

Sanskrit Sāhitya (संस्कृत साहित्य)

Introduction

Sanskrit literature is the symbol of the soul of India. This literature, created over 5000 years, is a glorious depiction of the emotions, imaginations, resolves and desires of its people and their wonderous land. Sanskrit literature is an ever-evolving ever-growing tradition, unprecedented in its richness and diversity. Its progress can be divided into four phases:

1. Era of Genesis (2500 BCE to 1500 BCE),
2. Era of Establishment or Assertion (1500 BCE to 500 BCE)
3. Era of Prosperity, (1000 BCE to 1200 CE)
4. Era of Expansion (1200 CE – till date)

1. **Era of Genesis (2500 BCE to 1500 BCE):** Stretched through several millennia the beginning of this era is marked with the commencement of Vedic/Sanskrit literature. This was the period when ṛṣis (ऋषि)/sages experienced and perceived the Vedic Mantras (मन्त्र). Vedic Saṁhitā (संहिता) and Brāhmaṇa (ब्राह्मण) treatises were created, traditions of Upaniṣadic contemplations developed. The heritage of folk literature in the form of legends, stories and folklores was created and compiled.
2. **Era of Establishment or Assertion (1500 BCE to 500 BCE):** During this period, several prime significant works such as Rāmāyaṇa (रामायण) and Mahābhārata (महाभारत), as well as some of the Upaniṣad (उपनिषद्), compositions of which had begun much earlier, came to prominence and were systematized in their prevailing forms. Traditions of philosophical thought processes belonging to a much older period reached their culmination point. These included the Śaḍdarśana (षड्दर्शन) or six schools of philosophy of Āstika (आस्तिक) category and the Jaina (जैन), Bauddha (बौद्ध), and Cārvāka (चार्वाक) philosophies. Timeless great litterateurs such as Kālidāsa (कालिदास) and Bhāsa (भास), established Sanskrit poetic and dramatic literature universally as a fine sublime literature.
3. **Era of prosperity (1000 BCE to 1200 CE):** This period saw growth of the philosophical thought process and scientific ideations. There were new speculations and experiments in the fields of astrology, mathematics, geometry, chemistry, Ayurvedic medicine as well as the philosophical systems. Great philosophers such as Diṅnāga (दिङ्नाग), Dharmakīrti (धर्मकीर्ति), Vasubandhu (वसुबन्धु), Jayantabhaṭṭa (जयन्तभट्ट),

Maṇḍana Miśra (मण्डन मिश्र), Vācaspati Miśra (वाचस्पति मिश्र), Śaṅkarācārya (शङ्कराचार्य), Udayanācārya (उदयनाचार्य) were influenced by this progress of knowledge and science. The great triad of Sanskrit Mahākāvya (महाकाव्य) (Kirātārjunīya (किरातार्जुनीय), Śiśupālavadha (शिशुपालवध), and Naiṣadhīya-carita (नैषधीय-चरित)) was composed in this period. New genres of poetic literature, such as historical epic poetry, Rāga-kāvya (राग-काव्य), Śāstra-kāvya (शास्त्र-काव्य) and Stotra-kāvya (स्तोत्र-काव्य) emerged in this period. These genres displayed remarkable synthesis of devotion, philosophy and poetry which is unparalleled in world literature till today.

4. **Era of Expansion (1200 CE – till date):** This period witnessed the rise of new Indian languages. Sanskrit literature got connected with folklore and local literature. The genres of Kāvyaśāstra (काव्यशास्त्र) - literary criticism and Saundaryaśāstra (सौंदर्यशास्त्र) - aesthetics saw the rise of prominent scholars and thinkers such as Mammaṭa (मम्मट), Ruṃyaka (रुय्यक), Maṅkha (मङ्ख), Viśvanātha (विश्वनाथ), Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (जगन्नाथ पण्डितराज), Kṣemendra (क्षेमेन्द्र), etc., and in the recent period Reva Prasad Dvivedi (रेवा प्रसाद द्विवेदी), Radha Vallabh Tripathi, etc. Poets like Bilhaṇa (बिल्हण), Mūkakavi (मूककवि), Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita (नीलकण्ठ दीक्षित), Rāmapāṇivāda (रामपाणिवाद) explored untouched emotions and with new imagery and experimentations and once again enriched the soil of Sanskrit literature. In the 19th and 20th centuries, by virtue of the Indian Renaissance, National freedom movement and contact with European literature, new horizons of style and composition emerged in Sanskrit literature.

Sanskrit Sāhitya (संस्कृत साहित्य) or Fine Sanskrit literature can be broadly categorized as Mahākāvya (महाकाव्य) or epic poetry, Rūpaka (रूपक) or plays, Gadya kāvya (गद्य काव्य) or prose literature, Khaṇḍakāvya (खण्डकाव्य) or small poems and Campū (चंपू) literature.

Mahākāvya (महाकाव्य) – Epic Poetry

The oldest compositions of Sanskrit Sāhitya or fine Sanskrit literature after the Vedic literature is Mahākāvya (epic poetry) or Kāvya (काव्य) i.e, poetry. It would not be out of place to assume that the Sanskrit kāvya literature though highly stylized, had its origin in two great and outstanding epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata.

Besides being compositions of the nature of Itihāsa (इतिहास) and Purāṇa (पुराण), Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are also ārṣa (आर्ष) epics or scriptures composed by sages or ṛṣis and

upajīvyā (उपजीव्य) epics, that on which one can earn one's livelihood, usually by narrating or singing stories from these epics.

Every significant poet of Sanskrit was influenced by these two prime epics and there emerged innumerable subsequent compositions based on the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. Rāmāyaṇa was Ādikāvya (आदिकाव्य), the first composition in the category of non-Vedic or Loukika (लौकिक) popular literature and Vālmīki (वाल्मीकि), its composer, became the Ādikavi (आदिकवि), the first poet. Vālmīki put this popular narrative in a format and made it immortal.

The writing of creative or fine Sanskrit literature started in ~500 BCE, with the commencement of the composition of Rāmāyaṇa and subsequently Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata comprising of 18 chapters is one of the world's longest epics. Composed by Vedavyāsa (वेदव्यास), Mahābhārata showcases genres of prose, poetry, and drama rich in its diversity of characters, emotions, and narration. Encased in it is the philosophical message of the Bhagavad Gītā (भगवद् गीता).

In the Post ārṣa epic period, there came a galaxy of poets. The most prominent among them were Aśvaghōṣa (अश्वघोष), Kālidāsa (कालिदास), Bhāravi (भारवि), Māgha (माघ) and Śrīharṣa (श्रीहर्ष), collectively known as **Pañca Mahākavi (पञ्च महाकवि)** or five Great Poets.

Aśvaghōṣa (अश्वघोष)

Aśvaghōṣa is considered as the first Mahākavi of the Sanskrit Kāvya literature and predecessor of Kālidāsa. His mention in records from the time of Kaniṣka (कनिष्क) puts his period around 100 CE. According to tradition, he was the court-poet/poet laureate of Emperor Kaniṣka. His most famous works include Buddhacarita (बुद्धचरित), Saundarananda (सौन्दरनन्द) and Śāriputraprakaraṇa (शारिपुत्रप्रकरण).

