

Daṇḍin's *Avantisundarī*: A Study in Genre and Sociability

by

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Abstract

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The *Avantisundarī* is a work of Sanskrit literary prose attributed to the South Indian poet and theorist Daṇḍin (late-seventh to early-eighth c. CE). The *Kāvyādarśa*, Daṇḍin's work on poetics, is renowned in the field of early literary and aesthetic criticism. And his other prose work, the *Daśakumāracarita*, has been the subject of a number of studies and translations. Yet despite being one of the few works of early *gadyakāvya*, "literary prose," the *Avantisundarī* has not received much attention. This dissertation calls for a more serious engagement with the *Avantisundarī*, and in doing so, it calls for a re-engagement with theories of *gadyakāvya*. For, even though the work conforms through its ornate prose style to other early *gadyakāvya* works, it defies several other genre features, thus creating a more complex picture of the prose form. With its biographical depictions of its author, Daṇḍin, the *Avantisundarī*'s paratextual material also brings to the fore new definitions of sociability and refinement. While the dissertation is grounded in its engagement with the *Avantisundarī*, it also offers new tools for literary analysis and for thinking about literary representations of the historical author and the social dynamics of the poet in early-medieval South Asia.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Scope of the Dissertation

The literary theorist Daṇḍin (7th–8th c. CE), author of the *Kāvyādarśa*, needs no introduction in the world of Sanskrit studies. We only need to look up any of the histories of Sanskrit poetics to find a generous introduction to his work. It takes a little more searching to read about Daṇḍin, the author of the *Daśakumāracarita* (*The Deeds of Ten Young Men*). Though there is less secondary scholarship on this work of literary prose compared to the acclaimed works of Subandhu and Bāṇa, the numerous translations of the *Daśakumāracarita* in South Asian and European languages indicate that it is still considered among the classical *gadyakāvya*s, “literary prose compositions,” from early-medieval South Asia. But the other *gadyakāvya* attributed to Daṇḍin, the *Avantisundarī*, has had an entirely different reception. Given the condition of the manuscript, with its numerous lacunae, scribal issues, and incomplete narrative, some scholars share A. B. Keith’s opinion that, “The Kathā should never have been published from one mutilated manuscript, whose readings, even if correctly stated, have already been proved wrong by other manuscript evidence.”¹ In contrast, comparing it to the prose work par excellence of Bāṇa, the *Kādambarī*, M. Ramakrishna Kavi, the work’s publisher, notes, “Avantisundari in style resembles Kadambari but is less monotonous and more difficult. The strings of epithets are generally longer than in Kadambari but many a time present a finished picture worthy of a great poet. The loss of the work lamentably affects both history and literature.”² Despite those who hold the latter view of the work’s historical and literary import, the *Avantisundarī* has not received much scholarly interest as a work of *gadyakāvya*.

Although the poetic theorist Vāmana relays in his *Kāvyālaṅkārasūtra* 1.3.22, “As they say, ‘*Gadyakāvya* is the touchstone of poets’ ” (*yathāhur gadyam kavīnām nikaṣaṁ vadanti*),³ it is the verse form in its different manifestations that has captured the aesthetic imagination and the scholarly attention of most modern studies. This is partly due to there not being many *gadyakāvya* works. For while some poets composed in the prose medium during the second half of the first millennium CE, *mahākāvya* remained the genre *par excellence*. Eventually *gadyakāvya*s declined, and prosimetrical *campū kāvyas* came to stand in their wake. Given the overall paucity and the little attention that *gadyakāvya* generally receives, the *Avantisundarī* provides an opportunity to think more deeply about Sanskrit literature and the theoretical discussions around an understudied literary form. As the first sustained study of the *Avantisundarī*, this dissertation explores the work through the lenses of genre and narrative form. Grounded in an engagement with the *Avantisundarī* and its author Daṇḍin, this study also makes

1. A. Berriedale Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), xvi.

2. M. Ramakrishna Kavi, Introduction to *Avantisundarikathasara and Avantisundarikatha*, 1–16. Edited by S. K. Ramanatha Sastri, Dakshinabharati Series 3 (Trichur: Mangalodayam Press, 1924), 12.

3. *The Kāvyālaṅkārasūtras of Vāmana with His Own Vṛtti*, eds. Kāśīnāth Durgāprasād, Pāṇḍuraṅg Parab, and Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Shāstrī Paṇṣikar, *Kāvyamālā* 15, 3rd rev. ed. (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1926).

interventions in regard to the theorization of prose, representations of the historical author, and the social dynamics of the poet in early-medieval South Asia.

1.2. A Definition of Terms: What Does It Mean to Be “Early”?

In the pages to follow, I use the term “early” in several contexts. Broadly speaking, the period under discussion is what South Asian historians call the “early-medieval period,” that is, the period after the end of the Gupta-Vākātaka state to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, i.e., from the sixth to the thirteenth century CE.⁴ As noted by social historian B. D. Chattopadhyaya and others, the early-medieval period was a time of social, political, and economic change, the forces of which differed from those of the ancient and high medieval periods.⁵ For the study of South Asian literature and literary criticism, the early-medieval period is a formative time when more works of *kāvya*, “literature” or “poetry” in the broader sense of the language arts, become available. This is also the case for *alaṅkāraśāstra*, “science of rhetorical figures,” with the earliest extant work to focus on this subject being Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaṅkāra* (*Ornaments of Literature*, ca. 600 CE).⁶ While Daṇḍin’s works are dated to the late-seventh to early-eighth century (ca. 680–720 CE), Daṇḍin’s main interlocutors in both the realm of *alaṅkāraśāstra* and *kāvya* are Bhāmaha flourishing ca. 600 CE and Bāṇa, the author of the *gadyakāvya*s *Harṣacarita* (*Deeds of Harṣa*) and *Kādambarī* (*Story of Kādambarī*), during the first half of the seventh century. While there are Sanskrit literary works composed in a combination of prose and verse prior to this period, such as Viṣṇuśarma’s *Pañcatantra* (*The Five Discourses*, ca. 300 CE) and Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* (*Garland of Past-Birth Stories*, 4th c. CE), I limit the discussion to works of prose.⁷

While the broader treatment will address works up to the thirteenth century, my primary focus will be on the sixth through the ninth to tenth centuries as this period corresponds with the rise of the first, and still extant, *gadyakāvya* works, namely Subandhu’s *Vāsavadattā*, Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī*, and Daṇḍin’s works. I will refer to these poems of the formative period as “early *gadyakāvya*” works. The tenth-century end date is not arbitrary. Rather it is in line with Sheldon Pollock’s paradigm-shifting discourse on the relationship between political

4. Daud Ali, “The Idea of the Medieval in the Writing of South Asian History: Contexts, Methods and Politics,” *Social History* 39, no. 3 (2014): 382–407. For a discussion of the limits of this tripartite model of periodization in a global context and for possible solutions, see Timothy Reuter, “Medieval: Another Tyrannous Construct,” *The Medieval History Journal* 1 (1998): 25–45.

5. B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 34–36.

6. For Bhāmaha’s dating, see Yigal Bronner, “A Question of Priority: Revisiting the Bhāmaha-Daṇḍin Debate,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (2012): 67–118.

7. Despite some scholars referring to the *Pañcatantra* and the *Jātakamālā*, along with the *Lalitavistara*, as prose, they are a mixture of prose and verse. Like many Buddhist *mahāvaiṣṇavaśāstras*, the *Lalitavistara* is a mixture of verse and prose. For fuller discussion of the *Lalitavistara*’s form, see Xi He, “Experiencing the Graceful and the Joyful: A Study of the Literary Aesthetics and Religious Emotions of the *Lalitavistara*” (PhD. diss, University of Chicago, 2012), 50–56. *Jātaka-Mālā by Ārya Śūra*, ed. P. L. Vaidya (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1959).

power and literary aesthetic practices in South Asia. For it is around the turn of the first millennium CE that the move from Sanskrit to regional languages took place.⁸ While Pollock analyzes wide-scale historical shifts in the intellectual and aesthetic arenas, I suggest that these shifts can also be seen on the micro-level through the lens of literary genre. And in the case of *gadyakāvya* and its narrative sources, this period heralds an expansion in literary forms and conventions.

1.3. The Problem of Prose: *Gadyakāvya* Reception

The *editio princeps* of many of the early *gadyakāvya* works appeared in the mid-1800's with H. H. Wilson's 1846 edition of Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita*;⁹ the two-part Calcutta edition of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* edited by Madanamohan Tarkālaṃkāra in 1850 and Tarkavācaspati Bhaṭṭācārya in 1872 respectively;¹⁰ Fitzedward Hall's 1859 edition of Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*;¹¹ and A. A. Führer's edition of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, a latecomer, in 1909.¹² One of the earliest and most commonly cited statements on early *gadyakāvya* reception comes from Albrecht Weber's review of the 1850 Calcutta edition of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*:

[It] compares most unfavourably with the Daśakumāracharitra by a subtlety and tautology which are almost repugnant, by an outrageous overloading of single words and epithets the narrative proceeds in a strain of bombastic nonsense, amidst which it—and if not it, then the patience of the reader—threatens to perish altogether: a mannerism, already apparent in the Daśakumāracharitra, is here carried to excess: the verb is kept back to the second, third, fourth, nay, once to the sixth page, and all the interval is filled with epithets and epithets to these epithets: moreover these epithets frequently consist of compounds extending over more than one line: in short, Bāṇa's prose is an Indian wood, where all progress is rendered

8. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), e.g., 19–30.

9. *The Daśa Kumāra Charita, or Adventures of Ten Princes: A Series of Tales*, ed. H. H. Wilson, (London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Books, 1846).

10. *Kādambarī*, ed. Madanamohan Tarkālaṃkāra (Calcutta, 1849) and *Kādambarī*, ed. T. Tarkavācaspati Bhaṭṭācārya (Calcutta, 1871). For a thorough list of *Kādambarī* editions and references, see David Smith, ed. and trans., introduction to *Princess Kādambarī* (New York: New York University Press / JJC Foundation, 2009) 1: xxix–xxxii. The Gregorian calendar year is approximated from the *saṃvat* era on the title pages of the Calcutta editions. Thus, there is the occasional discrepancy in the publication year (1849/50 and 1871/72).

11. *The Vāsavadattā, a Romance by Subandhu; Accompanied by Śivarāma Tripāṭhin's Perpetual Gloss, Entitled Darpaṇa*, ed. Fitzedward Hall, Bibliotheca Indica 30 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1859).

12. *Śrīharṣacaritamahākāvyaṃ: Bāṇabhaṭṭa's Biography of King Harshavardhana of Sthāṇvīśvara with Saṅkara's Commentary Saṅketa*, ed. A. A. Führer, Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series 66. (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1909). For editions and references, see Robert A. Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bāṇa: An Introduction to Sanskrit Prose Poetry* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), xiii–xiv.

impossible by the undergrowth until the traveller cuts out a path for himself, and where, even then, he has to reckon with malicious wild beasts in the shape of unknown words that affright him.¹³

Weber's early estimation of *gadyakāvya* is not unrepresentative. Thus Peter Peterson responds, "The vigorous description may be perhaps a little over-coloured, but in the main it is true..."¹⁴ Despite their negative valence, Weber's primary complaints point to some of the distinctive stylistic features of *gadyakāvya*: the priority of description over narrative that, in turn, lends itself to fewer finite verbs, the expansive use of epithets and other qualifiers to animate a single subject, the presence of multi-member nominal compounds that often defy line and, sometimes, page breaks, and the employment of difficult words, allusions, and indirect phrases.

Weber's statement also gestures toward the special place that the *Daśakumāracarita* holds among the early *gadyakāvya* works. While possessing some of the qualities that earlier scholars found distasteful in Sanskrit prose, the *Daśakumāracarita* was thought to differ in its overall style and presentation. Thus, A. B. Keith notes in his 1928 *History of Sanskrit Literature*, "His [Daṇḍin's] distinctive quality is the application to the simple tale of the grand manner of the Kāvya, though in a moderation which is utterly lost in the case of Subandhu and Bāṇa."¹⁵ Not only is the *Daśakumāracarita* considered different in terms of style, it is considered different in terms of narrative structure as well. In his discussion of Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* and Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, Siegfried Lienhard notes of the *Daśakumāracarita*,

On the contrary Daṇḍin avoids inordinately long descriptions and digressions that might distract the attention of the reader from the progress of the action, and he appears to do so deliberately. Subordinate episodes in Daṇḍin seldom halt the dynamic flow of events, and the placing of the four subordinate episodes introduced into the story related by Mitragupta, the eighth prince, as well as their nature, seem perfectly justifiable.¹⁶

While reiterating distaste for *gadyakāvya*'s density of description, Lienhard also points to a feature of *gadyakāvya* specifically, and the broader *kathā*-style of story literature more generally: the impulse of both toward weaving other stories into the main narrative in a manner that often seems arbitrary to the modern reader. Given these differences in style and narrative structure, the

13. Albrecht Weber, "Analyse der Kādambarī," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1853): 582–89, rep. *Indische Streifen*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1868), 353. Quoted in and translated by Peter Peterson, introduction to *Kādambarī*, ed. Peter Peterson, Bombay Sanskrit Series 24 (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1883), 37.

