

**An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory**  
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**Lecture- 04**  
**The Actual Relation Between Kāvyaśāstra or Kāvya**

Hello everyone, in this video lecture, we are going to talk about the actual relation between kāvyaśāstra and kāvya. From its beginning in 7 th century C.E. till around 17 C.E., kāvyaśāstra tradition clearly exercised a considerable influence upon the production of kāvya in what Pollock calls the Sanskrit cosmopolis. Mastering kāvyaśāstra was considered an essential prerequisite for an aspiring poet.


Daṇḍin's observation regarding the importance of education in kāvyaśāstra is a representative case in this regard.

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According to Daṇḍin, “Just as a blind person cannot distinguish between different colours, so also a poet untrained in poetics cannot differentiate between poetic merits and faults.”.

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न विद्यते यद्यपि पूर्ववासनागुणानुबन्धि प्रतिभानमत्भुतम्।  
श्रुतेन यत्तेन च वागुपासिता।  
ध्रुवम्करोत्येव कमप्यनुग्रहम्

[Even if a poet is naturally endowed with poetic genius,  
she or he can master the art of poetry  
simply by learning and practicing kāvyāśāstra]  
( Kāvyaśāstra I. 104)

He goes on to say that even if a poet is not naturally endowed with poetic genius, she or he can master the art of poetry simply by learning and practicing kāvyāśāstra.

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शब्दाभिधेये विज्ञाय क्रत्वा तद्विदुपासनं।  
विलोक्यान्यनिबन्धंश्च कार्यः काव्यक्रियादरः॥

(An aspiring poet should venture into composing  
kāvyas only after achieving mastery  
over all the śāstras related to kāvyā.)  
(Kāvyaśāstra I.10)

According to Bhāmaha, the earliest exponent of kāvyāśāstra, an aspiring poet should venture into composing kāvyas only after achieving mastery over all the śāstras related to kāvyā. Vāmana holds that a poet should understand the guṇas or poetic merit and doṣas or poet faults of kāvyā by getting educated in kāvyāśāstra, and even if a person is endowed with poetic talent by birth, he or she should definitely undergo training in poetics.

In his Kāvyaśāstra, Rājasekhara emphasises the importance of education in kāvyāśāstra by saying that

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शास्त्रपूर्वकत्वात् काव्यानां पूरुव शास्त्रेष्वभिनिविशेत्।  
नह्यप्रत्रितप्रदिपास्ते तवार्धसार्धमध्यक्ष्यन्ति॥

[The prior knowledge of śāstra is essential for a fuller appreciation of kāvya. Just as nothing is visible in the dark without the aid of light so also no poet can create without the knowledge of śāstra] (Kāvyamīmāṃsa 20)

“[t]he prior knowledge of śāstra is essential for a fuller appreciation of kāvya.” According to him, “Just as nothing is visible in the dark without the aid of light so also no poet can create without the knowledge of śāstra.” All these observations attest to the fact that mastery over kāvyaśāstra was as important as pratibha or inborn genius for a person to become a kavi. These observations show that mastering kāvyaśāstra was essential for a person aspiring to become a poet. And a person who desires to become kavi should know the essential rules of kavyasastra.

Now the next point that we need to address is the place in which Sanskrit kāvyaśāstra was being produced. As in the case of Sanskrit kāvya, the royal court was obviously one of the major locations for the production of treatises on literary science. For example, Daṇḍin whose Kāvyaadarśa exercised a veritable influence upon vernacular poetics, was associated with the court of Śivaskandavarman of Pallava dynasty in Kāñcīpuram;

Vāmana and Udbhaṭa were members in the court of king Jayāpīḍa of Kashmir; Ānandavardhana and Mukula were associated with King Avantivarman in Kashmir; Dhanañjaya was a courtier of the Paramara King Vākpati Munja; Vidyādharma and Viśvanātha were associated with an unknown king in Kalinga; Jagannātha, the author of the famous Rasagaṅgādhara was associated with the court of Shah Jahan, and Viśveśvara with the royal court of Almora. Bhoja, the author of the voluminous Śringāraprakāśa and Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharāṇa, himself was a king who ruled the city of Dhara in today’s Madhya