Most prominent of these is the 'Buddhacarita' (Life of Buddha), which had 28 sargas (सर्ग) or cantos in its original form and in the Tibetan translations. Unfortunately, only 17 sargas are available today in Sanskrit. In this beautifully crafted Mahakāvya on the life of Buddha, Aśvaghōṣa expresses the depth of his intense devotion to Buddha and the truth of Buddha's doctrine with poetic emotion and vivid imagery. His ability to elucidate intricate concepts through lucid verses is exceptional. His analogies, selected from daily life events, are richly infused with poetic expression, free of complicated and rigid scholarly dogma. In the following verse use of verbs cacāra (चचार) and śaśāma (शशाम) has added to the decorative beauty in terms of **yamaka (यमक)**, a part of speech, besides indicating his tremendous and profound command over grammar.

तदा हि तज्जन्मनि तस्य राज्ञो मनोरिवादित्यसुतस्य राज्ये।
चचार हर्षः प्रणनाश पाप्मा जज्वाल धर्मः कलुषः शशाम॥२.१६॥

Then, at the time of the birth of that king , as well as in the kingdom of that king, who was comparable with Manu, the son of Sun, Joy prevailed and sin got destroyed; dharma became very prominent and bright and wickedness faded away.

Aśvaghōṣa's second famous work is 'Saundarananda' an epic composition of 18 sargas, marked with high grounds of poetic beauty and philosophical exposition. It describes Buddha's half-brother Nanda's (नन्द) reluctant conversion to an ascetic life, his immense love for his beautiful wife Sundarī (सुन्दरी) and his conflicted feelings as he is torn between his passion for Sundarī and the allure of Buddha's divine knowledge:

तं गौरवं बुद्धगतं चकर्ष भार्यानुरागः पुनराचकर्ष ।
सोऽनिश्चयात् नापि ययौ न तस्थौ तरन् तरङ्गेश्चिव राजहंसः ॥४.४२॥

Reverence for the Buddha drew him on; at the same time love for his wife drew him back. Irresolute, he neither went nor stayed, like a swan pushing forwards against the waves.

Aśvaghōṣa enumerates all the righteous and good qualities of human nature through picturesque descriptions of the land of Kapilavastu (कपिलवस्तु).

यत्र स्म मीयते ब्रह्म कश्चित् कैश्चिन्न मीयते ।
काले निमीयते सोमो न चाकाले प्रमीयते ॥

This is the Himalayan region, where sages contemplate and meditate on Brahman; nobody indulges in violent activities. Soma is measured and controlled at the right moment; and no body dies pre-maturely.

Aśvaghōṣa also wrote plays. He had profound knowledge of grammar and astute understanding of politics. Born a Brahmin and converted to Buddhism, he strongly condemned the caste system by drawing examples from the Vedas and Mahābhārata to demonstrate the 'sārvabhauma' (सार्वभौम) or universal sentiment.

Kālidāsa (कालिदास)

Kālidāsa is considered as the greatest Sanskrit poet and author of all times. It is difficult to establish the period of Kālidāsa due to multiple reasons. Kālidāsa did not write about himself in any of his compositions. His name was a legend and was used as a title by many other poets

causing further confusion in establishing true authorship and time of various available works. However, his vivid descriptions of landscapes, urban setting, and court life, indicate an association with Candragupta II (चन्द्रगुप्त २), dating his period as 320 – 480 CE.

Kālidāsa was extensively well versed in the courtesies and virtues of an exemplary citizen. In addition to his inherent literary skills, he had in-depth knowledge of politics, warfare, philosophy, and fine arts. He was well acquainted with the diversity and variety of urban life. Despite living a luxurious life in the later period of his life, he was not so immersed in it to disregard the value of ideals. He aimed at portraying the staunch truth of human life on the rich canvas of literature.

Of all the works of Kālidāsa, seven are available today - three dramas - Abhijñānaśākuntalam (अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्) (Recognition of Śakuntalā), Mālavikāgnimitram (मालविकाग्निमित्रम्) (Mālavikā and Agnimitra), and Vikramōrvaśīyam (विक्रमोर्वशीयम्) (Urvaśī won by Valour), two epic poems - Raghuvamśam (रघुवंशम्) (Dynasty of Raghu) and Kumārasambhavam (कुमारसम्भवम्) (Birth of Kumāra) and two Khaṇḍakāvya (खण्डकाव्य) or small poems - Ṛtusamhāra (ऋतुसंहार) (Nice Garland of Seasons) and Meghadūta (मेघदूत) (Cloud Messenger).

Ṛtusamhāra, Kālidāsa's earliest composition, describes the six seasons through the experiences of two lovers in each of the seasons. The poem echoes with his pervading love and accuracy of observation of all aspects of nature. Meghadūta, a small poem, is the story of a Yakṣa (यक्ष) trying to send a message to his lover through a cloud. With Meghadūta, Kālidāsa created his own genre of poetry. It is one of Kālidāsa's most popular poems and truly incomparable in its lyrical sweetness and intricacies of emotions. In Raghuvamśam, Kālidāsa has courageously taken up the immensely popular and revered story from epic Rāmāyaṇa and rendered it into a glorious composition with his brilliance and genius. Description of characters of several kings in Raghu genealogy is the additional feature of Raghuvamśam.

Kālidāsa was a rare genius who possessed both – the fluency and intellect to weave external nature with human feeling with ingenious similes. There is a famous saying about him: “उपमा कालिदासस्य” (Upama Kālidāsasya) – Kālidāsa the Genius of similes.

He excels in his ability to use similes drawn from life and nature to convey the nobility, profundity, and richness of human emotions. Following verses are some examples which depict human emotions through the grandeur of apt similes (उपमा).

Kālidāsa sets himself to undertake the stupendous task of describing Raghu's genealogy, Raghuvamśam. With utmost modesty he writes:

क्व सूर्यप्रभवो वंशः क्व चाल्पविषया मतिः।
तितीर्षुर्दुस्तरं मोहादुडुपेनास्मि सागरम्॥१-२॥

There is no comparison between the Raghu's race which has originated from none other than the Sun deity and my intelligence, which has tremendous limitations in understanding even very few subjects. I am like an ignorant person who wants to cross the ocean with a tiny boat.

मन्दः कवियशः प्रार्थी गमिष्याम्युपहास्यताम्।
प्रांशुलभ्ये फले लोभादुद्धारिव वामनः॥१-३॥

I am a feeble person who wants to gain success and fame as a poet, and surely I will make myself a laughing stock for others, just like a person who raises hands to pluck such a fruit from a tree which is accessible only to a tall individual.

About Kālidāsa the following verse is immensely popular which beautifully and poetically depicts his uniqueness in the field of poetry:

पुरा कवीनां गणनाप्रसङ्गे कनिष्ठिकाधिष्ठितकालिदासः।
अद्यापि तत्तुल्यकवेरभावात् अनामिका सार्थवती बभूव ॥

In olden times, when all the poets were being counted according to their poetic prowess and ability, Kālidāsa was assigned the little finger denoting his first place. But, no poet of the genius comparable with him has existed till today; hence, the finger next to little finger which is called 'Anāmikā' (one without a name) ever remained true to its name, on which no other name can mount.

