. It is acceptable only as a characteristic of a speaking character. The next *doṣa* is *yatibhraṣṭa* and it is a flaw in metrical pause. It occurs when metrical caesura is put in a wrong place. Similarly, *bhinnavṛtta* refers to metre – it is a non-rhythmicity. It occurs, for example, when a light syllable is applied instead of a heavy one, or when it is located in a wrong place. *Sandhi* is another grammatical error, which is caused by wrong application of *sandhi*. The last type of *doṣa* refers to six kinds of inconsistency. The first is about place – *deśa*, which can be presented wrongly due to

(meaninglessness, incoherence), *bhinnārtha* (excessive vulgarity or changing expected sense into another), *ekārtha* (tautology), *abhiplutārtha* (discontinuity of meaning), *nyāyāvapetam* (logic flaws), *viśama* (flaws in metrics and rhythm), *visandhi* (errors in *sandhi*), *śabdacyuta* (grammatical errors). More about each of the *doṣas*: B. Jha, *Concept of poetic blemishes in Sanskrit poetics*, (Varanasi: The Chowkhama Sanskrit Series Office, 1965), 14 – 25.

29 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 110.

30 For a detailed explanation of the lists of *doṣas* provided by Bhāmaha see: Jha, *Concept of poetic blemishes in Sanskrit poetics*, 26 – 56.

ignorance or a lack of attention of a writer. The second refers to time – *kāla*. It can happen when a writer describes an event typical for a certain season or a part of a day in a wrong time. The third type is inconsistency with art and science – *kalā*. This *doṣa* happens when an author describes something he does not know about, and his description reveals this lack of knowledge. The fourth kind is *loka* and it refers to the world, environment. This *doṣa* can be noticed when a writer presents incorrectly an object, an animal, an activity known from everyday life. The fifth type of inconsistency is *nyāyā*. It refers to mistakes made because of lack of knowledge in views, opinions, or because the author did not really understand them. The last type of the tenth *doṣa* is *āgama*. This shortcoming occurs when an author presents views and ideas from the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, but he does not understand them, or does not even know them.³¹

The concept of *doṣa* was examined also by Vāmana. This theorist defined *doṣas* as opposites of *guṇas*, which, according to his opinion, were positive entities. He considered flaws as elements detracting from the beauty of poetry.³² Vāmana proposed a division of shortcomings into four categories: flaws of wording (*pāda doṣa*), flaws of meaning of words (*pādārtha doṣa*), flaws of sentences (*vākya doṣa*), and flaws of meaning of sentences (*vākyaṛtha doṣa*). The theoretician also stated that *doṣas* should be regarded separately from *guṇas*.³³

Later theorists, such as Bhoja, Mammaṭa, Vidyānātha, also discussed the issues of *guṇas* and *doṣas* and provided their own definitions and views on these terms. However, the latest of the poetesses from *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* – Avantisundarī – lived in the 10th century CE. Therefore, none of them could possibly know and discuss those problems referring to the opinions of theoreticians later than Vāmana. For that reason, the examination of these issues in the context of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* shouldn't go beyond the views of this theorist, and it seems that it is what V. Raghavan did.

31 De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 11 – 17; Cieřlikowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 252 – 258.

32 Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, 208.

33 Cieřlikowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 252 – 258.

6.3.3 *Rīti*

As far as the stylistic theories are concerned, another important term used in the dramas of Dr. V. Raghavan is *vaidarbhī mārga* or *vaidarbhī rīti*. It is one of the styles distinguished by the theoreticians of the *rīti theory*. *Rīti* or *mārga* is a literary manner.³⁴ The oldest text mentioning this term is *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa. In one of its introductory verses, the author mentions that there are certain features specific to literatures of different geographical areas.³⁵

Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin named two styles present in Sanskrit literature as *vaidarbhī* (from Vidarbha, modern Berar) and *gauḍī* (from Gauda, modern Bengal).³⁶ It seems that for Bhāmaha the idea was not important in literary criticism. He stated that both styles are acceptable. He disproved the views that sweet, graceful and lucid *vaidarbhī* style was superior to complicated and highly ornamented *gauḍī* style. According to Bhāmaha, both literary manners are simply characterized by distinguishing features. They should be expressed in gentle phrases, and they both should not be vulgar, insipid or uninvolved. Moreover, the *vaidarbhī* as well as the *gauḍī* has features which can be overdone. The theorist stated that it was possible to write good and bad poetry in both styles. Poets aiming to create works in *vaidarbhī* or *gauḍī* style may exaggerate certain features. Nevertheless, the good *gauḍī* imagined by Bhāmaha was probably not demonstrated by representatives of this style, and this term became equivalent to a bad literary manner, with excess of *alaṃkāras* and poor in ideas.³⁷

Daṇḍin, in the first chapter of the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, described the *vaidarbhī mārga*, which he considered the best diction. After providing the list of ten *guṇas*, the theorist stated:

34 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 147.

35 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 147 – 148.

36 Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 231.

37 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 154.

iti vaidarbhāmārgasya prāṇā daśa guṇāḥ smṛtāḥ |

eṣāṃ viparyayaḥ prāyo drśyate gauḍavartmani ||³⁸

These ten mentioned *guṇas* are life of the *vaidarbhī* style

Their opposites are usually seen in the *gauḍī* manner.

Thus, according to Daṇḍin, the ten *guṇas* are the essence not of literature as a whole, but only of the works which can be ascribed to *vaidarbhī mārga*. The *gauḍī* style is characterized by opposites or misapplication of some of the *guṇas*. The later theoreticians stated that *arthavyakti*, *udāratā* and *samādhi* are required in both manners.³⁹ Daṇḍin believed that there are two distinct literary manners: one simple, elegant and not so elaborately ornamented – *vaidarbhī*, and the second one grandiloquent and figurative – *gauḍī*.

Vāmana claimed that *rīti* is the soul of poetry – *rītir ātmā kāvyasya*.⁴⁰ He believed that it is a chief principle “that permits the integration of the other principles of analysis (including most particularly *alaṃkāra*) in a holistic view of poetry.”⁴¹ To the styles distinguished by his predecessors he added a third one – *pāñcālī*. This theorist also considered *vaidarbhī rīti* as a superior literary style. However, contrary to Daṇḍin, he did not consider *gauḍī* as an inferior style. He thought that it lacks sweetness and delicateness, but it has more vigour and forcefulness. The *pāñcālī rīti* possesses all but two *guṇas*: *ojas* and *kānti*. Nevertheless, Vāmana claimed that poets should try to achieve the perfection of the *vaidarbhī rīti*.⁴²

38 Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaḍarśa*, 1.42, *Kāvyaḍarśa of Daṇḍin*, ed. R. R. Shastri, (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), 42 – 43.

39 Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 379 – 380.

40 Vāmana, *Kāvyaḍalaṃkārasūtra* 1.2.6, Vāmana, *Kāvyaḍalaṃkārasūtra*, ed. A. Vidyabhu, V. N. Vidyaratna, (Calcutta: Oriental Series, 1922), 14.

41 Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 235.

42 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 160 – 161.

Rudraṭa, a theorist from the beginning of the 9th century from Kashmir, although did not advocate the *rīti* doctrine, added one more style to Vāmana's list – *lāṭīyā*. According to him, styles were associated with certain *vṛttis* transferred together with *rasas* from drama domain into poetry. *vaidarbhī*, because it was considered sweet and graceful, was linked with *kaiśikī vṛtti* and *śṛṅgāra rasa*. *gauḍī* was associated with *ārabhaṭī vṛtti* and *rasas* like *raudra*, *vīra*, *bhayānaka*, *bībhatsa*. Two other styles were considered as middling, *lāṭīyā* was more similar to *gauḍī* and *pāñcālī* to *vaidarbhī*.⁴³

Vāmana was the first theoretician who tried to synthesize a philosophy of literary aesthetics. Nevertheless, this theory received very little acceptance of later theoreticians, and as it was put by E. Gerow: “his theory is one of the significant dead-ends in the history of Indian poetics.”⁴⁴ However, terms like *guṇas*, *doṣas* and *vṛttis* were discussed, defined and developed by later theoreticians.⁴⁵ These issues were also very important in later theories of Sanskrit poetics. Nevertheless, in the context of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, the examination of history of those concepts can be concluded at the early 9th century CE. References to those issues occur only in two plays: the *Vijayāṅkā* and the *Vikaṭānitambā*. The first of them is set in the middle of the 7th century CE (during the reign of the king Candrāditya from Chalukyan dynasty) and the action of *Vikaṭānitambā* takes place during the life of the historical Vikaṭānitambā – in the early 9th century CE. Therefore, the characters of those plays could not discuss those issues on the basis of works of later theoreticians.

6.3.4 The *rīti* theory and *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī*

It must be noted that numerous references to the *rīti* theory did not occur in *Vijayāṅkā* and *Vikaṭānitambā* without a reason. They are both set roughly when this school of aesthetics flourished in the Indian subcontinent. Vikaṭānitambā lived in similar time to Vāmana, and the action of *Vijayāṅkā* is set in the time of Daṇḍin. Although the heroine of the second play sees the *Kāvyaḍarśa* for the first time and she cannot be aware of the

43 Ibidem, 161 – 163.

44 Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 236.

45 For more about the *rīti* theory see: Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alamkāra Śāstra*, 147 – 200; for more about the history of *guṇas* see: Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, 244 – 343; for more about the history of the concept of *doṣas* see: ibidem, 203 – 243.

views of Daṇḍin on *guṇas* and *doṣas* as well as on *vaidarbhī*, she could possibly be aware of previous coverages of these issues. There might have been discussions on these issues at her time.

Another reason for appearance of numerous allusions to the constitutive elements of *rīti-marga* theory is the last stanza of *Vijayāṅkā*. In this verse (quoted in Chapter 4. The heroines of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* and their historical counterparts, page 143) the Queen is compared to Kālidāsa in her abilities to write in the *vaidarbhī* style. As it was mentioned above, this style was considered by Daṇḍin and other theoreticians as combining all ten *guṇas* harmoniously, and because of that it was regarded as superior. This verse is not authored by Dr. V. Raghavan, but it is ascribed to Rājaśekhara. We know very little about the poetess, but this assessment of her work by Rājaśekhara, the 10th century playwright and theoretician, certainly inspired Dr. Raghavan to construct a play showing snapshots of Vijayāṅkā's life in such a way that the stanza could form its conclusion. In that way, V. Raghavan could give a touch of authenticity to the whole play. And for that purpose, it was necessary to introduce beforehand occasions for the appearance of elements which were of great importance in the discussion of the styles.

One of the first remarks on *doṣas* occurs in *Vijayāṅkā* when the queen laughs after having listened to the opening stanza of *Kāvyaḍarśa*.

ācāryaḥ

sahrdaye! ko vā doṣo' tra bhavatyāḥ karṇāruntudo bhavati?

vijayāṅkā (*sahāsam eva*)

nanu na paśyanti bhavantaḥ pratakṣavirodhadoṣam atra |⁴⁶

Ācārya

Oh, lady connoisseur! What is the flaw which causes pain to your ears?

46 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 3 – 4.

Vijayāṅkā [laughing]

Do you indeed not see a flaw which is a contradiction to direct perception?

Vijayāṅkā speaks here about *pratyakṣa virodhi* – a contradiction to a visual evidence, or direct perception. This can be considered as a reference to the tenth *doṣa* distinguished by Daṇḍin. In the verse 3.126 of *Kāvyādarśa*, he speaks about flaw, which is a contradiction (*virodhi*) to different aspects of world:

deśakālakalālokanyāyāgamavirodhi ca |

iti doṣā [...] ||⁴⁷

Place, time, arts, reality, logic and tradition

– these are flaws [...].

Therefore, it seems that the proud Queen adds a new illustration of the tenth *doṣa* described by the theorist. According to her, Daṇḍin made a mistake in respect of reality (*loka*). He called Sarasvatī all white, while he could see with his own eyes that the goddess of speech (i.e. Vijayāṅkā) has a dark complexion. Therefore, it was a contradiction to the reality.

The next reference containing the words *guṇa* and *doṣa* does not refer to the poetry, but personally to Vijayāṅkā.

Ācārya

yat satyaṃ guṇaprakarṣā bhavatā garvadoṣam enaṃ sarvathā pariharati |⁴⁸

Ācārya

It is true, that the excellence of your merits destroys the flaw of pride.

47 Daṇḍin, *Kāvyādarśa*, 3.126, *Kāvyādarśa of Daṇḍin*, ed R. R. Sastri, 374.

48 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 4.

Here it seems like Ācārya uses the terminology of Sanskrit poetics to describe the character of the Queen, but in fact the term *doṣa*, as referring to vices of human character, can be found in various earlier texts. For example, *Mahābhārata* (v. 33. 66.) provides a list of six *doṣas* which stop a man from obtaining prosperity, and *Manusmṛti* (I.7. 47-48) provides two lists: 10 *doṣas* originating from lust (*kāma*) and six *doṣas* originating from anger (*krodha*). But there is no *garva doṣa* – the flaw of pride – among them. The term *garva* appears among *aparāddhis*, what means: “a ‘guilt’-bearing action or state of mind, causing one to take on the taint of sin.”⁴⁹ In connection with this line of Ācārya’s speech, it is important to remember that in Sanskrit poetics, *doṣas* are not explicitly negative. According to Bharata and Bhāmaha, flaws can change into merits when placed in the right context. In the *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* we can read that:

sanniveśaviśeṣāt tu duruktam api śobhate |

*nīlaṃ palāśam ābaddham antarāle srajām iva ||*⁵⁰

Even what was said wrongly shines because of its particular position,

Like a green leaf woven into a wreath of flowers.

Therefore, the line of Ācārya can be interpreted in this way: because of great poetic abilities of Vijayāṅkā, pride is no longer a flaw. In this context, pride becomes a rightly earned self-esteem.

The next reference to the *doṣas* is rather simple.

vijayāṅkā

*kim idam? na kimapy ucyata ācāryaiḥ? yady asti ko’pi doṣaḥ svairam
śikṣaṇīyā śiṣyā |*⁵¹

49 B. Walker, *Hindu World An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism In Two Volumes Volume II M-Z*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 401.

50 Bhāmaha, *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* 1. 54, *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra of Bhāmaha with English Translation and Notes on Pariccheda 1 to 3*, ed. C. S. R. Sastri, (Madras: The Sri Balamanorama Press, 1956), 48.

51 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 6.

Vijayāṅkā

How can this be? The Master says nothing? Where there is a flaw, it should be implicitly explained to the student.

Here, the Queen is surprised that her teacher and her husband have nothing to say after her stanza was recited. Thus, she thinks that her poem has some flaws, and it is an obligation of her teacher to point them out so she could avoid them while writing her poems in future. However, it turns out that her stanza was so beautiful and flawless that both astonished men contemplated it in silence.

Some references to *guṇas* and *doṣas* can be also found in the *Vikaṭānitambā*. The first of them can be noticed in the line of the heroine addressed to her teacher when he asks her to recite one of her new works.

vikaṭānitambā

*nūnaṃ lajjāpayati mām ācāryaḥ | kintu bhavān eva guṇadoṣaparakāśāya
samucito nikaṣāśmeti (...)*⁵²

Vikaṭānitambā

Indeed, you embarrass me, Master. But acknowledging that you are a real touchstone for poetical qualities and faults (...).

The poetess acknowledges that Govindasvamī is a learned connoisseur of Sanskrit poetry and can easily point out merits and shortcomings of a poem. Thus, she wants to learn about the mistakes she made to avoid them in the future, but also about good sides of her poetry.

The next reference to *guṇas* and *doṣas* can be found in the speech of Govindasvamī when he tries to comfort the heroine worried about her marriage with an uneducated man.

52 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 3.

govindasvamī

ayi, prāyo guṇo doṣāya kalpate hi ⁵³

Govindasvamī

Usually merit has its share in a fault.

Here, the teacher refers to the *guṇas* and *doṣas* as they were described by Bharata. He provided the list of the flaws before the list of the merits, and then in *Nāṭyaśāstra* 16.96 c, he said that *guṇā viparyayād eṣāṃ – guṇas are opposition of doṣas*. However, the particular flaws enlisted by him are not opposite to particular merits. Later theorists considered those issues separately. In addition, Bharata and Bhāmaha stated that if elements considered usually as *doṣas* are applied correctly and in the right context, they can turn into positive features. Thus, those issues complement each other. Furthermore, Daṇḍin, who treated these subjects separately, said that *gauḍī mārga* is characterized mainly by the opposites of the ten *guṇas*. He did not call them *doṣas*, but he clearly considered this style as inferior to *vaidarbhī mārga*, and therefore he meant by this expression (*viparyaya*) those features of poetry that are not always appreciated.

6.4 *Avantisundarī* of Raghavan and *Kāvyaṃmāṃsā* of Rājaśekhara

The heroine of *Avantisundarī* was a wife of renowned poet and theoretician of Sanskrit literature. Therefore, it is no wonder that Dr. V. Raghavan woven the plot of this play around the literary output of Rājaśekhara.

Kāvyaṃmāṃsā is a unique treatise consisting of eighteen chapters (*ādhikaraṇas*). It must be noted that it does not deal with numerous issues typical and crucial for *alaṃkāraśāstra*, such as *rasas*, *guṇas*, *alaṃkāras*. It is mostly devoted to a poet. Thus, S. K. De believes that this work belongs rather to *kaviśikṣās* – guides for poets and poetic training and education. Nevertheless, it is much more than a handbook. This treatise is an unusual work in the field of Sanskrit poetics because it deals with circumstances of creating good poetry, rather than with product of its creation. As it was

53 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 5.

noticed by E. Gerow: “This work is concerned then with the prerequisites of poetry, rather than with poetry per se.”⁵⁴

6.4.1 *Kavirāja*

One of the first issues disputed by Rājaśekhara and his wife in the play of Raghavan is the term *kavirāja*. He tries to explain to her why he composed a play in Prakrit, and says that he wants to earn a title of *kavirāja*. The heroine teases her husband about the fact that he calls himself in this way. As she is not familiar with it, or pretends so, the theorist in the play explains to his wife the meaning of this term by quoting a piece of the fifth *adhikaraṇa* of *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* or V. Raghavan makes us ‘witnesses’ of the moment in which this part of the treatises is composed:

rājaśekharaḥ

*ayi, sāhityaprasthānaparicayaṃ gūhamānā krīḍārasakutukinī pṛcchasi |
bhavatu, vivṛṇomi | tatra kaviṣu aneke bhedāḥ, - śāstrakaviḥ, kāvyakaviḥ,
arthakaviḥ, alaṅkāarakaviḥ, uktikaviḥ, rasakaviḥ, hṛdayakaviḥ, mahākaviḥ,
kavirāja ityādayaḥ | tatra anyataraprabandhabheda paraṃ pravṛṇo
mahājavir ucyate |*

*“yas tu tatra tatra bhāṣāviśeṣe teṣu prabandheṣu tasmimś tasmimś ca rase
svatantraḥ sa kavirājah” (...)*

*madīyaṃ prākṛtaprāgalbhyaṃ prakāṣayitum kavirājapadaṃ samarthayitum
ca evaṃ prākṛte saṭṭakaṃ kṛtam |⁵⁵*

54 Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 261. For more information and a detailed analyse of the content of *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* see: K. Pażucha, “Kavirahasya, ‘The Secret of Poets’: Rājaśekhara’s View on Poetry”, *Cracow Indological Studies 15* (August 2021): 143-66. <https://doi.org/10.12797/CIS.15.2013.15.09>.

55 V. Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, in V. Raghavan, *Prekṣaṇakatrayī – Vijayāṅkā, Vikaṭanitambā, Avantisundarī. Three Sanskrit Prekshnakas*, (Madras: Sri Ramachandra Printing Works, 1956), 5.

Rājaśekhara

You, hiding your knowledge on the details of poetics, want to play games with me and that's why you ask. Let it be, I will explain. There are many types among poets: *śāstrakavis* – poet-scholars, *kāvya-kavis* – specialists in refined poetry, *arthakavis* – those concentrating on meaning, *alaṃkāra-kavis* – concentrating on figures of speech, *uktikavis* – authors of *subhāṣitas*, *rasakavis* – experts in poetic feelings, *hṛdayakavis* – poets of hearts, *mahākavis* – great poets, *kavirājas* – kings among poets. etc. Among them the one who is skilled in many types of compositions is called *mahākavi* – a great poet.

“Among them the one who is called kavirāja – a king of poets – is an expert composer in all specific languages, in all genres and in all rasas. (...)”

This *saṭṭaka* in Prakrit was written to show my expertise in Prakrit and in order to justify the title “the king of poets”.

While creating this speech of Rājaśekhara, Raghavan employed an exact quote from the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*. Rājaśekhara indeed considered himself a king of poets, and he stated it in *Karpūramañjarī*.⁵⁶ Since he mentioned it in his Prakrit play, it can be assumed that one of the reasons for creating it was proving that he was worth of this title.

In the fifth *adhikaraṇa* of the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, the theorist provided a detailed classification of poets. The most basic division is into *śāstrakavi* – scientific poet and *kāvya-kavi* – specialist in refined poetry. There is also a third kind – *ubhayakavi* – a poet who can compose both *śāstras* and *kāvya*. Rājaśekhara stated that none of them is superior to the others, but that they all should be evaluated in their own fields. *Kāvya-kavis* further divide into eight categories: *rocanākavi*, *śabdakavi*, *arthakavi*, *alaṃkāra-kavi*, *uktikavi*, *rasakavi*, *mārgakavi*, *śāstrārthakavi*. These classes reflect the areas of poetry in which poets specialise themselves. Writers can - and should - attain

56 *bālakaī kairāo ṇibbhaarāssa taha abajjhāo |*

itti assa paraṃ parae appā māhattamārūḍho |

Karpūramañjarī (The Prakrit play of Rājaśekhara), ed. M. Ghosh (University of Calcutta, 1939), verse 8, p. 3.

perfection in more than one of them. Depending on how many areas they specialise in, poets can be *kaniṣṭha* (inferior), *madhyama* (medium) and *mahākavi* – a poet who specialises in all of them. According to Rājaśekhara, there are also ten stages of poet’s development. Among them, there are *hrdayakavi* – a timid poet (who composes poetry, but is afraid to expose it) *mahākavi* – *great poet* (who can compose entire important composition), and *kavirāja* – the king of poets.⁵⁷

In the play, Raghavan clearly uses terminology from *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*; however, it seems that he mixed some levels of the classification, or he depicts the stage, in which Rājaśekhara starts thinking about the problem of poets’ classification. At the beginning of the line, in which he explains this concept to his wife, Rājaśekhara states that there are a few ways of classification of poets, but then he lists them all without any distinction. Nevertheless, the most important part of this reasoning is that he is by all means the king of poets.

6.4.2 *Pāka* – the poetical perfection

The next issue about which Rājaśekhara asks Avantisundarī is *pāka* – maturity of poetry. As far as the concept of *pāka* is concerned, the word itself comes from the verbal root *pac*, which means ‘to cook’, ‘to ripen’, ‘to mature’, ‘to bring to perfection or completion’. The basic meaning of the noun *pāka* then is ‘cooking’, ‘cooked food’, ‘ripeness (as in a fruit)’ or ‘maturity’. However, its secondary meaning, which originates from the basic one, is ‘excellence’, ‘perfection’, ‘full development’. As I am explaining in my article devoted to *pāka*:⁵⁸

Theoreticians of Sanskrit literature used the term *kāvyaṁpāka* to describe the state where a poem has attained its final form, was ready and finished, hence the poet could stop working on it. Although the word *pāka* was used in the context of poetry to denote specific literary quality, it still maintained its association with its primary meanings as the degree of maturity of

57 *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara. Original text in Sanskrit and Translation with Explanatory Notes* by Sadhana Parashar (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2000), 57 – 63.

58 M. Karcz, “The Ripeness of Poetry — Innovation in the Concept of *kāvyaṁpāka* As Introduced by Bhoja”. *Cracow Indological Studies* 22 (2) 2020: 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.12797/CIS.22.2020.02.04>,

a poem was compared to the measure of ripeness of different kinds of fruits.⁵⁹

In the play, *Avantisundarī* asks his husband about the opinion of earlier theoreticians on this matter. Raghavan made Rājaśekhara to provide views of the same theorists to whom the dramatist and scholar referred to in his work. However, while presenting opinions of Maṅgala,⁶⁰ Raghavan used simplified passage from *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*, which originally says:

satatam abhyāsavaśataḥ sukaveḥ vākyam pākam āyāti | 'kaḥ punar ayam pākah?' ity ācāryāḥ | 'pariṇāmah' iti maṅgalaḥ | 'kaḥ punar ayam pariṇāmah?' ityācāryāḥ | 'supām tiṅgām ca śravaḥ saiśā vyutpattiḥ' iti maṅgalaḥ | sauśabdyam etat | 'padaniveśaniṣkampatā pākah' ityācāryāḥ |⁶¹

Thanks to continuous exercise (*abhyāsavaśataḥ*), the expression (*vākyam*) of a good poet reaches ripeness (*pākam*). The Ācāryas ask: ‘What then is this ripeness?’. Maṅgala answers: ‘It is the maturation (*pariṇāmah*)’. The Ācāryas ask ‘Again, what is this maturation?’. Maṅgala: ‘It is the proficiency which consists in the intimacy with verbs and nouns (*supām tiṅgām ca śravaḥ*)’. The Ācāryas say: ‘That is the felicity of expression (*sauśabdyam*). Ripeness is the stability in the disposition of words (*padaniveśaniṣkampatā*)’.⁶²

59 Ibidem, 64.

60 See: K. Krishnamoorthy, “Maṅgala, a Neglected Name in Sanskrit Poetics,” *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 20, 3, 1971, 247 – 255.

61 *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śāstry, (Oriental Institute Baroda: Gaekwad’s Series, 1924) 20.

62 Transl. by A. Battistini, “When poetry is ripe: An overview of the theory of kāvyapāka”, In: *a World of Nourishment. Reflections on Food in Indian Culture*, ed. C. Pieruccini, P.M. Rossi, (Milano: Ledizioni, 2016), 147.

The next theoretician quoted in the *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā* is Vāmana.

tadāhuḥ-

‘*āvāpoddharāṇe tāvad yāvad dolāyate manaḥ |*

*padānāṃ sthāpīte sthairyē hanta siddhā sarasvatī ||*⁶³,

‘*āgrahaparigrahād api padasthairyaparyavasāyas tasmāt padānāṃ
parivṛttivaimukhyaṃ pākaḥ*’ *iti vāmanīyāḥ* ⁶⁴

It is said:

As long as the mind is hesitating,

there is insertion and removing of words.