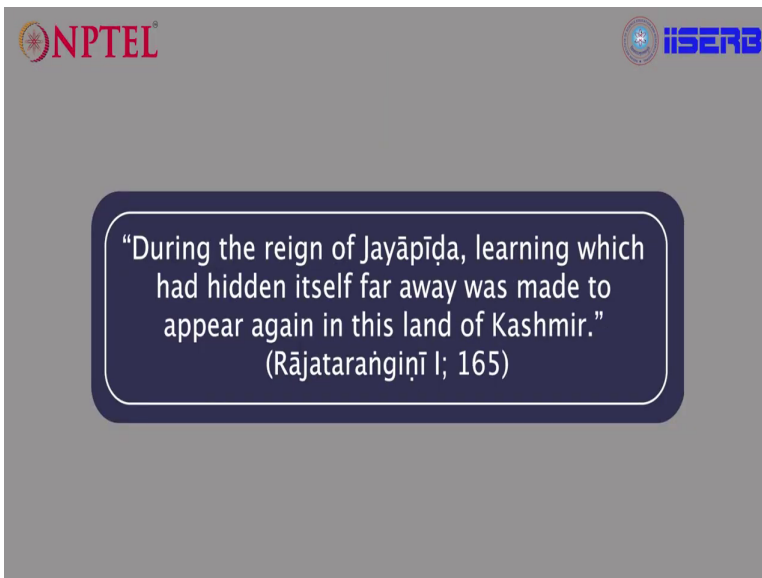
Pradesh. Arjunavarmadeva who is the author of Rasikasāñjīvani was a king in the lineage of Bhoja of Dhara. Singabhūpāla, the author of Rasārṇavasudhākara, was also a king in a small country in today's Andhra Pradesh.

Although the treatises on Sanskrit kāvyāśāstra was produced all over the Sanskrit cosmopolis, what rose to fame as the prime locus of the production of Sanskrit literary theories was undoubtedly the place which we now call Kashmir. A few names that mark the prominence of Kashmir in the intellectual history of Sanskrit kāvyāśāstra include Bhāmaha, Vāmana, Udbhāṭa, Ānandavardhana, Rudraṭa, Pratiharendurāja, Mukula Bhaṭṭa, Kuntaka, Bhaṭṭa Tauta , Mammaṭa, Mahima Bhaṭṭa , Abhinavagupta, Tilaka, Ruyyaka and so on.

Even though Kashmir's tradition of literary science began with Bhāmaha's Kāvyaśāstra in the 7th century C.E., what gave it a real impetus was the reign of King Jayāpīḍa in the eighth century. King Jayāpīḍa was the grandson of King Lalitāditya, the celebrated patron of art and science. Lalitāditya's reign was followed by an age of political turmoil and a consequent lull in the intellectual and creative exercise in Kashmir.

Jayāpīḍa who wished to restore his grandfather's era of glory, generously funded both intellectuals and creative writers. We can say for certain that it was under King Jayāpīḍa that school of literary criticism in Kashmir originated. Kalhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī talks highly about Jayāpīḍa's reign.

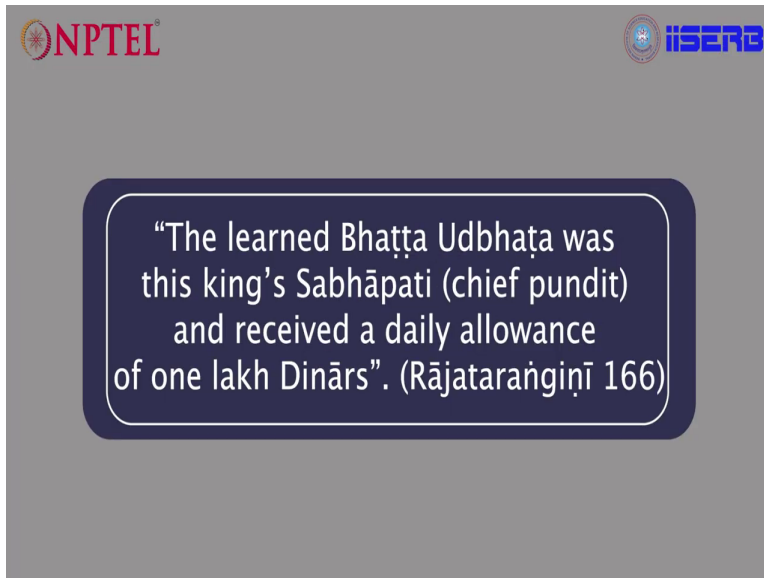
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According to Rājatarāṅgiṇī, “During the reign of Jayāpīḍa, learning which had hidden itself far away, was made to appear again in this land of Kashmir”.