14. Peterson, *ibid.*

15. Keith, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, 299.

16. Siegfried Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 236.

Daśakumāracarita continues to have an equal but different status among the early *gadyakāvya* works.

Another distinction still made in conversations about *gadyakāvya* has to do with the prose literary genres *kathā*, “invented account,” and *ākhyāyikā*, “biographical account,” terms that I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two. Of the two genres, we have only one example of the latter genre, Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita*. E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas have the following to say about this work in the preface of its first English translation:

The great merit of the *Harṣa-carita* consists in the fact that it is a very early attempt at an historical romance. Bāṇa’s other work, the *Kādambarī*, and Subandhu’s *Vāsavadattā* deal with mythological fiction, and everything is viewed through a highly poetical atmosphere; and the *Daśa-kumāra-carita* is equally based on pure imagination, although its characters, as in the *picaresco* literature of modern Europe, are the exaggerated pictures of the vulgar rogues and ruffians of every great city. But the author of the *Harṣa-carita* has taken his own sovereign as his hero and has woven the story out of the actual events of his reign.¹⁷

The translators praise the *Harṣacarita* for its historicity which they distinguish from the “mythological fiction” and “highly poetic atmosphere” of the *Kādambarī* and *Vāsavadattā*, as well as the “pure imagination” upon which they claim the *Daśakumāracarita* is based. Fact over fiction, narrative over description, and simplicity over complexity—while these preferences pertain to Sanskrit works of both verse and prose, prose as the form of the modern novel has added associations. As Roest and Vanstiphout note, “Novels, moreover, as their preferred mode of discourse make use of narrative prose, which for many centuries has been as a mode connected with ‘truth’ and verisimilitude (or ‘mimesis’), and which is therefore eagerly embraced as a transparent vehicle of meaning.”¹⁸ Given these modern associations between prose and realism, *gadyakāvya* works, especially of the *kathā* genre, which often foreground verbal performance over, plot proved challenging for its early western audiences.

While the *gadyakāvya* studies of the nineteenth century focused on individual works, the early twentieth saw a few comparative studies. Louis Gray’s 1904 “Literary Studies of the Sanskrit Novel” draws thematic and narrative parallels between Perso-Arabic literature and between Indian prose and plays.¹⁹ Two years after Ramakrishna Kavi announced the recent finding of a fragment of the *gadyakāvya* *Avantisundarī*—which I discuss below—S. K. De

17. E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas, preface to *The Harṣa-Carita of Bāṇa*, trans. E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1897), viii.

18. Bert Roest and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, “Generic Studies in Pre-Modern Traditions: Why and How?” in *Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures*, eds., Bert Roest and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, COMERS/ICOG Communications 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 129.

19. Louis H. Gray, “Literary Studies on the Sanskrit Novel,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 18 (1904): 39–58.

published his 1924 essay, “Akhyayika and the Katha in Classical Sanskrit,” on the development of the prose poetry genres of *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*.²⁰ Considering the early Sanskrit literary theorists and the works of Bāṇa and Subandhu, De argues that the two genres of *gadyakāvya* can be mapped to distinct stages of development beginning with the *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha whose definitions reflect a stage preceding Bāṇa’s works. Beginning with Daṇḍin, later theorists gave up some of the formal criteria laid out by Bhāmaha and modified their criteria according to Bāṇa’s *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā* works. The *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* of Rudraṭa (9th c. CE) applies Bāṇa’s models to the entire genre. De’s essay is the first attempt to theorize *gadyakāvya* along the lines of genre and form. By highlighting through a close reading of these theorists the indigenous ways that these genres were conceived of, De opens the door for future studies that would focus on regional as well as historical developments.²¹

More recently, scholars have looked at individual *gadyakāvya* works and their authors to produce cultural studies, biographical studies of *gadyakāvya* authors, and, less frequently, literary critical studies. An excellent example of the cultural study genre is V. S. Agrawala’s 1969 monograph *The Deeds of Harṣa: Being a Cultural Study of Bāṇa’s Harṣacarita*, the English translation of the 1953 Hindi publication *Harṣacarita: Eka Sāṃskṛtika Adhyayana*.²² Agrawala’s study is a rigorous philological study of the *Harṣacarita*’s printed editions, manuscripts, and commentaries used to provide a detailed depiction of the material culture, flora, fauna, and other realia as found in Bāṇa’s *ākhyāyikā*. Agrawala’s purview also extends to other textual sources such as Kālidāsa’s poetry, Bāṇa’s other prose work, *Kādambarī*, and notably with attention to Gupta artwork, sculpture, painting, terracotta, and architecture.

Robert Hueckstedt’s 1985 *The Style of Bāṇa*, a study of Bāṇa’s prose works *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī* makes the first attempt to analyze elements of style in *gadyakāvya*. In response to earlier Orientalist scholarship beginning with Albrecht Weber’s 1853 pronouncement that the prose of Bāṇa’s *Kādambarī* is “a veritable Indian forest (*ein wahrer indischer Wald*)”²³ Hueckstedt argues instead that Bāṇa’s works are “highly sculptured gardens” in terms of their stylistic logic and organization.²⁴ Hueckstedt’s study focuses on prose syntax, sentence length, and figures of speech primarily using statistical analysis in the form of number of appearances of each stylistic element. While the method of the work prohibits a comprehensive theoretical contribution to the study of *gadyakāvya*, it does point to patterns in Bāṇa’s works that apply to other prose *kathā* works as well. For instance, the author points to the syntactic division of labor

20. Sushil Kumar De, “The Akhyayika and the Katha in Classical Sanskrit,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 3.3 (1924): 507–517.

21. I discuss De’s essay further in Chapter Two

22. Vasudeva S. Agrawala, *The Deeds of Harsha: Being a Cultural Study of Bāṇa’s Harṣacharita*, ed. P. K. Agrawala (Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 1969). Agrawala also published in 1958 a cultural study of Bāṇa’s *Kādambarī*: Vasudeva S. Agrawala, *Kādambarī: Eka Sāṃskṛtika Adhyayana*, Vidyābhavana Rāshtrabhāṣā Granthamālā 14, 2nd ed. (Varanasi: Caukhambā Vidyābhavana, 1970).

23. Weber, “Analyse der Kādambarī,” 582. Translation by Peterson quoted in full above. Hueckstedt renders “Wald” as “jungle” and refers to the proponents of Weber’s view as part of the “Jungle” School. For a reception history of *gadyakāvya*, including more favorable perspectives, see Hueckstedt, *Style of Bāṇa*, 11–17.

24. Hueckstedt, *ibid.*, 81.

between the verb-initial and verb-final sentences,²⁵ where the latter introduce beginnings of works and embedded narratives and the former emphasize swift continuous action or suggest a desired or feared action.

Whereas Hueckstedt surveys the stylistic features of a particular prose author, Yigal Bronner's 2010 study focuses on the historical development and reception of a single poetic feature that largely becomes associated with, though was not restricted to, prose poetry: *śleṣa*, "paranomasia," or, as referred to by Bronner, "bitextual poetry."²⁶ Bronner inflects Hueckstedt's view of the western reception to *śleṣa* by claiming that the form was considered by early Orientalist scholars as simultaneously unnatural to poetical aesthetic yet natural to the Sanskrit language, thus demonizing the form on one hand and passing over more serious inquiry into the phenomenon on the other hand. In this work, Bronner maps a literary history that begins with Subandhu during the sixth century, as a pioneer in the form, and continues to what the author calls the "bitextual bloom," or the florescence of bitextual poetry of the beginning of the second millennium through the early modern period.

Although a comprehensive study of *gadyakāvya* has yet to be undertaken, the individual contributions to a more recently published history of Sanskrit literature titled *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* have opened up new directions in the study of prose poetry.²⁷ As a provisional bookend to the early attitudes toward *gadyakāvya* cited above, the editors of this volume provide the following description of *gadyakāvya*:

Anyone who reads the *gadyakāvyas* of this period will immediately notice new features of intensity: the complex syntactical effects, including sentences running for pages on end and often structured in multilayered hypotaxis, the dense patterns of figuration, including extensive use of alliteration and punning, the new musicality with its persistent exploration of the range of textures available beyond the boundaries of individual verses, and the complexities of narrative structure with their rich use of emboxed stories and variations in pace.

All of this reflects an extended moment of creative experimentation, not only with the possibilities of prose as a style, but also with the system of genres.²⁸

Many of *gadyakāvya* features discussed by the volume editors in this passage are the same as those pointed out by the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars above. But, rather than

25. I discuss this prose syntax further in Chapter Four.

26. Yigal Bronner, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

27. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, eds., *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

28. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, "The Masters of Prose," in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 234.

reading these works according to the standard of modern literary genres and tastes, they acknowledge that the *gadyakāvya* authors worked under different sets of aesthetic conventions and linguistic constraints.

1.4. The *Avantisundarī*: An Introduction to the Text, Its Issues, and Proposed Solutions

Relative to the other early Sanskrit *gadyakāvya*s that were in print circulation from the mid-1800's onward, the *Avantisundarī* arrived late on the scene. The manuscript and publication history of the *Avantisundarī* is relatively brief, especially compared to that of its sibling text, the *Daśakumāracarita*, whose 1846 *editio princeps* was published almost eighty years prior to that of the *Avantisundarī*.²⁹ While the *Daśakumāracarita* has been edited and translated numerous times, there have only been two editions and no published translations of the *Avantisundarī*.³⁰ A partial edition of *Avantisundarī* was first published in 1924 as the *Avantisundarīkathā* (*Story of Avantisundarī*) along with the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* (*Essence of the Story of Avantisundarī*), a Sanskrit verse epitome of the work composed by an anonymous author.³¹ A more complete version of the *Avantisundarī* was published in 1954.³² The *Avantisundarīkathā* and its *Sāra* are linked through their narrative material and manuscript provenance. Moreover, despite being a verse abridgment, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* follows the *Avantisundarī* closely in terms of its diction and detail. For these reasons, I will discuss their manuscript and publication histories together.

29. Prior to Wilson's 1846 publication of the *Daśakumāracarita editio princeps*, Henry Colebrook mentions a *Daśakumāracarita* by Daṇḍin in his introductory remarks to Appayya Mantrin's verse abridgment *Daśakumārakathāsāra*. However, Colebrook seems to think that the work by Daṇḍin was also composed in verse." Henry Thomas Colebrooke, "Introductory Remarks" in *Hitopadēśa, or Salutory Instruction in the Original Sanscrit*, ed. W. Carey, iii–xv (Serampore: s.n., 1804), xii. M. Krishnamachariar identifies Appayya Mantrin with sixteenth-century philosopher and rhetorician Appayya Dikṣita. M. Krishnamachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature* (Madras: Tirumali-Tirupati Devasthanams Press, 1937; Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 464. Page references are to the 1970 edition.

30. Small sections of the *Avantisundarī* have been translated in scholarly sources. For example, see Sheldon Pollock's translations of sections of the prologue (*AS*, p. 14, 1954 edition) referred to by Michael Rabe, "The Māmallapuram Praśasti: A Panegyric in Figures," *Artibus Asiae* 57, no. 3/4 (1997): 198–200. See also V. Raghavan, *R̥ṣi in Sanskrit Literature* (1972; repr., New Delhi: Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanakrit [sic] Vidyapeetha, 2009), 108–109.

31. *Avantisundarikathasara and Avantisundarikatha*, ed. S. K. Ramanatha Sastri (Trichur: Mangalodayam Press, 1924).

32. *Avantisundarī of Ācārya Daṇḍin*, ed. K. S. Mahādeva Śāstrī (Trivandrum: University of Travancore, 1954). In the work's preface, Sūranād Kunjan Pillai, Honorary Director of the University Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum, at the time of the work's publication clarifies that K. S. Mahādeva Śāstrī edited the work under the direction of the library's curator, P. K. Nārāyaṇa Pillai. See Sūranād Kunjan Pillai, preface to *Avantisundarī of Ācārya Daṇḍin*, ed. K. S. Mahādeva Śāstrī (Trivandrum: University of Travancore, 1954), 5. K. S. Mahādeva Śāstrī's name is neither listed on the work's cover nor title page. Unless noted, all subsequent *Avantisundarī* (*AS*) citations refer to the 1954 edition.