But once their firmness is accomplished,

oh, the poetry is perfect!

The Vāmanīyas say: ‘The conclusion of the firmness of words comes also from the inserting and inserting again.’

It should be noted, that Vāmana wrote about *pāka* twice in the *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti*. In the second verse on this subject (*Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti* 3.2.15), he spoke about two kinds of maturity – of a mango, which characterizes good poetry, and of an eggplant, which is typical for worse kind of poems.⁶⁵ However, this passage is not disputed in *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, and consequently it was not introduced in *Avantisundarī*.

In the play, Raghavan condensed the message removing the dialogue between Maṅgala and the Ācāryas. Nevertheless, the author managed to keep the meaning of the relevant passage.

63 Passage from the *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti* 1.3.15 of Vāmana quoted in the *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*.

64 *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā* of Rājaśekhara, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Sastry, 20.

65 For more information about *pāka* according to Vāmana, see: Battistini, “When poetry is ripe: An overview of the theory of *kāvyaḷaṃkāra*”, 146 – 147.

rājaśekharaḥ

*‘pariṇāmaḥ supāṃ tinām ca śravaḥpriyā vyutpattiḥ’ iti maṅgalaḥ | etādr̥śīm
vyutpattiḥ sauśabdyam manvānā apare ‘padaniveśaniṣkampata pākaḥ’ iti
vadanti: tathaiva vāmanīyā abhiprayanti, yadāhuḥ–*

āvāpoddharaṇe tāvat

yāvaddolāyate manaḥ |

padānām sthāpīte sthairye

hanta siddhā sarasvatī ||⁶⁶

Rājaśekhara

According to Maṅgala, perfection or maturity – *pariṇāma* – is the effect pleasant to the ears, connected with nominal and verbal inflected words. This is called by others *sauśabdyā*, and they say: “the perfection – *pāka* – is the firm arrangement of words”. This is what was said by Vāmana and his followers:

“As long as the mind is hesitating,

there is insertion and removing of words.

But once their firmness is accomplished,

oh, the poetry is perfect!”

After learning about the views of those two earlier theorists, the heroine is ready to present her own opinion. Here, Dr. Raghavan uses the same technique as in the earlier case – he condensed and simplified the passage in prose from *Kāvyaṃmāmsā* and quoted precisely only the stanza ascribed to Avantisundarī and a stanza cited, apparently by her, from *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti*. In the fifth *adhikaraṇa* in *Kāvyaṃmāmsā* one reads:

66 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 8 – 9.

*'iyam aśaktir na punaḥ pākaḥ' ity avantisundarī | yad ekasmin vastuni
mahākavīnām aneko 'pi pāṭhaḥ paripākavān bhavati tasmād
rasocitaśabdārthasūktinibandhanaḥ pākaḥ | yadāha-*

'guṇālaṅkārarītyuktiśabdārthagrahanakramaḥ |

svadate sudhiyāṃ yena vākyapākaḥ sa mām prati' ||

taduktam-

'sati vaktari saty arthe śabde sati rase sati |

*asti tan na vinā yena parisravati vāṅmadhu ||*⁶⁷

Avantisundarī says: 'Again this is weakness [of poets], not the perfection. Because for great poets, there is more than one reading (i.e. expression) which is ripe for one and a single matter, therefore, the perfection is employment of good speech, with meaning and sound proper for *rasa*. As was stated:

This maturity of sentence, which delights connoisseurs, is, in my opinion, an arranged sequence of sense and sound expressed with [care for] style, ornaments and qualities.

It is said:

“It is there, when the speaker is present, when the meaning is present, when the word is present, when the *rasa* is present,

without this a honey-speech does not flow.”

It must be noticed that the poetess did not agree with her eminent predecessors. She defined the poetical maturity in a new way and called the inability of substituting words with their synonyms as a lack of creativity and a weakness of poets rather than perfection. It can be considered as a very brave move, especially in a patriarchal society she lived in. It is also very significant that Rājasekhara did not ascribe this opinion to

67 *Kāvyaṃimāṃsā of Rājasekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 20.

himself, although he shared it, and gave credits for it to his wife. This shows that he must have respected her greatly.

In the play, Dr. Raghavan quoted a large part of the passage from *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*. He changed only the introductory part.

avantisundarī

*kavisahrdayarājasya bhavataḥ parokṣaṁ kiṁ vā tattvam avantisundarī
vyākhyātu | yadiyaṁ padānāṁ parivṛtṭyasahiṣṇutā tāṁ kaveḥ aśaktiṁ
manye, na punaḥ pākam | tasmāt rasocitaśabdārthasūnktinibandhanaṁ
pākaḥ |*

guṇālaṅkārarītyuktiśabdārthagranthanakramaḥ |

svadate sudhiyāṁ yena vākyapākaḥ sa mām prati ||

‘sati vaktita satyarthe śabde sari rase sati |

asti tan na vinā yena parisravati vāṅmadhu ||’

idamavantisundayāḥ matamavaḡacchantu sacetasāḥ ⁶⁸

Avantisundarī

Should Avantisundarī explain the principle that is unknown for you, the king of poets and connoisseurs? What is the inability of transforming words I consider a weakness of a poet, not the perfection. Therefore, the perfection is employment of good speech, meaning and words, proper for *rasa*.

This maturity of sentence which delights connoisseurs, is, in my opinion, an arranged sequence of sense and sound expressed with [care for] style, ornaments and qualities.

“It is there, when the speaker is present, when the meaning is present, when the word is present, when the *rasa* is present,

68 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 9.

without this a honey-speech does not flow.”⁶⁹

May the connoisseurs understand the view of Avantisundarī.

In the play, after the heroine presents her view, the theorist simply agrees with her and gives her another topic for consideration. In *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, Rājaśekhara provided his own definition of the poetical maturity, in which he also agreed with his wife. According to him, *pāka* is more than grammatical correctness. It depends on sounds and combinations of words, their relations with subjects, and the ability to induce intended *rasa*. The theorist believed that a poet should practice writing in order to be able to create ripe poems, because the *pāka* is not only the perfection of literary composition, but also the maturity of a poet himself. Rājaśekhara also explored this issue further and he distinguished nine kinds of poetic perfection and compared them to the ripeness of nine different fruits.⁷⁰

6.4.3 What should be described in *kāvya*?

The next issue about which Rājaśekhara asks his wife is what subjects are suitable to be described in poetry. The theorist devoted to this matter the 9th chapter of *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, which is titled *Arthavyāpti*. In the play, at the beginning of the discussion of this subject, Rājaśekhara introduced the opinion of Bhaṭṭalollaṭa:⁷¹

nissīmany apy arthe rasavata eva nibandha iti bhaṭṭalollaṭa |⁷²

According to Bhaṭṭalollaṭa among limitless meanings, only those full of *rasa* suit the composition.

69 *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti* 1.2.11 quoted in *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā. Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 20.

70 See also: M. Karcz, “The Ripeness of Poetry — Innovation in the Concept of *kāvyaṃpāka* as Introduced by Bhoja.”

71 It is noteworthy that Bhaṭṭalollaṭa was a theorist of Sanskrit literature from the 9th century, author of commentary to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. None of his work was preserved independently, however, some of his ideas were quoted in the preserved works of later theoreticians.

72 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 9 – 10.

In the *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā* the passage corresponding to this sentence is more detailed:

“*astu nāma niḥśīmārthasārthaḥ |*

*kintu rasavata eva nibandho yukto na nīrasasya” iti āparājitiḥ ||*⁷³

Āparājiti’s son says:

Let the nature have the objects with limitless meanings,

but the literary composition is fit for those with *rasa*, not the ones devoid of it.

In the quotation there is no name of Bhaṭṭalollaṭa; however he, is introduced as a son of Āparājiti. Also, the opinion of this theorist is much more simplified and condensed. In the *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, after citing the views of Bhaṭṭalollaṭa, Rājaśekhara provides some examples and his own opinion on Bhaṭṭalollaṭa’s statement. The play of V. Raghavan does not refer to those passages. Rājaśekhara, a figure in Raghavan’s drama, presents views of another theorist – Pālyakīrti.⁷⁴ Again, the author of the play used the same technique summarising his opinions in quite a brief and uncomplicated way.

*tatra pālyakīrtir nāma vadaty evam – yathā tathā vāstu vastuno rūpaṃ,
vaktravasthābhāvasvabhāvāyattam eva āvye samullekhaṃ prāpnoti | yam
arthaṃ raktaḥ stauti tam eva virakto nindati | madhyasyaś ca tatra udāste |
tathā hi – savallabhānāṃ triyāmā kṣaṇam iva kṣīyate, śītataś ca śaśī;
virahināṃ saiva dīrghayāmā, śaśī ca ulkeva santāpakṛt; nirvallabhānāṃ
nirvirhāṇāṃ ca triyāmā triyāmaiva; induś ca kevaladarpaṇākṛtiḥ, noṣṇo na
vā śītalaḥ |*⁷⁵

73 *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 45.

74 Sakatāyana Pālyakīrti was a Jain grammarian, author of the treatise *Śabdānuśāsana* along with its commentary *Amoghavṛtti*. The commentary was named after his royal patron Amoghavarṣa I. Pālyakīrti lived probably in the 9th century. J. Prasad Jain, *The Jaina Sources of the History Of Ancient India*, (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1982), 207.

75 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 10.

Then Pālyakīrti says this: Whatever form of thing may be, it depends on the speaker's (i.e. author's) own nature and the character of situation how it is reflected in poetry; what is praised by person in love, this is blamed by indifferent and not noticed by the one in the middle. Therefore, for those who are with their lovers night⁷⁶ is reduced to a moment, and the moon seems to be cold; for those who are in separation it is like a long watch and the moon creates heat like a fire falling from heaven; and for those who don't have lovers three *yāmas* are only three *yāmas* and the Moon is like a mirror, neither cold, nor hot.⁷⁷

The relevant passage in the *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* is slightly longer and more sophisticated.

*“yathā tathā vāstu vastuno rūpaṁ vaktaprakṛitiviśeṣāyattā tu rasavattā /
tathā ca yam arthaṁ raktaḥ stauti taṁ virakto vinindati madhyasthastu
tatrodāste” iti pālyakīrtiḥ |*

“yeṣāṁ vallabhayā samaṁ kṣaṇamiva sphārā kṣapā

kṣīyate teṣāṁ śītatarah śaśī virahiṇām ulkeva santāpakṛt |

asmākaṁ na tu vallabhā na virahastenobhayabhraṁśinām

indū rājati darpaṇākṛtirayaṁ noṣṇo na vā śītalaḥ” ||⁷⁸

Pālyakīrti says,

the form of a thing may be of any type, but the fullness of *rasa* depends on the specificity of the natural dispositions of a speaker. What is praised by person in love, is blamed by indifferent one and by the one in the middle is not noticed.

76 The word used for a night *triyāmā* literally means “consisting of three *yāmas*” – period of three hours. This word is used here to emphasize that the length of the night is the same in every case.

77 This sentence is a paraphrase of a sentence from the 9th chapter of *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*. *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājasekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 45.

78 *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājasekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 46.

For those who are with their beloveds' a long night passes like a moment,
and for them the Moon is of intense coolness. For separated lovers it creates
heat like a fire falling from heaven.

For us, who have no beloved, are not separated, and are free of both,
the moon shines like a mirror, it is not cold nor hot.

It seems that, in his play, V. Raghavan explained the views of certain theoreticians for his audience. He kept the meaning and used vocabulary from the treatise extensively, but he made it much simpler. The most significant change is in the example provided by Pālyakīrti, which originally was a stanza, but Raghavan changed it into prose.

The reaction of Avantisundarī Dr. V. Raghavan described in his play as follows:

suṣṭhūktam tīrthamkarapriyaśiṣyeṇa | paśyatv atrabhavān⁷⁹ –

vidagdhabhaṇitibhaṅginivedyam vastuno rupam na niyatasvabhāvam

“vastusvabhāvo 'tra kaver atantram guṇāguṇāv uktivaśena kāvyē |

*stuvan nibadhnāty amṛtāmśum induṃ ninduṃs tu doṣākaram āha
dhūrtaḥ”⁸⁰||*

The dear student of *tīrthaṅkara* said correctly. Please look, the form of a thing is presented through a specific style of a learned man, its nature is not fixed.

Here [i.e. in this world] the nature of thing does not depend on a poet,

79 From this place Dr. Raghavan almost entirely quoted the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. See:

“vidagdhabhaṇitibhaṅginivedyam vastuno rupam na niyatasvabhāvam” iti avantisundarī | tadāha-

“vastusvabhāvo 'tra kaveratanre guṇāguṇāvuktivaśena kāvyē |

stuvannivadhnātyamṛtāmśuminduṃ ninduṃsti doṣākaramāha dhūrtaḥ” ||

Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājasekhara, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 46.

⁸⁰ Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 10.

In poetry its qualities and defects depend on the speech.

The praiser shows the Moon as the Nectar-radiant.⁸¹

Mocking rouge calls it the Night-maker⁸² (also: a mine of faults).

Before introducing the sentence of Avantisundarī from *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, Dr. V. Raghavan highlighted, that she agreed with the views of Pālyakīrti. Indeed, in the following sentence of this treatise, Rājaśekhara wrote:

“ubhayam upapannam” iti yāyāvārīyaḥ |⁸³

Yāyāvārīya (Rājaśekhara) says: “Both are right”.

Therefore, the well-known theorist admitted that his opinion was built on the views of his predecessor Pālyakīrti and his own wife.

6.4.4 Śabdaharaṇa or plagiarism

The next passage of *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā*, where Rājaśekhara quoted opinion of his wife, is located in the 11th *adhikāraṇa*, which is titled *Śabdaharaṇa*. This chapter is devoted to appropriation of words; therefore, it deals with a problem of using expressions and ideas from works of another poet and applying them into one’s own work.

The problem of plagiarism was vaguely discussed by Vāmana. He distinguished two types of the subject matter (*artha*) of poetry: original (*ayoni*) and derivative (*anyacchāyāyoni*). The first one is an invention of poet’s imagination, and the second one relies on another work. However, he did not condemn the latter. Ānandavardhana dealt elaborately with appropriation of words and ideas from other writers. In his opinion, taking themes and ideas from earlier poets was not a serious trespass. According to his views, even trite subjects could be rendered into good poetry when

81 This epithet of the Moon means literally “having nectar-rays” and it refers to Puranic stories, presenting the Moon as the preserver of *amṛta* – nectar of immortality.

82 The compound *doṣākara* can be translated in two ways: as “night-maker” (an epithet of the Moon) and as “a mine of flaws”.

83 *Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 46.

touched by poetic creativity (*pratibhā*). Even when words correspond to an older work, they could be endowed with freshness through the poetical suggestion (*dhvani*). In the view of Ānandavardhana, even if a composition resembles an older work, it can be made original through the poetical imagination of the poet.⁸⁴

Rājaśekhara stated that there are kinds of such appropriation of wording that can be accepted; however, not all of them should be tolerated. He divided *śabdaharaṇa* into five categories: *pada* (borrowing of a word), *pāda* (borrowing of a quarter of stanza), *ardha* (borrowing a hemistich), *vṛtta* (borrowing of a metre) and *prabandha* (borrowing of a long composition). Thus, Rājaśekhara provided numerous examples of stanzas with similar wording, themes etc. to illustrate his point. Then, he quoted an opinion of his wife, in which she presents possible excuses of poets who are prone to literary theft.

*ayam aprasiddhaḥ prasiddhimān aham, ayam apratiṣṭhaḥ pratiṣṭhāvān
aham, aprakrāntam idam asya saṃvidhānakaṃ prakrāntam mama,
guḍūcīvacano 'yaṃ mṛdvīkāvacano 'ham, anādr̥tabhāṣāvīśeṣo 'yam aham
ādṛtabhāṣāvīśeṣaḥ, praśāntajñātṛkam idaṃ, deśāntarītakartṛkam idam,
ucchinnanibandhanamūlam idaṃ, mlecchītakopanibandhanamūlam idam ity
evam ādibhiḥ kāraṇaiḥ śabdaharaṇe 'rthaharaṇe cābhirameta" || ity
avantisundarī |⁸⁵*

Avantisundarī says:

He is unknown, I am famous; he is without position, I have a foundation; his style is not advanced, mine is advanced; his words are like wood vine,⁸⁶ my words are like grapevine; his distinctive feature is careless language, my distinctive feature is careful language; this [work] is of the late expert; this is of the foreign author; the core of this composition is wrong; the most of the descriptions in this composition are unintelligible – due to these and other

84 V. M. Kulkarni, *Studies in Sanskrit Sāhitya-Śāstra*, (Patan: B. L. Institute of Indology, 1983), 1 – 6. V. K. Vijayan, *Creative Writing in Sanskrit (Studies in Rājaśekhara's Kāvyaṃimāmsā)*, (Calicut: Publication Division University of Calicut, 2012), 150 – 153.

85 *Kāvyaṃimāmsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śāstry, 57.

86 *Cocculus indicus*, the chemical substances in the plant are used in pharmacology. Its fruits have poisonous and stimulant properties.

similar reasons, appropriation of words and appropriation of meanings may be resorted to’.

Most of the statements made here look like excuses of the plagiarists themselves, but perhaps *Avantisundarī* in *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*, under some special circumstances, accepted appropriation of wording. Perhaps she could notice that in many poems there were numerous excellent elements which were not widely appreciated because they were shadowed by some negative features of those works. Thus, if another poet notices them and is able to use them in a better, more suitable poem, he is allowed to appropriate them.

In the play of Dr. V. Raghavan, it is the heroine who starts considerations of this subject. It is a reversed situation, because in both earlier cases it was her husband who initiated the discussion. There are no quotations from earlier theorists here. In *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* Rājaśekhara mentioned *ācāryas* – teachers, but he did not give their names.

It can be easily noticed that in this case passages from *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* and from the play *Avantisundarī* are very different. Dr. V. Raghavan not only did not quote from the treatise, but changed the opinion of the poetess.

avantisundarī

*bhavatu, atimahaty asmin kaviparamparāpravāhe nāsty eva sa kaviḥ yo
yayā kayāpi vidhayā nopajīvati param pūrvatanaṁ vā kavim | tatra ca
parakāvyaḥaraṇe prakāṣṭas sūkṣmās ca laghavo mahāntas ca bhedaviśeṣā
bhavanti |*

rājaśekharaḥ

priye, sādhu nirīkṣitaṁ tvayā |

nāsty acauraḥ kavijanaḥ nāsty acauro vaṇijanaḥ |

sa nindati vinā vācyam yo jānāti nigūhitum ||

avantisundarī

*śabdaharaṇe arthaharaṇe ca ko'pi bahubhiḥ kāraṇair abhirameta /
parimite prasiddhe ca sati arthajāte yadi kaviḥ pratibhāvān vyañjanāmārge
ca nipuṇaḥ, tadā 'mito'pi anantatām yāti kāvyamārgaḥ, 'dṛṣṭapūrvā api
hy arthāḥ madhumāsa iva drumāḥ', sarve navā iva ābhānti |*⁸⁷

Avantisundarī

Let it be, in this extremely big stream of poetical tradition, there is no such poet, who does not somehow depend on another or former poet. In taking from others' poetry there are specific distinctions: [the borrowings can be] obvious and subtle, small and big.

Rājaśekhara

Dear, your observation is correct.

There is no poet, who is not a thief, there is no merchant, who is not a thief.

He, who knows how to disguise it without being blamed, rejoices.⁸⁸

Avantisundarī

Somebody may be interested in stealing words and stealing meanings because of many reasons. When the objects are well known and limited, if a poet possesses poetic imagination and is skilled in using implied suggestion, then the poetic path, although limited, becomes infinite – meanings are like trees in springtime – even though seen earlier, all appear to be new.

It is clear that in this case Dr. V. Raghavan did not even try to make the lines of the heroine similar to the opinions expressed and quoted in *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. In the both texts the wording and meaning are quite different. In the play, Avantisundarī sums up

87 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 10 – 11.

88 This verse comes from the 11th chapter of *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 61.

the essence of the whole 11th *adhikaraṇa*. The heroine speaks also about the appropriation of sense (*arthaharaṇa*), which is the subject of the 12th chapter of the *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*.⁸⁹ She mentions the poetic imagination (*pratibhā*) and implied meaning (*vyañjanā mārga*), which indeed appear in those chapters, but mentioned by Rājaśekhara. In the play, it seems like it was the poetess who inspired her husband to examine the issues of poetic borrowings and its relations to *pratibhā* and *vyañjanā*, and to write about them in his work. This artistic choice of Dr. V. Raghavan is very interesting, because in *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* there is no such a situation. It appears that the author wanted to give Avantisundarī more credits in creating the treatise. There is also one more thing that should be noticed in the discussed passage from *Avantisundarī* – although the author did not use a quote from *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* while creating the lines of the heroine, he cited a stanza from this work in the line of Rājaśekhara. For these reasons this piece seems intriguing.

While reading closely this part of the play, one may notice that here Raghavan described the situation we face in *Prekṣaṇakatravī*. Indeed, he himself is a poet who in a way ‘steals’ *śabda* (whole stanzas!) and *artha* of much earlier writers. Of course, it is not stealing *per se*, because he did not ascribe those passages to himself, but he used a large parts of other works and employed them in his own writings using creativity and imagination (*pratibhā*). What is more, the term *vyañjanā* (implied indication, allusion, suggestion) does not appear at all in *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*. Therefore, it is quite possible that Raghavan spoke in this passage about himself and his creation of those three plays.

6.4.5 *Pratibhā*

In the last quoted fragment, there are also two other terms from the realm of the theory of Sanskrit literature which are worth mentioning. The first of them is *pratibhā* – the poetic imagination. This term literary means image, light, splendour. It was used in Indian philosophy referring to “the sense of wisdom characterized by immediacy and freshness. It might be called the supersensuous, and supra-rational appreciation,

89 *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara. Original text in Sanskrit and Translation with Explanatory Notes* by Sadhana Parashar (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2000).

grasping truth directly [...].”⁹⁰ It is a kind of intuition that allows one grasps the real nature of things even if he or she is not highly educated. However, in the Sanskrit poetics it means something different. In this context, it refers to poetic imagination or genius. As it was stated by D. Shulman: “Sanskrit poetics regularly claimed that this mental faculty or propensity was a sine qua non of poetic creativity and somehow close to the elusive impulse, possibly divine in origin, that drives the poet [...].”⁹¹ The oldest preserved treatise mentioning it is *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra*,⁹² although Bhāmaha did not explore this term. He claimed that creating poetry depends on imagination, not on knowledge. The next important theorist who devoted more attention to this term was Daṇḍin.⁹³ He stated that innate imagination was one of the factors of making a good poetry. Vāmana, in his *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtra*, wrote:

kavitvabījaṃ pratibhānam ||⁹⁴

Brilliance is the source of poetry.

He also stated that without it it is impossible to create poetry, or it is only possible to create ridiculous poetry.⁹⁵ It is then clear that all of those theorists believed that *pratibhā*

90 G. Kaviraj, “The doctrine of *pratibhā* in Indian Philosophy,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 5, no. 1 (1923): 1–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44082804>, 1.

91 D. Shulman, *More than Real a History of the Imagination in South India*, (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 81.

92 *gurūpadeśād adhyetum śāstram jaḍadhiyo 'py alam |*
kāvyaṃ tu jāyate jātu kasyacit pratibhāvataḥ || *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* 1.5

Kāvyaḷaṃkāra of Bhāmaha with English Translation and Notes on Pariccheda 1 to 3, ed. C. S. R. Sastri, (Madras: The Sri Balamanorama Press, 1956), 5.

93 *naisargikī ca pratibhā śrutam ca bahunirmalam |*
amandaś cābhiyogo 'syāḥ kāraṇam kāvyasaṃpadaḥ || *Kāvyaḷadarśa* 1.103

na vidyate yady api pūrvavāsanāguṇānubandhi pratibhānam adbhutam |
śrutena yatnena ca vāgupāsītā dhruvam karoty eva kam apy anugraham || *Kāvyaḷadarśa* 1.104

Kāvyaḷadarśa of Daṇḍin, ed R. R. Sastri, 106 – 107.

94 *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtra* 1.3.16, *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtra*, ed. A. Vidyabhu, V. N. Vidyaratna. (Calcutta: Oriental Series, 1922), 32.

endowed with *pratibhā* even what was unseen before, is like perceived directly.

Rājaśekhara described also imagination with relation to other determinative qualities of a poet: *buddhi* (innate, basic intelligence) and *samādhi* (concentration). The theorist claimed that both of them make *śakti* – talent – shine forth. However, talent also has its two aspects: *pratibhā* and *vyutpatti* (training). Rājaśekhara explored the relation between them. He disagreed with Ānandavardhana, who believed that the first of those two is superior, and the opinions claiming that training can hide the lack of imagination. According to Avantisundarī's husband, *pratibhā* and *vyutpatti* should both characterize a good poet, and such poets are very rare.

Rājaśekhara stated that *pratibhā* can be not only innate, but also gained by an adept of creative writing through training or through esoteric practise. For the theorist: "Pratibhā is his major tool, one that requires the slight twist of indirection, the crooked or jagged movement of the mind that allows the poet to speak truth. In other words, empathic understanding and insight nearly always require a certain imaginative leap, normally expressed by implication or other indirect, twisted, and nonliteral linguistic means."⁹⁹ The theorist also distinguished two kinds of poetic imagination: *kārayitrī* (creative) and *bhāvayitrī* (receptive). The first type should characterize a poet, the second – a critic. This receptive imagination is obligatory for a critic to appreciate a poem.¹⁰⁰

6.4.6 Vyañjanā

The second term mentioned by Avantisundarī is *vyañjanā*, sometimes called also *vyañjakatva*. It means implied indication, allusion, suggestion. This issue was crucial for the *dhvani* theory and its representatives.