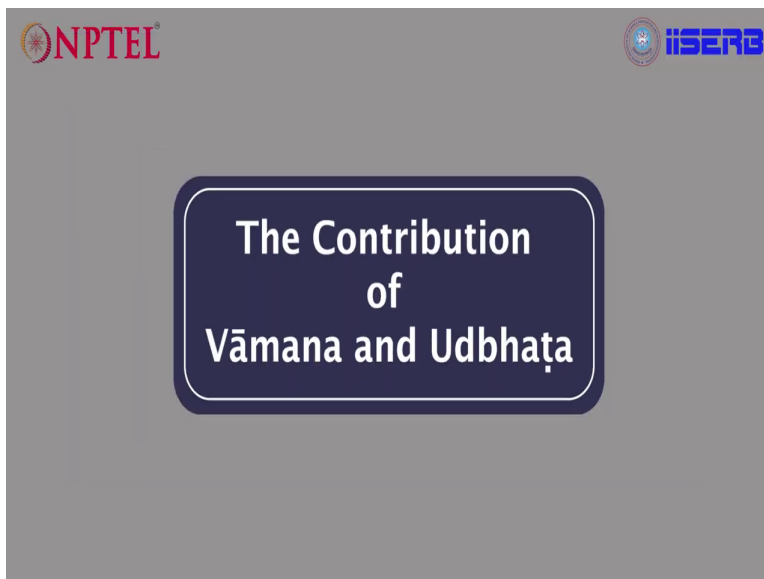
The two major literary theoreticians in the court of King Jayāpīḍa were Udbhaṭa and Vāmana.

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Kalhaṇa observes that “The learned Bhaṭṭa Udbhaṭa who was Jayāpīḍa’s Sabhāpati or chief pundit received a daily allowance of one lakh Dinārs. As far as the history of kāvyaśāstra was concerned, Udbhaṭa and Vāmana from Kashmir played a vital in shaping the intellectual ethos of literary theory.

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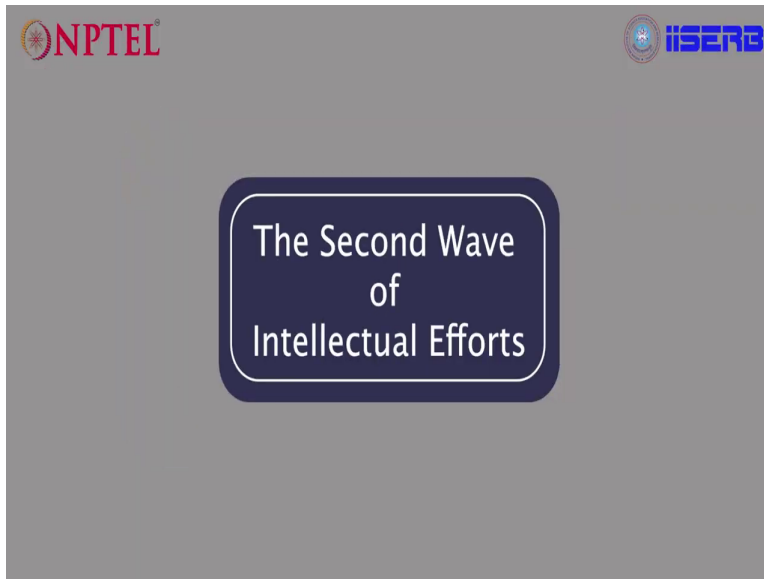
Udbhaṭa and Vāmana's texts, namely Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha and Kāvyaṅkāra-sūtravṛtti, are undoubtedly the forerunners of systematization in Sanskrit poetics in terms of their size, style, and approach. First of all, the critical corpus of Vāmana and Udbhaṭa alone is as large as all the earlier works on poetics put together. This is primarily due to the productivity of Udbhaṭa, who authored three works in the field of kāvyāśāstra, namely Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha, Bhāmaha-vivaraṇa and a commentary on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra.