Bhāravi (भारवि)

Bhāravi (~ 600-680 CE) was the foremost successor of Kālidāsa. Poets up to the period of Kālidāsa gave importance to the expressing emotion with grace and lyrical beauty. Bhāravi introduced a style with cultivated expression and aesthetics. His most famous work Kirātārjunīya (किरातार्जुनीय) - Arjuna (अर्जुन) and the hunter (किराता), is the story from the Mahābhārata. When in exile, Arjuna's penance frightens the gods. On their appeal Śiva (शिव) descends to earth as a hunter – Kirāta (किरात), challenges Arjuna and after a duel grants him boons of weapons. Bhāravi takes a simple and small episode and expands it into a Mahakāvya with 18 sargas. He embellishes all the episodes with magical elements. He is a master of dialogues with refined and technical style of metrical composition and clever argumentative word play. भारवेरर्थगौरवम् – Bhāravi is known for the gravity and grandeur of the purport in his poetic expressions.

His power of description is refined, elaborate and entertaining. However, he does not digress from the rules of grammar but in fact displays precise knowledge of the subject. His approach

to poetic exposition is practical. He ensures that the verses are well arranged with no ambiguity and loss of meaning or context.

Bhāravi believed:

स्फुटता न पदैरपाकृता न च न स्वीकृतमर्थगौरवम् ।
रचिता पृथगर्थता गिरां न च सामर्थ्यमपोहितं क्वचित् ॥२.२७॥

Words should be laid down or set in such a manner that they do not hinder the clarity in meaning. Sublimity and gravity of purport or import is ever maintained and intended variety in the meanings of the words should be intact. Every word should explicitly expose its own meaning. Words and imports of words should not dominate each other.

Here is a verse representing poetic eminence of Bhāravi, which he has maintained uniformly through the whole epic:

शुचि भूषयति श्रुतं वपुः प्रशमस्तस्य भवत्यलंक्रिया ।
प्रशमाभरणं पराक्रमः स नयापादितसिद्धिभूषणः ॥२.३२॥

Study of sacred Vedas is the ornament of human body whereas tranquillity or composure adorn the study of Vedas. Courage and valour are the ornaments of tranquillity or composure. Courage and valour are adorned by the accomplishments achieved through righteous conduct.

Māgha (माघ)

The composer of the Mahakāvya Śisūpālavadha (शिशुपालवध), Māgha ranks among the prominent Mahākavis. As per records and references found in later literature, the period of Māgha is placed at 700 CE. He wrote the epic poem 'Śisūpālavadha'. Based on an episode of Mahābhārata, regarding the killing of Śisūpāla (शिशुपाल) by Lord Kṛṣṇa (कृष्ण) with His Sudarshana Chakra (सुदर्शन चक्र) (disc), this epic is composed on the lines of 'Kirātārjunīya'. There is overt similarity between the two Mahakāvyas as regards the political dialogues, statecraft, description of battles and mountains. Māgha employs a similar but more extensive style of skilful configuration of words and figures of speech and surpasses Bhāravi. He is said to have all the three special attributes put together, each of which was individually possessed by the three great poets or Mahākavis, eg., Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Daṇḍī (दण्डी). This aspect is manifested in the following verse composed by some literary critic:

उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेरर्थगौरवम् ।
दण्डिनः पदलालित्यं माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः॥

The excellence of Kālidāsa is in use of simile (उपमा), of Bhāravi is gravity of meaning (अर्थगौरवम्); Dandi's is the beauty in setting words(पदलालित्य) whereas Māgha possesses all the three qualities.

The similies of Māgha are scholarly and hit the target accurately. Every word used by Māgha testifies his genius. Here are two examples:

त्वयि भौमं गते जेतुम् अरौत्सीत् स पुरीमिमाम्।
प्रोषितार्यमणं मेरोरन्धकारस्तटीमिव ॥२.३९॥

Referring to Śrīkr̥ṣṇa someone says - "When you went on the mission of winning Narakāsura, Śīsupāla cordoned off this city of yours just like darkness encompasses the shores of Meru mountain after sunset."

Here the poet compares Śrīkr̥ṣṇa with the Sun and his city with the shores of the mountain Meru. By doing this he has lifted his describable subjects from the ground and set them at the remarkably high pedestal.

तृप्तियोगः परेणापि महिम्ना न महीयसाम्।
पूर्णश्चन्द्रोदयाकाङ्क्षी दृष्टान्तोऽत्र महार्णवः॥

Mightier and powerful people are not satisfied even after achieving abundant prosperity.

Here the example is the ocean, that is filled to the brim, still wants to have rising moon. Lord Śrīkr̥ṣṇa is like magnanimous ocean.

Śrīharṣa (श्रीहर्ष)

Śrīharṣa was a poet and philosopher in the court of King Jayacandra (जयचन्द्र) around first half of the 12th century CE. Śrīharṣa was a reputed scholar of the different systems of Indian philosophy and had exemplary command over grammar and rhetoric. His epic poem 'Naiṣadhīya-carita' (नैषधीय-चरित), one of the excellent compositions of Sanskrit literature, is the enchanting story of Nala (नल) and Damayantī (दमयन्ती) taken from the Mahābhārata. It is composed with wonderful poetic maturity and charm even though it is decorated with ornate style of verse. His brilliance is seen in the arrangement of figures of speech, proper investment of sentiment, emotion and imagination, command over grammar and sophisticated combination of philosophical and classical knowledge. His works, as is commonly believed, are not for the ordinary but for scholars or men of learning.

In his own words –

ग्रंथग्रन्थिरिह क्वचित्क्वचिदपि न्यासि प्रयत्नान्मया
प्राज्ञमन्यमना हठेन पठति मास्मिन् खलः खेलतु।
श्रद्धाराद्धगुरुश्लथीकृतदृढग्रन्थिः समासादय-
त्वेतत्काव्यरसोर्मिमज्जनसुखव्यासज्जनं सज्जनः॥

My poetry is not meant for such wicked people who consider themselves too sapient or too wise. They should not play with it for their pastime. Because they are just incapable of solving the riddles and undo the knots which I have set in with great and special efforts. A compassionate and tasteful person, who is really and honestly wishes to immerse in and float over the waves of love and passion instilled in my poetic compositions, should learn it from a revered Guru or teacher. Then, after having contemplated and with profound and repeated meditation will he become able to comprehend the concealed riddles.

In the 17th sarga of Naiṣadhīya-carita poet's lament culminates into the essence of Buddhist philosophy:

उभयी प्रकृतिः कामे सज्जेदिति मुनेर्मनः।
अपवर्गे तृतीयेति भणतः पाणिनेरपि ॥

According to Buddha two sorts of creation – men and women – are inclined towards cupid, only third sort, i.e., eunuch, is inclined towards the path of Mokṣa or salvation. Even Pāṇini's aphorism “अपवर्गे तृतीया” also means this only.

What a statement! In this example, Śrīharṣa, with his imaginative genius, has given a twist to Pāṇini's (पाणिनि) aphorism. Whole epic is full of such majestic sprinklings.

Besides these great names as the composers of epics, there were several other poets, such as Bhaṭṭi (भट्टि) (610 CE-615 CE), writer of Bhaṭṭikāvya (भट्टिकाव्य) or Rāvaṇavadha Mahākāvya (रावणवध महाकाव्य); Kashmiri poets Maṅkha (मङ्ख), Hariścandra (हरिश्चन्द्र) , Vāgbhaṭa (वाग्भट) (all ~1200 CE), Amaracandra (अमरचन्द्र), Devaprabhasūri (देवप्रभसूरि), Vāmanabhaṭṭabāṇa (वामनभट्टबाण) (all ~1300 CE), in 1500 CE Sakalakīrti (सकलकीर्ति) and Jinadāsa (जिनदास) wrote Harivaṁśa (हरिवंश) and in 1600 CE Śubhacandra (शुभचन्द्र) composed Pāṇḍavapurāṇa (पाण्डवपुराण) also known as Jaina Mahābhārata (जैन महाभारत). Cidambara (चिदम्बर) (1586-1614) composed an epic Rāghava-yādava-pāṇḍaviya (राघव-यादव-पाण्डवीय). In this spectacular creation Cidambara depicted Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Bhāgavata (भागवत), simultaneously interpreting it in three ways by using triple-entendre paronomasia or a figure of speech known in Sanskrit as Śleṣa (श्लेष).