At the 1922 Oriental Conference of Calcutta, Ramakrishna Kavi announced the discovery of a damaged and incomplete manuscript of a work named *Avantisundarīkathā* attributed to Daṇḍin, along with the anonymous, less damaged and slightly more complete *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*.³³ The *Avantisundarī* manuscript contains a description of the author that scholars of Daṇḍin, the author of the manual of literary aesthetics, the *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*Mirror on Literature*), had not been able to find in other sources. Kavi's paper for the conference, which was published the following year in the 1923 *Proceedings and Transactions*, was incorporated into the introduction to the 1924 *editio princeps*, edited by S. K. Ramanatha Sastri.³⁴ Both the *Avantisundarī* and its *Sāra* were found during a three-year project organized by the Government Oriental Manuscript Library (GOML) of Madras to acquire manuscripts throughout the Madras Presidency (1916–1919).³⁵ The *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* was found first near Korakkal (now Kottakkal), in the Malabar district of present-day Kerala. A year later in the same region, fifteen damaged palm leaves of a prose text were found in a manuscript of Vallabhadeva's anthology, the *Subhāṣitāvalī* (15th c. CE).³⁶ Despite making three subsequent trips from Madras to the Korakkal region, Kavi and Shastri were unable to obtain more of the *Avantisundarī* manuscript. However, at the request of the senior Nambudiri brahman of the Cherumukka Mana where the earlier palm-leaf folios were found, they were sent a package of loose palm leaves that were about to be placed in permanent storage. In this package, the two found four more leaves of the *Avantisundarī* along with two chapters of Prabhākara's *Bṛhatī*.³⁷ The nineteen leaves of the *Avantisundarī* and the manuscript of the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* found the year prior comprise the 1924 edition.

In June 1925, just a year after the publication of the *Avantisundarī* and *Sāra*, G. Harihara Sastri, on a mission for the Trivandrum Curator's Office, collected a large bundle of palm-leaf

33. M. Ramakrishna Kavi, "Avantisundarī-kathā of Daṇḍin," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Second Oriental Conference, Calcutta* (1923): 193-201.

I follow the editors of the 1954 edition in calling the work *Avantisundarī*. The addition of *kathā* to the name seems to be extrapolated from the title of the verse epitome, i.e., *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*. There is also a reference in the text to Daṇḍin as "wanting to tell the story *Avantisundarī*" (*kathām avantisundarīm ācikyāsur iti*, p. 10). Here, the terms *kathā* (story) and "*Avantisundarī*" are in apposition, not in compound. The remaining references to the work itself are from the colophons, which refer to the work as *Avantisundarī* (pp. 1 and 216).

34. Kavi, introduction to *Avantisundarīkathāsāra and Avantisundarīkathā*, 1–16.

35. Kavi refers to this search as taking place over seven years under the direction of S. Kuppuswami Sastriar (=S. Kuppuswami Sastri). Kavi, introduction to *Avantisundarīkathāsāra and Avantisundarīkathā*, 15. But Harihara Sastri refers to it as a three-year project in the introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra* (Madras: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1957), i. Neither editor provides further details about the project, but this must be the three-year peripatetic party of GOML to find manuscripts listed in the "Additions to the Library," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* no. 3 (Jul. 1920): 441. See under S. Kuppuswami Sastri, *Report on the Working of the Peripatetic Party of the Government Oriental MSS. Library during the Triennium 1916-19*.

36. Kavi, introduction to *Avantisundarīkathāsāra and Avantisundarīkathā*, 15–16.

37. Ibid., 16.

folios from a Nambudiri brahman household in Muvattupuzha, North Travancore.³⁸ The bundle, which contained various Sanskrit texts, also contained a considerably larger, albeit still fragmented, manuscript of the *Avantisundarī*. This manuscript became the basis for the 1954 edition by K. S. Mahādeva Śāstri under the supervision of Nārāyaṇa Pillai.³⁹ Along with finding the folios for the 1954 edition, G. Harihara Sastri published a second edition of the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* based on the 1924 *editio princeps* and two new manuscripts. This edition appeared serially across eleven issues of the *Journal of Oriental Research Madras* (December 1946–June 1949)⁴⁰ before being published as a monograph in 1957 by the Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute with an extensive introduction in which the editor provides a detailed summary and comparison of the *Avantisundarī* and its *Sāra*.⁴¹

Despite the fragmentary state of both the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* and *Avantisundarī* for the 1924 edition, both works' description of Daṇḍin as the author of this newly introduced work was received with much fanfare. From the style of the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, Kavi first identified it as the work of the *Kāvyādarśa* author.⁴² Aside from questions of the identity of the authors of both works, the earliest conversations had to do with the relationship between the poet Bhāravi, author of the *mahākāvya Kirātārjunīya*, mentioned in the *Avantisundarī* framing narrative and Daṇḍin's great-grandfather Dāmodaragupta.⁴³ While the *Kāvyādarśa* and the *Daśakumāracarita*, both attributed to Daṇḍin, had received scholarly attention prior to the publication of *Avantisundarī*, neither of these works had provided information about the author's date or provenance. The framing narrative, with its account of Daṇḍin's ancestors' migration from northern India to the Deccan and of the travels of his great-grandfather Dāmodara, emboldened the *Avantisundarī*'s editors and other mid-twentieth century scholars of Sanskrit literature to locate Daṇḍin in the city of Kāñcī (now, Kanchipuram, northern Tamil Nadu) during the reign of Narasiṃhavarman Pallava (ca. 680–720 c. CE).⁴⁴ And, despite continued debate whether the Daṇḍin of the *Kāvyādarśa*, the *Daśakumāracarita*, and the *Avantisundarī* were one in the same author, the *Avantisundarī*'s framing narrative account became the default biography for the presumed author of all three works.

38. Harihara Sastri, introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, i.

39. Whereas twenty-five pages comprise the published *Avantisundarī* fragment in Kavi's 1924 edition, two hundred and forty-six make up Śāstri's 1954 edition.

40. G. Harihara Sastri, ed., "Avantisundarīkathāsāra," *Journal of Oriental Research Madras* 16, pts. 2–4 (Dec 1946–Jun 1947); 17, pts. 1–4 (Sep 1947–Jun 1948); 18, pts. 1–4 (Sep 1948–Jun 1949).

41. *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, ed. G. Harihara Sastri (Madras: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1957)

42. Kavi, introduction to *Avantisundarīkathāsāra and Avantisundarīkatha*, 1.

43. On this debate, see Kavi 1923, "Avantisundarī-Kathā of Dandin," 194–95; Kavi 1924, introduction to *Avantisundarīkathāsāra and Avantisundarīkatha*, 2–3; Sushil Kumar De, "Bhāravi and Daṇḍin," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 1 (1925): 31–36; G. Harihara Śāstrī. "Bhāravi and Daṇḍin," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1927): 169–171; and Sushil Kumar De, "Miscellany: A Note on the Avantisundarīkathā in Relation to Bhāravi and Daṇḍin," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1927): 395–403.

44. See, for example, Śāstrī, *Avantisundarī of Ācārya Daṇḍin*, 23–24; Dharmendra Kumar Gupta, *A Critical Study of Daṇḍin and His Works* (Delhi: Meharchand Lachhmandas, 1970), 89–93. Cf. B. V. Krishnarao, "Avantisundarīkatha and Its Historical Value," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 5 (1941): 211.

The publication of the *Avantisundarī* especially brought to the fore the question of the work's relationship with the more popular prose *kāvya* attributed to Daṇḍin, the *Daśakumāracarita*. Despite differences in style, diction, and narrative structure, the two works have very similar plots. From the time that Wilson introduced the *Daśakumāracarita* to western audiences, it has been a textual conundrum for scholars. The work is divided into three sections: a *pūrvapīṭhikā*, "introduction," the body of the work, and the *uttarapīṭhikā*, "conclusion." For the most part, scholars consider the body to be composed by Daṇḍin, and the introduction and the conclusion by later authors.⁴⁵

The *Daśakumāracarita* narrates the story of prince Rājavāhana and his nine conatal companions who, after spending their childhoods in exile in the Vindhya forest, set off on a *digvijaya*, "quest to conquer the directions," and avenge the defeat of Rājavāhana's father, Rājahamṣa, king of Magadhā, at the hands of king Mānasāra of Ujjayinī. Rājavāhana is separated from his companions after helping the brahmin ascetic Mataṅga become ruler of the underworld. The remainder of the *Daśakumāracarita* takes place with Rājavāhana running into two of his companions and hearing their adventures of love and conquest. Rājavāhana then meets and falls in love with Avantisundarī, daughter of his father's enemy, Mānasāra. With the help of a magician's power of illusion, Rājavāhana marries Avantisundarī. The story transitions here from the *pūrvapīṭhikā* to the body of the text. Adventures ensue. And the rest of the work consists of Rājavāhana remeeting the rest of his boon companions and hearing their subsequent adventures. In the *uttarapīṭhikā*, Rājavāhana and his companions conquer Mānasāra, Rājavāhana succeeds his father as ruler of Magadhā, and his companions become vassal rulers of neighboring kingdoms.⁴⁶

The beginning of the *Avantisundarī* differs dramatically from the *Daśakumāracarita* in that it opens with a twenty-seven verse preamble and a framing narrative that gives an account of Daṇḍin's ancestry, his life, and how he came to compose the story of Avantisundarī. Whereas the *Daśakumāracarita* moves at a snappy pace syncopated with considerably more verbal forms, the *Avantisundarī* moves at the pace of *gadyakāvya*s such as *Vāsavadattā* and *Kādambarī*. That is, it foregrounds description through the use of long nominal compounds and repeating figures of sound and sense. Moreover, it punctuates the main narrative with lengthy philosophical discourses as well as intervening stories that provide history, metempsychotic backstories, and the occasional future prediction. The narrative continues up to Rājavāhana's meeting with the brahmin ascetic Mataṅga and his entrance into the underworld. As an example of a metempsychotic back story, the work abruptly ends with the future wife of Mataṅga relating how, in a past life, she heard the story of Kādambarī.

45. See for example, Isabelle Onians, Introduction to *What Ten Young Men Did*, Clay Sanskrit Series (New York: New York University Press / JJC Foundation, 2005), 22–23. As counterpoint, see Herman Tieken, "Daṇḍin, the *Daśakumāracarita*, and the *Avantisundarīkathā*," *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 31 (2013): 231–52.

46. For translations of the *Daśakumāracarita*, see for example M. R. Kale, trans. *Daśakumāracarita of Daṇḍin*, 4th ed. (1925, repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966); Johann Jakob Meyer, trans., *Daṇḍin's Daśakumāracaritam: die Abenteuer der zehn Prinzen. Ein altindischer Schelmenroman* (Leipzig: Lotus-Verlag, 1902); Marie-Claude Porcher, *Histoire des dix princes, par Daṇḍin. Traduit du sanscrit, présenté et annoté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995); and Onians, *What Ten Young Men Did*.

Given the different register and narrative priorities, the *Avantisundarī*'s printed edition, which totals two hundred and forty-six pages, only takes its audience through the first two of the five chapters that make up the *Daśakumāracarita*'s *pūrvapīṭhikā*. This comes to less than one-seventh of the narrative as it appears in the *Daśakumāracarita*. Because the *Avantisundarī* ends before the beginning of the body of the *Daśakumāracarita*—the section believed to be composed by Daṇḍin—there is no crossover between the two works to compare. However, the *Avantisundarī* verse summary, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, summarizes the contents of the *Avantisundarī* to where the prose work ends. It then continues the narration following the *Daśakumāracarita*'s storyline up to where Rājavāhana meets his companion Upahāravarman. In the *Daśakumāracarita*, this meeting takes place in the third out of eight *ucchvāsa*-chapters that make up the main body of the work, that is, the section thought to be composed by Daṇḍin. Given that the *Avantisundarī* ends close to where the *Daśakumāracarita*'s *pūrvapīṭhikā* ends, many scholars have concluded that the *Avantisundarī* and the body of the *Daśakumāracarita* had once formed a unitary work known as the *Avantisundarī*. But, because the *Avantisundarī* portion had gotten lost over time, later authors re-wrote the beginning portion of the work and, naming it the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, attached it to the body of the separated work. The entire work was then renamed the *Daśakumāracaīrta*.⁴⁷

In the century since the publication of the 1924 edition of the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* and the *Avantisundarī*, many of the questions regarding the text have remained the same. They have to do with the issues of authorship and the relationship between the *Avantisundarī* and the *Daśakumāracarita*. While most of these arguments are rehearsals of one of the early ones, recently Herman Tieken has taken a different and potentially productive approach to the dating.⁴⁸ I will return to his work below. The other issues that remain of interest to scholars are the poets mentioned in the work's *kavipraśamsā* and the historical details pertaining to the framing narrative. Another approach to the *Avantisundarī*'s story proper that some textual scholars have taken on is that of cultural studies. For example, A. K. Warder's work has been useful in thinking about some of the philosophical views expressed in the prose works attributed to Daṇḍin such as the role of *daiva*, "fate," in them.⁴⁹ But much more needs to be done.