The first one, that is Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha, is of particular importance. It was an extensive scholastic commentary on Bhāmaha's Kāvyaṅkāra and the first such learned treatise in this tradition. Through his Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha, Udbhaṭa also set a new model for the composition of treatises on literary science by approaching a core text with a succession of commentaries. Vāmana even went a step further by composing a sūtra text in clear imitation of Pāṇini's aphorisms. He also supplied them with a self-written commentary, surely hoping that additional sub-commentaries would at some point follow.

While Udbhaṭa's predecessors like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, for the most part, composed impromptu stand-alone verses in order to explicate the literary tropes and figures of speech that they mentioned in their treatises, Udbhaṭa made use of verses from his own full-fledged poem Kumārasaṃbhava to serve this purpose.

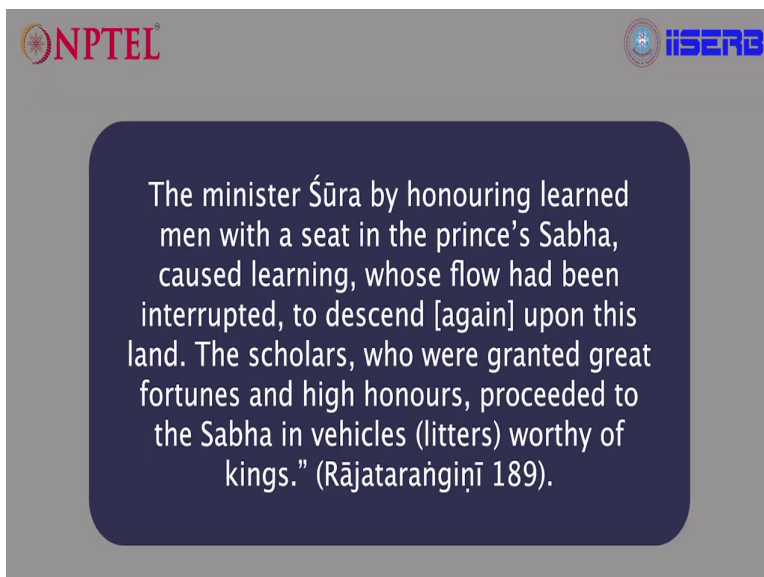
This was the first time when kāvyāśāstra actually borrowed verses from an independent literary work to explicate various critical concepts. According to scholars like K. Krishnamoorthy, excerpts from the Vivaraṇa clearly show that Udbhaṭa was engaged in close reading and criticism, a trend we find later in critics like Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. Vāmana, Udbhaṭa's successor, even incorporated poems from other writers of his period. In his commentary on his own aphorisms, Vāmana explicitly drew the attention of his readers to this unique feature of his work, and he clearly tried to choose examples that were popular or striking. It is also significant to note that while critics like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin laid emphasis on the way poetry could be composed, Vāmana and Udbhaṭa focused more on the processes through which poetry was being cognized and appreciated. Considering these innovations and turning points in literary theory during the reign of King Jayāpīḍa, Daniel Ingalls says that, "It was under King Jayāpīḍa that the school of literary criticism in Kashmir originated."

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After Jayāpīḍa’s reign, there was again an intellectual lull in Kashmir because of the political instability during this period. The second crucial landmark in the history of kāvyaśāstra in Kashmir occurred during the rule of King Avantivarman of Utpala dynasty in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Kalhaṇa’s observation about the revival of love for knowledge during the reign of Avantivarman is noteworthy here.

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According to Kalhana “The minister Śūra by honouring learned men with a seat in the prince’s Sabha, caused learning, whose flow had been interrupted, to descend [again] upon this land. The scholars, who were granted great fortunes and high honours, proceeded to the Sabha in vehicles worthy of kings.”

It was in Avantivarman's court that the great literary theorist Ānandavardhana, in fact produced his famous Dhvanyāloka which, in fact, revolutionized Sanskrit literary science through the concept of dhvani.

After the death of king Avantivarman in A.D 883, especially during the reign of Śankaravarman in the late ninth-century and that of Queen Didda in the mid-tenth-century, courtly patronage for literature and literary criticism again had a very serious setback. Sanskrit literary production once again got arrested during this period, obviously because of the political turmoil of this period.

