



## A Prolific Writer's Contribution to Sanskrit Literature

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### Abstract:

The paper is an attempt to describe the scholarly pursuits of Kshemendra through the annals of Kashmir history. Kshemendra was a very renowned poet of the Eleventh Century who penned many books in Sanskrit and presented a realistic representation of Kashmir society of his own times. Kshemendra's contribution to Sanskrit literature is unique in many respects as he promotes it and introduced many novel things in literature. He introduces social satire, mixed with humour and sarcasm. He is also often known as father of social satire. The study depicts the works of Kshemendra who played a significant role in sketching the history of Kashmir during his time and made a respectable contribution in literature of Kashmir. The analysis is on the nature of work, literary contribution the methods he heralded in his works.

**Key Words:** - Poetry, Drama, Literature, Sanskrit and Kashmir.

**Introduction:** - Kshemendra was a poet of excellence. What makes him even more important and relevant is his concern for the downtrodden, the common man, the unlettered, the courtesan etc. He studied literature under the foremost teacher of his time, the celebrated Shaiva philosopher and literary exponent 'Abhinavagupta'. In a bold but lucid way he lays bare the social evils and rampant corruption in those times. The exploitation of the oppressed by the elite, exploitation of the scribes (Kayasthas) and bureaucracy finds ample space in all his works. His heart seems to cry in pain upon seeing degenerated acid exploitation all around. Kshemendra wrote his works in the reign of the Kashmirian king Ananta and his son Kalasa; as such, he may be assigned to the second and third quarters of the eleventh century A.D. In his book,

*Naramamala*(Chapter II) Kshemendra endorses Kashmiri, “then the master, who was little intoxicated, entertained them with a composition of his own in the desi bhaasha (Kashmiri)”. In *NarmaMala* he vehemently attacks the clerk (Kayastha). Kayasthas, during those times were very powerful and in a way represented the corrupt official machinery of the times. The role of Kayasthas has attracted the attention of Kalhana also who had also written about their dirty role in the society. He says that Kayasthas sit on files like coiled serpents. Kshemendra in his books *Kavee Kantha Baran* and *Deshopadesh*, addressed the poets should write in their own language. His *Samayamatrika* is a poem of eight chapters narrating the story of the wanderings of a courtesan in the Valley. It is an interesting specimen of satire rarely found in Sanskrit literature, on strolling musicians, women beggars, shop girls, saints, thieves and other classes of people. The poem is strikingly original in conception. His *kalavilasa* another notable work depicts various occupations and follies of the people of the time, such as physicians, traders, astrologers, goldsmiths, harlots and saints. His *Darpadalama* condemns pride which is said to spring from birth in a good and rich family, wealth, learning, beauty, valour, charity and asceticism. Kshemendra's *Deshopadesa* exposes all kinds of disgrace in society through the caricatures of the life of various depraved sections of the community, such as cheats, misers, prostitutes, bawds, voluptuaries, students from Gauda (Bengal), old men married to young girls, degraded Saiva Gurus, etc. His works on poetics are two, viz. the *Aucityavicara-carca* and the *Kavi-kanthabharana*. A *Kavikarnika* by the author is referred to by himself in his *Aucitya-vicara-carca*. The *Aucitya-vicara-carca* of Kshemendra is a unique work in the sense that it deals with the question of Aucitya or propriety in Kavya most exhaustively, and declares it as the very soul (jivitabhuta) of Kavya. Aucitya, in his opinion, relates to twenty-seven items, viz. word, sentence, sense of the composition, literary excellences (gunas), poetic figures, employment of grammatical matters like verb, preposition, time, place and so on. What renders his work more valuable is the collection of verses called from a wide range of classical Sanskrit literature. Kshemendra follows the footsteps of Anandavardhana who holds Aucitya as the highest secret (*para upanisat*) of Rasa. The idea of Aucitya, anticipated by Bharata in connection with dramaturgy, and explicitly dealt with by writers of the Dhvani School and discussed by most post-Dhvani writers in connection with Rasa-dosa, found the strongest exponent in Kshemendra. He considers it to be founded on the aesthetic pleasure (*camatkara*) that underlies the enchantment of Rasa. No Guna or Alankara, devoid of Aucitya, has any significance in Kavya according to Kshemendra. In the *Kavi-kanthabharana*, Kshemendra deals with the making of a poet, his defects, the peculiar charm (*camatkara*) of a poetical composition, the Gunas and Dosas of words, sense and sentiment (*rasa*). There are, according to Kshemendra, two things that engender in a person the capacity for producing Kavya. The first one is *Divyaprayatna* (divine effort) and the second is *Paurusa* or individual effort. *Divya-prayatna* is the name given to prayer, incantation and the like. In discussing *Paurusa-prayatna*, he states that there are three kinds of persons according as they require little effort, strenuous effort or as they are incapable of poetic power despite effort. A poet,

in his opinion, must possess knowledge of the various arts and sciences a list of which is given by him. The various branches of knowledge include, inter alla, (grammar, Logic, Dramaturgy, Erotics, Astronomy) etc. While discussing the question of one poet borrowing from another, he mentions different kinds of borrowers or plagiarists. Of them, some borrow an idea, a word or the foot of a verse while others copy an entire composition. He mentions, apparently with approval, the practice of borrowing from sources like the work of Vyasa. Incidentally Kshemendra dwells on the training of a poet and the moulding of his life and character. An important part of the work is devoted to discussion on *camatkara* or the peculiar charm which is an essential requisite of a poetical composition. *Camatkara* has been divided into ten varieties in accordance with its nature and substratum. It may be readily comprehensible or realizable after much thought. It may reside in the whole of a composition or in a part of it and belong to *sabda*, *artha* or both, to *alankara*, *rasa* or may relate to the nature of a famous subject-matter.