The oldest preserved text belonging to this tradition is *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana. However, he mentioned his predecessor as *dhvanikāra*, although

99 D. Shulman, *More than Real a History of the Imagination in South India*, 85.

100 K. Pażucha, "Kavirahasya, 'The Secret of Poets': Rājaśekhara's View on Poetry," 151 – 152. C. Galewicz, "Pratibha: o świetle poetyckiej wyobraźni słów kilka," in S. Cieślowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 355 – 368.

some scholars believe that *dhvanikāra* and Ānandavardhana are the same person. The term *dhvani* stands for sound, echo, tune; however, in the context of Sanskrit poetics, it can also mean allusion, hint, implied meaning. The followers of the *dhvani* theory believed that the implied meaning was the soul of poetry. The suggested sense cannot be understood by knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. It is only comprehensible by the power of suggestion (*vyañjanā*). It was the third potency of language recognized by the *dhvani* theorists and added to two functions of language distinguished by their predecessors: *abhidhā* (literal meaning) and *lakṣaṇā* or *guṇavāda* (metaphorical meaning). Therefore, *vyañjanā* can be translated as the power of suggestion which is endowed in a language. It allows to notice *vyaṅgya* – which is indicated by allusion or insinuation; implied; suggestive.¹⁰¹

The *dhvani* theory is closely related to the *rasa* doctrine. The *dhvani* theorists noticed that *rasas* and *bhāvas* are never present directly in a text.¹⁰² Thus, *rasa dhvani* was one of the three kinds of *dhvani* they distinguished. The other two are: *vastu dhvani* (suggestion of an act or an idea) and *alaṃkāra dhvani* (suggestion of a trope; imaginative thing, which if “expressed in so many words would assume the form of figure of speech”).¹⁰³

6.5 Other references to Sanskrit poetics in *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*

6.5.1 *Kāvya-puruṣa* – the Poetry Man

When Vikaṭānitambā learns that she is soon to be married, she says:

vikaṭānitambā

*kim? nanu pariṇītaivāhaṃ kāvyapuruṣeṇa!*¹⁰⁴

101 V. K. Chari, “The Indian Theory of Suggestion (Dhvani),” *Philosophy East and West* 27, no. 4 (1977): 391–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1397981>.

102 V. A. Ramaswami.Sastri, “Studies in *Dhvanyaloka*,” *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 17, no. 3 (1955): 222–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42929647>.

103 Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 388.

104 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 8.

Vikaṭānitambā

What? But I am married to the Poetry-Man!

The poetess refers to Kāvya-puruṣa (The Poetry-Man), the personification of poetry. His story was told by Rājaśekhara in the third *adhikāraṇa* of *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*. It is the earliest known source of this story. There is no doubt that the theorist lived later than Vikaṭānitambā. Rājaśekhara lived in the 10th century, while the poetess is dated in the 9th century. What is more, in a poem ascribed to him, he praises her poetical skills, so if he indeed wrote this stanza, he must have already known her works. Nevertheless, it is possible that the story provided by him in *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* might be older, or may have some older roots. This reply of Vikaṭānitambā can be also an outcome of creativity of Dr. Raghavan, who imagined how a learned poetess could answer to an unwanted proposal of marriage.

According to the third chapter of *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, Kāvya-puruṣa is a child of Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Speech. She practiced a severe penance in order to have a son. When he was born, he saluted his mother with the first non-religious metrical verse in Sanskrit, pleasing her greatly. This is how she described her son:

*śabdārthau te śarīraṃ, saṃskṛtaṃ mukhaṃ, prakṛtaṃ bāhuḥ, jaghanam
aparbhraṃśaḥ, paiśācaṃ pādau, uro miśram | samaḥ prasanno madhura
udāra ojasvī cāsi | ukticaṇaṃ te vaco, rasa ātmā, romāṇi chandāṃsi,
praśnottarapravahlikādikaṃ ca vākkeliḥ, anuprāsopamādayaśca
tvāmalāṅkurvanti |¹⁰⁵*

Sound and meaning are your body, Sanskrit is your face, Prakrit your arms, Apabhramsha your hips, Paisachi are your feet, mixed languages your chest. You are complete (sama), gracious (prasanna), sweet (madhura), noble (udāra) and vigorous (ojasvin). Your speech is famous for expressions, your soul is rasa, your hair are meters, your witty conversation are questions and answers and riddles, alliteration (anuprāsa), simile (upama) and others (figures of speech) adorn you.

105 *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, 6.

It can be noticed that the qualities of Kāvya-puruṣa correspond to some *guṇas* enlisted by Vāmana (*samatā, prasāda, mādhyura, audārya, ojas*) and others. The statement that his soul is *rasa* is a reference to the *rasa* theory, according to which statement *rasa* is the essence of poetry. The Poetry-Man is also adorned by *alamkāras*, that is figures of speech.

The theorist might be probably inspired by Ānandavardhana, who wrote: *śabdārthaśarīraṃ tāvat kāvyam*¹⁰⁶ (sound and meaning are the body of poetry) and *kāvyaśātmā dhvanir*¹⁰⁷ (*dhvani* is the soul of poetry).

When Kāvya-puruṣa and Sarasvatī get separated, he meets the goddess Gaurī. She wants to comfort the sad boy and sends for him a suitable bride – Sāhityavidyāvadhū, the Lady-Poetics, who is the personification of theory of literature. She follows Kāvya-puruṣa, who visits four regions of India trying to find his mother. In each place, attempting to seduce him, she dresses differently, puts different ornaments and dances and sings for him. As a consequence, four styles of poetry (*rīti*) are created. As his attraction towards her grows, his speech becomes more refined. In the city of Vidarbha her effort is so perfect, that he cannot resist, and they finally wed. Thus, the *vaidarbha* style is considered as the best among *rītis*. The purpose of creating Sāhityavidyāvadhū was restraining the insubordinate Kāvya-puruṣa, and she completed her task.¹⁰⁸

Although the reference to the story of Kāvya-puruṣa is clear, the poetess probably used this name in a figurative way. Vikaṭanitambā meant that she devoted her life to creating poetry and she was not interested in marriage.

106 *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana Vṛitti to 1.1, *Dhvanyāloka of Śrī Ānandavardhanāchārya with Locāna and Bālapriyā Commentaries*, ed. M. Sastri, (Benares: Jaya Krishna Das Haridas Gupta, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1940), 16.

107 *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana Vṛitti to 1.1, *Dhvanyāloka of Śrī Ānandavardhanāchārya with Locāna and Bālapriyā Commentaries*, 16.

108 *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara. Original text in Sanskrit and Translation with Explanatory Notes* by Sadhana Parashar, 31 – 40.

A reference to similar concept can be found also in *Vijayāṅkā*

candrādityaḥ

nūnaṃ vitanor vyāpāra ivāyaṃ vyāpāraḥ pratītir nāma, yasya śārīrakasya śabdārthamātre śarīraṃ nopalabhyate |¹⁰⁹

Candrāditya

Indeed, the activity of the Bodiless is close to the poetic profession, whose soul has no body but sound and meaning.

This sentence is also an allusion to Bhāmaha, who wrote: *śabdārthasahitau kāvyam*¹¹⁰ – sounds and meanings together are *kāvya*. As we know, later the theorists distinguished also the soul (*ātman*) of poetry, which was its crucial point. However, they have different views on which element is the soul of poetry. Nevertheless, it is the soul which has an impact on a reader. Thus, the poetry is similar to Kāma, who lost his body, but when brought to life in a bodiless form, still could affect people’s souls.

6.5.2 Aucitya

In *Vijayāṅkā* one can also notice a reference to *aucitya*.

ācāryaḥ

prīṇayatītarām aucityam iva bhavatyā guṇaguṇeṣu jīvitabhūto’ yaṃ vinayaḥ |¹¹¹

Ācārya

This modesty is vital element among all your virtues, just like *aucitya* is very much appreciated among the literary merits.

109 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 7.

110 Bhāmaha, *Kāvyaśāstram*, 1.16

111 Raghavan, *Vikāṭānītam*, 6.

Aucitya is a suitability, harmony in a poetry, which makes all its elements coherent. A poetic composition should be evaluated as a whole. The components constituting it, like plot, style or figures of speech, do not have an independent value. Each element can only be assessed in the context of the whole composition. The beauty of any poetic component depends entirely upon whether it suits properly with other elements.¹¹²

The first traces of the concept can be found in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Although Bharata did not use this term specifically, he wrote a lot about features of text and spectacle which should be consistent with *rasas*. Therefore, he dealt with dress and make-up, musical tunes, modes of expression, etc., and he described them according to *rasas*. All of those elements of a spectacle should be chosen to enhance particular sentiments, not to contradict them. Furthermore, the text should be written accordingly to the *rasa*. In particular cases, abundance of *alaṃkāras* would enhance or destroy desired sentiments. He calls it *rasa prayoga*; however, the later theorists called it *rasa aucitya*¹¹³ and further developed this concept. Rudraṭa accepted it as the governing principle in poetry. According to him, flaws in poetry are results of inappropriateness and excellence is caused by propriety. This concept was then explored by Ānandavardhana and Kuntaka. The later defined it as a *guṇa* which is able to bring out the excellence of described object. According to Abhinavagupta, who commented on *Dhvanyāloka*, a poetry with no *aucitya* was merely *kāvyaābhāsa* – a semblance of poetry.¹¹⁴

The concept of *aucitya* was developed into a theory of poetry by Kṣemendra, an 11th century poet and theorist from Kashmir. In his treatise *Aucityavicāracarcā*, he described *aucitya* as the life of poetry and explored this concept in a great detail. In his opinion, propriety is harmony or proportion between the principal and subordinate components. *Aucitya* is the essence of *rasa* because realisation of the sentiments depends on it. The embellishing effect of all the elements of poetic composition depends

112 N. Joshi, *Poetry, Creativity and Aesthetic Experience*, (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1994), 135.

113 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 214 – 221, for more about *rasa aucitya* see: K. Krishna Moorthy, “Rasaucitya – as a Criterion of Literary Judgement in Indian Theory and Practice,” *Pūrṇatrayī. Sri Ravi Varma Samkrita Granthavali Journal*, Vol. XVIII, No.2, 1990.

114 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, 252.

on the fact that they suit the poem as a whole. Thus, Kṣemendra distinguished different kinds of *aucitya* depending on different aspects of poetry.¹¹⁵

As it was noticed by V. Raghavan himself: “Aucitya is a great principle within whose orbit comes everything else. The Aucitya-rule of criticism is obeyed by all others, including Rasa.”¹¹⁶ Therefore, there is no wonder that in one of his plays this principle was declared as one of the most important.

6.5.3 *Vakrokti*

In *Avantisundarī*, when the heroine replies to a comment on the difference between Sanskrit and Prakrit, she says:

avantisundarī

*kavirāja! bhāṣā yā bhavati sā bhavatu | uktiviśeṣaḥ khalu kāvyam |*¹¹⁷

Avantisundarī

O, King of poets! May the language be as it is. Poetry is the specific speech.

It must be a reference to the concept of *vakrokti*. This term was coined from two words: *vakra* – crooked, curved, twisted and *ukti* – speech. Hence, it stands for *twisted speech*, or *strikingness in expression*. It is the opposition of *svabhāvokti* – natural, utilitarian description, used with reference to everyday life and in scientific texts. *vakrokti* allows writers to create unusual and creative poetical images.¹¹⁸

According to Bhāmaha, the sound and meaning of poetry are beautiful because of strikingness of the expression – *vakrokti*. In his views, it is the main power which gives life to all figures of speech, and a principle which underlies all of them. To achieve it, a poet needs to employ the words in a way different to the one that ordinary

115 Joshi, *Poetry, Creativity and Aesthetic Experience*, 139 – 142.

116 Raghavan, *Some Concepts of Alamkāra Śāstra*, 280.

117 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 6.

118 S. Hegde, *The Concept of Vakrokti in Sanskrit Poetics: a Reappraisal*, (New Delhi: Readworthy Publications, 2009) 7 – 10.

people apply on a day-to-day basis. Also for Daṇḍin *vakrokti* was an artistic language essential for poetry; however, he includes it among *alaṃkāras*¹¹⁹

The concept of *vakrokti* was discussed most extensively by a Kashmirian theoretician, Kuntaka (c. 10th–11th century), in his treatise *Vakroktijīvitam*. He transformed it into a theory of poetics and stated that it is the essence of poetry. According to him, *vakrokti* is crucial for poetical compositions. Kuntaka developed the definition of Bhāmaha. He provided a definition similar to the one of his predecessor, but he added that words or meaning should be striking and compete with each other, what should result in strikingness executed in harmonious manner. The theoretician distinguished six kinds of *vakrokti*. His theory of strikingness was very broad, and it included the ideas of *rasa* and *dhvani* in its scope.¹²⁰ Later theoreticians (such as Mahimabhaṭṭa) reduced the scope of this concept and its importance.¹²¹

6.6 Poetics in *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* and Raghavan's research

Dr. V. Raghavan was one of the most important researchers in the fields of Sanskrit poetics of the 20th century. Therefore, it is no wonder that he used his knowledge in creating dialogues and making them historically and factually accurate. The scholarly *magnum opus* of Dr. V. Raghavan was a work devoted to the *Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* of Bhoja, a theorist who lived later than any of heroines of the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*. Therefore, in the plays he never mentioned Bhoja and his doctrines. Nevertheless, one can notice that issues mentioned in *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikātanitambā* and *Avantisundarī* were also important elements of his research and academic achievements. For example, in *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* there are two chapters devoted to the complete history of the concepts of *guṇa* and *doṣa*. There are also chapters describing the attitude of Bhoja towards the concepts of *aucitya*, *vakrokti*, *rīti*, *dhvani*, *rasa*, *alaṃkāras*. He was also the first scholar who conducted a research on the issues of *aucitya* and *rīti*, comparing the latter, for the first time, to the Western concept of style.

119 Joshi, *Poetry, Creativity and Aesthetic Experience*, 129.

120 Joshi, *Poetry, Creativity and Aesthetic Experience*, 130 – 135

121 Cieślowski, *Teoria literatury w dawnych Indiach*, 36 – 37.

7. The analysis of *Vijayāñkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* from the gender perspective

Dr. V. Raghavan made a woman the central figure of each of the three dramas. What is more, the women characters he created are quite extraordinary – they are independent and strong personalities. Although the dramas are very short, they all show a quite detailed picture of those poetesses. Even though they lived in a patriarchal society, and what is more, at their times Sanskrit literature was a field almost entirely dominated by men, they were praised for their literary accomplishments. It seems that men exclusively had the ability to value literature and to decide what literary works should be preserved. All the available pieces of information on these poetesses come from works written by men. Furthermore, all of their preserved one-stanza-poems, perhaps belonging to much longer compositions, were also quoted by these men. We know very little about women writers and their lives. Thus, the three plays devoted to them somehow give them back their voice and place them in the realm of Sanskrit poetry. However, it must be noted that these dramas still present *Vijayāñkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* from the male perspective as it was a man who put them in the spotlight. Therefore, it would be beneficial to study these three plays also in terms of gender and its aspects.

It should be mentioned that V. Raghavan was raised in a patriarchal culture. However, as it was demonstrated in the Chapter I,¹ from his childhood he had contacts with women who were educated and proficient in Sanskrit. This experience might have given him a different perspective on male hegemony in the field of Sanskrit literature and inspired him to do a research on women creating literature.

7.1 General remarks on heroines in Sanskrit drama

As Ratnamayidevi Dikshit has noticed in her book *Women in Sanskrit Dramas*: “The *Nāṭyaśāstra* has ordained that women are the basic sources of happiness and so the dramas should include them in the leading roles.”² Therefore, the main heroine has a very important role in a Sanskrit play. She belongs to one of three categories, which

1 See page: 14.

2 R. Dikshit, *Women in Sanskrit Dramas*, (Delhi: Bharat Bhatati Press, 1964), 169.

depend on her relation with the hero. The first class is *svā* or *svīyā* – wife of the hero. Such heroine must be righteous, noble, humble, devoted to her husband and of a good character. She may be inexperienced (*mugdhā*), and therefore shy in love and gentle in anger when her husband is unfaithful to her. If she is a wife for longer period of time, she becomes more experienced (*madhyā*), and then she is loving and passionate, but in anger her conduct may vary from chiding her husband to bursting in tears, or even yelling harsh words. The most experienced wife (*pragalbhā*) is bold, delirious in love, but when angered, she may even use threats and blows. The second class of heroines is *anyā* or *anyastrī* – belonging to another man. Such figure can be a wife of other man or a maiden. Nevertheless, a relation with a married woman should not be the main theme of a play, unlike winning a maiden. Third category of heroine in Sanskrit drama is a courtesan (*sādhāraṇī*). A hetaera is bold, skilled in arts and cunning. She is often helped by her mother who intermediate in relations between her and her customers. a courtesan may be a character in *prahasanas*,³ where she is shown as deceiving her lovers. However, she might be also presented as a heroine in other genres, but she must be in love with the hero (like it was in the *Mṛcchakaṭikā*).⁴ A hetaera cannot be a heroine if a hero is divine or royal personage.⁵

It can be seen that the relation of a heroine and a hero is always erotic and sexual. She is usually described as young and beautiful, pleasing to men's eyes. Of course, older and not so beautiful women also appear in Sanskrit plays, but they are not an object of hero's desire.

3 As is well known *prahasana* is one of ten major genres of Sanskrit drama. Its predominant *rasa* is *hāsyā*; hence, it is often called 'comedy' or 'farce'. It usually has a single act, and it depicts the corrupt practise of certain groups of society. See also: S. Ramaratnam, *Prahasana in Sanskrit Literature*, (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1987), 35 – 74.

4 In *Mṛcchakaṭikā* the heroine is a courtesan Vasantasena who falls in love with poor Brahmin Cārudatta and marries him at the end of the play.

5 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 308 – 309.

7.2 Bold or tamed? Poetesses in dramas of V. Raghavan

Vijayāṅkā, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, although they are separate plays, share a lot of common features in the way they present their heroines. One of the significant attributes of these dramas is that they never mention the physical appearance of the poetesses.⁶ The plays never comment on beauty of these women. They are appreciated for their achievements in the field of literature, not for being a good, devoted wife or daughter. The poetesses are praised by other characters only because of their skills in poetic composition and knowledge of Sanskrit poetics.

Among these three heroines, the most emancipated seems to be Vijayāṅkā. The Queen is portrayed as a bold and truly self-confident woman. She knows her skills in composing poetry and she is not shy about them. She even claims her superiority to the majority of male poets by stating that she is willing to bow only to poets of the rank of Brahmā, Vyāsa and Vālmīki. Vijayāṅkā describes herself as an incarnate Sarasvatī, what is the highest praise a poetess may give herself while commenting on her abilities in composing poetry. She mocks Daṇḍin, who is clearly very respected as a scholar by her teacher. The Queen is intelligent, witty and has a sharp tongue. She is not afraid to speak her mind. She openly demands a comment from her teacher after he listened to her poem. Thus, she is presented as an outspoken person. However, while speaking about the boldness of Vijayāṅkā, it must be noticed that, as a queen, she has a very high and privileged social position. Thus, she probably could allow herself to be more emancipated than other women in her times.⁷

Although Vijayāṅkā is very critical towards others, she never goes against nor disrespects her husband and her teacher. She calmly and humbly accepts their praises, and it is likely that she would equally humbly accept their critique. The Queen waits for the encouragement and approval of the King and the teacher to present her newest poems. Hence, she is portrayed as a bold poetess and at the same time as a virtuous woman who treats her husband and her teacher with a great respect.

6 In *Vikaṭānitambā* there are stanzas describing woman's body; however, they do not refer to the heroine. Those stanzas portray anonymous ladies and are ascribed to the historical poetess.

7 Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, 308 – 309.

The selection of poems used by V. Raghavan in the play is also very meaningful. As it was demonstrated previously, the scholar used stanzas written by the poetess Vijjā, who might not be identical with the Chalukyan queen. Among her literary output, there are poems presenting unfaithful women and poems of openly erotic character. However, V. Raghavan did not include such verses and chose only stanzas which were consistent with the image of wife devoted to her husband and respected queen. This was probably a deliberate act of the scholar who considered erotic poems not suiting the representation of an educated woman in his drama. The omitted stanzas of Vijjā would have given Dr. V. Raghavan an opportunity to create even bolder and emancipated heroine, but he dismissed this chance.

Vijayānkā was evidently proud of her dark complexion. She emphasized this fact in her stanza without any hesitation. Nowadays, in India fair skin is considered as the most beautiful and desired. However, it was not necessarily the case in the time of this poetess. In the times of Kālidāsa (c. 5th century), a dark complexion was considered beautiful. This changed over time, and during the life of Mallinātha (14th century), fair skin was favoured.⁸ It should be also noticed that Sarasvatī is traditionally depicted as having fair skin, dressed in white garments and sitting on a white lotus. As it was put by D. Kinsley: “Sarasvati's gleaming white body and garments express well her purity and transcendence, and these themes are in keeping with her typical association with the sattva guna, the pure, spiritual thread of prakṛti.”⁹

Vikaṭānitambā is presented in the play in a somewhat different way. She is also a skilled and talented poetess, but she is much humbler and shyer than the Queen Vijayānkā. She is not as outspoken as the first heroine, and she waits for encouragement from her teacher to present to him her latest compositions. However, when the master compliments her first poem, she is eager to present him more of her stanzas. As soon as her skills are validated by the teacher, Vikaṭānitambā immediately gains more confidence and is ready to share more of her output. She even proudly notices that she is a good observer. This poetess is the only one among those three heroines who tries to oppose a male character. She is clearly unhappy about her upcoming marriage arranged

8 Feller, “Food and Love in Sanskrit Poetry: On the Margins of Desires”, footnote p. 76.

9 D. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass P. L., 2005), 62.

by her father and about her future husband. Nevertheless, she does not go against her father's will by herself – it is her teacher (so another man invented by the author of the play) who tries to prevent the wedding.

The play *Vikaṭānitambā* presents an unusual situation – women well educated in Sanskrit mock uneducated man. It is a reversed convention of Sanskrit drama, according to which the language suitable for women in dramas is Prakrit. It must be noticed that this scene is designed to be comic; therefore, it hardly can be treated as a scene of women's empowerment.

Moreover, also in this drama the choice of verses written by the historical *Vikaṭānitambā* is significant. Dr. V. Raghavan used, for example, a stanza describing a woman walking down a secret meeting with her beloved one (*abhisārikā*).¹⁰ The poem concentrates on physical aspects of the girl, namely her abundant breasts bouncing above her tiny waist. Therefore, it is an image typically considered as pleasing for men. On the other hand, it is written by a woman; hence, it can be a conscious product of an emancipated woman. However, this historical poetess was most famous because of her vividly erotic poems. Once again, it must be stressed that these poems would allow to create even more emancipated, liberated and aware of her sexuality heroine. And once again, V. Raghavan decided not to include these poems and he chose to create a heroine more humble and suitable to the image of a devoted and virtuous woman.

Avantisundarī is the only one among these three poetesses who is not portrayed by V. Raghavan as a writer. In the play, she is shown as a learnt lady, connoisseur of literature, specialist in poetics and counsellor of her husband. Nevertheless, she also seems to be an independent and audacious figure. At the beginning of the play, *Avantisundarī* uses puns and wit to play with her husband. This short scene shows intelligence and cleverness of the heroine, but also tells a lot about her relationship with

10 *abhisārikā* is the only type of heroine from *aṣṭānāyikā* who takes matters into her own hands and decides for herself. Therefore, it is possible that Raghavan chose this stanza to emphasize the image of strong and independent Indian women. On *abhisārikā* see also: L. Sudyka, "Abhisārikā – the Heroine Proceeding to a Tryst as Seen by Indian Theoreticians of Literature," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny LX, no. 2* (2007), 130 – 146.

her man. She dares to tease her husband and it seems that she has at least similar, if not equal position in her marriage.

Avantisundarī is clearly very sensitive about her education. She is offended by the premise that her husband wrote for her a play in Prakrit only because of her lack of knowledge of Sanskrit.

avantisundarī

*nāṭyadharmīm anusṛtya strīyam iti mām api kevalam prākṛte eva vijñāṃ
matvā khalu bhavatedaṃ prākṛtena saṭṭakaṃ kṛtam |*¹¹

Avantisundarī

Having followed the rules of drama, you assumed that because I am a woman, I know only Prakrit and therefore you composed *saṭṭaka* in Prakrit.

Therefore, her education and her image as a learnt person was truly important to her. Avantisundarī feels that any suggestion that she does not know Sanskrit insults her. It must be remembered that at her time Sanskrit was no longer an everyday language, but it remained a medium of culture, art, science, religion, politics, rich literature and its poetics. Therefore, if she did not know this language, she would be excluded from the world of educated people and unable to participate in it.

7.3 Gender inequalities

The heroines of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* seem to be very emancipated for their times. Nevertheless, all the three dramas have some marks of a patriarchal culture the poetesses lived in, which remained largely unchanged also in the time of Raghavan. The most evident example is the case of *Vikaṭānitambā*, who has to submit to the will of her father and marry a man she does not want to marry. She depends entirely on the wish of her father. Her miserable situation is stressed by one of her girlfriends:

11 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 4.

sakhī (svagatam)

*katham sarasvatīva kṛtamānuṣavighrahā naḥ priyasakhī pitur durāgrahena
etādṛśāya mūrkhāya pradīyeta | hanta, dāruṇaḥ kanyakānām bhāgaḥ [...]*¹²

Sakhī (to herself)

How it is? – our dear friend, who is like Sarasvatī in human form, is marrying this kind of fool, because of her father’s stubbornness. Oh, cruel is the girls’ fate!

This quotation suggests that the author wanted to highlight the inequality and was aware of injustice of such traditions.

Another example of a gender inequality is the moment in *Avantisundarī* when the heroine does not want any acknowledgement for the help in the work of her husband. She undoubtedly contributed to his treatise. Moreover, Rājasekhara decided to use her ideas and views on theory of literature in his work. However, *Avantisundarī* initially opposes because she is worried that ascribing those thoughts to her could harm the reputation of her husband as a scholar.

avantisundarī

*purobhāgī khalu lokaḥ; preyasīpreṃṇā ‘kavirājenaitat svapatnyā
nāmadheyaṃ madhyegrantham udāhārī’ iti khalu vadiṣyati* |¹³

Avantisundarī

People indeed are malevolent. They will surely say: “This king of poets put the name of his own wife in the middle of the book because of affection to his beloved.”

The poetess thinks it might cause an impression that he added her name just to please her, and no one would believe that she actually deserved to be mentioned and truly

12 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 8 – 9.