After this period up to the contemporary era the writing of epics receded to a great extent. Yet, in the last 80 years considerable amount of work has been done in Sanskrit, including some new and innovative genres. These will be discussed in a separate segment.

Rūpaka (रूपक) – Sanskrit Drama Literature

Bharatamuni's (भरतमुनि) Nāṭyaśāstra (नाट्यशास्त्र) written ~200 BCE and 200 CE, but estimates vary between 500 BCE and 500 CE, is a detailed treatise on aspects of theatre art forms and has for centuries been a prestigious and influential text of classical Sanskrit theatre. With the synthesis of music, art, and literature a new genre of drama was created. The invention of drama made it possible to present education, entertainment, and knowledge in an innovative manner/style. According to Nāṭyaśāstra, Rūpaka is that genre of literature which constitutes part of the performing art. This is presented on stage as a drama or play. It is composed in an intermingled prose-verse format.

योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः
सोऽगाद्यभिनयोपेतः नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते ॥ नाट्यशास्त्रम् १/१२१ ॥

Human behaviour which is intimately connected with happiness and sadness, when integrated and depicted by physical and other forms of acting, is called Nāṭya or drama

Rūpaka literature evolved in the favourable Indian literary environment with the intent of depicting aesthetics of human emotions (rasa-bhāva -रस-भाव) through acting/performance (abhinaya - अभिनय). The Rūpakas emphasised more on arousal and experiencing of emotions than characterization or narration. Based on idealistic principles and steeped in sentiments and aesthetics, Rūpakas are successful in delving deep within the human heart and analysing its most intense emotions. Poetic expression is predominant in Rūpakas and is not compromised at the expense of narration or characterization. However, despite flights of poetry, the realistic tone of the plot is maintained. Due to the dominance of emotions and aesthetics the characters are more typical (vargīya -वर्गीय) than individualistic (vyaktiparaka - व्यक्तिपरक). The main protagonist is always noble minded and humble, either portrayed as human or divine.

Although there are a few plays written with tragic ends, main thrust is on composing Rūpakas with happy endings. It is significant to note that as per Indian philosophical thought process the final aim of human life is आत्यन्तिक दुःख निवृत्ति or to end the ultimate pain and misery - duḥkha (दुःख). The plays such as Uttararāmacarita (उत्तररामचरित) are the ideal models of such tragic ending drama compositions. But such tragic ending plays are minimal in Sanskrit literature.

In the Nāṭyaśāstra concept of rasa has been dealt with elaborately. Rasa is the central theory of Nāṭyaśāstra, which enumerates 8 rasas- śṛṅgāra (शृङ्गार) - love or romance, bhayānaka (भयानक) – fear or terror, bībhatsa (बीभत्स) – disgust or revolt, vīra (वीर) -

courage or heroism, hāsya (हास्य) – laughter or comedy, karuṇa (करुण) - tragedy or compassion, raudra (रौद्र) - rage or anger, and adbhuta (अद्भुत) – surprise or wonder. According to some Āchāryas (आचार्य) there is a ninth rasa called Śānta (शान्त) - calmness or tranquillity. Rasa is also a philosophical concept in Sanskrit literature which denotes the aesthetic essence of any literary, musical, or visual art form which evokes an emotion, which can be experienced but cannot be perfectly described.

Nāṭakakāra (नाटककार) - Dramatists/Playwrights

Nāṭya (drama/theatre) has been as an ever-present element of the human life since the origin of creation. The beginning of Sanskrit Nāṭya is seen since Vedic times – in the composition of sūktas (सूक्त) and in the dialogue of yajña (यज्ञ) procedures. Nāṭya further developed with enactment and depiction of episodes/stories from the Rāmāyaṇa (रामायण), Mahābhārata (महाभारत), and Purāṇas (पुराण). The sūta (सूत) of the Vedic era became the Sūtradhāra (सूत्रधार) or narrator. Granthika (ग्रन्थिक) or relater/narrator, read these stories and Kuśīlava (कुशीलव) or the wandering bards sang them. There was formation of Nāṭaka Maṇḍalī (नाटक मण्डली) or theatre groups, who presented variety of drama, dance, and dance-dramas to the public. In this backdrop, emerged works of eminent dramatists (Nāṭakakāra - नाटककार) such as **Bhāsa's (भास)** (150 BCE – 250 CE) Svapnavāsavadattā (स्वप्नवासवदत्ता), **Aśvaghōṣa's** (~100 CE) Śāriputraprakaraṇa (शारिपुत्रप्रकरण), **Kālidāsa's (कालिदास)** (~4th c. CE) Abhijñānaśākuntalam (अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्), **Śūdraka's (शूद्रक)** Mṛcchakaṭikā (मृच्छकटिका) (period not known), **Harṣa's (हर्ष)** Ratnāvalī (रत्नावली) (606-648 CE), **Viśākhadatta's (विशाखदत्त)** Mudrārākṣasa (मुद्राराक्षस) (second half of 600 CE), **Bhavabhūti's (भवभूति)** Uttararāmacarita (उत्तररामचरित) (~700 CE). They were followed by prominent playwrights such as Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa (भट्टनारायण) (~700 CE) and Murāri (मुरारि) (early 9th c. CE), Rājaśekhara (राजशेखर), guru of Rājā Mahendrapāla (राजा महेन्द्रपाल) (893-907 CE), Diṅnāga (दिङ्नाग) (1000 CE), Jayadeva (जयदेव) (1200 CE), Rāmacandra Dīkṣita (रामचन्द्र दीक्षित) (1700 CE). After this period there were a few sporadic compositions. Bhārata-Vijaya-Nāṭakam (भारत-विजय-नाटकम्) by Mathurā Prasāda Dīkṣita (मथुरा प्रसाद दीक्षित) (1878 – 1966 CE) is especially important in this category.

Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Śūdraka and Bhavabhūti are the greatest names in the history of Sanskrit drama.

Bhāsa (भास)

Bhāsa is the earliest dramatist of Sanskrit literature. According to available studies and evidences the period of Bhāsa is said to be around 150- 250 CE. The 13 dramas of Bhāsa,

referred to as Bhāsa Nāṭakacakra (नाटकचक्र), are predominantly based on the lines of Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. Prominent among his plays are Svapnavāsavadattā, Pratimanāṭaka (प्रतिमानाटक), Bālacharita (बालचरित), Abhiṣekanāṭaka (अभिषेकनाटक) and Daridra Cārudatta (दरिद्र चारुदत्त). Bhāsa is known for his development of techniques of presentation and stagecraft and brilliant adaptations of the epics to drama. All characters, whether major or minor, created by Bhāsa are handled with such consideration that they leave an indelible mark on one's mind. The protagonist of Svapnavāsavadattā, Udayana (उदयन) is considered as a foremost romantic character of Indian literature. He is married to Padmāvati (पद्मावती), however his love for his allegedly dead queen Vāsavadattā (वासवदत्ता) is unwavering.