Despite being one of the few available works of Sanskrit literary prose from the second millennium, the *Avantisundarī* has received surprisingly little attention. For example, aside from a two mentions, Robert Hueckstedt's important work on the style of early-medieval Sanskrit prose poetry, which focuses on Bāṇa's prose and Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, does not discuss the

47. For the most recent discussion of this debate, see Manu Francis's excellent study of literary sources attributed to the Pallava court. Emmanuel Francis, "Le discours royal: Inscriptions et monuments *pallava* (IVème–IXème siècles)," vol. 1 (PhD diss., Université Catholique de Louvain, 2009), 91–98. To date, the relationship between the *Avantisundarī* and the *Daśakumāracarita* remains inconclusive. While this view that the *Daśakumāracarita* is part of the *Avantisundarī* has generally been accepted, early-twentieth century scholars, such as S. K. De and A. B. Keith strongly disagree based on stylistic differences between the two works. See Keith, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, xvi."

48. Herman Tieken, "Daṇḍin, the *Daśakumāracarita*, and the *Avantisundarīkathā*," *Bulletin d' Études Indiennes* 31 (2013): 231–52.

49. A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 4: 169–172.

Avantisundarī.⁵⁰ In terms of literary esteem, Bāṇa's and Subandhu's prose works are given the highest regard. And even the the *Daśakumāracarita* has been considered in much more detail than the *Avantisundarī*, despite its outlier status in terms of style and genre. An exception to this lacuna of addressing the *Avantisundarī* through a literary lens is Maan Singh's monograph, *Subandhu and Daṇḍin*, which compares Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* with the prose works attributed to Daṇḍin, the *Avantisundarī* and the *Daśakumāracarita*, in terms of style and diction.⁵¹

This general lack of engagement with the *Avantisundarī* might arise from a number of textual issues. First, the *Avantisundarī* and *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* manuscripts that have been found thus far are incomplete and damaged. And the available folios are regularly illegible and filled with lacunae with the folios being out of order in places. At times there are palm-leaf pages left blank by the scribe which G. Harihara Sastri notes is "a fact evidencing the imperfect state of the original from which the present copy was made."⁵² On the state of the manuscript, with its lacunae and scribal errors, Harihara Sastri notes, "The editors have not, therefore, been able to convince themselves that the readings are quite correct."⁵³ Along with the physical incompleteness of the texts arises the difficulty of an incompleteness of narrative. Despite ending mid-narrative, the manuscript's colophon states that the work is finished.⁵⁴ This apparent cutting off of the narrative made Sastri question the colophon as a scribal error: "The colophon mentioning the work as complete is evidently a mistake made by the copyist who, not having the continuation, took the portion for a complete work."⁵⁵

Not only does the *Avantisundarī* edition contain numerous lacunae and end *in medias res*, its language is quite dense and difficult, as far as Sanskrit *kāvya* goes, containing some unwieldy syntax and numerous words not found in Sanskrit dictionaries. Compounded with these general issues of transmission is the difficulty that the uninitiated reader might have with the challenging idiom of ornate Sanskrit prose. In addition, it contains numerous lacunae and what look like oversights or emendations by numerous hands during the course of its transcription and publication. These issues and the generally difficult language of the text make the work difficult to access. At the same time, these issues also allow interesting and potentially productive questions to be asked about the *Avantisundarī* as text, as material object, as part of a larger narrative tradition, and as a work of literature.

From the review of the literature above, it is clear that the same questions have been asked of the *Avantisundarī* since its introduction to modern scholarship in the 1920's without

50. Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bāṇa*, 25, 29n4.

51. Maan Singh, *Subandhu and Daṇḍin*, (New Delhi: Meharchand Lachhmandas), 1979.

52. Harihara Sastri, introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, 2.

53. Ibid.

54. "Thus, the *Avantisundarī* composed by Ācārya Daṇḍin is finished (*ity ācāryadaṇḍinā kṛtā avantisundarī samāptā*)." *AS*, 216. The editor has chosen to keep the numbering of the out-of-sequence manuscript folio here. So the last page of the edition is 216 and the penultimate 245. This has been done without explanation in the critical apparatus.

55. Harihara Sastri, introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, ii.

new answers forthcoming. Moreover the method of enquiry has primarily been that of seeking empirical data from the text without considering the literary context of the work. This is especially the case with understanding the relationship between the *Avantisundarī* and the *Daśakumāracarita* as well as the identity of the author(s) of these two works. What has yet to be explored in this area are the poetic conventions within which these details are embedded, the intertexts of the narrative source material, and the rich use of tropes both linguistic and thematic that this *gadyakāvya* employs. In other words, I suggest that a study of genre and narrativity would yield different outcomes to these questions.

Herman Tieken's 2013 work mentioned above has taken the first steps in this direction. Here, he addresses old questions regarding authorship and continuity in the *Daśakumāracarita* by considering narrative structure as well as linguistic and stylistic considerations within the text. His arguments focus mainly on narrative coherence and authorship followed by questions of genre. Contra scholars who believe that the beginning and end of the *Daśakumāracarita* were lost and that new beginnings and ends were composed by later authors, Tieken argues that the transitional points between sections act as "turning points" in the narrative.⁵⁶ In terms of genre, he is one of the first to critically consider the narrative topoi of the *Daśakumāracarita* as part of the *Brhatkathā* tradition. Here he theorizes that the magical realism of these texts signals a narrative space that functions as "*vidyādhara* time."⁵⁷ Tieken also notes the structural parallels between what I refer to as the conatal motif of Naravāhanadatta and his ministers in the *Brhatkathā* verse epitomes and prince Rājavāhana and his boon companions in the *Daśakumāracarita*.⁵⁸ He very compellingly ends with nods toward the genre distinctions inherent in the *carita*, a hero's "deeds," contra the *kathā*, "story" based on earlier narrative material in Daṇḍin's prose works.⁵⁹ Tieken has gestured toward a solution to this fragmented transmission of Daṇḍin's texts by asking: "such serious losses in the course of their transmission: was it accidental or were they fragments from the very beginning?"⁶⁰ Tieken's approach is a productive model for thinking seriously about narrative as a means to understanding other more "belabored" issues such as authorship.

Another productive approach to reading the *Avantisundarī* would be the one applied by the authors of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*'s special 2010 issue on the poet Bilhaṇa, author of the patron-centered *mahākāvya* *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (*Deeds of King Vikramāṅka*, late 11th c. CE).⁶¹ Rather than focus on Bilhaṇa as a eulogist, the three articles that comprise the issue focus on the author's overall "poetic and political vision"⁶² The authors contextualize Bilhaṇa's work by putting it into conversation with the larger cultural and aesthetic processes that would

56. Tieken, "Daṇḍin, the *Daśakumāracarita*, and the *Avantisundarīkathā*," 234–36.

57. Ibid., 242.

58. Ibid., 241.

59. Ibid., 248.

60. Ibid., 249.

61. Lawrence McCrea, Yigal Bronner, and Whitney Cox, introduction, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38, no. 5 (2010): 453–55.

62. Ibid., 453.

influence a Kashmiri expatriate poet of the late-eleventh century. By doing so, they are able to trace the conflicted undercurrents of the poet's work. For example, Lawrence McCrea's contribution points to the different genre choices available to Bilhaṇa when depicting his patron and what was at stake for making such choices. By choosing to depict Vikramāṅka in the historical mode of the *carita*, McCrea notes that the poet no longer has the choice to ignore the king's less savory political conduct: "Had he chosen to invent a series of fanciful adventures for his royal hero, as Padmagupta had earlier done, he could have sidestepped the issue, but once he has decided to offer a more or less historical account, he is constrained, at least in the broad outlines of his narrative, by what actually occurred."⁶³ Though the *Avantisundarī* doesn't purport to be a patron-centered *carita*, it does address themes of kingship, patronage, and authorial representation that, through reading practices such as these, we might be able to better understand their social contexts.

1.5. Plan of the Dissertation

The two focal points of this dissertation, *gadyakāvya* as a literary form and the *Avantisundarī* as one of the less studied works of this literary form, are supported by the underlying view that *kāvya* and *alaṅkāraśāstra* mutually inform each other. So rather than participate in the conversation of whether literary theory in premodern South Asia is descriptive or prescriptive,⁶⁴ I suggest that poetry and poetic theory have a constitutive relationship. In support of this view, I place the *Avantisundarī* in conversation, not only with other works of *gadyakāvya*, but with *alaṅkāraśāstras* that theorize *gadyakāvya*. To this end, I refer to Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Vāmana (c. 800 CE), and Rudraṭa (9th c. CE) as "early theorists" in my discussion of *gadyakāvya*. As a preliminary discussion to the *Avantisundarī*, Chapter Two historicizes *gadyakāvya* through the lens of genre. By first questioning whether the etic term, genre, is at all a viable category for analysis in Sanskrit poetics, the chapter articulates how *kāvya* has been conceptualized by early poetic theorists in a way that both corresponds to and departs from modern literary conceptions. Focusing then on the literary-prose genres of *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*, the chapter offers a revisionist history of these *gadyakāvya* genres that departs from formalist readings. Continuing along the lines of literary historical inquiry, the second half of Chapter Two considers the relationship between the earlier term *ākhyāyikā* in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and its use to describe the later prose genre of *ākhyāyikā*. A theme throughout this preliminary chapter is that of the shifting role of imagination in understanding the narrative sources of *kāvya*.

Having articulated a provisional genre history of *gadyakāvya* in Chapter Two, Chapter Three continues the discussion of *gadyakāvya* by considering the role of the *kāvyaārambha*, "verse preamble," in *gadyakāvya* works and then offering a new approach to reading the verse

63. Lawrence McCrea, "Poetry Beyond Good and Evil: Bilhaṇa and the Tradition of Patron-Centered Court Epic," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38, no. 5 (2010): 508.

64. For a modified version of the latter view, see Sheldon Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 44.

preamble in the *Avantisundarī*. By outlining the development of the opening verse in Sanskrit and Prakrit literature, I show that, rather than being a static literary convention, the preamble follows the changing requirements of genre and literary affiliation. In its first section, Chapter Three focuses on the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, “opening benedictory verse” and its special features when opening *gadyakāvya* works. After pointing to the discursive features of the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, this chapter considers the power of literary tropes to create affiliations between works. The second half of Chapter Three analyzes the *kavipraśaṃsā*, the “praise of poets” section of the poetic preamble, to show again the *gadya*-specific features of the *kavipraśaṃsā*. Using this new analytical framework, the chapter outlines the features of the *Avantisundarī*’s verse preamble vis-à-vis that of other literary-prose works. In doing so, it situates the work within the larger narrative tradition of the *Brhatkathā* (*Great Story*).

Chapter Four considers the framing narrative of the *Avantisundarī*, which provides a genealogy of the author Daṇḍin and explains how he came to compose the work. Taking the transparent historical reading of the framing narrative as a point of departure, this chapter looks at the literary conventions and descriptions of authorial “self-fashioning” that abound in the framing narrative to better understand the social aesthetics of what it meant to be an author in early-medieval India. By looking at shared representations of a particular kind of authorial representation and literary production—one that, while first appearing in *gadyakāvya* works travels and finds voice across genres, regions, and time periods—I suggest that the *Avantisundarī* framing narrative presents different models of patronage through its representation of Daṇḍin and his great-grandfather Dāmodara, a famous poet in his own right. While we recognize the more established poet-patron model in the case of Dāmodara, Daṇḍin’s own circumstances of narrative production are mediated through other social networks and authorized through different powers, namely the power of *pratibhā*, “poetic inspiration.”

Chapter Five returns to the theoretical questions posed in Chapter Two, thus shifting our attention back from Daṇḍin the poet to Daṇḍin the poetic theorist. Through a close reading of Daṇḍin’s biography, the fourth chapter presented a new imagining of the poet. To counter the formalist impulse to conceive of *alaṅkāraśāstra* as a linguistic and semiotic space devoid of the social contexts of production and reception, this chapter seeks to better understand the *adhikārī*, “authorized reader/audience,” of Daṇḍin’s work on poetics. To this end, it considers how Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin conceive of their projects through the *anubandhacatuṣṭaya*, the “fourfold criteria” of a *śāstra*. While Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin have similar purposes for their work, their varying definitions of the requirements of the poet suggest that their works are meant for, in part, different audiences. For Daṇḍin, I argue the *Kāvyaadarśa* not only speaks to the traditional poet seeking everlasting fame and patronage, it also highlights the social and performative aspects of poetry-making in a way that Bhāmaha’s work does not.