13 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 8.

contributed to the treatise. Avantisundarī is evidently afraid that she would not be accepted by the academic world because she is a woman. Her concern may be motivated by a fact that scholars would not consider her as capable of contributing to Sanskrit theory of literature. Thus, she wants to stay in a shadow. The patriarchal system she lived in affected her self-confidence as a woman.¹⁴

It should be pointed out that Vijayānkā and Vikaṭanitambā are both taught in writing poetry by a man. And exclusively men evaluate their literary works. Only men are shown as having the power to validate the work of women. Both heroines became immediately more confident about their poems when they were approved by male listeners. In both plays, poems were previously revealed to girlfriends of the poetesses, who appreciated them. However, the heroines were still too timid and unsure to present them to their teachers, and a husband in the case of the Vijayānkā. Only after they were encouraged by men they agreed to show them their latest stanzas. Thus, they clearly valued more opinions of men. Such behaviour could be caused by the internalized patriarchy – a case in which a woman absorbs and maintains the beliefs that men control.

However, it must be remembered that Vijayānkā and Vikaṭanitambā are heroines created by a male writer. Thus, it is plausible that V. Raghavan considered the historical Sanskrit poetesses as a rather unusual, rare phenomena. He in fact might have doubted their ability to surpass men in knowledge on poetics and to properly value the literary output. It should be noted that in those two plays all technical terms from the Sanskrit theory of literature are found in lines of male characters. Subsequently, exclusively men explain those terms to other characters of a drama. It seems like the author considered it as more appropriate, even though Sanskrit poetesses must have known those terms and

14 As it was noticed by Abeda Sultana: “In this patriarchal system, men and women behave, think, and aspire differently because they have been taught to think of masculinity and femininity in ways which condition difference. Patriarchal system shows in or accept that men have, or should have, one set of qualities and characteristics, and women another. Such as ‘masculine’ qualities (strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, competitiveness etc.) and ‘feminine’ qualities (caring, nurturing, love, timidity, obedience etc.)”

A. Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: a Theoretical Analysis”, *Arts Faculty Journal* 4. p.

rules to apply the concepts behind them in their poetry. Therefore, consciously or not, V. Raghavan presented different issues concerning women struggling to acquire appreciation in a field of culture almost exclusively dominated by men.

Presenting a new poem by a poet among learnt connoisseurs was not imagined by V. Raghavan in his plays, but it was a real custom advised to aspiring writers. Such assembly was called *kavi goṣṭhī*. The tenth *adhyāya* of *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* describes the course of such an event.¹⁵ The assembly consisting of learnt persons and more experienced poets should evaluate a poem and help to improve it if necessary. Thus, the situation when a master of poetry or the gathering of connoisseurs gives their judgment about a new composition of the student was a normal practice also for aspiring men poets. Hence, this motif was not invented by the author to present male superiority in the field of poetry.

The situation described in *Avantisundarī* is different. It is the heroine who assets the literary work of her husband, who worries if she likes it. He waits for her verdict about his play and is relived when he finds out that she appreciates it. Therefore, in this play, it is a woman who has the power to validate and evaluate man. Also, the issue with the definitions and technical terms of Sanskrit poetics is different. Rājaśekhara provides and explains all the definitions; however, it is important to notice why he does that. It must be remembered that he seeks the help of *Avantisundarī* and asks her about her views on those matters. Thus, the dynamics between this couple is different than in *Vijayāṅkā* and *Vikaṭānitambā*. *Avantisundarī* contains the least of gender inequalities among those three plays.

15 *siddham ca prabandham anekādaṛśagataṁ kuryāt |*

yad itthaṁ kathayanti-

nikṣepo vikrayo dānaṁ deśatyāgo' lpajīvitā |

truṭiko vahnirambhaś ca prabandhocchedahetavaḥ ||

dāridrayaṁ vyasanāsaktir avajñā mandabhāgyatā |

duṣṭe dviṣṭe ca viśvāsaḥ pañca kāvyamahāpadaḥ ||

Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śāstry, 56.

It should be noted that Dr. V. Raghavan through using only poems written by historical counterparts of the heroines of his plays instead of composing his own stanzas exposed them. He brought to light the Sanskrit poetesses whose life and contribution to Indian literature often seem to be forgotten and neglected in the academic circles.

As feminist criticism from the so-called first wave onwards noted the material and social conditions in which men and women produced literature were different for the two sexes. The ideology of gender and gender-stereotyping also affected how the canons were established and how the women writing was viewed.¹⁶ V. Raghavan restored the poetesses to their place in the history of Sanskrit literature and to the consciousness of the audience and academic circles, even if his three plays are still marked with patriarchal world view.

16 R. Selden, P. Widdowson, P. Brooker, a *Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (London et al.: Pearson Longman, 2005), 115 – 143.

8. The language of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*

8.1 General remarks

As it is well known, Sanskrit as a language has a very long and complicated history. Its origins trace back to the Vedic Period, even though Vedic language is a different language not only from a diachronic point of view but also from the diatopic and probably diastratic ones. Between the 6th and the 4th century BCE, the so-called classical Sanskrit was established. It was not used as an everyday dialect; however, it was never a dead language. It rather became the speech of élites, literature, religion and science. Thousands of manuscripts concerning very different subjects were created in Sanskrit – a great number of them were never published. From the beginning of the common era to the 14th century, inscriptions in Sanskrit were spread all over India, and beyond. This so-called “public poetry” occurred in the area between Kabul and Java. These inscriptions had not only political character, but they were also literary works, as they were composed as poems.¹

Even today, although only about 24 000 citizens of India declare Sanskrit as their mother tongue, new works in this language are often created. Sanskrit newspaper “Viśvasya Vṛttāṃtam” is published daily online. Moreover, there are TV shows, films and radio broadcasts in Sanskrit. Even modern songs are translated and performed in Sanskrit. There are also modern Sanskrit poets. Their works concern many subjects which are not typical for traditional *kāvya*, although conventional themes are also used by the modern writers. Furthermore, new genres of Sanskrit poetry emerged. Through the centuries, Sanskrit, although it was hardly anyone’s mother tongue, developed and flourished. It interacted with other language cultures in India and enriched itself. Thus, Sanskrit cannot in any way be defined as a “dead language”.

However, because Sanskrit stopped being used as an everyday language, or it is plausible that the classical Sanskrit was never spoken outside a diglossia regime, its development was slower and worked in a different way than it is the case of other languages. Nevertheless, the passage of time has forced certain changes in the language and its structure. For example, the contemporary poets do not write only on classical

1 Sh. Pollock, “Public Poetry in Sanskrit” *Indian Horizons* vol. 44 (1995).

themes, but also on modern themes. Therefore, they need to invent and employ numerous neologisms which allow them to write about contemporary world and modern technology.

While analysing the language of the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, it must be remembered that the plays contain numerous passages quoted from other, much older texts. Therefore, only fragments written by V. Raghavan should be taken into consideration.

8.2 Punctuation

The most noticeable alteration in the texts of modern Sanskrit writers is employing the punctuation marks. They allow the writer to stop, pause, or give emphasis to certain parts of the sentence, his/her key ideas, and most important passages. In general, punctuation adds precision to writing. However, punctuation was not used by the authors of manuscripts. They used only two signs. In prose, a single *daṇḍa* was used to mark the end of any kind of sentence. In metrical texts a single *daṇḍa* was applied to mark the end of a line, or a semi-verse, and double *daṇḍa* was used to mark the end of a metrical unit.² This approach gives the writer less control on the text than Western style of punctuation. Therefore, V. Raghavan decided to combine these two approaches.

The author of the *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* used traditional *daṇḍas* instead of full stops at the end of the declarative sentences, just like the writers of the manuscripts did it. He also kept *daṇḍas* in the cited stanzas. However, the author introduced also other marks, such as question mark, exclamation point, comma and semicolon. In this way, he not only made understanding the text easier for a potential reader, but also gave hints to actors who would like to stage *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* and how they should perform their roles. What is more, modern Indian languages such as Hindi and Tamil also adopted the punctuation of the Latin alphabet. Thus, for a contemporary reader who is used to punctuation, a text without those marks would seem strange. Furthermore, a modern Sanskrit writer is used to being able to highlight some parts of the text, to emphasise crucial ideas and to give his or her writing a more organized structure.

2 See e.g. A.M. Ruppel, *The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 33.

V. Raghavan also introduced quotation mark to separate the quoted passages from the text of his own authorship. In Sanskrit text, a usual way to show that there is a citation from other text or someone's speech is putting the word *iti* at the end of the quotation.³ This indeclinable word does not convey its literal sense, namely "thus", but rather informs the reader that the preceding text is a citation. However, it may be noticed that he did not apply them consequently. For example, in *Vijayāṅkā* he used it only while quoting the verse from *Kāvyādarśa* of Daṇḍin. In *Avantisundarī* the situation is even more complicated. Quotation marks are applied while citations from *Karpūramañjarī* and from works quoted in *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* are introduced, but not always while introducing quotations from *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. Perhaps Raghavan wanted to emphasise in this way that we are witnessing the creation of Rājasekhara's work. What is more, the author applied single and double quotation marks in the same situations, when he quoted the passages from other texts. In *Vikaṭānitambā*, quotation marks appear when the learnt girl-friends of the heroine repeat some words after her future husband and mock his pronunciation. It is particularly interesting because here the author decided to use them together with the word *iti* at the end. The word *iti* was added probably for the sake of possible staging. In this way, it would be clear for the audience that the girls mock Vikaṭānitambā's fiancé.

Dr. V. Raghavan, following modern Western manner, used brackets to distinguish the stage directions from the main text. In this manner, he made the text clearer to the readers and staging troupe.

8.3 Simplification

In modern Sanskrit writing there is a noticeable tendency to simplify the texts. This simplification can be noticed on numerous levels, such as on grammatical level, in the way of applying *sandhi*, or in using long compounds.⁴ Some of these changes can be also noticed in *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*.

3 J. S. Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 379 – 388.

4 H. Nakamura, *A Companion to Contemporary Sanskrit*, (Tokyo: Eastern Institute, 1973), 18 – 19.

V. Raghavan, in *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, generally avoided using long compounds and indeed he employed not so many of them. This may be caused by practical reasons. Lines with long compounds can be more demanding for actors, and they can be more difficult to understand by audience.

Another frequent feature of modern Sanskrit works is not applying the *sandhi* rules.⁵ In classical Sanskrit writing, the *sandhi* rules are compulsory. In *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*, V. Raghavan consistently applied all the *sandhi* rules, which also might be for their practical use. Although when the *sandhi* rules are not applied it is more straightforward to read and understand the work, those rules make pronunciation easier. Therefore, texts that follow *sandhi* rules are more appropriate to be read out loud and thus more suitable for the stage. However, there is an exception. In *Vijayāṅkā*, Ācārya says: *mahārāja, svāgatam, iha upaviśatu bhavan*.⁶ There, between the words *iha* and *upaviśatu* should be applied *sandhi*. Nevertheless, it may not necessarily be a mistake. Perhaps, because it is part of a quick dialogue Dr. Raghavan decided not to apply *sandhi*, in this way he wanted to show the dynamism of the conversation. After all, in modern spoken Sanskrit applying *sandhi* is not compulsory.⁷

8.4 Grammar

Contemporary Sanskrit works are often characterized by simplified grammar. Although they are written grammatically correctly, it can be noticed that certain forms and constructions are rather avoided by modern Sanskrit authors. One of the most frequent characteristics of contemporary Sanskrit works is abolishment of the dual forms. One of the rationale behind this is that among Indian languages only Sanskrit has dual forms.⁸ Therefore, for modern Sanskrit writers it may be more intuitive to use plural form while referring to a couple of objects.

5 *sandhi* is a process of introducing sound changes that occur at morpheme or word boundaries. The final sound of each word changes slightly according to what sound the next word begins with.

6 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 2.

7 On the other hand how important *sandhi* was considered for the well-educated Sanskrit speakers according to Dr. Raghavan, see below in the *Vikaṭānitambā*, Appendix, page: 285.

8 Nakamura, *A Companion to Contemporary Sanskrit*, 18.

In *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* dual forms are rare. One can argue that the situations when they could be used are very limited, and that in plays which are so short there could be even no occasion to use this form. However, in *Vijayāṅkā*, when the heroine is addressing two persons: her husband and her teacher, says: “nanu na paśyanti bhavantaḥ (...)”⁹ – she uses the plural forms. However, this can also be *plurale maiestatis*. Nevertheless, a dual form appears in stage directions: “(ubhau niṣkrāntau).”¹⁰ They can be also seen in the speech of Vikaṭānitambā: “āstām tāvaddure vaiduṣyaṃ sahrdayatā vā |”¹¹ as “āstām” is the 3rd person dual imperfectum of verb *as*.

Another common grammatical simplification of the modern Sanskrit works is expressing the verbs in the form of verbal nouns¹² with conjugated verbs *bhū* (to be) and *kṛ* (to do). In this way, the knowledge of the conjugation of solely two verbs is enough to understand (or write) the whole text. The conjugation of other verbs (often complicated and irregular) is therefore avoided. Hence, the text is much easier to understand. Nevertheless, this feature is not present in *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*. Another similar grammatical simplification seen in the contemporary Sanskrit texts is the tendency to use participles instead of conjugated verbs.¹³ This is also a way of avoiding difficult and irregular verbal forms. This mode of writing might be influenced by modern Indian languages, such as Hindi, in which participles are used to create sentences in particular tenses.¹⁴

The method described above was not employed by Dr. Raghavan in his plays on the poetesses. He used mostly conjugated verbs. One more grammatical facilitation typical for modern Sanskrit texts is using verbs only in present tense, and adding the

9 Raghavan, *Vijayāṅkā*, 4.

10 Raghavan, *Vikaṭānitambā*, 8.

11 Ibidem, 5.

12 Nakamura, a *Companion to Contemporary Sanskrit*, 18.

13 Ibidem, 18.

14 For example, in the Present Indefinite Tense in Hindi, a verb consists of a meaning verb in present habitual participle and conjugated verb *hona* (to be).

particle *sma*¹⁵ when speaking about the past. Therefore, the work can be understood by people with really basic knowledge of Sanskrit. However, Dr. Raghavan, again, did not use this technique. What is more, he even used some rare verbal forms, like the conditional mood. It can be seen in the speech of Vikaṭanitambā: “*yady ahaṃ mahārājñy abhaviṣyam, nūnaṃ na jāne kopena jugupsayā vā kiṃ nākariṣyam iti*”¹⁶ The word “*akariṣyam*” is the 1st person singular of the verb *kr* in the conditional mood. Another uncommon form is the aorist passive: “*udāhāri*”¹⁷ – the 3rd person singular of the verb *hr* with prefixes *ud* and *ā*. Therefore, the grammatical simplification cannot be seen in the plays of Dr. Raghavan.

8.5 Vocabulary

The vocabulary of the modern Sanskrit works often contains a great number of neologisms. When an author decides to write about contemporary world, he frequently speaks about things unknown to authors of classical Sanskrit literature. Therefore, there is a need of creating new words. For example, a Sanskrit term for the Internet is *antarjāla*. It is a *tatpuruṣa*¹⁸ compound created out of two words: *antar* (in, in the middle, within, amongst) and *jāla* (net). Thus, it is a literal translation of the English (and international) term the Internet.

Vijayāṅkā, *Vikaṭanitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are all set in the period between the 7th and the 10th century CE. Therefore, Dr. Raghavan did not need to introduce any neologism. Because of the fact that these plays concern mostly the Sanskrit poetics, their vocabulary is also connected to this subject. It is especially evident in *Avantisundarī* when the characters of the play weave into their lines a great number of

15 *sma* is a particle, which when joined with a present tense or present participle gives them a past sense. It is noteworthy that this use dates back to the earliest phases of Vedic language.

16 Raghavan, *Vikaṭanitambā*, 6.

17 Raghavan, *Avantisundarī*, 8.

18 It is noteworthy that a *tatpuruṣa* compound is a compound where the second word is prominent and it determines the gender and the number of the compound. It expresses in a condensed way (substantive or adjective) a noun with some other noun qualifying it. The noun qualifying is the former member of the compound and the one qualified is the latter member. J. S. Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 150 – 151.

quotations from *Kāvyaīmāmsā*. In addition, when they do not cite the treatise accurately, they simplify passages from it and use numerous words from relative fragments of this text.

While analysing the vocabulary of *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* it must be remembered that V. Raghavan used in his plays original stanzas ascribed to the historical counterparts of the heroines of those dramas. Thus, the author had to adjust the vocabulary of the lines to the poems he quoted. Otherwise, the two texts would not match and would seem like completely separate works stitched together. Here, the effect is different – the whole plays seem coherent and consistent. It is a proof that the playwright adjusted well the vocabulary and structure of the lines to the quoted stanzas.

8.6 Interrogations

The characteristic of contemporary Sanskrit is also expressing questions with the indeclinable word *kim*. In classical Sanskrit there are two ways of forming interrogative sentences – with interrogative pronoun *ka* and interrogative pronouns such as *kva*, *kutaḥ*, *kimiti* and its derivatives, and with interrogative particles like *api*, *uta*, *kim* and *kaccit*, which can be omitted.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in contemporary Sanskrit prevails the way of creating interrogative sentences with the particle *kim*.²⁰ This tendency is also seen in *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī*. Most of the questions include the indeclinable *kim*, and it is often put at the beginning of the sentence.

8.7 Word-order

The word-order of Sanskrit is usually considered to be free. Nevertheless, although in classical Sanskrit poetry there is no fixed word-order, in prose certain rules can be noticed; however, they are not very strict.²¹ In contemporary Sanskrit works there is

19 Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax*, 320 – 324. See also: P. Scharf, “Interrogatives and word-order in Sanskrit,” in *Sanskrit Syntax. Selected papers presented at the seminar on Sanskrit syntax and discourse structures*, ed. P. M. Scharf, (Providence: The Sanskrit Library, 2015), 203 – 218.

20 Nakamura, *A Companion to Contemporary Sanskrit*, 18.

21 A. Kulkarni, P. Shulka, P. Satuluri, D. Shukl, “How free is ‘free’ word order in Sanskrit?” in *Sanskrit Syntax. Selected papers presented at the seminar on Sanskrit syntax and discourse structures*, ed. P. M. Scharf, (Providence: The Sanskrit Library, 2015), 269 – 304.

a tendency to retain a certain word-order. It is very similar to the Hindi word-order. This tendency is visible even as early as in medieval Sanskrit texts; thus, it is not solely the influence of Hindi. It is the result of distancing from other Indo-European languages and adopting the word-order more similar to those in Tibetan and Japanese.²²

While reading *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* one may notice that their lines have a rather similar word-order. This impression is enhanced by the punctuation, which makes the text look more organized. Usually, the verb is at the end of the sentence, epithets precede the described words, and prepositions are directly after the related words.

8.8 Honorifics

Characteristic feature of modern Sanskrit works is not using the majestic plural (*pluralis majestatis*) and the words *bhagavat* or *bhavan* when referring to a person (these words nowadays are used almost exclusively while addressing a god).²³ V. Raghavan in *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* used the majestic plural and the pronoun *bhavan*. The answer why he decided to employ these honorifics is probably because he wrote about ancient India and wanted to convey the atmosphere of those times. Thus, although these plays belong to contemporary Sanskrit literature, they have some features typical for much older works.

8.9 Summary

Vijayāṅkā, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* possess numerous features characteristic for contemporary Sanskrit. The most noticeable is the usage of punctuation. For a modern reader it would be difficult to imagine a text without it, and it gives a writer more control over the text. Another typical feature is specific way of formulating question. There are not many long compounds; however, this can be due to a desire to make the play easier to stage. The simplification of grammar is not as evident. Dr Raghavan applied rare forms of verbs, although he did it very seldom. *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* also has some features characteristic for much older works, such as

22 Nakamura, *A Companion to Contemporary Sanskrit*, 18.

23 Ibidem, 14 – 16.

wording and usage of honorifics. Because Raghavan wrote about ancient India and employed a lot of quotations from much older works, he probably aimed for homogenous effect. Therefore, these plays possess features typical for both contemporary and classical Sanskrit literature.

9. Concluding remarks

9.1 *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* and the scholarly work of Dr. V. Raghavan

In *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭanitambā* and *Avantisundarī* it is noticeable that the work and academic interests of Dr. Raghavan influenced him as a playwright. In these plays he tackled a great number of issues related to the Sanskrit theory of literature, which he dealt with in his academic work. He provided an especially significant contribution to the development of research of some of those issues, such as *aucitya* and *rīti*. It is clear that Dr. Raghavan used his deep understanding and knowledge of those subjects while writing *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*. He also supported his explanations of certain terms with the definitions provided by ancient theoreticians of Sanskrit literature. Thus proves that his academic work and achievements cannot be separated from his dramatic output.

Another important area of interest for Dr. Raghavan was Sanskrit drama. He studied this art from a theoretical and practical point of view. The scholar conducted extensive research enabling him to attempt to revive the tradition of staging Sanskrit dramas. It can be assumed that V. Raghavan wrote those plays not only to express himself as an artist, but also to prove that Sanskrit plays can be still created, and that they can have literary value and be entertaining to a modern public. Therefore, this aspect of Dr. Raghavan's life cannot be detached from his dramatic output.

9.2 Purpose and inspirations for writing *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*

The heroines of *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭanitambā* and *Avantisundarī* are based on partially forgotten, but most likely historical, figures about whom there is not much information. They are often neglected by the academic circles. Firstly, as far as *kāvya* literature is concerned, the canons of excellence have always been based on the opinion of Indian literary critics of the past. These critics, in turn, were predominately men, and they were active in the circles of male writers. *Kavigoṣṭhis*, even if held in the public sphere, were not open for every woman, and their works were not given an opportunity to be presented and noticed. Secondly, it should be stressed that in case of the Sanskrit literary canons, we now take for granted without any deeper reflection, there are also preferences established by and inherited from colonial scholarship in which *kāvya* was diminished. Regrettably, the *kāvya* works, with some exceptions (as for instance

Kālidāsa's oeuvre), were not made the object of serious academic research for a long time. It was Vedic and Epic literature mainly, or the *śāstras*, which were researched with all due attention. By popularising knowledge of Sanskrit literary theory and poetry created in Sanskrit by women, Raghavan drew attention not only to women's writing in Sanskrit, but generally to *kāvya* tradition.

In the preface to *Prekṣaṇakatrayī*, Dr. Raghavan mentioned that these plays had been successfully staged by his students and on the radio. Therefore, it can be assumed that the goal to spread the knowledge about these poetesses and their literary output belonging to Sanskrit *kāvya* tradition was realized. Through his plays he also propagated the general knowledge on Sanskrit and its literature. Nevertheless, it must be noticed that most of the aspects of poetesses' lives were imagined by the author, as there is no sufficient information about these characters to support a historically accurate biographical work.

In the second millennium in India, the tradition of creating *prabandhas* (i.e. literary compositions) devoted also to narrate scenes for the imagined lives of some poets emerged. They were differed from biographies (*carita*) and lineages (*vaṃśa*), as they were stories presenting the moment of composition *ex tempore* of famous poems. They became an integral part of poetic culture and were circulated widely in the literary circles. Those stories have some common features: the poet is participating at a royal court and he or she obtained his or her skills, at least partially, because of his or her devotion towards Sarasvatī or another goddess. What is more, the plot is woven around a poetical and scholarly rivalry. Such a story should also contain verses – *subhāṣitas*¹ proclaimed by the protagonist and his rivals and usually presented as spontaneously composed. Those *subhāṣitas* were often taken from the Sanskrit anthologies. The plots of the stories have common elements and they are mostly fictional images of famous

1 *subhāṣita* or *sūkti* is a genre of brief Sanskrit poems, usually having four or two verses. They are characterized by excellent poetical skills, exposed often in witty world-plays. Their message is a maxim, advice, universal truth, lesson, fact or riddle. See also: L. Sternbach, *Subhāṣita, Gnostic and Didactic Literature*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1974).

poets.² An example of such a composition is *Bhojaprabandha*, a 16th century narrative of king Bhoja's life composed by Ballāla in Benares. The first, shorter part of this text is devoted to Bhoja's birth and succession to the throne, and the second one is about his court. The latter part consists of few episodes which take place at the court. They are devoted to a conversation between the king and various poets. Among writers who visit Bhoja are such masters of literature as Bhavabhūti, Daṇḍin, Bāṇa, Vararuci, and Kālidāsa, with whom Bhoja develops a close friendship. It is clear that each of these persons lived in different centuries and they could not have met. Nevertheless, the author of the *prabandha* decided to gather all of them in one court. Into the text are woven *subhāṣitas* from various anthologies. Those poems were chosen rather because they fit to the narrative of Ballāla than because they were ascribed to poets appearing in *prabandha*.³

The three plays of Raghavan share a lot of common features with *Bhojaprabandha*: they borrowed stanzas ascribed to different authors, they show imagined life of historical poets, and occasionally they bring together historical characters from different periods.

It seems that Dr. V. Raghavan joined this literary trend even though his works are predominantly dramatic. *Vijayāṅkā* and *Vikaṭānitambā* also present the moments of creating, or the first presentation of poems ascribed in the anthologies to the heroines of the plays. There is a similar moment presented in *Avantisundarī* – the heroine formulates her opinions which were later quoted by her husband in his own treatise. The royal court is involved only in *Vijayāṅkā*. In this play also a trace of rivalry can be noticed – when the poetess claims her superiority over Daṇḍin. All the plays lack the motif of obtaining poetical skills through the devotion to the goddess Sarasvatī.

It is plausible that V. Raghavan was inspired by such 'biographical' *prabandhas* and wanted to create similar works about Sanskrit poetesses whose lives were unknown

2 D. Ali, "Verses at the Court of the King: Shifts in the Historical Imagination of the Sanskrit Literary Tradition during the Second Millennium," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2021, 1–19. doi:10.1017/S135618632100081X.

3 Ibidem, 15 – 16.

and whom were mostly forgotten. Hence, he created an image of them using preserved historical information, his imagination, and sometimes combined their biographies with life and works of other notable female historical characters. Dr. Raghavan probably wrote dramas instead of *prabandhas* because this form was more engaging to the public and easier to spread, particularly because he was involved in performing Sanskrit plays himself.

9.3 *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* against the background of contemporary Sanskrit literature

9.3.1 General characteristics of modern Sanskrit dramas

The realm of modern Sanskrit drama is vast and diverse. The subjects undertaken by contemporary Sanskrit dramatists are varied. Nevertheless, it seems that some features common to most of those plays are conspicuous. There is a tendency among modern Sanskrit writers to write about burning issues. Many modern plays focus on current social and even political problems. There are also contemporary dramas based on more traditional sources, such as Puranic and epic stories. However, many authors try to show them in a new context, or from a different perspective, often commenting on some current problems.⁴ Nonetheless, it must be remembered that numerous classical Sanskrit plays belonging to genres of *prahasana* and *bhāṇa*,⁵ through their satirical aspects, commented on the society and flaws of certain social groups.⁶ Therefore, this aspect was present also in certain classical Sanskrit plays.