Kshemendra's works and literary activities are spread over many diverse fields. He is a summarizer of the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. He is an adopter of 'Brahatkatha' or Great Story of Gunnadiya which was composed in the first century of the Christian Era in Pishacah Dialect (ancient Pusto) and consisted of 1,00,000 slokas. His earliest dated work, Brihatkathamajari, a verse summary of the lost Northwestern *Brahatkatha* itself a recension of Gunnadiya lost *Brahatkatha* -Great Story. He was a commentator on *Dashavtarcharita* an account of the ten incarnations of the god Vishnu and author of *Baudvandana Kalaplata*. In depicting his family tree with an exact sense of chronology so lamentably absent in majority of Indian and his contemporary authors makes him very appreciated in that sense. He was a tireless satirist. He also wrote important works on poetics and rhetorics. Kshemendra's important contribution to the Sanskrit literature has been his interpretation of Gunnaday's 'Brahatkatha' in Sanskrit. He summarized Ramayana as 'Ramayana Manjari' and Mahabharata as 'Mahabharta Manjari'. The thing of curious interest in 'Mahabharta Manjari' is that the author has not included 'Shanti Parva' which forms an important part in the present rendering of Mahabharata. 'Brahatkatha Manjari' is in verse and describes the lives, campaigns and amorous alliances of various kings especially of King Udyana. Kshemendra was not only author of Hindu lore. He also wrote many works on Buddhism too. In 'Baudvandana Kalaplata' he compiled Jataka tales. This work is a collection of 107 chapters (Pallavas). 'Baudvandana Kalaplata' it may be added is still considered an important work by Buddhists. In Tibet it is available in an interesting form of Tibetan woodcuts. This work has been translated in Dogri and other languages also.

**AUCITYA NOTION OF KSHEMENDRA:** - 'Aucitya' is the Indian equivalent of Decorum. It is the principle of propriety in the Sanskrit literature. Aucitya emits its charms in the process of aesthetic experience, being the very life principle of RASA. Decorum is a state of propriety expected in all literary compositions according to

western poetics. In the field of literary criticism it is used in the sense of the appropriateness or propriety or fitness of any element of a literary work, such as style or tone, words, actions, mannerisms, volume and general delivery to its particular circumstance or to the composition as a whole may it be in poetry or drama. He had discussed the concept of Aucitya in his treatise “Aucitya Vichara Charcha” which consists of 39 Karikcis and 105 examples.

Kshemendra also composed plays, descriptive poems, a satirical novel, historical lineage, and possibly a commentary on the Kama Sutra. Kshemendra’s contribution to Sanskrit literature has recently been fully cherished; the first of the 34 works attributed to him was discovered in 1871. Eighteen have been found in total, of which several are technical and devotional works and four satirical. The important works of Kshemendra’s are as follows:

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>CLASS TO WHICH THE WORK BELONGS</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>
Aucitya-vicara-carca	POETICS DRAMATURGY	Kshemendra
Kavi-kamika	POETICS	Kshemendra
Kavi-kanthabharana	POETICS/ COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Avadana-kalpalata (Same as Bodhisattva-vadana-kalpalata)	POETICS	Kshemendra
Kala-vilasa	POETICS	Kshemendra
Caturvarga-samgraha	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Caru-carya	POETICS	Kshemendra
Darpa-dalana(Pride has fall)	POETICS	Kshemendra
Dasavatara-carita	POETICS	Kshemendra
Desopadesa	POETICS	Kshemendra
Narma-mala	POETICS	Kshemendra
Niti-kalpataru	POETICS	Kshemendra
Brhatkatha-manjari	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Bodhisattva-vadana-kalpalata	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Bharata-manjari	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra

Rajavali (or, Nrpavali)	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Ramayana-manjari	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Samanya-matrka	COMMENTARIES	Kshemendra
Sevya-sevako-padesa	POETICAL COMPOSITIONS	Kshemendra
Lokaprakasa	LEXICON	Kshemendra
Suvrtta-tilaka	PROSODY	Kshemendra

**CONCLUSION:** - To sum up, we can say that Kshemendra was a lover of the stage and a frequent playgoer. His studies were wide and extended to law, Grammar, Ayurveda, Politics, Music and Painting. In spite of that he had other talents in practical works like carpentry and smithy. He was the tutor to the heir-apparent Kalasa. No less than thirty-four books written by him are present to us. Among them is *Desopadesha* which delineates vividly the moral and political evils rampant in his own days. Moreover it provides a glimpse of the history of Kashmir and the social transformation going during those days. Kshemendra was bitterly satirical of the government officials. His style was that of Voltaire and his book *Narmamala* depicts the standards in this style. Kshemendra talks about realm of Indian aesthetics who spoke of *Aucitya* or decorum. He uses *Parihas* (jokes) to depict the various characters of his times in his work 'Narma Mala'. He was a perfectionist who with his immense talents wrote on diverse subjects with equal authority and finesse. Kshemendra was a poet who belonged to the people and he portrayed the glimpse of the society during his times which built an argument that society transforms later when we go through Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*. Kshemendra becomes a quintessence for the literary genius later on and they followed the footsteps of him in their works.

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