Didda's reign was particularly a period of rebellion and total violence. Following her husband's death, she placed her son Abhimanyu on the throne, and ruled on his behalf for some time. But, not long after his coming of age, Didda's son Abhimanyu passed away. After Abhimanyu's death, Didda placed three of her grandsons on the throne, and they were all murdered after enjoying brief stints of sovereignty.

Finally, she assumed power for some time in her own right, and eventually left the kingdom to her nephew who she had apparently chosen after a careful examination.

The withdrawal of royal patronage during the time of Śankaravarman and queen Didda resulted in a near dearth of literary production in Kashmir. We have no Sanskrit lyric or play from Kashmir during this period.

The only mahākāvya that is available from this period is Abhinandana's Kādambarī-kathā-sāra. However, the tradition of Sanskrit scholarship, especially Śaiva philosophy and kāvyaśāstra, continued to flourish chiefly because of the Brahmins living in the capital or on their tax-free grants of land. They made sure that their sons were trained in grammar and other scholarly disciplines in Sanskrit.

So we have a lot of texts on Sanskrit literary theory from both the 10 th and 11 th centuries such as Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's Hṛdayadarpaṇa, Dhanañjaya's Daśarūpaka, Bhaṭṭa Tauta's Kāvya-kautuka, Kuntaka's Vakroktijīvita, Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabhāratī, Mahima Bhaṭṭa's Vyaktiviveka and Mammaṭa's Kāvya-prakāśa.



Of all these texts, Mammaṭa's Kāvyaṣāstra deserves a special mention here because of a large number of commentaries it invited from both his contemporaries and successors. These numerous commentaries bear testimony to the popularity that Kāvyaṣāstra enjoyed in Sanskrit literary circle. Bhāskara opines that there are almost a thousand commentaries on Kāvyaṣāstra, and among them, his is the best one.

In his commentary on Kāvyaṣāstra, Bhīmasena Dikṣita opines that although several commentaries on Kāvyaṣāstra are available these days, none of them are as good as his. Maheśvara, the author of Kāvyaṣāstra darśana, says that although a commentary of Kāvyaṣāstra is prepared in almost all houses, it still escapes the grasp of intellectuals by its innovative nature.

Among the numerous commentaries on Kāvyaṣāstra, some of the important ones include Kāvyaṣāstra-śāntas of Ruyyaka, Māṇikyacandra, Someśvara and Śrīdhara Thakkura; Bālacittānurañjini of Narahari and Sarasvatīrtha; Kāvyaṣāstra dīpika of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa; Sāhityadīpika of Caṇḍidāsa, Kāvyaṣāstra-darśana-s of Viśvanātha and Maheśvara and Kāvyaṣāstraṭīkā of Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa. Kāvyaṣāstra was mostly a reformulation of the ideas already discussed in detail by other literary theoreticians.

So it is still a matter of wonder as to what element in Kāvyaṣāstra endeared it so much to scholars. One possible reason could be that its text-bookish nature, comprehensively collating almost all ideas from the preceding scholars, might have helped both the preceptors and disciples of Sanskrit literary science to have a bird's-eye view of all the major lessons of kāvyāśāstra.

In the 12th century C.E., under King Harṣa's reign, Sanskrit learning in Kashmir again faced a serious crisis from which it could never survive. After the twelfth-century, no new literary theory was produced in Kashmir and the last major kāvyāśāstra text to be circulated outside of Kashmir was Alaṅkāraśāstra of Śobhākaramitra from the end of the twelfth-century. The 12th century C.E. is often considered the endpoint of the early phase of kāvyāśāstra on two grounds.

First of all it marks the end of Kashmir's prominence as the center of Sanskrit learning in general and kavīśāstra tradition in particular. And secondly the post 12th century phase is

characterized by the dwindling of Sanskrit monopoly as the only language of science and literature and the emergence of vernacular literary tradition. The corpus of writings that Sanskrit kavyasastra tradition produced during the entire span of the early phase starting from 7 CE to 12th century CE can be broadly classified into 8 schools such as alaṅkāra, rīti, guṇa, doṣa, dhvani, vakrokti, anumāna, and aucitya.