4 Ch. S. Naikar, “Modern Sanskrit Drama,” in *Modern Sanskrit Literature. Traditions & Innovations*, ed. S B. Raghunathacharya (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002), 234 – 245.

5 *Bhāṇa* is a monodrama in which appear a parasite, here called *viṭa*. He simulates the dialogue by responding to imagined voices, asking questions to unseen characters and repeating their statements to the audience. During the course of the play, he roams through city, often through areas filled with gamblers and prostitutes, to accomplish a mission for his patron. See also: De, S. K. “A Note on the Sanskrit Monologue-Play (Bhana), with Special Reference to the Caturbhani,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1926): 63–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25220898>.

6 D. J. Bisgaard, *Social Conscience in Sanskrit Literature*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1994), 87 – 96.

It can be noticed that in general the authors of contemporary Sanskrit plays are aware of the traditional rules of Sanskrit drama; however, they do not always decide to apply them. The rule which is very often broken by the playwrights is the use of Prakrits in a play by certain characters. Most modern Sanskrit dramas are written entirely in Sanskrit, and even individuals of low social status and bad qualities of character use it. In this way those plays became more egalitarian, no characters are shown as better than others, because of their provenance only. However, there are also dramatists who try to preserve this rule of Bharata in their plays. Therefore, they often use vernacular languages in the place of Prakrits. As an example, two plays written by Mathura Prasad Dikshit can be mentioned. In the play *Bhūbharoddhāraṇam* he used Hindi instead of Prakrit, and in *Bhāratavijayanāṭakam* he used the Newari language from Nepal.⁷

A break from the ancient tradition also can be noticed in the structure of modern plays. Numerous Sanskrit dramas follow the Western pattern, and their acts are divided into scenes. Modern Sanskrit playwrights experiment with structure of dramas combining different theatrical traditions. They take inspiration from ancient Sanskrit plays, as well as from various modern sources. Many of those dramas do not have *nāndī*, *prastāvanā*, and *bharatavākya*. Another visible tendency is creating very short plays, usually consisting of only a single act. Therefore, the elaborate structure characteristic of old plays are being simplified. This also makes them easier to stage, or even to be performed on the radio. This aspect may also be important for the authors of Sanskrit plays because there are organizations and clubs which stage Sanskrit dramas - the modern as well as those ancient ones.⁸

9.3.2 *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* and the tendencies visible in contemporary Sanskrit plays

Vijayāṅkā, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* agree with some of the previously mentioned characteristic features of modern Sanskrit plays. However, they do not follow them to the full extent.

The plays belonging to *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* are written exclusively in Sanskrit. All the characters use only this language. Even in *Avantisundarī*, when Rājāśekhara cites

7 Ch. S. Naikar, "Modern Sanskrit Drama", 238.

8 Ibidem, 239 – 240.

Karpūramañjarī – a play written entirely in Prakrit – he provides a quotation in Sanskrit. Furthermore, the structure of the plays is also simplified – they have no *prastāvanā*, *bharatavākya* and *nāndī*. All those plays also consist of a single, relatively short act. The presented scenes are very simple, the plots are uncomplicated, and the lines are quite brief and dynamic. For this reason, they could be easily performed on the radio, and as it was suggested by P. V. Kane in the foreword, by students during annual gatherings at their universities.⁹

On the other hand, the plays have also some features typical for classical Sanskrit dramas, for example, the stanzas woven between the lines in prose. What is more, the structure of those plays is not typical for Western dramas as it, for example, lacks the division for scenes. A Western modernization V. Raghavan employed in his texts is adding punctuation, which was not used by the authors of the classical Sanskrit dramas.

At first glance, *Vijayānkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* do not comment on any current problem or social issue important for modern Indian society. They all tackle historical characters and subjects. However, they can also have an educational impact on a modern viewer. *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* speaks about the contribution of female writers to the classical Sanskrit literature which has often been neglected by scholars. Furthermore, the plays show that in Indian tradition there were strong female figures, and that educated women having strong social position are not in contradiction with the tradition. It must be remembered that in the 20th century in India there was, and still is, an inequality in access to education.¹⁰ Thus, it is possible that in this way Dr. Raghavan wanted to present his statement about this issue. The educational aspect of these plays can also be noticed in providing information about the development of Sanskrit theory of literature.

9 P. V. Kane, *Foreword*, in V. Raghavan, *Prekṣaṇakatrayī – Vijayānkā, Vikaṭānitambā, Avantisundarī. Three Sanskrit Prekshnakas*, (Madras: Sri Ramachandra Printing Works, 1956).

10 R. U. Arora, “Gender Inequality, Economic development, and Globalization: a State Level Analysis of India” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 46, no. 1 (2012): 147–64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23215428>.

9.4 *Prekṣaṇakatrayī* as a modern historical Sanskrit literature

As *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* were written in the 20th century, there is no doubt that they belong to the contemporary Sanskrit literature. Nevertheless, they are all devoted to historical personages and they are set in the second half of the first millennium CE. Thus, they are contemporary plays touching on historical subjects. What is more, they all include quotations from the works written in the past. For this reason, their linguistic aspect had to be adjusted to their historical background. Otherwise, the cited passages would stand out from the text and outcome of the plays would be unfavourable. It must be also noted, that Raghavan adjusted the style and convention of this plays according to *kāvya* literature. It is especially visible in the play *Avantisundarī*, when the heroine talks with her husband. Dr. Raghavan skillfully depicted a conversation between spouses, both of whom were poets and literary critics. For this reason, their speech contains a lot of puns, word-plays and references to the theory of literature. There are also conventional motifs typical for *kāvya*, such as comparison of face to a lotus. V. Raghavan managed to merge the citations into the text successfully. It also seems that he captured the atmosphere of the times he wrote about.

9.5 Final conclusion

As modern historical Sanskrit plays, *Vijayāṅkā*, *Vikaṭānitambā* and *Avantisundarī* have a unique position among the contemporary Sanskrit literature. Another very special feature is that they were written by a renowned scholar who dealt with Sanskrit literature and Sanskrit drama in an academic way. At the same time, he was a practitioner who wanted to revive this art and knew how to create a play which could be appreciated by modern viewers. Therefore, they are characterized by literary artistry and stagecraft.

The three Raghavan plays analyzed here stand on the threshold of tradition and modernity. With their themes and heroes, they are part of the bygone glory days of literature written in Sanskrit; their form, on the other hand, is adapted to the present. It is difficult to include them in any of the known types of Sanskrit drama. They come closest to the biographical *prabandha* tradition but realised as short stage form. Raghavan's plays are closely connected with the Indian tradition because of one more

reason – one can speak of their didactic aspect and the educational role they have. His works are original, written in flawless, even if simplified, Sanskrit.

Referring once again to the article “The Death of Sanskrit” by Sheldon Pollock, *Prekṣaṇakatrāyī* denies his opinion that the ‘quality’ of the Sanskrit literature is declining. Those plays, although grounded in the tradition of Sanskrit dramaturgy, are characterized by creativity and artistic invention. Hence, they prove that there is still life in Sanskrit literature. It still serves the needs of some groups of Indians. Its literature reacts to changes and the current environment, and it is transformed according to them. Therefore, in my opinion, Sanskrit cannot be regarded as a dead language.

Appendix

Vijayāṅkā

Text

[karnāṭarājasya candrādityasya prāsādaikadeśo sarasvatīmandiram | tataḥ praviśaty
upaviṣṭaḥ kasmiścit kośe dattāvadhānaḥ āsthānakavir ācāryaḥ |
praviśati katipayanimesānantaraṃ rājā candrādityaḥ]

candrādityaḥ

ācārya! sāhityasamrājāṃ vandate karnāṭasamrāt!

ācāryaḥ

mahārāja, svāgatam, iha upaviśatu bhavān |

candrādityaḥ

kāvya-kathāveśavaśān nirantarīkṛtabhavatsannidhānā rājñī naḥ priyatamā,
yathārthanāmnī vijayāṅkā, atra sarasvatīmandire syād iti samāgato'smi |

ācāryaḥ

susṭhūtprekṣitaṃ mahārājena | kintv adya kim iti sā cirayatīti na jñātam | adya viśeṣatas
tvarate madīyam api mānasam tāṃ draṣṭum |

candrādityaḥ

katham iva?

ācāryaḥ

tīrthayātrāprasāṅgena kāñcīmaṇḍalam gataiḥ kair api asmacchiṣyaiḥ tatra
pallaveśvarasya āsthānikamaṇḍalam alaṃkurvato mahākaveḥ daṇḍināmaḥ
kāvyalakṣaṇagranthaḥ kāvyādarśanāmā samāsādyā asmadavalokanāya preṣitaḥ | tatraiva
magnaṃ me manas samprati | rājñyā vijayāṅkayā saha taṃ nipuṇaṃ parīkṣitum
icchāmi | hanta! āgataiva kavikularājñī rājñī |

vijayāṅkā

vardhatām āryaputraḥ | ācārya, vandate śiṣyā | api vardhate sāhityasevā?

ācāryaḥ

bhavadāgamanāpekṣiṇī vilambate sā sevā | asti adya kācana nūtanā kṛtiḥ kāñcīpradeśād
āgatā |

vijayāṅkā

kāñcīprastāvaḥ kathayati kartāraṃ kavim daṇḍinam |

ācāryaḥ

sādhu anumitaṃ devyā | tenaiva mahākavinā

vijayāṅkā

aho, kṣiprasantuṣṭa ācāryaḥ |

ācāryaḥ

vijaye! maivam bhāṇa | kāvyālaṃkāraśāstram etat nirmītavān daṇḍī samyagalaṃkaroti
'ācārya' - daṇḍīti viśeṣaṇam |

vijayāṅkā

bhavatu, paṭhyatāṃ maṅgalaślokaḥ, śṛṇumas tāvat |

ācāryaḥ

paṇḍitā te sakhy eva paṭhatu | itaḥ pustakam |

sakhī

(pathati)

“caturmukhamukhāmbhojavanahamsavadhūr mama |

mānase ramatāṃ nityaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||”

vijayāṅkā

(uccair hasati)

candrādityaḥ

ayi, kim idam akāṇḍe mahān prahāsaḥ?

ācāryaḥ

sahṛdaye! ko vā doṣo' tra bhavatyāḥ karṇāruntudo bhavati?

vijayāṅkā

(sahāsam eva) nanu na paśyanti bhavantaḥ pratyakṣavirodhadoṣam atra –

nīlotpaladalaśyāmām vijjikām mām ajānatā |

vṛthaiḥ daṇḍinā proktaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||

(rājā, ācāryaḥ, sarve ca hasanti)

ācāryaḥ

mahārāja! samyaguktam siddhavācā devyā | devī! kim upari paṭhyatām daṇḍinaḥ kṛtiḥ?
udāharaṇaślokeṣu svakāvyaśāstrīṇāṃ viśadaṃ kāvyasāstrobhayalakṣmīkaṃ viracitam etad
grantharatnam |

vijayāṅkā

ācārya! alam atistutyā | mām prati tu dvitrā eva kavayaḥ |

ācāryaḥ

katham iva?

vijayāṅkā

ekaḥ 'bhūn nalināt paras tu pulinād valmīkataś cāparaḥ

te sarve kavayaḥ strīlokaguravas tebhyaḥ namaskurmahe |

arvāñco yadi gadyapadyaracanaś cetasa camatkurvate

teṣāṃ mūrdhni dadāmi vāmacaraṇam karṇāṭarājapriyā ||

ācāryaḥ

yat satyaṃ guṇaprakarṣo bhavatyā garvadoṣam eṇaṃ sarvathā pariharati | bhavatu
parakavivārtā | nanu na suprabhātas sa divaso mām prati, yasmin bhavatyāḥ ko 'pi
sarasāḥ kāvyabandho na śrotrapeyīkṛtaḥ | tad vyāharatu bhavatī bhavadīyaṃ
nūtanatamaṃ ślokaṃ ekam |

candrādityaḥ

vayam api rasakutūhalinaḥ !

vijayāṅkā

āryaputra! bhavataiva sākāṃ hyas sāyaṃ turagārūdhā nagarasīmantaśobhādarśanāya
samāgatāham | tadā tatra grāmīṇastrījanaiḥ khale sagītakaṃ dhānyakaṇḍanam

kriyamāṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā śloko 'yaṃ sandr̥bdho mayā |

candrādityaḥ

kiṃ tadaiva nāveditam?

vijayāṅkā

prātar guruṇā saha saṃvibhaktaraso 'yaṃ svadetatarām iti kṛtvā |

ācāryaḥ

ayi rasike! alaṃ vilambya |

vijayāṅkā

vilāsamaṣṇollasanmusalaloladoḥkandalī-

parasparapariskhaladvalayaniḥsvanodbandhurāḥ|

lasanti kalahuṃkṛtiprasabhakampitorāḥsthala-

truṭadgamakasaṅkulāḥ kalamakaṇḍanīgīṭayaḥ ||

ācāryaḥ

mahārāja! dr̥ṣyatām atra varṇacāturī varṇanācāturī ca | daṇḍinā svasāstre ullikhitā
vaidarbhamārgaprāṇabhūtāḥ

“śleṣaḥ prasādas samatā mādhyayaṃ sukumāratā |

arthavyaktir udāratvam ojaḥkāntisamādhayaḥ ||”

iti daśāpi kāvyaguṇāḥ atra samagram ullasanti | asti anyad api kiñcid bhavatyāḥ pratnaṃ
padyaratnam? na hi bhavatyāḥ paripākaviśeṣasvādu sandarbham āsvādayato guror me
tṛptir bhavati |

vijayāṅkā

nanu sarvo 'yaṃ sārasvatavivartaḥ mūrtyantaralabdhasamullāsaḥ gurūnāṃ bhavatām
eva prasādaparipākaḥ |

ācāryaḥ

prīṇayatitarām aucityam iva bhavatyā guṇaguṇeṣu jīvitabhūto'yaṃ vinayaḥ | bhavatu |
muktakāntaraṃ yadi syāt, pradarśayatu bhavati | pariśīlayitum icchāmaḥ | āśukavayitryā
bhavatyā vadanāt tadā tadā niṣpatatāṃ suvṛttānāṃ avadātānāṃ muktakamauktikānāṃ
saṅgrahakarī kośabhūtā iyaṃ te paṇḍitā sakhī, tāṃ pṛcchāmaḥ |

sakhī

ācārya! hyas sāyam eva mahārājena saha bahis sañcarantyā rājñyā kimśukakesaram
dṛṣṭvā utprekṣitam etat –

kimśukakalikāntargatam

indukalāspardhi kesaram bhāti |

raktanicolakapihitam

dhanur iva jatumudritam vitanoḥ ||

(nimīlitākṣam tūṣṇīm ślokarasam anubhavaty ācāryaḥ |)

vijayānkā

kim idam? na kim apy ucyata ācāryaiḥ? yady asti ko 'pi doṣaḥ svairam śikṣaṇīyā śiṣyā |

ācāryaḥ

ayi pragalbhe! śiṣyatām sudūram atilaṅghitavatīm bhavatīm katham vacobhiḥ ślāghe |
prāyaḥ pulakānkuro vacaḥpallavam nirarthayati khalu |

vijayānkā

satyam āha ācāryaḥ –

kaver abhiprāyam aśabdagocaram

sphurantam ādreṣu padeṣu kevalam |

vahadbhir aṅgaiḥ kṛtaromavikriyaiḥ

janasya tūṣṇīm bhavato'yam añjaliḥ ||

ācāryaḥ

mahārāja! paśyatu bhavān, śloke 'tra 'vitanoḥ' iti padaṃ kuñcikeva niveśitam | tena
uddhāṭitāt padyāt kośād iva artharatnāni niṣpatanti | yathā kasyāpi vīrasya astram
tasyāsannidhāne samyak vastrapidhānena jatumudrayā ca samrakṣitam kvacin nyasyeta,
tathā harakopānalena tirobhāvite manmathe tadapadānanidānabhūtam pauspaṃ
taddhanuḥ nikṣiptam iti pratīyate |

candrādityaḥ

nūnam vitanor vyāpāra ivāyaṃ vyāpāraḥ pratītirnāma, yasya śārīrakasya śabdārthamātre
śarīram nopalabhyate |

sakhī

satyam āha mahārājaḥ | ācārya, na kevalaṃ vaidarbhamārge kintu
antarnigūḍhabahvarthagambhīrāyām api racanāyām kālidāsam evānusarati vaḥ
priyaśiṣyā |

sarasvatīva karnāṭī vijayānkā jayati asau |

yā vaidarbhagirāṃ vāsaḥ kālidāsād anantaram ||

Translation

[The hall of Sarasvatī^{1 2} somewhere in the palace of Candrāditya,³ the king of Karṇāta]

[On the stage] appears the court poet and teacher focused on a manuscript. After a few moments enters king Candrāditya.

Candrāditya

Master! The Lord of Karṇāta greets the lord of literature⁴.

Ācārya

Hail King, please be seated here.

Candrāditya

My beloved queen, a vessel [of knowledge] made in thy likeness, rightly called

1 Sarasvatī is a Hindu goddess patronising on science and fine arts; especially music, speech and literature. She is the consort of god Brahmā. Sarasvatī is also believed to be the inventor of Sanskrit language. She is usually pictured as a young woman holding lute and manuscript, mounting on or in a company of pure, white, wild goose.

2 The word *mandira* can be also translated as a temple, but in this context, it probably refers to a place for an assembly of court poets. Literary accomplishment was highly appreciated in the aristocratic and urbane circles. In royal houses took place meetings of poets called *kavigoṣṭhi*. During such meetings, poets discussed literature and took parts in poetic contests. a famous example of such poetic circle is the one of the court of king Bhoja. D. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, (New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 84.

3 Candrāditya I was a king from Chalukya dynasty who ruled from 646 to 649 CE. He took over after his father, Pulakesin II, who died after the attack of enemy king on his capital – Vatapi (nowadays Badami, Karnataka). After his short reign, it was probably his wife, called in inscriptions Vijaya Bhattarika and Vijaya Mahadevi, who ruled the kingdom, perhaps on the behalf of their son.

4 The word used here for the literature is *sāhitya*. This word is an abstract noun derived from *sahita* – together, associate (which comes from the root *dhā* – to put) and it can be translated as *togetherness*. It refers to the combination of sound – *śabda* and meaning - *artha*, as it was explained by Bhāmaha: *Poetry is harmonious of sound and sense (śabdarthau sahitaū kāvyam, Kāvyaḷamkāra* I.16). The term *sāhitya* can also refer to the discipline of poetic theory. K. Krishnamoorthy, “The Meaning of 'Sāhitya': a Study in Semantics,” *Indian Literature*, 28(1), (1985), 65-70.

Vijayāṅkā⁵, should be here in the hall of Sarasvatī. Because of [her] devotion to poetry and prose⁶ – that is why I came.

Ācārya

You depicted her well, oh King. However, I do not know know why she is late now. Today my heart is especially rushing to see her.

Candrāditya

How is it?

Ācārya

Some of my disciples who went to the district of Kāñci because of pilgrimage sent to my insight a treatise on characteristics of literature.⁷ It is named *Kāvyaḍarśa* of Daṇḍin⁸, who adorns the circle of court poets of king of Pallavas.⁹ My mind is entirely

5 The name Vijayāṅkā means: The Mark (*aṅka*) of a Victory (*vijaya*).

6 The words used for poetry and prose are *kāvya* and *kathā*. The first term may refer to highly elaborated literature composed in a verse or in a prose, or in a mixture of verses and prose, composed from the first centuries of the Common Era. It includes literary forms meant for watching (*drśya*) – drama and for listening (*śrava*). However, here the term *kāvya* is used in its narrow sense as poetry, or literature written in verses. *Kathā* is Sanskrit or Prakrit literary genre belonging to *gadya* – prose. Its plot is imaginary, and it is told in the third person. Here the term *kathā* is used in a wider sense – just in opposition to versified poetry, as prose, in order to show Vijayāṅkā’s expertise in all fields of literature.

7 Probably a reference to the second verse of *Kāvyaḍarśa* (see below), in which its author declares, that in this treatise he deals with the characteristic of literature – *kāvya*lakṣaṇa (*pūrvasāstrāṇi saṃhṛtya prayogān upalakṣya ca | yathāsāmarthyam asmābhiḥ kriyate kāvya*lakṣaṇam|| *Kāvyaḍarśa* I.2). *Kāvya*lakṣaṇa is also an alternative title used in some manuscripts for *Kāvyaḍarśa*. The term *lakṣaṇa* in the context of poetics also has more specific meaning – a feature of poetry, which makes it different from common speech. The 15th chapter of *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides a list of 36 such *lakṣaṇas*.

8 Daṇḍin here mentioned is of course the renowned theorist of literature, who lived c. the 7th and 8th century CE and was most probably related to the court of Pallava king Narasimhavarman II. His work on poetics and rhetorical devices *Kāvyaḍarśa* is widely acknowledged as one of the most important treatises in this field. The major contribution of Daṇḍin to the Sanskrit poetics is the concept of *mārga* – *rīti*, which focuses on the literary style.

immersed in it. I want to examine it completely together with Queen Vijayāṅkā. Look! Here she comes – the queen and the empress of poets' clan.

Vijayāṅkā

May you prosper, my Lord. Master, [your] disciple salutes you. Is [your] commitment to literature increasing?

Ācārya

This commitment delays with regard to your late arrival. A certain new work from the city of Kāñci has arrived today.

Vijayāṅkā

The mention of Kāñci brings to mind the poet Daṇḍin.

Ācārya

Indeed, Your Majesty is right. Just by this great poet...

Vijayāṅkā

Oh, the precipitously recognised master!¹⁰

9 The Pallava dynasty ruled in the northern part of today Tamil Nadu from 275 CE to 897 CE. Their capital was Kanchipuram. The dynasty reached its height of prosperity and power in the 7th and the 8th century, during the reigns of Narasimhavarman I (630 – 668CE), Paramesvarman I (670 – 695 CE) and Narasimhavarman II (695 – 728). Pallavas and Chalukyas ruled in neighbouring territories and fought each other for a century, despite multiple cultural, social and religious similarities. First important victory was made by Chalukyan king Pulakesin II, however later Narasimhavarman I attacked Vatapi in 642, what led to internal problems in the kingdom of Chalukyas. During the reign of Vikramaditya I (654 – 668 CE) Chalukyas stroke back and took over Kanchipuram. The war started over and lasted until the second half of the VIII century. See also: D. P. Dikshit, *Political history of the Chalukayas of Badami*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1941).

10 The sarcastic comment of Vijayāṅkā refers to Daṇḍin, who according to her, was too quickly recognized as a master of poetry.

Ācārya

Vijayā! Do not say so! Daṇḍin, who composed this treatise on ornaments of *kāvya*, is properly qualified for title “Master Daṇḍin.”

Vijayāṅkā

All right, let the verse of benediction be read out. We shall listen now.

Ācārya

Now, let your learned friend read this book.

Sakhī [reads]

May the all-white Sarasvatī, who is in the four lotus-mouths of Brahmā like a white goose in the thicket of lotuses,

always stay inside my mind – lake Mānasa.¹¹

Vijayāṅkā [laughing aloud]

11 It is a quote of *Kāvyaḍarśa* 1.1

The colour associated with Sarasvatī is white, and in accordance with beliefs, she emerged from Brahmā’s mouth riding a white goose. The stories concerning Brahmā and Sarasvatī depend on the *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* background of the believers, but always she is associated with Vāc and learning, literature and art; her *vāhana* can be a *haṃsa* or peacock.

Lake Mānasa is a holy pilgrimage place on the Mount Kailāsa, in Tibet. Today it is known as Lake Manasarovar. According to Hindu believes, it was created by Brahmā, and its water has powers of purifying former sins and it is the native place of wild geese, which come back there every year for breeding season. However, the word *mānasa* is also connected to *manas* ‘mind’ as a *taddhita* derivative word. Therefore, the word *mānasa* can refer both to mind and the lake Mānasa. Thus, the stanza opening *Kāvyaḍarśa* displays poetic sophistication and density of sense.

Candrāditya

And what is this unexpected big burst of laughter?

Ācārya

Oh, lady connoisseur! What is the flaw¹² which causes pain to your ears?

Vijayāṅkā

[laughing] Do you indeed not see a flaw which is a contradiction to direct perception?

Not knowing me, Vijjikā, dark as the petal of a blue water lily,

Daṇḍin has wrongly described Sarasvatī as all white.¹³

[King, Ācārya and everyone laughs]

Ācārya

My king, with this witty phrase the Queen has stated rightly. Oh Queen, which verse of Daṇḍin should be read out further? This gem of composition marked scholarly and poetically was created showing the wit of his spotless poetry in the example verses.

Vijayāṅkā

Master! Stop this exaggerated praise. According to me, there are 2-3 poets [better than Daṇḍin].

12 *doṣa* is a flaw in a piece of art which reduces beauty in it. Theorists of art in ancient India distinguished merits (*guṇa*), which provide beauty for a piece of art, and shortcomings, which take its beauty away. In a poetical work, *doṣa* can occur on various levels: grammatical, literary, logical. Any element that affects charm of a verse or whole composition in a negative way, or prevents realization of *rasa* for reader is a fault shortcoming. See also page: 199.

13 This verse was quoted in the anthologies *Subhāṣitahārāvalī* (v. 145), *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (v. 180), *Sūktimuktāvalī*. *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgāra* (v. 54).

Ācārya

How come?

Vijayāṅkā

One was from the lotus¹⁴, the other from the island¹⁵ and the last from the anthill.¹⁶

All these poets are masters in the world of women, we shall worship them.

If someone is lower (then them), they cause astonishment of mind by their prose or poetic composition,

I, the beloved of the Karṇāta 's King, would place my left foot on their foreheads.¹⁷

14 This phrase hints at Brahmā, who according to the *vaiṣṇava* tradition, as is well known, is one of the principal deities in Hinduism, together with Viṣṇu and Śiva known as *trimūrti*. He is the creator of the universe as he was associated with the Vedic god Prajāpati. He was born from a lotus emerged from the navel of Viṣṇu sleeping on the snake Ananta Śeṣa. According to the first chapter of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Brahmā created Nāṭyaveda – the knowledge about theatre, and theatre itself. He is also called *ādikavi*, the first poet.