पद्मावती बहुमता मम यद्यपि रूपशीलमाधुर्येः ।
वासवदत्ताबद्धं मनो मे तावन्न तु हरति ॥ ४.५ ॥

Although Padmāvati is my queen and is my very favourite because of her beauty, good character, and sweetness, she can not keep my mind ever attracted which is always engrossed in the memory of my beloved Vāsavadattā.

The natural unfolding of sequence of events, the life-like portrayal of characters, the effectiveness of expression, and the accurate assigning of various aesthetics and nuances of emotions are timeless characteristics of Bhāsa's dramas.

Kālidāsa (कालिदास)

Kālidāsa (~350- 480 CE), ranks among one of the utterly unique dramatists on the stage of world literature. This admirer of beauty, tenderness, and decorum wrote three poignant romances – Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Mālavikāgnimitram (मालविकाग्निमित्रम्), and Vikramōrvaśīyam (विक्रमोर्वशीयम्). His character portrayal is natural, lyrical, and blooming with ideals. All Kālidāsa's heroes were divine humans (mānavadeva - मानवदेव) as the triumph of life is that man ultimately becomes like God. However, the characters are not clothed in artificial attires or language inconsistent with their roles. His writing is simplistic and lucid like Bhāsa or Śūdraka. It shines with elegance, excellence, compassion, and charisma, not found in the writings of other playwrights. He has woven man and nature into the silken rope of rapturous and graceful similes and done equal justice to both human emotions and nature's grandeur. The following verses from Abhijñānaśākuntalam represent his poetic fantasies which can be executed by only an extremely diligent, genius and accomplished playwright. In this verse Kālidāsa describes a deer leaping so fast that according to the poet he is seen more in the air than on ground:

ग्रीवाभङ्गाभिरामं मुहुरनुपतति स्यन्दने बद्धदृष्टिः
पश्चार्धेन प्रविष्टः शरपतनभयाद् भूयसा पूर्वकायम् ।

दर्भैरर्धावलीढैः श्रमविवृतमुखभ्रंशिभिः कीर्णवर्त्मा
पश्योदग्रप्लुतत्वाद् वियति बहुतरं स्तोकमुर्व्या प्रयाति ॥ ८॥

Oh behold! His neck is bent beautifully as he glances behind, at the pursuing chariot. His small body shrinks to half with fear as he looks at the falling arrows. The path he takes is strewn with blades of grass half eaten dropping from his jaws wide open with exhaustion. He leaps high and often that he appears to be mostly in air and hardly on ground.

सरसिजमनुविद्धं शैवलेनापि रम्यं
मलिनमपि हिमांशोर्लक्ष्म लक्ष्मीं तनोति ।
इयमधिकमनोज्ञा वल्कलेनापि तन्वी
किमिव हि मधुराणां मण्डनं नाकृतीनाम् ॥ १८ ॥

The lotus though intertwined with the aquatic plant is yet lovelier, the speck, though dark, heightens the beauty of the moon, this slender maiden even with her bark dress is charming – for even the simplest of garment enhances beauty of a naturally beautiful shapes.

चलापाङ्गां दृष्टिं स्पृशसि बहुशो वेपथुमतीं
रहस्याख्यायीव स्वनसि मृदु कर्णान्तिकचरः ।
करौ व्याधुन्वत्याः पिबसि रतिसर्वस्वमधरम्
वयं तत्त्वान्वेषान्मधुकर! हतास्त्वं खलु कृती ॥२१॥

King Duṣyanta addresses the bee “O eager bee, While I know nothing about her and still trying to gather some facts about her, you lightly touch her quivering eyelid whose outer corner moves. Buzzing around her ear you are softly whispering secrets to her. While her hands strike this way and that way trying to wave you off you are drinking off her lips the nectar of love. you are, indeed, very clever.

With his unique expressive style, he has successfully painted maximal emotions in selected words. Accomplished in the fine arts and brilliantly using both poetic and dramatic landscapes to express the depth of human joys and anguish, Kālidāsa has ensured immortality of his works.

Śūdraka (शूद्रक)

The time and life of Śūdraka are not known as there is no direct information available about him. Śūdraka’s Mṛcchakaṭikā (The Little Clay Cart) is a clever heroic drama, with excellent character portrayal and variety, written in simple, direct, and witty style. It is famous for its

breadth of characters and use of wide range emotions from humour to pathos. It is said that Mṛcchakaṭikā is based on Bhāsa's incomplete play 'Daridra Cārudatta'.

About intense darkness Viṭa (विट), a companion of prince, says:

आलोकविशाला मे सहसा तिमिरप्रवेशविच्छिन्ना।
उन्मीलितापि दृष्टिः निमीलितेवान्धकारेण॥

My eyes which are generally able to see everything in the light have been suddenly rendered powerless due to my entering in the darkness, now even if I try and keep them open, they tend to remain closed.

In this verse the magic of the figure of speech **Utprekṣā** (उत्प्रेक्षा) or poetic fancy is outstanding.

लिम्पतीव तमोऽङ्गानि वर्षतीवान्जनं नभः।
असत्पुरुषसेवेव दृष्टिर्विफलतां गता॥

Darkness besmears the limbs as it were; the sky is, as it were, showering soot; and vision has become as useless as the service of wicked master.

In this verse the pervading of darkness has been imagined to be besmearing. Spreading of darkness has been imagined to be like the showering of soot. This is an instance of poetic fancy or utpreksha, and not of simile or upamā (उपमा).

Viśākhadatta (विशाखदत्त)

Little is known of Viśākhadatta except that he was the son of Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta (भास्करदत्त). Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasa is undoubtedly one of Sanskrit's greatest dramas. A political drama full of intrigue and suspense, set in Chandragupta Maurya period (324 – 297 BCE), it breaks away from the tradition of romance and love. It is brilliantly crafted with plots and subplots of two rival political characters with intelligent arguments on allegiance and sense of duty. The storyline is complicated but not encumbered. The characters, dialogues and incidents are ingeniously created, and language is direct, forceful, and clear.

Here are a couple of verses which show poet's poetic prowess.

द्रव्यं जिगीषुमधिगम्य जडात्मनोऽपि
नेतुर्यशस्विनि पदे नियता प्रतिष्ठा ।
अद्रव्यमेत्य तु विशुद्धनयोऽपि मन्त्री
शीर्णाश्रयः पतति कूलजवृक्षवृत्त्या ॥१५॥

Even a thick-headed minister, coming by a king possessed of heroic qualities, is sure to win fame. But with the coming of a bad king, even an unerring minister falls, with the fall of king whose support he has sought, in the manner of a tree growing on the bank of a river.

अश्वैः सार्धमजसदत्तकविकाक्षामैरशून्यासनैः
स्नानाहारविहारपानशयनस्वेच्छासुखैर्वर्जितान्।
माहात्म्यात् तव पौरुषस्य मतिमन् दृप्तारिदर्पच्छिदः
पश्यैतान् परिकल्पनाव्यतिकरप्रोच्छूनवंशान् गजान् ॥१६॥

O man of talent, just as elephants deprived of the pleasures of bathing, eating, sporting, drinking and sleeping according to their liking have their backs swollen on account of the (constant) furnishing of military accoutrement along with the horses who on account of being kept bridled and saddled incessantly have emaciated, all through-out (fear of) your great prowess that has humbled the pride of haughty adversaries.