Chapter 2: Preliminary Discussions of Genre and Narration

2.1. Introduction

Story as Story: The Avantisundarī's Presentation of Itself

Toward the end of the *Avantisundarī*'s framing narrative, Daṇḍin and his companions visit a seaside temple where they witness a red lotus emerge from the ocean and become a semi-divine being of the *vidyādhara* class. Urged by his companions to explain this amazing sight, Daṇḍin returns home and worships Viṣṇu for an answer. And, in response, Viṣṇu, through the agency of Sarasvatī, reveals the story of *Avantisundarī* to him in a dream. Upon waking from this narrative revelation, Daṇḍin addresses his companions “with the desire to tell the story (*kathā*) of *Avantisundarī* to the group of friends who are eager to listen (*śuśrūṣave suhr̥dgaṇāya kathām avantisundarīm ācikhyāsuḥ*):⁶⁵

yuṣmatprārthitānuṣṭhitaprayatnena mayā madhunarakāriṣṭakeśikaṃsa-
dhvaṃsanasya tribhuvanaikamaṅgalasya bhagavato bhaktabhayaharaṇa-
vidhivicakṣaṇasyā[mbujekṣaṇa]sya prasādād ambunidhāv
ambujasyāmbarecaratvaprāptyavasānam adbhutam atimahat
kathāśarīraṃ dṛṣṭam | asti cet kutūhalaṃ ayam ahaṃ kathayāmi |
*śrūyatām |*⁶⁶

Attempting to accomplish what was requested by you all, and through the grace of

the destroyer of Madhu, Naraka, Ariṣṭa, Keśi, and Kaṃsa,
the one blessing of the three worlds,
the blessed one skilled in the ways of removing his devotee's fear,
the lotus-eyed

[Viṣṇu], I beheld the wondrous, very expansive body of the story
(*kathāśarīraṃ*) that ends (*avasāna*) with a lotus in the ocean attaining
(*prāpti*) the state of a sky-going [*vidyādhara*]. If this is of interest,⁶⁷ I will
explain. Please listen.

Given the fragmented state of the existing manuscripts, transcripts, and digested versions of the *Avantisundarī*, the reason for the lotus's transformation into a *vidyādhara* remains a mystery. However, the episode above signals other important aspects of the text. The densely compounded prose, with its intentional repetition of words and phonemes, locates the work in the world of

65. *Avantisundarī* (AS), 17. Unless otherwise noted, all *Avantisundarī* references are to the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series edition (TSS).

66. AS, 17.

67. *asti cet kutūhalaṃ ayam*: lit., if this is a curiosity.

ornate literary prose (*gadyakāvya*). And, while the terms *avasāna* and *prāpti* in the passage are understood in their general senses of “end” and “attainment,” they also refer to technical terms in literary-aesthetic theory—a resonance that would not be lost on the work’s audience of cognoscenti.⁶⁸

Less obvious, but as important to the discussion at hand, is the work’s acknowledgment of its own narrative structure. Distinguishing between paratext and text, the author refers to the story of Avantisundarī as the *kathāśarīra*, literally, the “story-body.” This stands in contrast to the *kathāvatāra*, the “descent of the story,” the account of how a story comes to be told. While most modern translators understand *kathāśarīra* to mean the story’s “plot,”⁶⁹ I suggest that premodern treatises on literary-aesthetic theory use the term to refer specifically to the main narrative of a work or to the source material from which the main narrative is drawn—and to distinguish this main narrative from other elements of a composition. For example, Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* (*Ornaments of Literature*, c. 850 CE, Kashmir) uses *kathāśarīra* as a technical term when describing the features of the *mahākathā*, or the great prose narrative:⁷⁰

sānuaprāsena tato bhūyo laghvakṣareṇa gadyena |
racayet kathāśarīraṃ pureva puravarṇanakaprabhṛtīn ||
āḍau kathāntaraṃ vā tasyāṃ nyasyet prapañcitam samyak |
laghu tāvat saṃdhānaṃ prakrāntakathāvatārāya || RuKĀ 16.21–22||⁷¹

Then, one should compose the story-body (*kathāśarīra*) beginning with a description of the city as if it were in days of yore, with a preponderance of metrically light prose containing alliteration. And, at the beginning, one should place another story (*kathāntara*) within it—one that is properly treated at length—such that there is a smooth transition (*saṃdhāna*) to the story’s descent (*kathāvatārāya*), which takes place prior.

68. For an example of *prāpti*, see Dhanañjaya’s discussion of the five junctures (*sandhis*) of a play in *Daśarūpaka* 1.28 (NSP edition). Here, the opening juncture (*mukha*) is the attainment of happiness (*prāpti*). For an example of *avasāna*, see Ānandavardhana’s description of *rasa* in the *Mahābhārata* in *Dhvanyāloka* (*DhvLo*) 4.5, p. 274 (KSS edition). For an analysis of this *DhvLo* passage in conversation with Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, see Lawrence McCrea, “Śāntarasa in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*: History, Epic, and Moral Decay,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50, no. 2 (2013): 182–85.

69. For example, see Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan, trans., *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Daniel H. H. Ingalls (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 427–29 on *DhvLo* 3.10, *vṛtti*, and *Locana*. Better is “narrative form” in McCrea, “Śāntarasa in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, 186.

70. *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* of Rudraṭa (*RuKĀ*) 16.20–23 (KMS edition). I discuss these passages below. For Rudraṭa’s date and provenance, see P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 153–55.

71. In the compound *prakrāntakathāvatārāya*, I take *kathāvatāra* as a genitive *tatpuruṣa* compound modified by the participle *prakrānta* (former), “to the prior descent of the story” (*prakāntaḥ yaḥ kathā tasyāḥ avatāraḥ tasmai*). It could also be taken as the “to the descent of a former story” (*prakrāntā kathā tasyāḥ avatāraḥ tasmai*). Alternatively, this could be read as a locative *tatpuruṣa* compound, “to the descent into the story,” I render *saṃdhāna*, lit., “joining,” “union,” or “mixing,” as “smooth transition.”

Unlike the earlier discussions of *gadyakāvya* by Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, Rudraṭa addresses some of the key structural elements of the *kathā* genre of prose: the *kathāvatāra*, the story’s circumstances of production, the *kathāśarīra*, the story proper, and the *kathāntara*, other stories woven into the larger narrative. The *Avantisundarī* is not the only literary work to signal its narrativity through the technical language of poetics, or *alankāraśāstra*. At the end of the framing narrative of Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*Ocean of Story-Rivers*, 11th c. CE, Kashmir), Guṇāḍhya, the author of the *Bṛhatkathā* and ex-royal minister of king Sātavāhana, meets the king after a period of self-imposed exile and tells him of his past life as a *gaṇa* attending to lord Śiva:

so 'pi svaṃ puṣpadantasya rājñe śāpādiceṣṭitam |
jñānī kathāvatāraṃ tam ācakhyau bhūtabhāṣayā ||
tato gaṇāvatāraṃ taṃ matvā pādānato nṛpaḥ |
yayāce tām kathāṃ tasmād divyām haramukhodgatām ||KSS 1.8.30–31||⁷²

In the language of the spirits,⁷³ the wise one himself told the king the descent of the story (*kathāvatāra*), which was first set in motion by Puṣpadanta’s curse. Then realizing him to be the incarnation of a *gaṇa* (*gaṇāvatāra*), [with his head] bowed down at [Guṇāḍhya’s] feet, the king implored him for the divine story (*kathā*) that had come from the mouth of Hara.⁷⁴

In this way, the *Avantisundarī* is a *kathā* in two senses of this multivalent term. As a work of *gadyakāvya*, it is of the literary genre *kathā* as opposed to the other prose genre of *ākhyāyikā*. While the translations to follow of each of these genres is not perfectly representative, for now, let us call the prose *kathā* “invented narrative” and the prose *ākhyāyikā*, “historical narrative.” The *Avantisundarī* is also a *kathā* in the sense of a narrative, one strongly influenced by, if not based on, the *Bṛhatkathā* tradition of story literature.⁷⁵ Before turning to the *Avantisundarī*, this chapter of the dissertation will focus on these larger questions of genre and narrativity in order to provide a literary-historical context for, not only the *Avantisundarī*, but also for the other Sanskrit *gadyakāvya* works of first-millennium South Asia.

72. *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadevabhaṭṭa (NSP edition).

73. For a compelling history of the semantic drift that took place with the term *bhūta*- in *bhūtabhāṣa*, see Andrew Ollett, “Ghosts From the Past: India’s Undead Languages,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 51, no. 4 (2014): 405–56, especially pp. 436–40. By rendering *bhūta* here as “spirits,” I attempt to convey the sense of *bhūtabhāṣā* as the language of “ghosts” and of “the past.”

74. *yayāce tām kathāṃ tasmād divyām*: lit., “begged/implored the divine story from him.”

75. See, too, the colophon at the end of the first story of the *Śukasaptati* (*Seventy [Tales] of a Parrot*): “Thus, is narrated the first tale (*kathā*) which has the form of the original foundation of the other tales, known as the descent of the story (*kathāvatāra*) in the story-collection (*iti iyaṃ prathamā kathetarāsāṃ kathānām mūlapīṭhikārūpā vyāvarṇitā. iti kathākośe kathāvatārah*).”

Chapter Scope: Gadyakāvya and the Bṛhatkathā

In this chapter, I set the context for my exploration of the *Avantisundarī* by discussing genre as a conceptual category. This discussion helps us better understand the relationship between *gadyakāvya* and the narrative tradition that *gadyakāvya* is primarily drawn from. Both these aspects speak to their participation in a particular literary genre, but also as part of a discursive genre that shares a particular imagining of the past. While the former, *gadyakāvya*, points to a literary genre acknowledged by traditional scholars of *alaṅkāraśāstra*, “treatises on poetics,” the idea of a Bṛhatkathā tradition as a narrative genre is less explicitly so and, thus, requires more explanation. While much of the dissertation will focus on the formal aspects of genre in *gadyakāvya*, specifically in the *Avantisundarī*, it will do so, not in the spirit criticized by Rick Altman that “genre study serves to convince theorists that genres actually exist, that they have distinct borders, that they can be firmly identified....and that they evolve according to a fixed and identifiable trajectory.”⁷⁶ Rather, as argued by John Frow, “Just as genres form a horizon of expectations against which any text is read, so are they themselves subsumed within a broader horizon formed by a period’s system of genres.”⁷⁷ Using Jauss’s hermeneutic term “horizon of expectations,”⁷⁸ Frow reminds us that, to use genre as a category of analysis, we need to understand that, like the texts that they belong to, genres are neither stable nor transhistorical.⁷⁹ Instead Frow reminds us that, for a text to be legible at all, its receiver must have a shared intertextual knowledge, a common understanding of forms of discourse that makes genre itself both social and historical. Moreover, there is a “fuzziness and open-endedness of the relation between texts and genres” rather than rigid formal categories.⁸⁰

This chapter attempts to clarify some of the fuzziness around *gadyakāvya* and its genres while simultaneously complicating our understanding of these forms. The first half of the chapter reconsiders the treatment of the prose genres *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā* in early *alaṅkāra* treatises by moving away from the focus in modern studies on the formal aspects of genre. By earlier *alaṅkāra* treatises, I refer specifically to the works on poetics that address *gadyakāvya* from the second half of the first millennium, specifically Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaṭīkā* (*Ornaments of Literature*, ca. 7th c. CE), Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*Mirror of Literature*, late 7th–early 8th c. CE), Vāmana’s *Kāvyaṭīkāśāstra* (*Aphorisms on the Ornaments of Literature*, c. 800 CE), and Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaṭīkā* (*Ornaments of Literature*, 9th c. CE). Not only do these works present unique perspectives on *gadyakāvya*, when read together, these genre-specific discussions provide

76. Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Industry, 1999), 6. Quoted in John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), 53.

77. Frow, *Genre*, 70.

78. Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

79. Here Derrida’s view that the relationship between genre and a text is one where “participation never amounts to belonging” is useful. Jacques Derrida, “The Law of Genre,” trans. Avital Ronell. *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 65.

80. Frow, *Genre*, 54.

a window into changing ideas of the relationship between literary form and its relationship with past traditions. By expanding the discussion of prose to include earlier references in the *vyākaraṇaśāstra*, “grammatical treatise,” Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* (ca. 2nd c. BCE), the second half of the chapter considers the continuities and ruptures between the *ākhyāyikā* as a historical genre and as a literary genre.