15 This second syntagm depicts Vyāsa – legendary sage, who is told to be the author of *Mahābhārata*, the longest epic poem ever known, composed between the 4th century BCE and the 4th century CE. Since it consists of about 75 000 couplets and long passages in prose, it is almost impossible that it was written by one person. Vyāsa in fact literally means “arranger, compiler” and it must be his role. According to the legend, he was born on an island: hence his name Dvaipāyana.

16 This third expression clearly alludes to Vālmīki, i.e. the legendary sage, known as the inventor of śloka, perhaps the most important Sanskrit metre, and the author of *Rāmāyaṇa*, second great epic poem of India, composed approximately between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE. (John Brockington presented the subsequent stages of creating the epic in: J. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, (Leiden, Boston, Köln, Brill, 1988), 377 – 398.) It is not known if he was a historical character. According to the legends, while he was performing a severe penance, huge anthill formed around him and ants covered all his body. Therefore, he earned the name Vālmīki – “of anthill”.

17 In Indian culture placing foot on somebody's head is a great insult. Feet are considered the dirtiest parts of body; therefore, stepping over someone or touching or even pointing at someone with foot is believed as very rude. On the contrary, there is a traditional form of honorific salutation (*praṇāma*), called *caraṇasparśa* – bowing before somebody and touching their feet. It is practised as a form of paying

Ācārya

It is true that the excellence of your merits destroys the flaw of pride. Let the best poet reveal himself. The day, during which my ears are not pleased by your composition that arouses emotions, will not dawn beautifully for me. So please tell [us] your most recent verse.

Candrāditya

I am also curious of its taste.¹⁸

Vijayāṅkā

My lord, yesterday evening I went with you on horseback to see the beauty of the village. When I saw village women threshing grain and singing songs on the threshing-floor, I composed this verse.

Candrāditya

Why didn't you reveal it then?

Vijayāṅkā

In the morning, this flavour shared with [my] master would taste better – that is why I did it this way.

Ācārya

Oh, lady full of taste! Enough of waiting!

regard towards parents, teachers, spiritual teachers, elderly family members, etc. This verse is traditionally ascribed to Vijayāṅkā.

18 Here the word *rasa* is used. The term *rasa* literally means: juice, sap, essence, taste. However, in the context of the Sanskrit poetics it stands for an aesthetic flavour, present in every piece of art. The purpose of *rasa* is to evoke an intended emotion in reader or spectator. See also page: 189.

Vijayāṅkā

The songs of thrashing rice in mortars resound intensified by deep sighs –

inarticulate incantations – coming from fiercely shaking breasts and by high-pitched sounds

of bracelets clashing together on swinging arms like sprouts,

moving trembling pestles, which hum softly and delightfully.¹⁹

Ācārya

My king, please see the mastery of sound and mastery of description here. In his work Daṇḍin named the vital features of the *vaidarbhī* style.²⁰

śleṣa, prasāda, samatā, mādhyurya, sukumāratā,

*arthavyakti, udāratva, ojas, kānti, samādhi.*²¹

Exactly these ten merits of poetry shine altogether [in this verse of yours]. Is there any previous gem of your verses? My teacher's satisfaction is not yet fulfilled by your sweet, exceptional and artful composition.

19 This verse was quoted in *Sūktimuktāvalī*, *Śārṅgadharaṣṭakā* (v. 94), *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgāra* (v. 41) and *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa*.

20 *vaidarbhī* is one of the styles of composition (*mārga* or *rīti*) distinguished by Sanskrit poetics. It is related to Vidarbha – geographical region, north-east part of Maharashtra (modern Amravati division, also known as Varhad). This region in Sanskrit literature was traditionally recognized as the home of grace and beauty. *Vaidarbhī* was considered as the superior style, which was characterized by sweetness and simplicity. According to Daṇḍin, it was the best style because it contains all ten *guṇas*.

21 *Kāvyaśāstra* 1.41. In this verse Daṇḍin lists the *guṇas* – merits of poetry. a *guṇa* is an element which provides beauty for a piece of art. In the context of literature, it is a certain virtue essential to judge the literary worth of a composition. Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* provided the set of ten *guṇas*, which was accepted by later theorists. However, Vāmana doubled the numbers of *guṇas* by providing two sets: *śabdaguṇas* – verbal merits and *arthaguṇas* – merits of meaning. See also page: 195.

Vijayāṅkā

Indeed [students'] every progress in the field of Sarasvatī²², which brings the accomplishment of different form, is in fact the result of grace and excessive brilliance of [their] masters.

Ācārya

This proper conduct is important as life among all your virtues, just like propriety²³ is the most appreciated among the literary merits [of your literature]. Alright. If there is another stanza, you shall reveal it. We want to enjoy it. We ask (to recite) your learned friend who is compiler and collector of the spotless, composed in a suitable meter verses like pearls, which every now and then quickly fly out of poetess' mouth.²⁴

Sakhī

Master! Yesterday evening this [verse] was composed by the Queen when she was walking outside with the king and she saw pistil of *kiṃśuka*²⁵.

Pistil coming out of the bud of *kiṃśuka*

shines rivaling the edge of the Moon,

22 Sarasvatī is the goddess of literature, so Vijayāṅkā means: "In the field of literature".

23 Suitableness, propriety – *aucitya* – in *kāvya* was discussed by major theorist of literature and it was an important factor for all schools of poetics. It is a rule saying that artistic means used in a literary work must be right/proper for emotions the author want to arouse in readers. The particular elements of a poem cannot be evaluated separately but according to situation where they occur. See also: 233.

24 A suggestion that Vijayāṅkā is an *asūkavi* – a poet who composes poems ex tempore.

25 *Butea monosperma*, commonly known as Flame of the Forest is a medium size tree native for the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Its trunk and branches are crooked and covered with rough, grey bark. In December it loses most of its leaves; however, from January till March it blossoms and then its entire crown is covered with immensity of orange and red flowers which resemble fire. *Kiṃśuka* frequently occurs in Sanskrit Literature. Its intense red flowers are compared to flame but also to marks left on skin by nails of one's lover.

Like the bow of Kāma²⁶ covered with lac and hidden among red garments
and coming out to triumph.

[With closed eyes and in silence, the master contemplates the taste of the verse]

Vijayāṅkā

How can this be? The Master says nothing? Where there is a flaw, it should be frankly explained to the student.

Ācārya

Oh, eminent one! How can I praise in words the one who has so far exceeded the state of being a student? My words, usually like sprouts bristling the hairs, [now] are useless.

Vijayāṅkā

You said true, Master.

Through tremble of body and bristle of hair only

[is expressed] this homage of man frozen in silence

to the unspeakable intention of a poet

which only quivers in tender words.²⁷

26 Kāma, i.e. the famous Hindu god of love, desire and erotic pleasure, who already occurs in *Rgveda*, where he is the personification of self-born creative desire which made the creation of the Universe possible, in later texts is depicted as young and handsome man. His main attribute is a sugarcane bow with a bowstring made from the row of bees and five flower arrows, which are able to arouse love and desire if shot at someone.

27 This verse was quoted in anthologies *Subhāṣitahārāvalī* v. 158 and *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgāra* v. 35.

Ācārya

My king! Please look – here, in the verse “vitanoh” is a word placed like a key.²⁸ Because of it, the gems of meanings come out of the unlocked stanza like from an open treasure trove. Just as the weapon of a hero should be deposited somewhere after the end of his great deeds and, for its preservation, well protected with lac and a cloth cover, similarly when Manmatha stopped existing because of the fire of Śiva’s rage, his bow of flowers, which great deeds came to an end, was deposited – that is how it is believed.

Candrāditya

Indeed, the activity of the Bodiless²⁹ is close to the poetic profession, whose soul has no body but sound and meaning.³⁰

28 This is self-evidently a reference to a figure of speech, namely to the *alaṃkāra* called *dīpaka* – illuminator. In this figure of speech one word highlights the meaning of a whole sentence, stanza or even whole poetical work.

29 According to the Hindu mythology, the god of love Kāma, was burned by the third eye of Śiva when, instructed by other gods, he tried to arouse his passion for Parvatī and disturbed Śiva’s meditation. Some versions of the story say that Śiva, after seeing the lament of Kāma’s wife, restored him to life and he continued to live in a bodiless form as Anaṅga – the Bodiless.

30 Theorists of Sanskrit literature distinguished the body and the soul of poetry, called *kāvyaśarīra* and *kāvyaātma*. *kāvyaśarīra* consists of meaning (*artha*) and sound (*śabda*). It can be adorned by *alaṃkāras* – figures of speech – like a human body is embellished by jewellery. However, the questions about the soul, the essence, of the poetry was answered differently by various theories of poetics.

Sakhī

The King spoke the truth! Master, your dear student follows Kālidāsa³¹ not only on the *vaidarbhī* way, but also in [writing] compositions with hidden, deep and many meanings.

Like Sarasvatī, she – Vijayānkā of Karṇāta, triumphs,

the one who is the abode of the *vaidarbhī* style, just after Kālidāsa.³²

31 The text refers to the renowned Sanskrit poet and playwright Kālidāsa (c. 4th – 5th CE) – widely acknowledged as the greatest writer of ancient India. He is the author of *Kumārasambhavam* (*The Birth of Kumāra*), in which is included the story of conflagration of Kāma. As hinted at in this passage, Kālidāsa is in fact recognized as one of the greatest exponents of *vaidarbhī* style. See also: A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature vol. 3*, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977 pp. 122 – 154.

32 This verse attributed to Rājaśekhara was quoted by Jalhaṇa in his anthology *Sūktimuktāvalī* and by Bhoja in *Śṛṅgāraprakāśā*.

Vikaṭānitambā

Text

[tataḥ prāviśati āsīnā kavayitrī vikaṭānitambā, lekhanīhastayā sakhyā saha |

tataḥ prāviśaty ācāryo govindasvāmī ||

govindasvāmī

aye iyam asmākaṃ śiṣyā vikaṭānitambā! upāṃśu kim api kayācillekhikayā sakhyā saha
vyāharantī vilokyate | bhavatu, upasarpāmi | (vikaṭānitambām upasṛtya) ayi, kavayitri!
uccair vyāhr̥tya vilekhyatām ślokaḥ, yad aham api tasya rasam anubhaviṣyāmi |

vikaṭānitambā

(utthāya), ācārya, vande |

govindasvāmī

alam upacāreṇa | vidyāprakarṣāt tvām ācāryo 'py ahaṃ sakhīm bhāvayāmi | paṭhyatām
ślokaḥ | tvarate me hṛdayaṃ tvadīyasārasvatasudhāsvādanāya |

vikaṭānitambā

nūnaṃ lajjāpayati mām ācāryaḥ | kintu bhavān eva guṇadoṣaprakāśāya samucito
nikaśāsmeti kṛtvā paṭhāmi | athavā iyaṃ lekhikā me sakhī gāndharve ca śikṣitā, sā taṃ
gāsyati | timirābhisārikāṃ varṇayaty ayaṃ ślokaḥ saṃvādarūpaḥ |

lekhikā sakhī

kva prasthitāsi karabhoru ghane niśīthe

prāṇādhiko vasati yatra manaḥpriyo me |

ekākinī vada kathaṃ na vibheṣi bāle

nanv asti puṅkhitaśaro madanas sahāyaḥ ||

govindasvāmī

ām, asti sa mahāsahāyaḥ, yena abalā api sabalāḥ pragalbhante |

vikaṭānitambā

na kevalaṃ pragalbhante, kintu sāhasinyo 'pi bhavanti |

govindasvāmī

ayi, rasike! apy asti anyad api mayā aśrutapūrvam muktakamauktikaṃ kiñcit

bhavadīyapratibhāśuktisamputapṛadurbhūtaṃ tatraiva ca nigūhyamānam?

vikaṭānitambā

ācārya! tvaramāṇā kāpi sundarī mayaivaṃ saṃbodhayantyā pratitvarayā avalambitā |
sakhi, imam api ślokaṃ sarāgam ālapa |

lekhikā sakhī –

ayy ayi sāhasakāriṇi

kiṃ tava caṅkramaṇena |

ṭasad iti bhaṅgam avāpsyasi

kucaiyugabhārabhareṇa ||

govindasvāmī

suṣṭhūktam | tathā sukumārāṇāṃ aṅgam eva bhāro bhavati | kintu viyogo dussahataro
bhāro bhavan aṅganājanam kaśayeva hi tvarayati |

vikaṭānitambā

udarkamūḍhām upavanavinodinīm viproṣitām kāmapi upālabhate ślokāntaram idam |

govindasvāmī

katham?

lekhikā sakhī

kiṃ dvāri daivahatike sahakārakeṇa

saṃvardhitena viṣavṛkṣaka eṣa pāpaḥ |

yasmin manāg api vikāsavikārabhāji

ghorā bhavanti madanajvarasaṃnipātāḥ ||

govindasvāmī

dussaho hi sahakāro nāma, śatruḥ viyoginīnām, yaḥ pallavaiḥ mañjarībhiḥ
madhukarāvallyā parabhr̥tapañcamaiś ca mārasenām sannāhayati | nūnam
śṛṅgārasandarbheṣu pragalbhāyā bhavatyāḥ prakāṭaraseṣu vacovilāseṣu ramamāṇānām
nānyatra samutsukatā prasarati |

ke vaikaṭānitambena girām gumphena rañjitāḥ |

nindanti nijakāntānām na maugdhyamadhuram vacaḥ ||

ayi! ślokaṃ bhavatyāḥ śṛṇvato mama paryāyeṇa harṣaviśādayoḥ majjanmānasasya
kimapi apūrvam kilakiñcitam iva bhavati |

vikaṭānitambā

katham iva? ko vā viśādasya avakāśaḥ?

govindasvāmī

ayi, prāyo guṇo doṣāya kalpate hi | asulabho hi tāvān guṇasālī bhartā yam āsādyā
bhavādṛśī kācit labdhahemaparabhāgam iva ratnam adhigamiṣyatitarāṃ śobhām |

vikaṭānitambā

āstāṃ tāvaddure vaiduṣyaṃ saḥṛdayatā vā | ahaṃ tvevaṃ śaṅkaṃ ko 'py eḍamūkaḥ
prākṛtaḥ mama bhartṛbhāgadheyāya daivena nirdeksyate iti | eṣaiva cintā māṃ
muhurmuhuḥ bādhte –

yasya ṣaṣṭhī caturthī ca vihasya ca vihāya ca |

ahaṃ kathaṃ dvitīyā syād dvitīyā syām ahaṃ kathaṃ || iti

govindasvāmī

pratihatam amaṅgalam | tathāpi saṃbhavanty eva tādrśyaḥ kathāḥ, paṇḍitāḥ
purandhryaḥ prākṛtebhyaḥ patibhyaḥ prattā iti | śrūyate hi pratiṣṭhāne sātavāhano nāma
rājā prākṛtaruciḥ |

vikaṭānitambā

sa viśruta eva |

govindasvāmī

sa sātavāhanaḥ, yasya susaṃskṛtā vāci mahārājñī babhūva | vārivihāre kadācit tasmin
bhartari pāṇiyantreṇa tām udakaiḥ prasabham tāḍayati, vyākulitayā rājñyā proktaṃ
“modakaiḥ tāḍaya” iti | mahiṣīsamārādhana-pravaṇacetasā mahārājena tu jhaṭiti
prāsādamahānasādhikṛtebhyaḥ sandīśya samānītair madhurair modakaiḥ tāḍitā tapasvinī
devī kiṃ hasatu, kiṃ krudhyatu, kiṃ roditu?

vikaṭānitambā

yady ahaṃ mahārājñy abhaviṣyam, nūnaṃ na jāne kopena jugupsayā vā kiṃ
nākariṣyam iti |

govindasvāmī

bhavatu, sātavāhanamaḥiṣyā kṣāntiparayā kiñcid hasantya ca bhartā bodhitāḥ “mayā tu ‘mā udakaiḥ tāḍaya’ iti udakatāḍanaṃ pratiśiddham, bhavatā tu sandhim ajānatā mahānasān modakā ānītāḥ” iti |

vikaṭānitambā

tathā upasāntayā tayā kiṃ bhartur adhyāpanadhurā nāṅgīkṛtā?

govindasvāmī

aṅgīkṛtaiva | rājñaiva lajjamānena āsthāne samudghoṣitam – māsaṣaṭkena yadi kaścid vipaścid vyākaraṇadānena vācaṃ me saṃskariṣyate, tasmai yathābhīṣṭaṃ pradāsyāmīti |

vikaṭānitambā

kiṃ māsaṣaṭkena?

govindasvāmī

ām; prāyas sarveṣu sabhālaṅkārabhūteṣu vidvatsu anutsahamāneṣu śarvavarmā nāma prāgalbhata, yad upajñam idam vijayate ‘kālāpam’, ‘kātantram’ iti svalpapramāṇaṃ śabdatantram |

vikaṭānitambā

katham evaṃ rūpaḥ kātantrasya itihāsaḥ! asmābhis tu pāṇinimahānadīplavanakutukinībhiḥ kātantrādikulyānāṃ vārtaiva na śrutā |

govindasvāmī

kāpi te sakhī sarabhasam itaḥ samāyāti | śubhā bhavatu vārtā yām eṣā samupāharati |

sakhī

(praviśya vikaṭānitambām upasṛtya) sakhi, tātas te samāhvayati | asti kimapi prastutam anena |

vikaṭānitambā

kiṃ viṣayam adhikṛtya?

(sakhī vaktuṃ vilambate)

vikaṭānitambā

kiṃ vilambate? brūhi |

sakhī

tava pariṇayam antarā |

vikaṭānitambā

kim? nanu pariṇītaivāhaṃ kāvyapuruṣeṇa!

sakhī

adya punaḥ kevalapuruṣāya kasmaicid dāsyase tvam |

vikaṭānitambā

katham iva?

sakhī

rahaḥ kathayāmi | (karṇe) evam iva |

govindasvāmī

(sakhīm prati) ayi, prakāśaṃ brūhi | nanv aham api vidyāpradānāt sakhyās te dharmataḥ
pitaiva | vikaṭānitambāyāḥ pradāne asti mamāpy adhikāraḥ |

sakhī

asti | parantu janakena vṛto jāmatā, pratiśrutam ca tatpitroḥ purataḥ kanyādānam | sakṛd
dhi dīyate kanyā |

govindasvāmī

vikaṭānitambe, mā vilambasva, ehi mayā saha | pitaram eva drakṣyāvaḥ |

(ubhau niṣkrāntau)

(praviśati vikaṭānitambāyāḥ sakhī)

sakhī

(svagatam) katham sarasvatīva kṛtamānuṣavigrahā naḥ priyasakhī pitur durāgrahēna
etādṛśāya mūrkhāya pradīyate | hanta, dāruṇaḥ kanyakānāṃ bhāgaḥ | (parito vilokya)
katham ita āgacchanti asmākam anyāḥ sakhyaḥ, ko’pi tābhiḥ parihasyamāno mūḍho
yuvā ca!

(tataḥ praviśanti sakhyaḥ mūḍho yuvā ca)

kāpi sakhī

(tatra pūrvam eva sthitāṃ prati) halā! kim jānāsi jāmataram? ayaṃ saḥ

adhītavyākaraṇaḥ, tīrṇasāstrābdhiḥ kavikulaguruḥ asmatsakhyāḥ subhāṣitasudhānidheḥ
vikaṭānitambāyā anurūpo bhartā | mahatā kleśena mārgito 'yaṃ naḥ sakhyāḥ pitrā |

anya sakhī

bhavatu, nikaṭam upasṛya enaṃ nipuṇaṃ nirūpayāmi |

(iti yuvānam upasṛtya avalokate)

(yuvā maudhyena hasati)

sakhī

kathaṃ mūḍha iva hasati!

(sakhyāḥ sarvā hasanti)

prathamā sakhī

halā! kim atra hasitum? roditum khalv avasaraḥ!

aparā sakhī

(yuvānam avalokya) ārya! kiṃ te nāma?

yuvā

viḍānambāe pai (vikaṭānitambāyāḥ patih) |

sakhī

hanta, striyo vyaṃ saṃskṛtaṃ vyāharāmaḥ, pumān ayaṃ prākṛtaṃ bhāṣate, viparīto
vidhaḥ vikaṭānitambāyāḥ!

anyā sakhī

āya, kiṃ vikaṭānitambāyāḥ patir iti te nāma |

yuvā

(maudhyena hasan) āma | sulogakarī me jāā jāā (ślokararī me jāyā jāā) |

(sakhyo hasanti)

ekā

'ślokararī me jāyā jāā' iti hi vadati | ārya! saṃskṛtaṃ vaktuṃ na pārāyati bhavān?

uccāraya suṣṭhu 'kleśaḥ' iti padam |

yuvā

keśaha

anyā

(sahāsam) nahi, nahi, kleśaḥ |

yuvā

leśaha

(sarvāḥ sahasatālāṃ hasanti)

aparā

‘suṣṭhu’ iti vada |

yuvā

suṣṭhu |

aparā

suṣṭhu |

yuvā

suṣṣu |

aparā

(apavārya) bhavatu, anyat padaṃ kathayāmaḥ | (prakāśam) māsaḥ |

yuvā

māśaha |

aparā

māśaḥ |

yuvā

māsaha |

anyā

bhavatu, padāntaram eṣa uccārayatu - ‘sakāśam’ |

yuvā

śakāśam |

aparā

uṣṭraḥ |

yuvā

uṣṭraha |

(sarvā hasanti)

yuvā

(punaś ca) uṣaha

(sarvā hasanti)

urṣaha

(sarvā hasanti)

uṣṭaha

(sarvā hasanti)

prathamā sakhī

hanta! vaśyavāco vikaṭānitambāyāḥ kim etādṛśo bhartā! balavatī hi bhavitavyatā!

kāle māśaṃ, sasye māśaṃ

vadati sakāśaṃ yaḥ ca śakāśaṃ |

uṣṭre lumpati raṃ vā śaṃ vā

tasmai datta vikaṭānitambā ||

Translation

On the stage appears poetess Vikaṭanitambā sitting with her friend, who holds a stylus in her hand. Then the teacher Govindasvamī enters.

Govindasvamī

Well, that is my student Vikaṭanitambā! She appears to be immersed in some confidential conversation with her friend – scribe. Very well, I shall come near. [approaching Vikaṭanitambā] After reciting the verse aloud, let it be written, so that I also will get to know its taste.

Vikaṭanitambā

(raising up) I greet you, my teacher.

Govindasvamī

Enough of pleasantries. As I am a teacher due to the high degree of knowledge, I encourage you and your friend: Let the verse be read! My heart is eager to try the taste of the nectar of your eloquence worthy of Sarasvatī.

Vikaṭanitambā

Indeed, you embarrass me, Master. But acknowledging that you are fit for the elucidation of poetical qualities and faults – a touchstone indeed,¹ I shall read. Or rather, the scribe, this friend of mine, who is a singer and a learned woman, shall recite. This verse in the form of dialogue describes a heroine going to a tryst in darkness.²

1 Reference to the *guṇa* and *doṣa* theory. Theorists of art in ancient India distinguished merits (*guṇa*), which provide beauty for a piece of art and shortcomings (*doṣa*), which take its beauty away. Sanskrit rhetoric distinguished different kinds of poetical merits and flaws and categorized them. Bharata, the author of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, provided a list of ten *guṇas* and ten *doṣas*, and this numbers were accepted by his continuators. Vāmana doubled the numbers of *guṇas* by providing two sets: *śabdaguṇas* – verbal merits and *arthaguṇas* – merits of meaning. In a poetical work, *doṣa* can occur on various levels: grammatical, literary, logical. Any factor, that affect charm of the verse or whole composition in a negative way is a *doṣa*. See also page: 195

2 The woman described here is an *abhisārikā* – a heroine on her way to meet her lover. In *Nāṭyaśāstra* (the oldest Sanskrit treatise on performative arts, composed between the 2nd BCE and the 2nd CE), Bharata provides eight types of heroines (also known as *aṣṭanāyikā*). The classification is based on a situation of heroine with regard to her beloved one. *aṣṭanāyikā* is the popular theme in *kāvya*, as well as in Indian painting, sculpture, music and Indian classical dance. The *abhisārikā*, usually despite adversities

The scribe friend

Where are you going in the dark night, oh lady with elephant trunk–thighs³?

There, where resides my beloved, dearer to me than life.

Tell me, oh young woman, why you are not afraid of going alone?

Indeed, the God of Love armed with sharp arrows⁴ is my supporter.⁵

Govindasvamī

Certainly, he is a great supporter – because of him the fragile ones are bold as they were mighty⁶.

Vikaṭanitambā

They are not just bold, they become true risk-takers.

like rain, storm, snakes, darkness etc. is going for a secret meeting with her lover. She is the only type of heroine, who actually takes action and pursues to attain her goal. Theoreticians of Sanskrit poetry made more subdivisions of *abhisārikā*, according to her social status, motives that urge her and conditions on her way; see: L. Sudyka, “‘Abhisarika’- the Heroine Proceeding to a Tryst as Seen by Indian Theoreticians of Literature,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* (Annual of Oriental Studies) 2 (60), (2007), 131 – 146.

3 Sanskrit love poetry provides its own, homogeneous canon of women’s beauty. Typical heroine has black hair, round face, large breasts, slender limbs, tiny waste and plump buttocks and thighs. Parts of body are very often compared to natural phenomena. For example, the face of the heroine is usually compared to moon or lotus, her eyes to deer’s eyes or lotus petals and her breasts to elephant’s globes, hills or couple of *cakravāka* birds. The physical charms of a young beauty are often systematized in a pattern called *nakha-sikha-varṇana*, i.e. description from toe to top. See: S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics and Erotic Literature*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969), 37 – 42.

4 Hindu god of love Kāma is usually depicted carrying a sugarcane bow and five flower-arrows. If they are shot in someone’s heart, they make him blinded by love and burning by desire. C. Benton, *God of desire: tales of Kamadeva in Sanskrit story literature*, (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 2006) 45 – 47.

5 This verse ascribed to Vikaṭanitambā comes from the anthology *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (verse 3610) compiled by Śārṅgadhara in 1363.

6 In this sentence Govindasvamī makes a pun, which cannot be translated into English. He uses words *abalā* (fragile, weak) and *sabalā* (strong, mighty), which seem to refer to the word *bālā* (young woman) used in the previous verse.

Govindasvamī

Oh lady connoisseur! Is there a hidden *muktaka*,⁷ I haven't heard before, which is a pearl indeed revealed from the space of the shell by your imagination?⁸

Vikaṭānitambā

Oh, Master! I have just captured [the image] of a certain beauty in a hurry, held back from rushing. Friend, recite also this verse with passion!