Bhavabhūti's (भवभूति)

After Kālidāsa Bhavabhūti (~700 CE) is Sanskrit drama's foremost dramatist. Three of his works are available today – Uttararāmacarita, Mahāvīracarita (महावीरचरित), and Mālatīmādhava (मालतीमाधव).

Bhavabhūti's plots are vigorous and interesting with picturesque and poetical descriptions. He uses poetry and idealism of olden days to bring out the beauty and charm of emotions. He has great command over rhetoric, characterization, and narration. He tends to over-emphasize emotions and evoke heart-rendering grief and pathos (karuṇarasa - करुणरस)

According to Bhavabhūti, karuṇarasa is the main or most important rasa of the nine rasas. All other rasas are subordinate or temporary phases heightening the karuṇarasa.

Legend goes that Vālmīki (वाल्मीकि) uttered the first śloka (श्लोक) out of grief on witnessing the death of a krauñcha (क्रौंच) bird, a kind of crane. This verse came out in perfect rhyme and rhythm.

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः।

यत्क्रौंचमिथुनादेकम् अवधीः काममोहितम्॥

Oh hunter, may you repent for life and suffer, find no rest or fame, for you have killed one of the unsuspecting, devoted, and loving krauñcha couple.

This illustration of karuṇarasa is seen in the following verse from Mālatīmādhava where Mādhava is depicting a picture of the world without Mālatī, who he loves deeply. He is addressing the sorceress who is about to kill Mālatī:

असारं संसारं परिमुषितरत्नं त्रिभुवनं
निरालोकं लोकं मरणशरणं बान्धवजनम्
अदर्पं कंदर्पं जननयननिर्माणमफलम्
जगज्जीर्णारण्यं कथमसि विधातुं व्यवसितः॥३०॥

This world is creative and full of substance you are engaged in robbing it of its substance. You are willing to steal the gems of all the three worlds. In this manner you are making this world devoid of light and making her (Mālatī's) relations take refuge in death. You are also attempting to render arrogant Kandarpa (Kāmdeva or cupid, god of love devoid of his arrogance. You are indulging in making the creation of peoples' eyes fruitless and of no effect. Similarly, you are engaged in the task of converting this world of human race into a decayed and tattered forest. Why are you doing all this?

And in the verses from Uttararāmacarita where Rāma is comforting Sitā who is feeling dejected on as all their relatives have departed-

किं त्वनुष्ठाननित्यत्वं स्वातन्त्र्यमपकर्षति।
सङ्कटा ह्याहिताग्नीनां प्रत्यवायैर्गृहस्थता॥८॥

But eternal sacrificial performance restricts freedom. Verily, the householder's state, in case of those who have kept the sacrificial fires, is beset with obstacles.

In Uttararāmacarita Bhavabhūti's Rāma on having to abandon a pregnant Sitā utters in grief-

दुःखसंवेदनायैव रामे चैतन्यमाहितम्।
मर्मोपघातिभिः प्राणैर्वज्रकीलायितं स्थिरैः ॥४७॥

God has given my weak body the strength to bear pain and misery and life strikes hard at the most vulnerable places. In the face of these attacks on vitals my life is behaving like an adamant shaft or a thunderbolt.

Perhaps, pathos is the one sentiment that affects a large part of the audience very easily and deeply. Hence, Bhavabhūti the master of eloquence, gives it an exalted position.

Bhārata-Vijaya- Nāṭakam written by Mathurā Prasāda Dīkṣita in 1937, based on the situation prevailing before India's freedom struggle. It was banned by the British government and re-published after India's independence in 1947. It chronicles the events from 1757 to 1947, depicting the oppression and atrocities committed by the British and portrays the various dimensions of courage and sacrifice, treachery notwithstanding, just before the period of real onset of the freedom movement.

From Bhāsa to modern day Sanskrit drama literature is replete with scintillating gems of style and compositions.

Besides, those enumerated above, several scholars of poetics wrote commentaries on Nāṭyaśāstra and poetics. Significant among these are Harsha (606-648 CE), Udbhaṭa (उद्भट) (800 CE), Mātr̥gupta (मातृगुप्त) (842 CE), Śāṅkuka (शंकुक) (842 CE), Bhaṭṭanāyaka (भट्टनायक) (900 CE), and Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabhāratī ((अभिनवगुप्त, अभिनवभारती), which is the only commentary on Nāṭyaśāstra available today.

Additionally, there were scholars of multi faceted talents, including those of poetic criticisms. Significant scholars in the field of poetics include Bhāmaha (भामह) ~early 700 CE, Ānandavardhana (आनन्दवर्धन) ~ 820 - 890 CE, Abhinavagupta (1000 CE), Mammaṭa (मम्मट) ~1100 CE and Viśvanātha (विश्वनाथ) ~1400 CE. At the time of development of Dhvani (ध्वनि) principle some important scholars who were engaged in propagating Rasasiddhānta (रससिद्धान्त) were Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa (भट्ट लोल्लट) ~700-800 CE, Śāṅkuka (शंकुक) ~842 CE, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka (भट्टनायक) ~900 CE.

Prose literature

The commencement of prose literature is considered to have taken place right during Vedic period. The oldest form of prose exists in Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda (कृष्ण यजुर्वेद) and Atharvaveda (अथर्ववेद). Some portions of Mahābhārata and Purāṇa contained prose sections. Yāska's (यास्क) Nirukta (निरुक्त) ~500 BCE, Patañjali's (पतञ्जलि) Mahābhāṣya (महाभाष्य) ~200 BCE, etc. are the ideal examples of Sanskrit prose significant for their elegant style of writing. There is a great tradition of encyclopaedias and dictionaries in Sanskrit. Nighaṅṭus (निघण्टु) contain glossary of Vedic words explained by Yāska in his Nirukta and Niruktas are the oldest forms of dictionaries and vocabulary. Additionally, there is profuse literature on diverse subjects such as Kāmasūtra (कामसूत्र) ~200 or 300 BCE, on the science of love or erotic science, Cāṅkya's (चाणक्य) Arthaśāstra (अर्थशास्त्र) ~400 BCE, an extremely authentic account of governance and

polity and medical texts such as Carakasamhitā (चरकसंहिता) ~300 BCE and Suśrutasaṁhitā (सुश्रुतसंहिता) ~400 BCE.

Gadyakāvya (गद्यकाव्य)

As compared to poetic literature less work was done in prose literary style. Sanskrit **Gadyakāvya** can be classified as two types – ‘Kathā (कथा)’ and ‘Akhyāyikā (अख्यायिका)’. Kathā is a purely fictional or imaginary story where the hero or any other person can narrate the story. ‘Akhyāyikā’ is based on historical narrative where the narrator is the hero or main character. Prominent Gadyakāvya works are Subandhu’s (सुबन्धु) Vāsavadattā (वासवदत्ता) ~700 CE, Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s (बाणभट्ट) Kādambarī (कादंबरी) and Harṣacarita (हर्षचरित) ~700 CE, and Daṇḍin’s (दण्डिन) Daśakumāracarita (दशकुमारचरित) ~700-800 CE.