2.2. *Gadyakāvya* and Genre

Genre as an Analytical Category

Authors of *alaṅkāraśāstra* conceptualize genre through the matrix that forms *kāvya*’s prerequisite features. The earliest theorist on record, Bhāmaha (ca. 7th c. CE) discusses these high-level features of poetry in his definition of *kāvya* in the very first *pariccheda*-chapter of the *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* (*The Ornaments of Literature*):

śabdārthau sahitaḥ kāvyam gadyam padyam ca tad dvidhā |
saṃskṛtaṃ prākṛtaṃ cānyad apabhraṃśa iti tridhā ||
vṛttadevādicaritaśaṃsi cotpādyavastu ca |
kalāśāstrāśrayam ceti caturdhā bhidyate punaḥ ||
sargabandho 'bhineyārtham tathaivākhyāyikākathe |
anibaddham ca kāvyādi tat punaḥ pañcadhocyate || *BhKĀ* 1.16–18||⁸¹

Kāvya is endowed with sound and sense. It has a two-fold division of prose and verse. It also has a three-fold division of Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhraṃśa. It is again divided into four types: one relating the past deeds of gods and others, one with topics inspired by the author, and those who have the arts and sciences as their sources. That principal *kāvyas* are said to be divided once again into five: those composed in *sargas* (i.e., *mahākāvya*), those whose meaning is acted out (*abhineyārtha*), the *ākhyāyikā*, the *kathā*, and individual verses (*anibaddha*).⁸²

This introduction to the formal elements of *kāvya* provide what, for Bhāmaha, are the five requirements of all poetry. Foremost are sound and sense, the components of all language. This is followed by a rhythmic mode of either verse or prose, language choice, and then source material. The fifth and final division is akin to the modern conception of higher-order literary genre. Of

81. Unless otherwise noted, all *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha (*BhKĀ*) references will be from the Kashi Sanskrit Series edition (KSS).

82. Alternatively, the term *kāvyādi* could construe with *anibaddham* to mean “excellent *kāvya* is unbound, i.e., presented as individual verses.” In either case, the *ādi* needs to be taken as “chief” or “best of” instead of “beginning with.”

the five genres that Bhāmaha lists, the *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*—to which I will return below—are composed in prose.

Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*Mirror of Literature*, late 7th–early 8th c. CE) generally follows Bhāmaha’s classification of these foundational aspects of *kāvya*. But, he conceives of these features through the metaphor of “the body (*śarīra*) and the ornaments (*alaṅkāras*) of *kāvya* (*śarīraṃ ca kāvyānām alaṅkāraś ca*)”⁸³ Here, the higher-order features of poetry form the body that is made beautiful by its ornaments, the rhetorical figures that the rest of the treatise focuses upon. Whereas Bhāmaha names prose (*gadya*) and verse (*padya*) as the two rhythmic modes, Daṇḍin adds prosimetry, a mixture of prose and verse (*miśra*) as a third type.⁸⁴ And where Bhāmaha allows for Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramśa as the three literary languages, Daṇḍin offers a macaronic register, a mixture from the three literary languages (*miśra*) as a fourth type.⁸⁵ Departing from Bhāmaha’s organization, which lists the sources of *kāvya* and the literary genres sequentially after rhythmic mode, Daṇḍin subsumes these features under the higher-level features. Thus, the verse genre of *sargabandha*;⁸⁶ the prose genres of *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*;⁸⁷ and the combined forms, starting with plays (*nāṭakādīni*) and including the newly presented genre of *campū*, are enumerated under the rubric of their respective rhythmic mode.⁸⁸

While the earliest theorists on record, Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, both place this discussion of *kāvya*’s high-level features in the opening verses of their works, discussions of genre lose this

83. *Kāvyaḍarśa* of Daṇḍin (*DaKĀ*) 1.10. All *DaKĀ* references are from the 1936 Srinivas Press edition unless noted otherwise:

taiḥ [sūribhiḥ] śarīraṃ ca kāvyānām alaṅkāraś ca darśitāḥ |
śarīraṃ tāvad iṣṭārthavyavacchinnā padāvalī ||

And they [the seers] reveal the body (*śarīraṃ*) and the ornaments of *kāvya*.

First, the body is a succession of words, distinguished by their desired meaning.

Though beyond the scope of this discussion, we also see the idea of an animating principle for this body in Daṇḍin’s discussion of poetic styles (*mārgas*, lit., “paths”): “[The aforementioned] ten poetic merits (*guṇas*) are the life-breaths (*prāṇas*) of the Vaidarbha-path (*iti vaidarbhamārgasya prāṇā daśa guṇāḥ smṛtāḥ*, *DaKĀ* 1.42ab). This metaphor gets fully realized with Vāmana introducing style (*rīti*) as the soul (*ātman*) of *kāvya*. See *Kāvyaḍarśa* of Vāmana (*VāKĀS*) 1.2.6 and *vṛtti* (*VāKĀS*, KMS edition).

NB: Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* also speaks of a body made of *kāvya* (*kāvyamayam vapuḥ*, *BhKĀ* 1.6d, edition). But Bhāmaha’s *kāvya-body* consists of the everlasting fame bestowed upon the talented poet. For a further discussion of the difference between Bhāmaha’s and Daṇḍin’s use of the body metaphor, see Chapter Five.

84. *padyaṃ gadyaṃ ca miśraṃ ca tat tridhaiva vyavasthitam | DaKĀ* 1.11ab. Cf. *BhKĀ* 1.16b.

85. *DaKĀ* 1.32:

tad etad vānmayam bhūyaḥ saṃskṛtaṃ prākṛtaṃ tathā |
apabhramśāś ca miśraṃ cety āhur āryāś caturvidham ||

The respected say that this manner of speech, for the most part, is fourfold: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramśa and a mixture thereof.

Cf. *BhKĀ* 1.16bc.

86. The *Kāvyaḍarśa*’s discussion of *sargabandha* extends from *DaKĀ* 1.14–1.22. Rather than discuss genres consisting of individual verses (*muktakas*), clusters of verses (*kulakas*), verse anthologies (*kośas*), or same-meter compilations (*saṃghātas*), the *DaKĀ* considers these forms as parts of the *sargabandha* and, therefore, expansions of the *padya* mode (*sargabandhāṃśarūpatvād padyavistarāḥ*, *DaKĀ* 1.13cd).

87. Daṇḍin treats the *gadya* genres at *DaKĀ* 1.23–1.30.

88. *DaKĀ* 1.31.

precedence of place in later works. Given that rhetorical figures at the level of individual verses are the primary concern of the early Sanskrit *alaṅkāra* theorists, genre—as a feature of the *prabandha*, or the composition as a whole—begins to slip in priority. This is reflected in later treatises where *prabandha*-level topics and, by metonymy, genre-related concerns are no longer placed in the introduction. By the time of Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaṅkāra* (*Ornaments of Literature*, 9th c. CE), the discussion of genre appears only at the very end of the work in its sixteenth and final *adhikaraṇa*-chapter. Even with the shift to a *rasa-dhvani* paradigm, the discussion of the *prabandha* remains relegated to the later chapters of most treatises.⁸⁹

Revisiting the Ākhyāyikā and the Kathā in Classical Sanskrit

Though the treatment of *gadyakāvya* is limited in the early *alaṅkāra* treatises, it does get acknowledged. The formal aspects of the prose literary genres are presented in the works of Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaṅkāra*, Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa*, Vāmana’s *Kāvyaṅkārasūtra*, Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaṅkāra*, and the *alaṅkāra* sections of the *Agnipurāṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*.⁹⁰ Similarly limited is the treatment of *gadyakāvya* in modern studies of Sanskrit literature. The main focus in this realm has been on the distinction between *ākhyāyikā*, commonly translated as “biography” or “historical narrative,” and *kathā*, commonly translated as “invented narrative,” “novel,” or “romance.”⁹¹ Often cited as the quintessential works of their respective genres are Bāṇa’s (first-half 7th c. CE) two prose works, the *Harṣacarita*, an *ākhyāyikā* chronicling the deeds of king Harṣa, and the *Kādambarī*, a *kathā* love story that takes place across lifetimes between king Candrāpīḍa and the work’s eponymous heroine, Kādambarī. While the *Harṣacarita* is the single extant example of the *ākhyāyikā* from the first millennium CE, there are other *kathā* works, such as Subandhu’s *Vāsavadattā*, Daṇḍin’s *Avantisundarī*, Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā*, and Dhanapāla’s *Tilakamañjari*. The definitions of the *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā* differ from treatise to treatise, but questions of structure, narrative voice, and poetic invention remain primary concerns.

S.K. De’s foundational 1924 article, “The Akhyayika and the Katha in Classical Sanskrit,” points to the formal features that comprise both of these *gadyakāvya* genres in the early *alaṅkāra* treatises and argues for the importance of Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī* in

89. For example, the *Dhvanyāloka* and *Locana* discuss genre (here, *viśaya*) and other *prabandha*-related issues primarily in conversation with *saṃghatanā*, texture through arrangement, compounding and style, in the third *uddhyota*.

90. For this discussion, I refer to works of *alaṅkāraśāstra* and not to *purāṇas* with *alaṅkāra* sections.

91. I discuss the problematic nature of translating *ākhyāyikā* as “biography” below. For discussions favoring the term “romance” for the prose *kathā*, see Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bāṇa*, 9–11; in favor of the term “novel” for both prose and verse *kathā*, see Christine Chojnacki, “Charming Bouquet or Wedding Garland? The Structures of the Jain Heroine ‘Novel’ in Prakrit From *Kuvalayamālā* (779) to *Maṇoramā* (1082),” *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 70, no. 2 (2016): 365–70. While neither etic genre is analogous to the prose *kathā*, out of the two, “romance” in the sense of the medieval European chivalric romance with its tales of wonder and focus on the heroic quest, as well as its tendency to be composed in prose, shares more genre features with the prose *kathā* than the modern novel.

shaping conversations around prose genres.⁹² In a later publication, De summarizes the argument as follows:

We have tried to show...that two of three well-defined stages are distinguishable in the development of these two species of the *kāvya* in Classical Sanskrit, the earliest being represented by the characteristics given by Bhāmaha and the latest by those given by Rudraṭa; and that while Bhāmaha cannot be taken as having accepted Bāṇa's two masterpieces as his prototype, Rudraṭa has only generalised their important features into universal definitions of the *kathā* and the *ākhyāyikā*.⁹³

De's work argues for a development of the *gadyakāvya* genres from Bhāmaha, the earliest theorist to deal with the subject, to Rudraṭa, in whose work, Gerow notes "we come to the culmination, in one sense, of the early *alaṃkāra* tradition that focussed on the classical *kāvya*."⁹⁴ In De's estimation, Bhāmaha's definition of *ākhyāyikā* differs too much from the features in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* to be based on the same model, the primary difference having to do with whether the *nāyaka* ought to narrate his own deeds.⁹⁵ On this point, Bhāmaha states, "In the [*ākhyāyikā*], the *nāyaka* relates his own actions that have taken place (*vṛttam ākhyāyate tasyām nāyakena svaceṣṭitam* |)."⁹⁶ For the *kathā*, he notes the contrary:

anyaiḥ svacaritaṃ tasyām nāyakena tu nocyate |
svaguṇāviṣkṛtiṃ kuryād abhijātaḥ katham janah ||BhKĀ 1.28–29||

In the [*kathā*] the *nāyaka*'s deeds are told by others, but not by the *nāyaka*.
For how would high-born people reveal their own merits?

While Bhāmaha's work enjoins the *nāyaka* of an *ākhyāyikā* to rehearse his own story, in Bāṇa's *ākhyāyikā*, the work's *nāyaka*, Harṣa, enlists the poet himself to chronicle his deeds. Rudraṭa's *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra*, however, elides any mention of narrative voice and, instead, includes in its definition several of the formal features found in both Bāṇa's *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*.⁹⁷ From Bhāmaha to Rudraṭa, we see that the features of the prose genres set out in *alaṅkāraśāstra* align more closely with Bāṇa's canonical works. Once Bāṇa's works have been accepted by theorists as the *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā par excellence*, De concludes, "This practically stereotypes the two species in Sanskrit literature; and as a natural result of this fixing of the characteristics, the *ākhyāyikā* and the *kathā* declined to such an extent that most later theorists do not think it

92. De, "The Akhyayika and the Katha," 507–17.

93. Sushil Kumar De, *Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics* (London: Luzac and Co., 1925), 57 n14.

94. Edwin Gerow, *Indian Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 238.

95. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 511.

96. *BhKĀ* 1.26ab.

97. De, "The Akhyayika and the Katha," 514–15. See *RuKĀ* 16.20–23 for the prose *kathā* and *RuKĀ* 16.24–30 for the prose *ākhyāyikā*.

necessary to dilate upon the question.”⁹⁸ And, for the most part, De’s work has also been the final word in modern discussions of genre in *gadyakāvya*.