Friend

Oh, you in a hurry!

What is the use of rushing weighed down?

You may break in half with a bang

under the burden of your bountiful breasts.⁹

7 *muktaka* is a single-verse poem, which is the shortest literary form of *kāvya*. *muktaka* can be an independent work, as well as part of a larger poem or drama, which can be read as autonomous works. Even as a single verse, it is a complete poem and it evokes emotions (*rasa*) in the reader. The most important feature of *muktaka* is its great conciseness. It is achieved by tools like different *alaṅkāras*, e.g. *śleṣa* paronomasia, double entendre) and *dhvani* (suggestion), which allow to express deeper sense, than its literal meaning. Trynkowska A. (1993). "Konwencja kāvyi jako instrument zwiększenia zwięzłości przekazu w sanskryckiej poezji pojedynczej strofy," *Classica Wratislavensa* XVII, 37 – 45.

8 *pratibhā* in the theory of Sanskrit literature is a poetic imagination or genius, essential for creating poetry. Without it, one can never become a great poet. See also page: 226.

9 This verse ascribed to Vikaṭānitambā comes from the anthology *Subhāṣitāvalī* (verse 1549) compiled by Vallabhadeva in 1417-67 CE. The verse depicts a woman, with so abundant breasts, that they make for her difficult to move. This image is in accordance with general canon of women's beauty. Similar depiction can be found in *Kumārasambhava* 1.11:

"Where the Aśvamukhi women do not leave off their lazy gait, bowed down as they are by (the weight of) the hips and full breasts difficult to bear, on the path on which the snow has formed into blocks, and which therefore bites the sides of the toes and the heels." Translation by M.R. Kale, *Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava Cantos I-VII*. (Bombay: The Standard Publishing CO., 1917)

Govindasvamī

Well said. So the body becomes a burden for the delicate young girls. But the burden of separation with their lovers being more intolerable, like a whip, causes the womenfolk to rush.

Vikaṭānitambā

This next verse touches upon a certain woman separated from her beloved,¹⁰ getting upset and heading out for a stroll to the garden.

Govindasvamī

How so?

Friend

Oh wretched one!¹¹ What is the use of growing a mango tree at the entrance?

It is a vicious, poisonous tree!

Just when it is perceived to get a little bit closer to flowering,

Horrified are they, who are about to collapse

because of the fever of love.¹²

10 The type of heroine described here is *viproṣitabhartṛkā* or *proṣitapatikā*— a woman whose husband or lover is absent, traveling somewhere. Although they are in love, they are separated by external factors. The *viproṣitabhartṛkā* is pictured as a heroine lovelorn and devoted to her lover, who faithfully waits for his return.

11 Addressing herself.

12 This verse ascribed to Vikaṭānitambā is quoted in the anthologies *Sūktimuktāvalī* (chapter 59, verse 20) compiled by Jalhana in 1257 CE, *Subhāṣitāvalī* (verse 1682) compiled by Vallabhadeva in 1417-67 CE, and it was cited three times by Bhoja (the 11th century) in his treatise on Sanskrit poetics *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhabharāṇa* (chapter 2, verse 35, chapter 5, verses 456 and 476).

This verse provides a description of spring, when the thriving nature increases the craving for love among all creatures. Blossoming flowers and singing birds provoke passion and desire. Especially fragrance of blooming mango and songs of kokilas are said to cause even angry women to be willing to reconcile with their lovers. However, spring, the most erotic season, is extremely painful for those, who are separated with their beloved ones. D. Feller *The Seasons in Mahākāvya Literature*. (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1995),

Govindasvamī

Unbearable (*duḥsaha*) is a mango tree known as “acting with” (*sahakāra*) – an enemy of those, who are separated, which equips the army of love with young sprouts, clusters of blossoms, swarms of bees and *kokila*’s tone.¹³ Indeed, it is in love poetry of yours – mature poetess – with clearly marked *rasa* and charming words, where thrives longing of lovers, nowhere else.

Who captivated by composition of Vikaṭānitambā’s words,

would not ridicule sweet simplicity of the speech of their own beloveds?¹⁴

In turn, for me, lost in my thoughts, who listened to your stanza, it is a completely new sensual experience between joy and despondence.

Vikaṭānitambā

How so? What is the reason for a despondence?

Govindasvamī

Usually merit has its share in a fault.¹⁵ a husband full of virtues is hard to come by. Getting him, a woman like you, will certainly reach the magnificence just like the jewel towering above the acquired gold.

Vikaṭānitambā

Always and everywhere education was coupled with good taste.¹⁶ But I am afraid that fate will give me a deaf and blind simpleton for my husband. This thought disturbs me over and over again.

13 *kokila* is perhaps the most well known Sanskrit name for an Indian Cuckoo. Here the synonym *parabhṛta* is used. Its musical cry is told to inspire tender emotions. In the spring time *kokilas* are told to sing tone, which represents the *pañcama*, namely the 5th note in Indian gamut, associated with the sentiment of love (*śṛṅgāra*) and laughter (*hāsyā*).

14 This verse ascribed to Rājaśekhara, comes from the anthology *Sūktimuktāvalī* (chapter 4, verse 92) compiled by Jalhana in 1257 CE.

15 The reference to the complex system of flaws and merits of literary works discussed widely by different theoreticians. Bharata, the first who discussed them, defined *guṇas* as “negations of *doṣas*” (*guṇā viparyayādeṣām* Nāṭyaśāstra 16.96 c). For more about *guṇas* and *doṣas*, see: 195.

How could I be the second half of someone, for whom

vihasya is a sixth case, *vihāya* is a fourth and *aham* is a second!¹⁷

Govindasvamī

Misfortune can be remedy. There are such stories about educated women married to dim-witted husbands. Please, listen about the king of Pratiṣṭhāna¹⁸ named Sātavāhana¹⁹, who was not a man of taste.

Vikaṭānitambā

He is certainly famous.

Govindasvamī

This Sātavāhana had a queen, who was well educated in Sanskrit. Once upon a time, her husband, while bathing, violently splashed water with his hands at her, and the disturbed

16 According to Abhinavagupta (X-century philosopher and aesthetician from Kashmir) a poet needs a *sahr̥dāya* – a person with similar aesthetic taste to fully appreciate his works.

17 Although words *vihasya*, *vihāya* and *aham* seem to be inflected with a sixth, fourth and second triplet of endings respectively, in fact they are different grammatical forms. “Vihasya” is the absolutivum of verb $vi\sqrt{has}$, “vihāya” is the absolutivum of the verb $vi\sqrt{hā}$, and “aham” is the first person pronoun in the first case.

This verse was not composed by Vikaṭānitambā, but by the 18th century poetess from Kerala Manoramā Tampurāṭṭi. As a member of a royal family, she had opportunity to get education and master Sanskrit. After death of her first husband a prince of Bepur, she married an illiterate Brahmin. It is about him that the poetess complains in her poem. Although not many of Manoramā’s works was preserved, she was famous for her writing skills and graceful style. K. Kunjunni Raja, *Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature* (Madras: G.S. Press., 1958.)

18 Pratiṣṭhāna, currently known as Paithan, is a town in Indian state Maharashtra, located close to Aurangabad. It was a capital of Sātavāhana dynasty (see below).

19 Name of the dynasty which ruled in Deccan from about 1st BCE to 2nd CE. They were known for using and patronizing Prakrit over Sanskrit. This story originally comes from now-lost work *Bṛhatkathā*, whose author Guṇādhaya describes himself as a minister of king Sātavāhana, however we do not know which one of the rulers of this royal house he could be. Some scholars identify this emperor with king Hāla (20-24 CE), who is famous for compiling an anthology of Prakrit poems *Gāhā Sattasāi*.

queen said: “modakaiḥ tādāya”²⁰. The king willing to please his wife, at once send his orders to the overseers of the palace kitchen and poor queen was overcast with a collection of delightful sweets. “Why are you laughing, why getting angry, why crying?”

Vikaṭānitambā

If I were this chief queen, I do not know, what I would do from anger and disappointment.

Govindasvamī

The most understanding chief queen of Sātavāhana laughing a bit explained to her husband: “mā udakaiḥ tādāya” – I forbade you to splash water. But you my Lord, who does not know *sandhi*,²¹ brought these sweets from the chefs.”

Vikaṭānitambā

Why this very patient queen did not take up the burden of teaching?

Govindasvamī

In fact she did. The ashamed king declared in public: “If some scholar neatens my speech with grammar in six months, I will give him whatever he wants.”

Vikaṭānitambā

How it is possible in six months?

Govindasvamī

Well, among all scholars adorning king’s assembly, not daring [to try], the one named Śarvavarman was bold enough, as he provided this unknown before concise manual of grammar, namely *Kālāpa*²² or *Kātantra*²³

20 This sentence can be translated in two ways: simply as “throw with sweets” or, with the recognition of sandhi rules “*ma udakaiḥ tādāya*” as “do not throw water drops”. These two possibilities are the reason of the misunderstanding between the king and his wife.

21 Here is used the crucial word *sandhi* – which literally means “junction”, “connection” – and in Sanskrit grammar refers to the process of combining adjoining sounds. It occurs within one word applying changes between final and initial letters of root and stem (internal *sandhi*), as well as in a sentence, when it causes modification of final and initial letter of two separate words (external *sandhi*). Most rules for external sandhi are optional, however almost always applied.

Vikaṭānitambā

What a story with this *Kātantra*! I, curious to swim in Pāṇini's great river²⁴, have not ever heard about the streams like *Kātantra*.

Govindasvamī

Some friend of yours is rushing here. May the message she brings be good.

Friend

(coming in and approaching to Vikaṭānitambā)

My Friend, your father is calling you. He wants to announce you something.

22 *Kālāpa* known also as *Kātantra* and *Kaumāryāyāna* (literary “The Grammar of Kumāra”) is a relatively small work on Sanskrit grammar composed by Śārvavarman. It sums up the chief rules of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, but omits less important ones, as well as parts dedicated to Vedic and accent. It was very popular because it allowed to learn Sanskrit easier and faster. According to the legend, its author received the instruction how to compose this grammar from Kumāra, the son of Śiva. Abhyankar M.K.V. a *Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar*, (Baroda: Oriental Research Institute, 1961), 106 – 107.

23 The story about the Sātavāhana originally comes from *Bṛhatkathā*. It explains why the author did not write this work in Sanskrit. *Bṛhatkathā* has been lost, however its several later adaptations have survived. The most famous of them is *Kathāsaritsāgara* written in the 11th century by Somadeva. However, it presents the story of the king Sātavāhana with a slightly different ending. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara*'s version the humiliated emperor was so bereaved, that his ministers wanted to comfort him. At first Guṇāḍhya (the author of *Bṛhatkathā*) promised to teach him Sanskrit in six years, but jealous Śārvavarman obligated to do this in six months. Guṇāḍhya knew that it was impossible and vowed that he would stop using Sanskrit, if his opponent succeeded. Śārvavarman told about it to his wife, who advised him to pray to Kārttikeya (the son of Śiva). Therefore he went to his shrine and fast until the god fulfilled his wish. From that moment embarrassed Guṇāḍhya stopped using Sanskrit and composed his great work *Bṛhatkathā* in Paiśācī. This kind of Prakrit was mentioned in several Indian grammars, however no literary work in it was preserved.

24 This passage hints at the fact that Pāṇini's work *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, i.e. the oldest preserved and the most important treatise on Sanskrit grammar, written about the 4th century BCE, consists of 3981 rules collected in eight chapters concerning morphology and syntax of Sanskrit but it is an extremely concise work. Due to its complex system of metarules, and conciseness, it is very difficult to understand. Therefore numerous later grammarians created commentaries to this work, which explain the original rules.

Vikaṭānitambā

About what matter?

Friend

(delaying the response)

Vikaṭānitambā

What are you waiting for? Speak!

Friend

Your marriage is close.

Vikaṭānitambā

What? But I am married to the Poetry-Man²⁵.

Friend

Nevertheless today you will be given in marriage to some ordinary man.

Vikaṭānitambā

How come?

Friend

I will tell you in secret. (whispering) It is like that.

Govindasvamī

(towards the friend) Hey, speak openly! Certainly, because of transmitting the knowledge to her, rightly I am the father of your friend. It is also my right in giving away Vikaṭānitambā.

25 *Kāvyaṭānitambā* (The Poetry-Man) is the personification of poetry. According to the legend provided by Rājaśekhara in the third chapter of *Kāvyaṭānitambā*, he is a son of Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Speech. When she abandons her son, the other goddess Gaurī wants to comfort him and sends for him a suitable bride – Sāhityā, a personification of poetics. Sāhityā follows Kāvyaṭānitambā, who visits four regions of India trying to find his mother. In each place, attempting to seduce him, she dresses differently, puts different ornaments and dances and sings for him. In this way four styles of poetry (*rīti*) are created. In the city of Vidarbha her effort is so perfect, that he cannot resist and they finally wed. Thus the *vidarbha* style is considered as the best among *rīti*s. Then they find Sarasvatī and Gaurī, who create for them the “heaven of poets”.

Friend

There is. Nevertheless, son in law was chosen by the father. And in the presence of his parents the girl was accepted as a daughter in law. Once and for all the girl was given away.

Govindasvamī

Vikaṭānitambā, do not wait. Come with me. We will meet your father.

(both going out)

(another friend of Vikaṭānitambā enters)

Friend

(to herself)

How is it – our dear friend, who is like Sarasvatī in human form, is marrying this kind of fool, because of her father's stubbornness. Oh, cruel is the girls' fate! (looking around). Are our other friends walking here? And with them some young laughing fool.²⁶

(then friends and young fool are coming)

A certain friend

(to the friend, who was there before)

Hey, have you met the brother in law? Here he is, the learned grammarian, the guru of the poets' guild, who crossed the ocean of knowledge – suitable husband for our friend Vikaṭānitambā, who is a vessel of nectar of eloquent speech. He was sought with a great difficulty by the father of our Vikaṭānitambā!

26 *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides advices for actors on characterization and behaviour on stage. Actors should wear different costumes, make-ups and hair styles according to status, age and birth of their characters. Members of each *varṇa* should be associated with different colors. For *śūdras* and *vaiśyas* the appropriate colour is dark or deep blue (chapter 23, verse 102). Insanity (including derangement of the mind) shall be represented on stage by laughing, weeping, running, crying without a reason. (chapter 7, verse 84-85). The young man is constantly laughing and this is probably the way how he was immediately identified as stupid.

Other friend

All right, I'll come to him and examine him closely.

(approaching the young man and looking at him)

(young man is laughing out of his stupidity)

Friend

Why is he laughing like a fool?

(every friend laughs)

First friend

Hey! Why are you laughing? It is a reason to cry!

Other friend

(looking at the young man)

Hey nobleman! What is your name?

Young Man

The Viaḍaniambāe's hubby! (The Vikaṭanitambā's husband)

Friend

Oh, we women speak in Sanskrit, and this man speaks in Prakrit²⁷ jargon, how twisted is Vikaṭanitambā's fate!²⁸

Other friend

Nobleman, is your name "the Vikaṭanitambā's husband"?

27 Collective name for numerous, closely related Middle Indo-Aryan languages, i.e. languages belonging to the family of Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages, specifically spoken in India which plausibly started being used after the 7th c. CE, i.e. since Sanskrit stopped being a generally spoken language.

28 Reference to the Sanskrit drama theory. It says that women in plays should speak a type of Prakrit called *śaurasenī* instead of Sanskrit, which was reserved for gods and high-status men. Only on the special occasions, high-status and educated women like queens and educated courtesans could also speak Sanskrit. Here the situation is reversed: all the women can speak good Sanskrit, whereas the future husband of one of them is not able to communicate in the language reserved for highly born men.

Young man

(laughing foolishly)

Yeap, my wifey was born to be a poetaster!

(friends laugh)

One friend

“My wife was born to be a poetess!”- he wants to say. Didn’t you complete your Sanskrit studies, Mister? Please, say the word “kleśaḥ”.

Young man

*keśaha.*²⁹

Other friend

(laughing)

No, no! “*kleśaḥ*”!

Young Man

leśaha.

(everybody laughs, while clapping hands)

Other friend

Say “*suṣṭhu*”!

Young Man

suṭḥṭhu.

Other friend

“*suṣṭhu*”.

29 Although all Prakrits are languages closely cognate with Sanskrit, they simplified numerous features with respect to the Old Indo-Aryan languages, among which was the articulation. For this reason the Young Man, who had never learnt Sanskrit, is unable to pronounce correctly these words. In his speech the following changes in articulation can be noticed: three sibilants: s, ś and ṣ were reduced to the dental s, visarga (ḥ) disappeared, most consonant compounds were assimilated or separated by a vowel. Alfred C. Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1928); V. Bubenik, *The Structure and Development of the Middle Indo-Aryan Dialects* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 34.

Young Man

suṣṣu.

Other friend

(in private)

All right, let us say another word.

(openly)

“*māsaḥ*”

Young Man

māṣaha.

Other friend

“*māṣaḥ*”

Young Man

māsaha.

Other friend

All right, now say the next word – “*sakāśam*”.

Young Man

śakāśam.

Other friend

uṣṭraḥ.

Young Man

uṭraha.

(everybody laughs)

Young Man

(over and over)

uṣaha. (everybody laughs)

urṣaha. (everybody laughs)

uṣṭaha. (everybody laughs)

First friend

Oh! This kind of husband for Vikaṭānitambā, servant of the language! How powerful is the fate!

Who says “bean”, while speaking about time and “month” while speaking about crop,³⁰ and “*śakāsam*” instead of “*sakāśam*”,³¹

who in “*uṣṭra*” omits “*ra*” or “*ṣa*”,

to such a man Vikaṭānitambā was given away!³²

30 In Sanskrit *māṣa* means “bean” and *māsa*, “month”. It is a reference to the earlier situation, when the young man pronounced “*māṣa*” instead of “*māsa*”.

31 The word *sakāśam* means “towards, near” but when it is mispronounced as *śakāsam* it has no meaning at all.

32 This verse was quoted by Bhoja in the 29th chapter of his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*. Joyster G.R. ed. Maharaja Bhojaraja’s *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* Forth and Final Volume (Mysore: Coronation Press, 1956), 970.

Avantisundarī

Text

[tataḥ praviśati upaviṣṭā avantisundarī kasminn api pustake dattāvadhānā |

tataḥ praviśati lekhanīpatrahastas tvarayā mahākavī rājaśekharah]

rājaśekharah

priye! avantisundari!

avantisundarī

aye! āryo me bhartā! (iti uttāya vandate)

rājaśekharah

ayi cāhamānakulamaulimālike! ko 'yaṃ kośaviśeṣa ya evam atyantāvadhānena tvayā
saṃmānyate?

avantisundarī

nanu mahārgharatnapūrṇa eva kośah |

rājaśekharah

yady evaṃ kutūhali me manaḥ amīśāṃ mahārgharatnānām ākaraṃ jñātum |

avantisundarī

ratnānām ākaro ratnākaraḥ |

rājaśekharah

jñāyata eva vyutpattiḥ | ka eṣa kaviratnākaraḥ yasya guṇā avantisundarīm api
āvarjayitum utsahante |

avantisundarī

(ātmagatam) kiñcid īrṣyālur iva bhāṣate preyān | bhavatu | parihāsenā rasam
vardhayaīṣyāmi | (prakāśam) priyatama! kiṃ bhaṇāmi sugṛhītanāmnah tasya
kavīśvarasya prabhāvam?

rājaśekharah

bhaṇeti kativāram vā prārthyatām |

avantisundarī

(ātmagatam) īśadunmiṣitaroṣaṣoṇāyamānaṃ puṣyati parāṃ śobhāṃ mukhakamalaṃ me priyatamasya | (prakāśam) kiṃ tatkr̥teḥ kośād eva paṭhāmi?

rājaśekharaḥ

(sāvegam) paṭha |

avantisundarī

bālakaviḥ kavirājah nirbhayarājasya tathā upādhyāyah |

ity etasya paramparayā ātmā mähātmyam ārūḍhaḥ ||

sa etasya kaviḥ śrī – (ity ardhokte vilambate)

rājaśekharaḥ (sasmitaṃ prekṣate)

avantisundarī

‘sa etasya kaviḥ śrī rājaśekharaḥ tribhuvanam api dhavalayanti | hariṇāṅkapratisiddhyā niṣkalaṃkā guṇā yasya ||

(iti paṭhitvā kāntam ālokya hasati)

rājaśekharaḥ

preyasi! na kevalaṃ parihasito ’smi, kintu paraṃ hrepito ’smi | kim iyaṃ me karpūramañjarī tvayā anubhūyate |

avantisundarī

kutra vānyatra ramate me manaḥ?

rājaśekharaḥ

nanu tvadartham eveyaṃ mayā nirmitā prākṛtabhāṣāmayī nāṭikāpratimā saṭṭakam iti kṛtiḥ |

avantisundarī

(sakopam iva) asty atra kim api praṣṭavyam |

rājaśekharaḥ

pr̥cchyatām |

avantisundarī

nāṭyadharmīm anusṛtya strīyam iti mām api kevalam prakṛte eva vijñāṃ matvā khalu bhavatedaṃ prakṛtena saṭṭakaṃ kṛtam |

rājaśekharaḥ

bhāmini! katham idaṃ tvayi saṃbhāvyate? kiṃ nāhaṃ kavirājaḥ?

avantisundarī

kavirājo 'stu bhavān | tataḥ kim?

rājaśekharaḥ

katham tvam apy evaṃ pṛchasi? ko vā kavirājaḥ?

avantisundarī

nanu bhavān eva | idānīm eva uktaṃ bhavatā "ahaṃ kavirājo 'smi" iti |

rājaśekharaḥ

bāḍham, camatkṛto 'smi | ahaṃ tu kavirājaśabdasya viśeṣārthaṃ pṛchāmi |

avantisundarī

bhavān eva vyākhyātu |

rājaśekharaḥ

ayi, sāhityaprasthānaparicayaṃ gūhamānā krīḍārasakutukinī pṛchasi | bhavatu, vivṛṇomi | tatra kaviṣu aneke bhedaḥ, - śāstrakaviḥ, kāvyakaviḥ, arthakaviḥ, alaṅkārikaviḥ, uktikaviḥ, rasakaviḥ, hṛdayakaviḥ, mahākaviḥ, kavirāja ityādayaḥ | tatra anyataraprabandhabhede param pravīṇo mahākavir ucyate |

"yas tu tatra tatra bhāṣāviśeṣe teṣu prabandheṣu tasmimś tasmimś ca rase svatantraḥ sa kavirājaḥ"

avantisundarī

satyaṃ, tvayāpi rītyā bhavān kavirāja eva |

rājaśekharaḥ

madīyaṃ prakṛtaprāgalbhyaṃ prakāṣayitum kavirājjapadaṃ samarthayitum ca evaṃ prakṛte saṭṭakaṃ kṛtam | aparāñ ca nanu na jānāsi tvam |

‘puruṣāḥ saṃkṛtabandhāḥ prakṛtabandho ’pi bhavati sukumāraḥ |

puruṣamahilānāṃ yāvad iha antaraṃ tāvat teṣu ||’

avantisundarī

kavirāja! bhāṣā yā bhavati sā bhavatu | uktiviśeṣaḥ khalu kāvyam |

rājaśekharaḥ

etena jānāmi madīyaṃ saṭṭakaṃ samyagavahitayā tvayā paṭhitam iti |

avantisundarī

tathā paṭhitam anubhūtañ ca | rasaparimalamedureyaṃ karpūramañjarī na kevalaṃ
karṇāvataṃsayogyā, api tu dṛśyavidhayāpi saḥḍayalokam ānandayiṣyati |
āśukavitāvinodavilasitaiḥ hindolovaṭasāvitṛkṛīḍotsavamanoḥaraiḥ
yoginīvalayādinartanamayaiś ca sandarbhaiḥ citriteyam | tadraṅge prayojya etasyā
rasam anububhūṣāmi |

rājaśekharaḥ

sundari! sāhityaguṇaprakāśāya tvam samucitā nikaṣadṛṣad iti suṣṭhu jāne |
prayokṣyāvahe etat saṭṭakam | bhoḥ, ko ’tra chātrāṇām |

(praviśati pustakahasto māṇavakaḥ)

māṇavakaḥ

ācārya, vande |

rājaśekharaḥ

māṇavaka! gaccha rājñas saṅgītaśālām | brūhi asmadvacanād bharatācāryam –

yeyam asmatkṛtiḥ nūtanā karpūramañjarī nāma saṭṭakaṃ bhavaddhaste ’smābhis
samarpitā, tatra manye labdhasīkṣāḥ bhavataḥ śiṣyā iti |

‘cāhamānakulamaulimālikā

rājaśekharakavīndragehinī |

bhartuḥ kṛtim avantisundarī

sā prayojayitum etad icchati ||’

tat sadyas tasya prayogāya saṃbhriyatām sarvam | rājānaṃ vayam eva svayaṃ
nivedayiṣyāmaś ceti |

māṇavakaḥ

yad ācārya ājñāpayati | (niṣkrānto māṇavakaḥ)

rājaśekharaḥ

priye! karpuramañjarīvyatikareṇa antaritaṃ me samprati samāgamaprayojanam!
nipuṇāsi tvam sāhityatattvavicāre 'pīti | tvaritam asmābhir atra lekhinīpatrahastaiḥ
madhyelekham āgatam |

avantisundarī

ko vādyā granthaḥ prastuto bhavatā |

rājaśekharaḥ

paṇḍite! vipulaṃ bahuprasthānam alaṅkāraśāstram | santi ca grantham anāropitāḥ
sahṛdayagoṣṭhīprasiddhāḥ samayāḥ paribhāṣās ca | sarvam etat kroḍīkṛtya
kāvyamīmāṃsā nāma grantho 'smābhir adya samārabdhaḥ | ācāryāṇām
abhiprāyavaividhyaṃ punar nitarām āyāsayati naḥ śemuṣīm | santi kecana viṣayā yatra
tava matikatakena vicārakāluṣyaṃ śodhayitum icchāmi |

avantisundarī

tantraprajāpatibhūtaiḥ daṇḍivāmanādibhiḥ sahṛdayadhurīṇaiḥ ānandavardhanādbhis
saha ekakoṭiṃ mām praveśya mā granthasya anyathā gauravārhasya nikaṣam
āpādayatv atra bhavān |

rājaśekharaḥ

katham iva?