Subandhu’s Vāsavadattā is a love story composed in the ‘gauḍī’ (गौड़ी) style which is a form of graceful and spirited poetic style. The slim plot is embellished with many forms of figures of speech. His compositions are replete with figure of speech - Śleṣa (श्लेष) or paronomasia, with double or triple entendre. He uses other figures of speech such as Virodha (विरोध) or antithesis, Yamaka (यमक) or repetition, Atiśayokti (अतिशयोक्ति) or hyperbole, and a Anuprāsa (अनुप्रास) or alliteration abundantly. The descriptions of charms of nature, valour and beauty are luxuriant and detailed.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s Kādambarī is an intricate elaborate love story across several births. Kādambarī has the power to pull one into its fantastic and unreal world. This composition could not be completed by Bāṇabhaṭṭa himself. The works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, by virtue of his powerful elaborate descriptions and creative talent are considered as standard style of prose.

Daṇḍin’s Daśakumāracarita is an akhyāyikā which describes the exploits of eight princes. The stories of two remaining princes are probably added later by another author in the prelude. This lively story reflects on the degenerate social conditions of the times and is rich in variety of episodes and interesting characters – unscrupulous rogues, rascals, hypocrites, and frauds. It has a satirical thread and with accurate observations and detailed characters the narration is fast paced and sprinkled with humour and wit.

Prose writers belonging to later period are Dhanapāla (धनपाल), Vāmana bhaṭṭa bāṇa (वामन भट्ट बाण) ~1000 CE, among many others.

Ambikādatta Vyāsa’s (अंबिकादत्त व्यास) -1858 -1900 CE- Śivarāja Vijaya (शिवराज विजय) has a special status among the modern prose compositions. This composition narrates the revolt led by Chhatrapati Śivājī (छत्रपति शिवाजी) against Mughal empire’s rule and atrocities. This tale of history is considered to have heralded a new era of Sanskrit literature with it engaging

narration, exciting visual description, and sophisticated use of figures of speech and poetic expression.

रात्रिर्गमिष्यति भविष्यति सुप्रभातं भास्वानुदेष्यति हसिष्यति पङ्कजश्रीः ।
एवं विचिन्तयति कोशगते द्विरेफे हा हन्त हन्त नलिनीं गज उज्जहार ॥

While drinking honey, the bee forgets that it is now evening, and lotus shrinks when the sun sets. The trapped bee thinks that it will come out in the morning, once the lotus blooms again. At that time, an elephant comes and plucks the lotus from its pond. Now, this lotus will not blossom again and hence the bee is trapped forever.

Vishnu Vallabh Shastri wrote a biographical novel or kādambarī entitled **Śrīratnacaritram** (श्रीरत्नचरित्रम्) which was published in 1962. This was edited by Late Govind Narahari Vaijapurkar and Shankar Gopal Nene.

Besides, compositions are also available in the form of didactic fables (Nītikathā नीतिकथा) which are Popular tales (Lōkakathā लोककथा). Nītikathās deliver the practical teachings through short, pithy stories with animals and birds as characters. Pañcatantra (पञ्चतन्त्र) and Hitopadeśa (हितोपदेश) are works on Nītikathās. Lōkakathās are popular tales where the aim is to entertain, and the characters are humans. Bṛhatkathāmañjarī (बृहत्कथामञ्जरी) is an ancient collection of such folktales.

The tradition of essay writing in Sanskrit commences in 1900 CE. The first essay writer was Pandit Hrishikesh Shastri Bhattacharya. Collection of his essays have been compiled in a book entitled Prabandhamañjarī (प्रबन्धमञ्जरी). There are several others such as Prastāva Taraṅgiṇī (प्रस्तावतरङ्गिणी) by Charudatta Shastri (1900 CE), etc.

Khaṇḍakāvya (खण्डकाव्य) - small poems

Khaṇḍakāvya or Gīti kāvya (गीति काव्य) are smaller poems as compared to Mahākāvyas. They handle a single topic or subject. In composition of Khaṇḍakāvya, the poet is free of the rules of poetic composition. The form of expression is individualistic and independent in their styles of composition, making them pleasant and popular. The doyen of composers of this format of literature was indeed, **Kālidāsa**. His Meghadūta and Ṛtusamhāra are very widely known compositions.

Ṛtusamhāra, Kālidāsa's earliest composition, describes the six seasons through the experiences of two lovers in each of the seasons. The poem echoes with his pervading love and accuracy of observation of all aspects of nature. Meghadūta, also a small poem is the

story of a Yakṣa (यक्ष) trying to send a message to his beloved through a cloud. With Meghadūta, Kālidāsa created his own genre of poetry. It is one of Kālidāsa's most popular poems and truly incomparable in its lyrical sweetness and intricacies of emotions.

Some other small poems are Ghaṭakarparakāvya (घटकर्परकाव्य) by Ghaṭakarpara (घटकर्पर), Nītiśataka (नीतिशतक), Śṛṅgāraśataka (शृंगारशतक) and Vairāgyaśataka (वैराग्यशतक) by Bhartṛhari (भर्तृहरि) ~700 CE, Amaruśataka (अमरुशतक) by Amaru (अमरु) before 1300 CE, Vikramāṅkadevacarita (विक्रमांकदेवचरित) by Bilhaṇa (बिल्हण) ~1076-1127 CE, Gītagovinda (गीतगोविन्द) by Jayadeva (जयदेव) ~1200 CE, Gāthāsaptasatī (गाथासप्तशती) by Govardhanācārya (गोवर्धनाचार्य) ~1200 CE, Pavanadūta (पवनदूत) by Dhoyī (धोयी) ~1220 CE, Bhāminīvilāsa (भामिनीविलास) by Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha (पण्डितराज जगन्नाथ) ~1700 CE. There are several other small love- poems, religious and devotional poems. In this category there are collections of some beautiful verses entitled as Subhāṣita (सुभाषित).

There is another segment of historical poetry. Among these composers there were Bāṇabhaṭṭa (बाणभट्ट), Vākpatirāja (वाक्पतिराज) ~700 CE, Padmagupta (पद्मगुप्त) or Parimala (परिमल) ~ 1005 CE, Kashmiri poet Bilhaṇa ~1085 CE, also Kashmiri poet Kalhaṇa (कल्हण) ~1200 CE. Kalhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī (राजतरङ्गिणी) is a famous historical composition.

Campū (चंपू) Literature

Literature represents various dimensions of contemporary society. Good literature manifests sublime aspects of a civilization. It has been observed the world over that in most languages, poetic compositions preceded prose writings. In Vedic language exalting Ṛgvedic revelations set the trend for beautiful poetic collections. Then followed a plethora of poetic-prose compositions – other Vedas (वेद), Mantra Saṁhitās (मन्त्र संहिता), Brāhmaṇas (ब्राह्मण), Āraṇyakas (आरण्यक), Upaniṣads (उपनिषद्), Rāmāyaṇa (रामायण), Mahābhārata (महाभारत), Purāṇas (पुराण), Mahākāvya (महाकाव्य), Kāvya (काव्य).

Campū literature is a specific form of composition where poetry and prose are interwoven. It consists of elaborate composition with a coherent plot by a single author, wherein the same subject continues through alternating prose and verse. Campū is a feminine word and is derived from 'Chap' (छप्) root which means to move or to go with 'u' (ऊ) suffix.

Sanskrit rhetoricians have defined Campū as an admixture of prose and verse. According to Daṇḍī (दण्डी) (6th CE)

गद्यपद्यमयी काचित् चंपूरित्यभिधीयते ।

Campū can be defined as a poetic composition consisting of a mixture of prose and verse employed indiscriminately and having for its subject matter topics dealt with in Gadya kāvya (गद्य काव्य) and Mahākāvya. However, due to absence of clarity in the peculiarities and characteristics of this form of literature, there appears to be total absence of an absolute and perfect definition of Campū.