In this lecture we have been talking about the relation between kavyasastra and kavya. From its beginning in the 7th century CE till around 17th century CE kavyasastra tradition clearly exercised a considerable influence upon the production of kavya. We saw the observations of various Sanskrit literary theoreticians in this respect. Sanskrit literary theoreticians as early as Bhamaha believed that a person aspiring to become a poet should necessarily need to get trained in kavyasastra.

The next point that we discussed was the location in which Sanskrit treatises on kavyasastra were being produced. We noted that, as in the case of Sanskrit kavya, the royal court was obviously one of the major locations for the production of treatises on literary science. In this context, we also discussed the importance of Kashmir in the intellectual history of Sanskrit poetics.

Although the treatises on Sanskrit kavyasastra was produced all over the Sanskrit cosmopolis, what rose to the fame as the prime locus of the production of Sanskrit literary theories was undoubtedly Kashmir. In connection with our exploration of Kashmir's contribution to poetics we noted two major historical points. The first one was the reign of king Jayapida. The two major literary theoreticians in the court of king Jayapeda were Udbhata and Vamana. Bhatudbhata and Vamana played a vital role in shaping the intellectual ethos of literary theory in general.

We saw that Udbhata and Vamana's text namely Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha and Kāvyaṅkāra-sūtravṛtti are undoubtedly the forerunners of systematization in Sanskrit poetics in terms of their size style and approach. First of all, the critical corpus of Vamana and Udbhata alone is as large as all the earlier works on poetics put together. Through his Kāvyaṅkāra-sāra-saṃgraha Udbhata set a new model for the composition of treatises on literary science by approaching a core text with a succession of commentaries.

In this respect, Vamana even went a step further by composing a sutra text in clear imitation of Panani's aphorism. He also supplied them with a self-written written commentary. We have also seen that Udbhata's predecessors like Bhamaha and Dandin, for the most part, composed impromptu standalone verses in order to explicate the literary tropes and figures of speech. Udbhata made use of verses from his own full-fledged poem Kumārasaṃbhava to serve this purpose.

This was the first time when kāvyasāstra actually borrowed verses from an independent literary work to explicate various critical concepts. It is also significantly note that while critics like Bhamaha and Dandin laid emphasis on the way poetry could be composed. Vamana and Udbhata focused more on the process through which poetry was cognized and appreciated. The second crucial landmark in the history of kavyasastra in kashmir occurred during the role of king Avantivarman of Utpala dynasty in the 9th century.

It was in Avantivarman's court that the great literary theorist Anandavardhana produced his famous Dhvanyāloka, which revolutionized Sanskrit literary science through the concept of dhvani. After the reign of king Avantivarman in A.D 883, especially during the reign of Śankaravarman in the late ninth-century and that of Queen Didda in the mid-tenth-century, courtly patronage for literature and literary criticism again had a setback.

It resulted in a near dearth of literary production in Kashmir. We have no Sanskrit lyric or play from Kashmir during this period. The only mahākāvya that is available from this period is Abhinandana's Kādambarī-kathā-sāra. However, the traditional Sanskrit scholarship especially shiva philosophy and kavyasastra continued to flourish. We saw that in the 12th century CE under king Harsha's reign, Sanskrit learning in Kashmir again faced a serious crisis from which it could never survive.

After the 12th century, no new literary theory was produced in Kashmir, and the last major kavyasastra text to be circulated outside of Kashmir was Alaṅkāratnākara of Śobhākaramitra from the end of the twelfth-century. So, the 12th century CE can be considered the endpoint of the early phase of kavyasastra on two grounds.

First of all, it marks the end of Kashmir's prominence as the centre of Sanskrit learning in general and kavyasastra tradition in particular. Secondly, post-12th-century phase is characterized by the dwindling of Sanskrit's monopoly as the only language of science and

literature and then the emergence of the vernacular literary tradition. An important text that we discussed in this lecture was Mammaṭa's Kāvyaṣakāṣa. We have seen that Mammaṭa's Kāvyaṣakāṣa is particularly important in the history of Sanskrit literary theory precisely because of the sheer number of commentaries on kavyasastra by both Mammata's contemporaries and successors. I hope you have understood the lessons in this lecture. Thank you!