2.3. De-Centering Bāṇa, Re-Centering the Theorists

Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin on the Relative Newness of Alaṅkāraśāstra

While the focus on Bāṇa’s canonical works has helped trace the development of formal features in the study of *gadyakāvya* genre, this approach has occluded other ways of reading the theorists of literary aesthetics. In what follows, I explore the relationship between Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin through the lens of genre. The intertextuality and the combative tone of the two theorists’ works has been discussed widely in the study of *alaṅkāraśāstra*.⁹⁹ For this reason, Yigal Bronner’s 2012 study is significant, not only for showing Bhāmaha’s relative priority to Daṇḍin, but also for bringing the following question to the fore: Given that scholars of *kāvya* theory existed earlier,¹⁰⁰ why are the works of these two seventh-century theorists the earliest that we have on record? To this important and rarely asked question, Bronner suggests that, “Their encompassing polarity combined with Bhāmaha’s claim to epitomize the core of the previous tradition and Daṇḍin’s attempt to reintroduce all that Bhāmaha excluded and more, is one of the factors that rendered the earlier corpus less relevant.”¹⁰¹

To participate in this inquiry, I re-examine some statements about genre made by the early theorists—statements that have only received passing attention. They have to do with the distinction between *dhṛīyakāvya*, the language arts that are viewed, such as plays, and *śravyakāvya*, the language arts that are listened to, such as verse and prose literature. In his discussion of *kāvya*’s five major genre divisions,¹⁰² Bhāmaha briefly discusses the play (*abhineyārtha*, *nāṭaka*) before engaging extensively with the foremost of the *śravyakāvya* genres, the *mahākāvya*:

*nāṭakam dvipadīśamyārāsakaskandhakādi yat|
uktam tad abhineyārtham ukto ’nyais tasya vistaraḥ||BhKĀ 1.24||*

98. De, “The Akhyayika and the Katha,” 517.

99. For example, see Gerow’s treatment of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin in Gerow, *Sanskrit Poetics*, 227–32. Gerow provides earlier discussions on the relationship between the two theorists on p. 227n39.

100. Bronner, “A Question of Priority,” 67–118. Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaśāstra* mentions the earlier works of Medhavin (*BhKĀ* 2.40, 2.88) and Rāmaśarman on *prahelikā* (*BhKĀ* 2.19). While not mentioning others by name, Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaśāstra* nods to past theorists and their works with terms such as *pūrvashāstra*, “previous treatises” (*DaKĀ* 1.2) and *pūrvasūri*, “previous scholars” (*DaKĀ* 2.7). For a comprehensive list of references in *Kāvyaśāstra* to unnamed theorists, see P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 93.

101. Bronner, “Question of Priority,” 112. For Bronner’s full discussion, see *ibid.*, 110–13.

102. The five-fold division is set forth in *BhKĀ* 1.18.

That which is called a play (*nāṭaka*), such as the *dvipadī*, *śamyā*, *rāsaka*, and *skandhakā*, the substance of which is to be acted out (*abhineyārtha*). It has been discussed at length (*vistara*) by others.

By the phrase *anyaiḥ*, “by others,” Bhāmaha is of course referring to theorists of *nāṭyaśāstra*, or dramaturgical texts, specifically the earliest known author Bharata, whose *Nāṭyaśāstra* (ca. 2nd c. CE) precedes the extant *alaṅkāra* theorists by close to five hundred years. Daṇḍin makes a similar comment in his discussion of the *kāvyaśarīra*. Daṇḍin also includes plays as part of his genre matrix, albeit under the presentational mode of prosimetry (*miśra*, mixed verse and prose). Despite this change in classification from his predecessor, Daṇḍin similarly notes, “[Genres] beginning with plays (*nāṭaka*) have a mixture of prose and verse. There is extensive (*vistara*) [discussion] of them elsewhere (*miśrāṇi nāṭakādīni teṣāṃ anyatra vistaraḥ*).¹⁰³ Both *alaṅkāra* theorists refer their audiences to works devoted specifically to plays. And both refer to the discussion of these works as *vistara*, being discussed “at length” or being “extensive.” Thus, they imply that an established body of scholarship on *drśyakāvya* already exists, while more work on *śravyakāvya* is still required. By expanding upon the genres of *śravyakāvya*, such as *mahākāvya*, in their own works, both Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin see their works as contributing to a field that is more in flux.

Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin are not the only *alaṅkāra* theorists to suggest this difference between the works on *drśyakāvya* and *śravyakāvya*.¹⁰⁴ Vāmana (ca. 800 CE), in his *adhikaraṇa*-chapter devoted to the body (*śarīra*) of *kāvya* of the *Kāvyaṅkārasūtra* (*Aphorisms on the Ornaments of Literature*), makes a compelling distinction between plays and the *śravyakāvya* genres. In his discussion of plays, which he refers to collectively as *daśarūpaka* (having ten [dramatic] forms),¹⁰⁵ Vāmana notes that other dramatic sub-genres arise from the ten primary dramatic forms referred to in the term *daśarūpaka*: “From that, there is the invention of other types (*tato ’nyabhedakṛtiḥ*).”¹⁰⁶ Fleshing out this *sūtra* in the work’s auto-commentary, Vāmana explains:

tato daśarūpakād anyeṣāṃ bhedānāṃ kṛtiḥ kalpanam iti |
daśarūpakasyaiva hīdaṃ sarvaṃ vilasitam | yac ca kathākhyāyike

103. *DaKĀ* 1.31ab.

104. See, too, *RuKĀ* 16.36:

anyadvarṇakamātram praśastikulakādīnāṭakādyananyat |
kāvyaṃ tad bahubhāṣaṃ vicitram anyatra cābhihitam ||

Only mentioned, there are other [types of] *kāvya* of different kinds, such as the *praśasti*, the *kulaka*, etc., and those forms beginning with plays, which are various [and] of many languages, are discussed elsewhere.

105. See the *vṛtti*, “auto-commentary” of Vāmana’s *Kāvyaṅkārasūtra* (*VāKĀSv*) 1.3.30–32. Given Vāmana’s date, the *daśarūpaka* in *VāKĀSv* 1.3.32 cannot refer to Dhanañjaya’s twelfth-century dramaturgical work *Daśarūpaka*. Although Vāmana could be using the term as a proper noun to refer to a specific treatise on drama, it seems unlikely from the context of *VāKĀS* 1.3.30 and *vṛtti*.

106. *VāKĀSv* 1.3.32.

*mahākāvyaṃ iti | tallakṣaṇaṃ ca nātīva hr̥dayaṃgamam ity upekṣitam
asmābhiḥ | tadanyato grāhyam | VĀSv 1.3.32*

“From that,” that is, from the *daśarūpaka*, there is the invention (*klpti*), that is to say, the composition (*kalpana*) of other types. For all this is manifested (*vilasita*, lit., shines forth) from the *daśarūpaka* alone. And the definition of what is called *kathā*, *ākhyāyikā*, and *mahākāvya* has been disregarded by us since it has not gone deeply into the heart (*hr̥dayaṃgama*). Therefore, it is to be sought out elsewhere.

While the term *hr̥dayaṃgama*, “touching the heart,” conventionally has an affective sense, I suggest that Vāmana’s commentary uses it in an epistemic sense of knowing, or accepting the knowledge of, something fully. And by providing this as the reason for excluding discussion of the *gadya* genres, the passage suggests that they are not a priority in Vāmana’s project. Or by excluding discussion of them, he expresses tacit disagreement with the genre distinctions established by other theorists. How then do we understand Vāmana’s silence about the *dr̥śyakāvya* forms that he esteems?

Gopendratippabhūpāla’s *Kāmadhenu* (*Wish-Fulfilling Cow*, 15th c. CE) explains both of these absences in his commentary on Vāmana’s work:

*yadi kathākhyaṇike mahākāvye tarhi tallakṣaṇaṃ kimiti na pradarśitam iti
tatrāha—tallakṣaṇaṃ iti | yadi kenacit tallakṣaṇaṃ apekṣitam, tad
bhāmahaḥlāṅkāradau draṣṭavyam ity āha—tad anyata iti |
nāṭakādilakṣaṇaṃ tu granthavistarabhayād asmābhir likhitam ||¹⁰⁷*

Thinking “If there are *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*, as [two types of] *mahākāvya*s,¹⁰⁸ then why is the definition not shown?” In regard to this [objection], he says the phrase beginning “Definition of that” (*tallakṣaṇam*). If the definition of that is expected by anyone, then it can be found in [works] beginning with the *Ornament* of Bhāmaha. Thus, he says the phrase beginning “Therefore, elsewhere” (*tad anyataḥ*). However, the definition of [plays] beginning with *nāṭaka* has not been written down by us from fear of the work becoming too long.

107. Commentary on *VāKĀSv* 1.3.32, p. 38. Cited from the Sri Vani Vilas Press (SVVP) edition.

108. Rather than taking the *kathākhyaṇike mahākāvyaṃ* in *VāKĀSv* 1.3.32 as *kathākhyaṇike mahākāvyaṃ* as the three separate genres of *kathā*, *ākhyāyikā*, and *mahākāvya*, the *Kāmadhenu* glosses the term as *kathākhyaṇikādimahākāvyaśvarūpam*, that which has the nature of the *mahākāvya*, beginning with the *kathā* and the *ākhyāyikā*. In other words, the *Kāmadhenu* commentator considers the *kathā* and the *ākhyāyikā* to be types of *mahākāvya*. Perhaps this comes from differences in the two editions. Whereas the KM edition renders *yac ca kathākhyaṇike mahākāvyaṃ iti* an independent *vākya*, the SVVP edition connects the phrase with the previous *vākya* and has a variant reading of *yac ca*, “and which,” as *yad uta*, “that is to say” (SVVP, p. 38).

As with Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, Vāmana has excluded discussion of *dr̥śyakāvya* for fear of prolixity. The assumption here is that discussion of plays can be found elsewhere. Vāmana’s explicit exclusion of the *śravyakāvya* genres of *kathā*, *ākhyāyikā*, and *mahākāvya* also suggests that, at least in early ninth-century Kashmir, these forms have been established in other works, such as Bhāmaha’s, so they did not need to be revisited. These are not the only genre features that had become established by Vāmana’s time. In his discussion of *anibaddha* and *nibaddha* poems, Vāmana notes, “Because these two are well-known, the definition of them is not discussed (*anayoḥ prasiddhatvāl lakṣaṇam noktam*)”¹⁰⁹

By contrasting their works, in the statements above, with treatises on the older field of *nāṭyaśāstra*, all three of these early *alaṅkāra* theorists suggest that the field of *alaṅkāra* studies is redefining itself during the time of their works. Reframing the conversation in this way offers a new perspective on Daṇḍin’s vociferous rejection of the views presented in Bhāmaha’s work. And it gives new meaning to Daṇḍin’s introductory statement of intent:

pūrvāśāstrāṇi saṃhr̥tya prayogān upalakṣya ca |
yathāśāmarthyam asmābhiḥ kriyate kāvyalakṣaṇam ||DaKĀ 1.2||

Having collected earlier treatises and having observed [current] practices,
 I have done my best to compose
 the characteristics of *kāvya*
 [in *The Characteristics of Kāvya*].

In this statement, the distinction between *pādas* a and b of the first hemistich is temporal: while acknowledging the work of earlier scholars, Daṇḍin also considers *kāvya* as praxis by studying the current practices of contemporary poets. Synthesizing the two, he composes an updated *śāstra*. Chapter Five of this dissertation will discuss Daṇḍin’s engagement with these current practices. For now, let us return to Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha. Thinking about the early medieval period of our theorists as a space for contest and innovation makes the stance that Daṇḍin takes toward his predecessor Bhāmaha more legible.

Yet, the question arises: why does the *Kāvyaādarśa* seem to stridently oppose the views that the *Kāvyaālaṅkāra* espouses? While disputes among commentators are not uncommon, this type of critique between the authors of root texts—at least during the early medieval period—is rare.¹¹⁰ Even in the case of contemporary literary theorists such as Vāmana and Udbhaṭa, both poetic theorists and members of king Jayāpīḍa of Kashmir’s court (799–813 CE), Gerow notes

109. *VāKĀSv* 1.3.27.