Generally, a Campū has more than 50 percent verses and the remaining prose. In Campū the verse is not a peg on which the prose is hung but serves the purpose of woof (vastra-वस्त्र) in which the prose is the warp (tānā- ताना). The verse is not specifically reserved for expressing a specific or important idea but used along with prose for narration or description. While prose is the natural form of expression, Sanskrit literature particularly uses verses to emphasize a certain point. There is some resemblance in drama and Campū literature as both have prose and verse. However, Campū is narrative in form whereas drama is conversational and performing. Campū composers have dealt with a variety of themes and subjects from flora fauna to human civilisation.

From the available evidences, it appears that Campū-like format is quite ancient. Jātakamālā (जातकमाला) (~4th c. CE) is the earliest available work having close similarity to Campū style and can be treated as an independent Campū. The first known Campū work dates to 959 CE, Nalacampū (नलचम्पू) by Trivikramabhaṭṭa (त्रिविक्रमभट्ट). Rāṣṭrakūṭa (राष्ट्रकूट) dynasty ruled a large part of the Indian subcontinent from 6-10th centuries CE. Under the liberal patronage of Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings, Jain mathematicians and scholars contributed important works in grammar, prosody lexicon, logic and geometry in both Kannada and Sanskrit languages. Trivikramabhaṭṭa was a protégé of Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Indra. He is credited with composing the first epic in Campū style – Damayantīkathā (दमयन्तीकथा) or Nalacampū, which throws light on the social milieu of the times. A few years later, the Ādipurāṇa (आदिपुराण) and Pāmpabharata (पाम्पभरत) of Pāmpa (पाम्प) were composed in Kannada in 941 CE.

Somadevasūri's (सोमदेवसूरि) Yaśastilakacampū (यशस्तिलकचम्पू) (1000 CE) is another literary masterpiece. Though written by a Jain scholar, the universality of his approach to human weakness and atonement made this socio-religious romance quite popular.

The maximum number of Pariṇayacampū (परिणयचंपू) have been composed during the period of Kṛṣṇadeva (कृष्णदेव), King of Vijayanagara (विजयनगर) (1509-1530 CE). Some prominent works include Bhaiṣmīpariṇayacampū (भैष्मीपरिणयचम्पू) by Ratnakheṭa Dīkṣita (रत्नखेट दीक्षित). Recently, a critical edition from the mss, with elaborations in English and Hindi, along with literary criticism by Shankar Gopal Nene has been published by National Manuscript Mission, New Delhi. Rāmāyaṇacampū (रामायणचंपू) by King of Dhārā nagarī, Bhoj (धारा नगरी, भोज) (1018-1063 CE) was another landmark work.

The following verses are some illustrative examples which manifest the prowess of the author of Bhaiṣmīpariṇayacampū in the use of figures of speech:

Verse 5 is a striking example of **Udātta (उदात्त)** figure of speech which describes supermundane prosperity or an action that is represented greatly collaterally to subject at hand.

ध्वन्यध्वन्यधिकं चमत्कृतितियुता यस्याद्भुताः सूक्तयः।
स्वारस्येन सुधां सुधां विदधते तां शर्करां शर्कराम्।।
सावित्र्याः प्रथमं यमद्भुतगुणं वव्रे स्वयं भारती।
षड्भाषाचतुरश्वकास्ति भुवने विख्यातकीर्तिः कृती ।।

In creating suggestive poetry, the lustrous sayings, and poems of poet Ratnakheṭa Dīkṣita have surpassed the sweetness of nectar and have rendered sugar in mere sand-grains. This poet was selected by the Goddess of knowledge even before his thread ritual. He is conversant in six different languages. His fame and lustre are world renowned.

In the above verse, अद्भुताः सूक्तयः सुधां सुधां शर्करां शर्करां विदधते - this portion exposes the traits of Udātta figure of speech. **Vibhāvanā (विभावना)** or peculiar causation consists in the mention of the effect. This verse also exposes exquisite attributes of all the three excellences – **Prasāda (प्रसाद)** (lucidity), **Mādhurya (माधुर्य)** (sweetness of diction) and **Ojas (ओजस)** (floridity).

Another appropriate example of Prasāda, lucidity or easy reading, is the following verse which also contains attributes of Mādhurya or delectability and floridity:

दन्तियोतिदिवाप्रदीपबिरुदो योऽद्वैतविद्यागुरुः।
विश्वामित्रकुलांबुधेर्हिमकरो लक्ष्मीधरस्यात्मजः॥
स्वायत्तीकृतवेदतन्त्रनिचयो यः साग्निचित् विश्वजित्।
याजी तेन हि रत्नखेटमखिना सेयं कृतिः तन्यते ॥६॥

Ratnakheṭa Dīkṣita, the poet, is full of lustre like a lamp by day, sported on the back of an elephant. He is conversant with Advaita Vedānta, one of the six principal Darśanas or systems of Indian philosophy. He has a God-gifted talent of composing poetry. He is like the moon, spreading splendour over the ocean of the clan of Vishvāmītra. He has mastered all the Vedas and all the systems of Tantra. He is an Agnichit, i.e. one who is entitled to keep sacred fire at home. He has performed the Viśvajit sacrifice and has generously donated all his riches. He is son of Lakṣmīdhara, adorned with the above attributes.

A fine exposition of **Ākṣepa (आक्षेप)** figure of speech, wherein something desired to be said is suppressed for purpose of conveying a special idea, is seen in the following verse:

मागधो राजहंसोऽपि न तेन सहसा रणम् ।
तच्चित्रमथवा युक्तं जरासंघद्वितांगकः॥११९॥

Jarāsandha (जरासन्ध), although a great King of Magadha (मगध), generally did not fight in the battle. It is strange. This strangeness or contradiction is dispelled by interpreting the expression जरासंघद्वितांगकः as follows: The demoness Jarā joined the two parts of the body of Jarāsandha as he was born as two separate body parts. Another meaning is as follows: Although expert in singing encomiums a great ballad or a swan did not sing or coo. He could not sustain himself in the battle due to the reason that his body organs were worn out due to old age. (Verse 119)

In fact, Jarāsandha did not run away from the battlefield, despite being old. This is what the poet is really intending to convey. But instead he hints at the fact that demoness Jarā had joined two parts of the body of Jarāsandha when he was born to his parents and was cut into two pieces and thrown out. This is Ākṣepa figure of speech.

The Bhaiṣmīpariṇayacampū is replete with such figures of speech.

In Kerala, Campūs are popularly known as Prabandha (प्रबन्ध) which means ‘strung together in beautiful form’. It must have come traditionally from the Cakyars (actors). Eventually, original creation replaced the borrowed ones in Sanskrit and became enriched in Malayalam. Similarly, Campūs have been composed in Telugu, Prākṛta (प्राकृत), Māgadhī (मागधी), and Marathi. However, Campū did not receive much credence outside South India in general and Kerala in particular.

Conclusion

The inclusion of all genres and works, is beyond the purview of this narrative. The sheer volume of Sanskrit literature is monumental. Pages can be filled with just the names and genres and sub-genres of the compositions and yet the full import of its magnitude could not be appreciated. One can only marvel at the creative and ingenious use of expression and rhythm to create masterpieces ranging from brilliant to elegant, copious to pithy, overt to subtle, suited for every mood and taste. The great poets and composers with their command of the language and dexterity in its usage have created treasures which have enriched the world literature and remain unparalleled and timeless.