avantisundarī

purobhāgī khalu lokaḥ; preyasīpremnā 'kavirājenaitat svapatnyā nāmadheyam
madhyegrantham udāhāri' iti khalu vadiṣyati |

rājaśekharaḥ

tvanmatasārataiva etam apavādam apākariṣyati | dhanyaṃ manyeta ca taṃ
yasyaitādṛṣam paṇḍityādhivāsitaṃ sumānuṣam saṃpannam | tat svairaṃ bhāṇa | asty
adya vicikitsā ya eṣa kāvyē kaver vācaḥ 'pākaḥ pākaḥ' iti vadanti, ko' yaṃ pāko nāma
iti |

avantisundarī

‘pākaḥ’ anubhavapratyakṣa eva | ācāryā enaṃ katham varṇayanti?

rājaśekharaḥ

‘pariṇāmaḥ supāṃ tiṇāṃ ca śravaḥpriyā vyutpattiḥ’ iti maṅgalaḥ | etādrśīm vyutpattim sauśabdyam manvānā apare ‘padaniveśaniṣkampatā pākaḥ’ iti vadanti: tathaiva vāmanīyā abhiprayanti, yadāhuḥ—

āvāpoddharaṇe tāvat

yāvad dolāyate manaḥ |

padānām sthāpīte sthairye

hanta siddhā sarasvatī ||

avantisundarī

kavisahrdayarājasya bhavataḥ paroḥṣaṃ kiṃ vā tattvam avantisundarī vyākhyātu | yad iyaṃ padānām parivṛttiyasahiṣṇutā tām kaveḥ aśaktim manye, na punaḥ pākam | tasmāt rasocitaśabdārthasūktinibandhanaṃ pākaḥ |

guṇālaṅkārarītiyuktiśabdārthagranthanakramaḥ |

svadate sudhiyām yena vākyapākaḥ sa mām prati ||

sati vaktari satyarthe śabde sati rase sati |

asti tan na vinā yena parisravati vāṅmadhu ||

idam avantisundaryāḥ matam avagacchantu sacetasah |

rājaśekharaḥ

satyam uktaṃ tvayā | ayam aparo vicāraṣayaḥ – kāvye kavibhiḥ varṇanārtham upādīyamānasya arthajātasya svarūpaṃ kīdrśam iti | nissīmany apy arthe rasavata eva nibandha iti bhaṭṭalollaṭaḥ | vayam api tathaiva manyāmahe | tatra pālyakīrtir nāma vadaty evam – yathā tathā vāstu vastuno rūpaṃ, vaktravasthābhāvasvabhāvāyattam eva kāvye samullekhaṃ prāpnoti | yam arthaṃ raktaḥ stauti tam eva virakto nindati | madhyasthaś ca tatra udāste | tathā hi – savallabhānām triyāmā kṣaṇam iva kṣīyate, śītataś ca śaśī; virahiṇām saiva dīrghayāmā, śaśī ca ulkeva santāpakṛt; nirvallabhānām nirvirahāṇāñ ca triyāmā triyāmaiva; induś ca kevaladarpaṇākṛtiḥ; noṣṇo na vā śītalaḥ |

avantisundarī

susṭhūktaṃ tīrthaṃkarapriyaśiṣyeṇa | paśyatv atra bhavān –
vidagdhabhaṇitibhaṅginivedyaṃ vastuno ruṇaṃ na niyatasvabhāvam
vastusvabhāvo 'tra kaver atantraṃ
guṇāguṇāv uktivaśena kāvye |
stuvan nibadhnāty amṛtāṃsum indum
nindaṃs tu doṣākaram āha dhūrtaḥ ||

rājaśekharaḥ

sādhu, pratipāditam sārāsvatamarmajñayā tvayā |

avantisundarī

bhavatu, asti mahaty asmin kaviparamparāpravāhe nāsty eva sa kaviḥ yo yayā kayāpi
vidhayā nopajīvati param pūrvatanam vā kavim | tatra ca parakāvyaḥ prakṛtāḥ
sūkṣmāḥ ca laghavo mahāntāḥ ca bhedaśiṣyā bhavanti |

rājaśekharaḥ

priye, sādhu nirīkṣitam tvayā |
'nāsty acauraḥ kavijanaḥ nāsty acauro vaṇigjanaḥ |
sa nindati vinā vācyam yo jānāti nigūhitum ||

avantisundarī

śabdaharaṇe arthaharaṇe ca ko 'pi bahubhiḥ kāraṇair abhiraṃeta | parimate prasiddhe ca
sati arthajāte yadi kaviḥ pratibhāvād yañjanāmārgaḥ ca nipuṇaḥ, tadā 'mito 'pi anantatām
yāti kāvyamārgaḥ', 'dṛṣṭapūrvā api hy arthāḥ madhumāsa iva drumāḥ', sarve navā iva
ābhānti |'

rājaśekharaḥ

nanu vivṛto 'yam arthaḥ saḥdayāloke |

avantisundarī

satyam | kintu tatra sūcīto 'yam viśayaḥ vistaram saḥate | manye samucitodāharaṇais
sahātra bhavataḥ kāvyamīmāṃsāyām eṣa viśayavicāraḥ prapañcayisyata iti |

rājaśekharaḥ

bāḍham | yathābhīmataṃ tava tathā viṣayam enam upabṛṃhayiṣyāmaḥ | manye tvadīyair
abhiprāyaiḥ ratnair eva naḥ kāvyamīmāṃsāsāstram ujjvaliṣyati |

(mṛdaṅgadhvaniḥ)

aye, mṛdaṅgaśabdaḥ sajjāḥ kuśīlavāḥ | tad ehi karpūramañjarīprayogadarśanāya vayam
api sannihitā bhavāmaḥ |

(niṣkrāntau)

Translation

On the stage appears sitting Avantisundarī focused on some book. Then the great poet Rājaśekhara enters in a hurry with the stylus and a leaf for writing in his hand.

Rājaśekhara

Dear! Avantisundarī!

Avantisundarī

Oh! It's my noble husband!

(having risen, she greets him)

Rājaśekhara

Oh, you, the garland crowning the House of Chauhans!¹ What is this special treasure,² you are honouring by paying so much attention to it?

Avantisundarī

This treasury is indeed filled with the most precious gems.

Rājaśekhara

If it is so, my mind is curious to know the source of these precious gems.

Avantisundarī

The source of the gems is “the source of the gems” (i.e. the ocean).³

1 Royal Rajput dynasty, also known as Chahamanas which ruled in the eastern Rajasthan between the 6th and the 8th century. See also page:170.

2 *kośa* means a treasury, treasure, accumulated wealth, etc. as well as collection of poems. Thus, the lines of the spouses hide ambiguities.

3 The word used here is *ratnākara*, and it means literally a *jewel mine* or a *place of origin of gems* and refers also to the ocean. In Sanskrit literature, ocean was often described as a repository of all kind of gems; see for instance: A. Trynkowska “The ocean in Māgha’s Śisupalavādha,” *Pandanus* '05: *Nature in*

Rājaśekhara

The etymology is well known. Who is the ocean of gems in the form of a poet whose merits are able to gain attention even of Avantisundarī?

Avantisundarī

(to herself)

My dearest one speaks as if he is somewhat jealous. Well, I will increase this feeling by a joke.

(openly)

My love! Shall I speak of the grandeur of this lord among poets who has acquired a good name?

Rājaśekhara

Tell me, how many times can I ask you?

Avantisundarī

(to herself)

The lotus of the face of my dearest one, blushed with slight anger, displays its extreme beauty.⁴

(openly)

Shall I read from the treasure of his work?

Literature, Myth and Ritual, ed. J. Vacek (Praha: Charles University, Faculty of Arts; Signeta, 2005), 61-62. Thus, the level of ambiguity of the sense in conversation between the husband and wife deepens.

4 The features of anger (such as dilated pupils or flushed cheeks) are also characteristics associated with beauty. Raghavan employed here a comparison of a face to a lotus. As is well known, it is a typical motif of *kāvya* literature. However, it is a description of male face provided by women, which is unusual.

Rājaśekhara

(with anxiety) Read.

Avantisundarī

Thus, a young poet became the king of poets, the preceptor of King Nirbhaya⁵ became the king of poets⁶ and according to the tradition, he himself reached greatness.⁷

This is the poet Śrī...

(stops in the middle of the sentence)

Rājaśekhara

(looks at her with smile)

Avantisundarī

This is the poet Śrī Rājaśekhara, whose spotless qualities, in contrast to the Moon,⁸ brighten all three worlds⁹

(having read, looks at her husband and laughs)

5 Mahendrapala I (reigned c. 890–908), a king from the Gurjara – Pratihara dynasty, which ruled a large part of Northern India between the 8th and the 11th century. Under the reign of his father, Mihira Bhoja, and his own, the kingdom reached its height of prosperity and power. He was the royal patron of Rājaśekhara, who often called him *Nirbhaya* – Fearless. H. Kulke, D. Rothermund, *A History of India*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 113 – 114.

6 From a technical point of view, *kavirāja* is not indeed a *tatpuruṣa* compound, but rather a *karmadhāraya* conveying the sense of “king-poet”, i.e. a poet envisioned as a king, since any partitive genitive as a member of compound is explicitly prohibited by Pāṇini in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.2.10. Nonetheless, for practical purposes this compound is here always translated as “king of poets”.

7 *Karpūramañjarī* 8.

8 The word used here for the Moon is *hariṇāṅka*, which literally means *deer-marked* and refers to the dark spots visible on the surface of the Moon.

9 *Karpūramañjarī* 9.

Rājaśekhara

My dear! Not only am I mocked, but I am really ashamed. Is it my *Karpūramañjarī* that you are enjoying?

Avantisundarī

And where else my mind may find pleasure?

Rājaśekhara

Indeed, I created in Prakrit work called *saṭṭaka*,¹⁰ which resembles *nāṭikā*,¹¹ especially for you.

Avantisundarī

(as if being angry)

There is something I need to ask.

Rājaśekhara

So, ask.

10 A minor genre of Prakrit drama corresponding to Sanskrit *nāṭikā* (see below). Its plot concentrates on love between a king and a young maiden who in fact is a disguised princess destined to marry the king. The lovers have to struggle against the jealous chief queen who, although devoted to the king, at first tries to prevent their marriage. Eventually, the elder queen helps the king and the princess to unite in marriage. Unlike *nāṭikā* it contains *adbhuta* – elements of marvellous *rasa* and it has no introductory scene nor the structural divisions – *vimarśa sandhi*. During staging a *saṭṭaka* music, dancing and singing should be involved. *Karpūramañjarī* is usually given by theorists as an example of perfect *saṭṭaka*. A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers 1998), 233 – 234.

11 A genre of Sanskrit drama belonging to *uparūpakas* – minor genres. a play of this type consists of four acts and it concentrates on love between a king and a young maiden – disguised princess, overcoming obstacles on their way to marriage. Although *nāṭikā* was not described in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it became popular due to plays attributed to the King Harṣa (c. 7th century). The dominant *rasa* in *nāṭikā* is *hāsya* (laughter) with elements of *vīra* (heroism) and *śṛṅgāra* (love). A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers 1998), 233 – 234.

Avantisundarī

Having followed the rules of drama,¹² you assumed that because I am a woman I know only Prakrit, and therefore you composed *saṭṭaka* in Prakrit.

Rājaśekhara

Oh, angry beauty!¹³ How can you think like this? Am I not The King of Poets?¹⁴

Avantisundarī

You may be the king of poets. So what?

Rājaśekhara

Why do you put things this way? Who indeed is a king of poets?

Avantisundarī

Certainly, you are. Just now you have said: “I am the king of poets”.

Rājaśekhara

Indeed, I am proud [of this]. But I’m asking about the specific meaning of the term “king of poets”.

Avantisundarī

So, explain it.

12 In Sanskrit plays not all characters are entitled to actually speak Sanskrit – it depends on their status. *Nāṭyaśāstra* gives rules according to which Sanskrit can be used by gods, kings, brahmins, ministers and learned people. Women and persons of inferior position should speak Prakrits, although some important women like chief queens, princesses, Buddhist nuns and courtesans may also use Sanskrit.

13 *bhāminī* – a heroine in which anger is associated with beauty.

14 “A king of poets” is a type of poets distinguished by Rājaśekhara in *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. It refers to a poet at the height of his career, See also page: 210.

Rājaśekhara

You, hiding your knowledge on the details of theory of literature, want to play games with me, and that's why you ask. Let it be, I will explain. There are many types among poets: *śāstrakavis* – poet-scholars, *kāvya-kavis* – specialists in refined poetry, *arthakavis* – those concentrating on meaning, *alamkāra-kavi* – concentrating on figures of speech, *uktikavis* – authors of *subhāṣitas*, *rasakavis* – experts in poetic feelings, *hrdayakavis* – poets of hearts, *mahākavis* – great poets, *kavirājas* – kings of poets. etc. Among them the one who is skilled in many types of compositions is called *mahākavi* – a great poet.

“Among them the one who is called kavirāja – a king of poets – is an expert composer¹⁵ in all specific languages, in all genres and in all rasas.”¹⁶

Avantisundarī

True, even according to this statement you are a king of poets.

Rājaśekhara

This *saṭṭakam* was written in Prakrit to show my expertise in Prakrit and in order to justify the title “the king of poets”. And moreover, don't you know:

“Composition in Sanskrit is harsh but in Prakrit it is very delicate,

The difference between them is like the difference between a man and a woman.”¹⁷

Avantisundarī

Oh, King of poets! May the language be as it is. Poetry is the specific speech.¹⁸

15 The *sutra* language term *svatantra* – which literally means ‘independent, free’, here is used in the sense of somebody who is free to use any form of poetry, i.e. who has at his disposal all the skills and inspiration sufficient to handle any kind of poetry.

16 On the term *kavirāja* see also page: 189.

17 *Karpūramañjarī* verse 1.7 (present in the edition of Konow, edition of Ghosh lacks this verse).

18 It may be a reference to *vakrokti* – see page: 235.

Rājaśekhara

I know then, that my *saṭṭaka* was read by you with full attention.

Avantisundarī

Yes, I have read and understood it. This full of fragrance and enjoyment of feelings *Karpūramañjarī* is not only capable to be an ornament for the ears, but due to its impact on the sight, it would give pleasure to the world of connoisseurs. It is brilliant because of weaved together: manifestations of pleasure, which gives the poetry created *ex tempore* (*āśukavitā*),¹⁹ attractive joys of festival play on a swing on the Sāvitrī's banyan tree,²⁰ joys of dancing bracelets and other [jewellery] on yoginīs. I want to experience the drama's taste when it is performed on a stage.

Rājaśekhara

O, beautiful one! I know well that you are as a proper touchstone when comes to revealing qualities of a drama. We shall perform this *saṭṭakam*. Hey, is there any student here?

(a student enters with a book in his hand)

19 *āśukavitā* is a poetic exercise when poets have to *ex tempore* compose verses on given themes. However, it may be also a reference to an assumption that *Karpūramañjarī* was intended as a play for a private performance at the author's house for a circle (*goṣṭhi*) of friends. See: Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature Vol. 5 (Śaktibhadra to Dhanapāla)*, 426,

20 Reference to the plot of *Karpūramañjarī*. In the play, there is depicted Banyan Sāvitrī Festival, celebrated by women to preserve their husband, as Sāvitrī saved the life of her husband. The oldest version comes from the *Vana Parva (The Book of Forest)* of the *Mahābhārata*. Sāvitrī married Satyavān knowing that he is destined to die in exactly one year. When he died, Sāvitrī placed his body under the banyan tree. After arrival of Yama, the god of death, Sāvitrī followed him. Astonished by her wisdom and purity, the god granted her four boons always excluding bringing Satyavān back to life. While promising her the fifth boon, Yama did not exclude the life of Satyavān. Sāvitrī immediately asked for it and the god brought him back to life. During the Hindu festival Vat Purnima, married women tie knots around banyan trees to show commitment for their husbands and commemorate the deeds of Sāvitrī.

Student

I salute to you, teacher.

Rājaśekhara

O student! Go to the king's music hall. Tell my words to the actors' teacher:

This new *saṭṭaka* named *Karpūramañjarī* I composed is bestowed by me in your hands, I hope for your students who received the training to be in it.

The garland crowning the Chahamana family,

The wife of Rājaśekhara, the greatest among poets,²¹

This Avantisundarī wants to put on stage

the work of [her] husband.²²

Therefore, everything should be arranged for its performance. And I will announce this to the King by myself.

Student

As you order, teacher.

(student leaves)

Rājaśekhara

Oh dear! The reason for my arrival now is not in connection with *Karpūramañjarī*'s case. "You are skilled in determining the essence of literature" [I thought] and I immediately came here, in the middle of writing, with the stylus and leaf in hands.

21 *kavīndra*- 'Indra-poet, i.e. as a poet is Indra' is a *karmadhāraya* and not a *tatpuruṣa*, but the translation 'the greatest among poets' is here preferred because it is poetically more effective.

22 *Karpūramañjarī* 10.

Avantisundarī

And what composition has been started today by you?

Rājaśekhara

Oh, learned one! The knowledge about alaṅkāras is very extensive and has many aspects. And there are practices²³ and rules not fixed by any treatise, although well known among the assemblies of connoisseurs. After collecting all these topics, today I began [to write] this work called *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*. The diversity of opinions among the teachers again, by all means confuses my mind. There are some matters where I want your opinions to clean the dirtiness of doubts, as if they were the seeds of *kataka*²⁴.

Avantisundarī

Do not cause degradation [of importance] to the book, otherwise deserving admiration, by putting me at the same place with Daṇḍin, Vāmana and others who became like Prajāpati²⁵ to the theory [of literature] and Ānandavardhana and other chiefs among connoisseurs.

Rājaśekhara

How come?

23 The word *samaya* might be a reference to *kavisamaya* – poetical conventions described for the first time by Rājaśekhara in the 14th chapter of *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā*. *kavisamayās* are fanciful and creative descriptions of certain things or objects, not necessarily coherent with factual knowledge. The theorist divided them into three categories: *svargya* (celestial), *bhauma* (terrestrial) and *pātālīya* (of nether world), which are further subdivided into four kinds according to: *jāti* (origin), *dravya* (substance) *guṇa* (quality) *kriyā* (action). Every one of them is again divided into its own three categories. See also: S. Parashar, *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara*, 222 – 234.

24 *kataka*; in Hindi *nirmali*; *Strychnos potatorum*, known commonly as cleaning nut tree, is a small or medium size deciduous tree. Its nuts are used in the traditional medicine and to purify water prior to drinking in India and Myanmar.

25 In the Vedic mythology, he is the creator of the world, gods and all living beings. *Prajāpati* literally means the Lord of creatures. As a title, it was also applied to other Vedic gods like Indra, Agni, Viśvakarman, Soma. Later, it was used mainly for Brahmā or his sons (their number varies between 7, 10 and 21 according to different sources) who are believed to be the agents of creation.

Avantisundarī

People indeed are malevolent. They will surely say: “This king of poets put the name of his own wife in the middle of the book because of affection to his beloved.”

Rājaśekhara

The value of your views will remove this accusation. Worthy people will recognise this as wealth which is imbued with that kind of fragrance of scholarship. So, you may speak freely. There is a doubt about what in poetry, as they say, is the perfection – *pāka* of poets’ speech. What in fact is this which is called *pāka*?

Avantisundarī

The perfection – *pāka* [means] “perceptible [as known] from experience”. How do the teachers describe it?

Rājaśekhara

According to Maṅgala,²⁶ perfection or maturity – *pariṇāma* – is the effect pleasant to the ears, connected with nominal and verbal inflected words. This maturity is called by others *sauśabdya*, and they say: “the perfection – *pāka* – is the firm arrangement of words”. This is what was said by Vāmana²⁷ and his followers:

“As long as the mind is hesitating,

there is insertion and removing of words.

26 Theoretician of Sanskrit literature from circa 10th century. The work of Maṅgala was not preserved independently; however, some fragments of the text were included by Rājaśekhara in his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. See: K. Krishnamoorthy, “Maṅgala, a Neglected Name in Sanskrit Poetics,” *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 20, 3, 1971, 247 – 255.

27 Theorist of Sanskrit literature, probably related to the court of king Jayapīḍa of Kashmir (799 – 813), author of *Kāvyālaṅkārasūtravṛtti*.

But once their firmness is accomplished,

oh, the poetry is perfect!”²⁸

Avantisundarī

Should Avantisundarī explain the principle that is unknown for you, the king of poets and connoisseurs? What is the inability of transforming words I consider a weakness of a poet, not the perfection. Therefore, the perfection is employment of good speech, meaning and words, proper for *rasa*.

This maturity of sentence which delights connoisseurs, is, in my opinion, an arranged sequence of sense and sound expressed with [care for] style, ornaments and qualities.

“It is there, when the speaker is present, when the meaning is present, when the word is present, when the *rasa* is present,

without this a honey-speech does not flow.”²⁹

May the connoisseurs understand the view of Avantisundarī.

Rājaśekhara

You said right. This is another topic for discussion: things of what nature should be described in poetry by poets? According to Bhaṭṭalollaṭa³⁰, among limitless meanings, only those full of *rasa* suit for composition. And I also think like this. Then Pālyakīrti³¹ says this: Whatever form of thing may be, it depends on the speaker’s (i.e. author’s) own nature and the character of situation how it is reflected in poetry; what is praised by

28 *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti* 1.3.15

29 *Kāvyaḷaṃkārasūtravṛtti* 1.2.11 quoted in *Kāvyaṃmāṃsā. Kāvyaṃmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, (*Oriental Institute Baroda: Gaekwad’s Series, 1924*) 20.

30 Theorist of Sanskrit literature from the 9th century, author of commentary to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. None of his work was preserved independently; however, some of his ideas were quoted in the preserved works of later theoreticians.

31 Poetician, grammarian and a court poet of king Amoghavarṣa I from Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty, who lived c. 9th century and belonged to a Jain community. He is the author of a treatise on Sanskrit grammar *Śākaṭāyanavyākaraṇa* and its commentary called *Amoghavṛtti* after his patron.

person in love, this is blamed by indifferent and not noticed by the one in the middle. Therefore, for those who are with their lovers night³² is reduced to a moment, and the moon seems to be cold; for those who are in separation it is like a long watch and the moon creates heat like a fire falling from heaven; and for those who don't have lovers three *yāmas* are only three *yāmas* and the Moon is just like a mirror, neither cold, nor hot.³³

Avantisundarī

The dear student of *tīrthaṅkara*³⁴ said correctly. Please look, the form of a thing is presented through a specific style of a learned man, its nature is not fixed.

Then, the nature of things does not depend on a poet,

In poetry with its qualities and defects it depends on the expression.

The praiser shows the Moon as the Nectar-radiant.³⁵

But blaming it, the mocking rouge called it the Night-maker³⁶ (also: a mine of faults).³⁷

32 The word used for a night *triyāmā* literally means: consisting of three *yāmas* – period of three hours. This word is used here to emphasize that length of the night is the same in every case.

33 This sentence is a paraphrase of a sentence from the 9th chapter of *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, (Oriental Institute Baroda: Gaekwad's Series, 1924) 45.

34 Avantisundarī refers to a Jain theorist of literature – Pālyakīrti. *Tīrthaṅkara* is a deified spiritual Jain teacher whose teaching shows the way to the final liberation. See also: P. Balcerowicz, *Dżinizm. Starożytna religia Indii*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2003), 49 – 57.

35 *amṛtāṃśū* means *the one who has rays full of nectar*. The Moon is considered as a container of the elixir of immortality.

36 It is a pun. The compound *doṣākara* can be translated in two ways: as “the one, who creates night”, that is the Moon and as “the mine of defects”, which refers to the spots on the Moon's surface.

37 This verse comes from the 9th chapter of *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, and it is indeed ascribed to Avantisundarī. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, (Oriental Institute Baroda: Gaekwad's Series, 1924), 46.

Rājaśekhara

You know the essence of literature and you said right.

Avantisundarī

Let it be, in this extremely big stream of poets' traditions, there is no such poet who does not somehow depend on another or former poet. In taking from others' poetry there are specific distinctions: [the borrowings can be] obvious and subtle, small and big.

Rājaśekhara

Dear, your observation is correct.

There is no poet who is not a thief, there is no merchant who is not a thief.

He, who knows how to disguise it without being blamed, rejoices.³⁸

Avantisundarī

Somebody may be interested in stealing words and stealing meanings because of many reasons. When the objects are well known and limited, if a poet possesses poetic imagination³⁹ and is skilled in using implied suggestion,⁴⁰ then the poetic path, although limited, becomes infinite – meanings are like trees in springtime – even though seen earlier, all appear to be new.

38 This verse comes from the 11th chapter of *Kāvyaśikṣā*. *Kāvyaśikṣā of Rājaśekhara*, ed. C. D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Śastry, (Oriental Institute Baroda: Gaekwad's Series, 1924), 61.

39 As is well known, *pratibhā* literally means image, light, splendour, imagination, intelligence, understanding, but in the context of Sanskrit poetics it conveys the sense of poetic creativity. According to Ānandavardhana, it was the most important quality of a poet. K. Krishnamoorthy, "Ānandavardhana's Treatment of Pratibhā in Relation to Dhvani," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 31, no. 1/4 (1950): 143–51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44028397>. See also page: 226

40 Equally famous is *vyañjanā* – implied indication, allusion, suggestion. It was considered as an important poetical function in the *dhvani* theory, and it was discussed in detail by Ānandavardhana. Because of *vyañjanā*, each reader of a poetry can experience a sense which is not manifested directly in the text. V. K. Chari, "The Indian Theory of Suggestion (Dhvani)," *Philosophy East and West* 27, no. 4 (1977): 391–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1397981>.

Rājaśekhara

Indeed, this reason is explained in *Sahṛdayāloka*.⁴¹

Avantisundarī

Correct. But the topic indicated there should be developed further. I think that this thought should be expanded in your *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* by proper examples.

Rājaśekhara

Agreed. As you wish, I will expand this subject. I think that my *Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā* will shine because of your opinions like gems.

(sounds of drums)

Oh, the sound of drums. The actors are ready. Come then to see the performance of *Karpūramañjarī*, I am also ready.

(These two are going out)

41 A work on Sanskrit poetics known also under the names *Dhvanyāloka* and *Kāvyaāloka* written in the 9th century by Ānandavardhana. The main text (*kārikās*) is sometimes ascribed to a different author – Dhvanikāra (literally: *Creator of dhvani*) and Ānandavardhana was – according to this hypothesis – merely the author of the commentary (*vṛtti*). In *Dhvanyāloka* for the first time was presented the *dhvani* (*sound, allusion, suggestion*) theory.

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