110. Bronner, “Question of Priority,” 113. Following this period, the polemical stance of literary theorists Appaya Dīkṣita and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja comes immediately to mind. On this, see Gary Tubb and Yigal Bronner. “Vastutas Tu: Methodology and the New School of Sanskrit Poetics.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36, no. 5-6 (2008): 619–32.

that, despite most likely being court rivals, “in their works there is not trace of mutual reference or apparent controversy.”¹¹¹

Daṇḍin holds a particularly polemical stance toward Bhāmaha’s view on the *gadyakāvya* genres.¹¹² Not only does Daṇḍin forego the formal distinctions of content, metrical style, chapter division, and narrative content set forth by Bhāmaha, he also argues that certain motifs, such as the abduction of a maiden, should also be included in the *mahākhāya* and, therefore, they are not specific to the *ākhyāyikā*.¹¹³ Moreover, Daṇḍin does away with the question of narrative voice. In fact, he casts away the notion that the *ākhyāyika* and *kathā* are distinct genre categories at all:

apādaḥ padasaṃtāno gadyam ākhyāyikā kathā |
iti tasya prabhedau dvau tayor ākhyāyikā kila ||
nāyakenaiva vācyā ’nyā nāyakenetareṇa vā |
svaguṇāviśkriyādoṣo nātra bhūtārthaśaṃsinah ||
api tv aniyamo dr̥ṣṭas tatpāpy anyair udīraṇāt |
anyo vaktā svayaṃ veti kīdr̥g vā bhedakāraṇam ||DaKĀ 1.23–25||

Prose consists of a continuous line of words not formed into metrical feet. It is said to have two kinds called *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*. Of these two, the *ākhyāyikā* is to be narrated by the *nāyaka*. The other, [the *kathā*,] is to be communicated by the protagonist or by someone else. It is not a fault to reveal one’s own virtues on the part of someone relating what really happened. However, there [in the *ākhyāyikā*], too, no restriction is observed from the act of speaking by others. What kind of grounds for distinction is there whether oneself or another is the speaker?

Rather than use the platform to outline the features of each genre, Daṇḍin uses it entirely to refute the features highlighted in Bhāmaha’s work. In this sheer dismissal of a near contemporary’s views, we see the possibility of what De calls “a period of uncertain transition in the history of these species of prose compositions, when older distinctions were losing their interest, but when no fixed rules had been (as Daṇḍin’s negative and destructive criticism implies) yet evolved to govern the practice or theory relating to them.”¹¹⁴ Bronner adds more complexity by pointing to the issues of *alaṅkāraśāstra* being a knowledge system without an

111. Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 234. Similarly, Kane notes “It is remarkable that neither [Vāmana nor Udbhaṭa] refers to the other.” Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 147. See, too, De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 80.

112. See above, Section 2.2.

113. See *DaKĀ* 1.25–30. *DaKĀ* 1.30 is often thought not be part of the *kathā/ākhyāyikā* distinction. And even some of Daṇḍin’s commentators see this as a separate discussion having to do with with another poetic convention. Taruṇavācaspati, takes *cihna* (pace Ratnaśrījñāna) as a literal stamp of the poet in the form of a “signature”—Magha ending a *sarga* with “śrī”, Bhāravi with “lakṣmī”, Pravarasena with “anurāga” at the end of an *aṃśa*-chapter, Hastimalla at the end of a *lambha*-chapter with “lambha.”

114. De, “The Akhyayika and the Katha,” 513.

authoritative text, as well as the particulars of regional affiliation—Bhāmaha being a northern theorist and Daṇḍin a southern one—and changing literary tastes.¹¹⁵

From Absence to Presence: An Interlude with Vāmana

While the prose genre debate between Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin has received much attention in modern studies, Vāmana's discussion of prose in his *Kāvyaśaṅkārāsūtra* remains largely ignored. This is due to Vāmana's silence on matters of form, which, as mentioned earlier, comprises most discussions of genre. De's study mentions Vāmana peripherally by noting, "Vāmana, coming after Daṇḍin but probably before Rudraṭa, brushes aside (*vr̥tti* on 1.3.32) the controversy and discussions in which Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin apparently engage themselves, and refers the curious reader to the works of 'others,' apparently regarding the question as of no great theoretic importance."¹¹⁶ In terms of Vāmana's larger contribution, Gerow summarizes, "However, felicitous the general outlook of Vāmana's work, it must be observed that the detailed working out of his ideas received little or no acceptance in subsequent centuries; his theory is one of the significant dead-ends in the history of Indian poetics."¹¹⁷ Rather than regard Vāmana's approach as lacking utility in the specific discussion of prose genre or as being unproductive in the broader discussion of premodern literary-aesthetic theory in South Asia, I see it as a development in conceptions of *gadyakāvya*.

In his discussion of genre, Vāmana begins by discussing the *kāvyaśarīra* in language that is similar to his predecessors. However, he uses this framework as a point of departure, before shifting from a formal analysis to a poet-centered approach focusing on style:

evaṃ kāvyaṅgāny upadarśya kāvyavišeṣajñānārtham āha:
kāvyaṃ gadyaṃ padyaṃ ca || VKĀS 1.3.21 ||
gadyasya pūrvam nirdeśo durlakṣya viśayatvena durbandhatvāt | yathāhuḥ,
gadyaṃ kavīnām nikaṣaṃ vadantīti | tac ca tridhā bhinnam iti darśayitum
āha: gadyaṃ vr̥ttagandhi cūrṇam utkalikāprāyaṃ ca || VKĀS 1.3.22 ||....
padyabhāgavadvr̥ttagandhi || VKĀS 1.3.23 ||....
anāviddhalalitapadaṃ cūrṇam || VKĀS 1.3.24 ||....
viparītam utkalikāprāyaṃ || VKĀS 1.3.25 || viparītam āviddhotapadaṃ
utkalilāprāyaṃ |....|

Having presented the limbs of *kāvya* in this way, he (the author of the root text) says for the purpose of knowing the distinctive features of *kāvya*, "Kāvya is [made up of] prose and verse." Prose is mentioned first because, due to its challenging scope, it is difficult to compose. As such, folks say,

115. Bronner, "Question of Priority," 112–13. On the hermeneutic strategies used by *alaṅkāra* theorists to navigate this lack of an authoritative text, see Lawrence J. McCrea, *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

116. De, "The Akhyayika and the Katha," 513. See also, p. 514n1.

117. Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, 236.

“Prose is the touchstone of poets.” And, in order to show that its division is three-fold, he says “Prose is 1. *vr̥ttagandhi*, ‘scented with verse,’ 2. *cūr̥ṇa*, ‘powdered sandalwood,’ and 3. *utkalikāprāya*, ‘abounding in buds.’” He explains their characteristics: “Prose that is *vr̥ttagandhi*, ‘scented with verse,’ possesses a whiff of verse”.... “Prose that is *cūr̥ṇa*, ‘powdered sandalwood,’ has individual (*anāviddha*, lit., unpierced) lilting words”.... “On the contrary, prose that is *utkalikāprāya*, ‘abounding in buds,’ has undivided words.” Contrary [to *cūr̥ṇa*], *utkalikāprāya* contains an excess of words pierced together.

Bhāmaha’s schema for genre lacks a definition of prose altogether, while Daṇḍin’s defines prose as having an “absence of metrical feet (*apāda*). Moving away from the language of absence, Vāmana theorizes prose through metaphors of a subtle (fragrant) presence. His definition of prose is replete with words such as *gandha* for scent, *cūr̥ṇa* for powdered sandalwood, and *utkalikā* for flower buds. Even the terms *anāviddha* and *āviddha*, literally, “pierced” and “not pierced,” only make sense in this context when used to describe the piercing of flower buds with a needle to string together into a flower garland. In the *utkalikāprāya* variety, the garland consists of words-buds strung together metaphorically in long nominal compounds. In the *cūr̥ṇa* variety, words remain unpierced as individual word-buds. Despite Gerow’s view of Vāmana, his conception of *gadya* styles does find followers in later works such as Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*.

Rudraṭa on Foregrounding the Poet’s Invention

As noted by De, Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyālaṅkāra* expands earlier *alaṅkāra* discussions and appears to follow Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī* as its models for the *ākhyāyikā* and the *kathā*, respectively. Rudraṭa treats the structural genre features, especially those pertaining to a *gadyakāvya*’s paratextual elements with more detail than the more general descriptions of the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* provided in earlier works. Acknowledging the grand scale of the early-medieval *gadya* works, Rudraṭa introduces the term *mahākathā*, “great prose narrative,” to describe compositions of the prose *kathā* genre that equal in scale to their verse counterparts of the *mahākāvya*, “great verse narrative genre.”¹¹⁸ For the *mahākathā*, Rudraṭa details conventions for the verse preamble and describes narrative elements such as the *kathāvatāra*, the descent of the story, i.e., the circumstances of the story’s production, and the *kathāntara*, intervening narratives.¹¹⁹ Revising the earlier motif of the *kanyāharaṇa*, “abduction of a young woman,”¹²⁰ Rudraṭa presents the *kanyālābha*, “attainment of a young woman,” as the primary goal of the *mahākathā*, thus making *śṛṅgāra*, “the aestheticized emotion of desire,” the primary goal of the *mahākathā*. Importantly, Rudraṭa tells us that *mahākathās* can be in Sanskrit or another literary

118. *RuKā* 16.20.

119. *RuKā* 16.23.

120. See, for example, *BhKā* 1.27cd.

language, and that they can be in either prose or verse.¹²¹ In this way Rudraṭa's analysis not only reflects the state of the prose *kathā* in ninth-century Kashmir, it also acknowledges the efflorescence of other verse *kathā* literature that comes to the fore, especially in Rudraṭa's own locale at the turn of the millennium. While the formal resonances in Rudraṭa's description of the prose genres and Bāṇa's works are notable,¹²² what is equally, if not more, striking is Rudraṭa's systematic reformulation of some of the earlier ideas around narrative voice and the *kāvyaśrayas*, the "sources for a *kāvya* composition."

Among the earlier treatises which address *gadyakāvya*, Rudraṭa's *Kāvyaālankāra* reconsiders the role of genre. Whereas genre was originally treated as part of the constitutive elements of poetry, the *kāvyaśarīra*, "the body of poetry," and addressed at the onset of *kāvya* treatises, Rudraṭa locates his discussion of genre in the final *adhikaraṇa*-chapter as part of a discourse on the *prabandha*, "the composition as a whole." While the *kāvyaśarīra* breakdown of his predecessors divides *kāvya* first according to rhythmic mode, language, narrative source, and literary genre,¹²³ Rudraṭa creates a matrix based on whether a work is inspired by a past event (*anutpādyā*) or invented (*utpādyā*) by the poet, as well as whether a work is of a major (*mahat*) or minor (*laghu*) genre:

santi dvidhā prabandhāḥ kāvyakathākhyāyikādayaḥ kāvye |
utpādyānutpādyā mahallaghutvena bhūyo 'pi ||
tatrotpādyā yeṣaṃ śarīram utpādayet kaviḥ sakalam |
kalpitayuktotpattiṃ nāyakam api kutracit kuryāt ||
pañjaram iti hāsādiprasiddham akhilaṃ tadekaśeṣaṃ vā |
paripūrayet svavācā yatra kavis te tv anutpādyāḥ ||RuKĀ 16.2–4||

Compositions are of two kinds in *kāvya*, beginning with the genres [*mahā*]*kāvya*, *kathā*, and *ākhyāyikā*. They are invented (*utpādyā*) and not invented (*anutpādyā*), being major (*mahat*) or minor (*laghu*) on top of that. In [compositions], those are invented (*utpādyā*) which have a body [of events] the poet should completely create. In some places, the poet should fashion a protagonist (*nāyaka*), too, whose origin is connected to the imagination. Those [works] are not invented where the poet should infuse, with his own voice, the full or partial body [of a narrative] which is well-known, such as a historical account.¹²⁴

121. Ibid.

122. For a summary, see De, "The Akhyayika and the Katha," 514–16.

123. See *BhKa* 1.16–18 and *DKĀ* 1.11–33.

124. I specify body of events for *śarīram*, "body," which Nāmisādhū glosses as *itivr̥ttam*, lit., "what happened" and *pañjaram*, "body," for *kathāśarīram*, lit., "story-body," also as per the commentator. Nāmisādhū glosses *paripūrayet*, "should make full," with *vadet*, "should speak."

Rudraṭa's commentator, Nāmisādhū (1068–1069 CE),¹²⁵ expands upon Rudraṭa's discussion of the two kinds of invented (*utpādyā*) works with the following examples. In the first kind, a totally new situation is created for a well-known *nāyaka*, as in the case of Kṛṣṇa in Māgha's *mahākāvya Śīsupālavadha*. In the second, the *nāyaka* is also fashioned from the imagination of the poet, as in the case of the two prose *kathās*, Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī* and Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*.¹²⁶ Similarly, works that are not invented (*anutpādyā*), i.e., those based on historical accounts, have two kinds: those based on complete and those based on partial narratives. Nāmisādhū understands narratives beginning with the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be well-known works that serve as the basis for *anutpādyā* works. In the first kind, a full account of an actual event becomes the basis for a composition, such as the no longer extant *Arjunacarita*, a Prakrit work attributed to Kashmiri theorist and poet Ānandavardhana (10th c. CE) which presumably draws from the epic hero Arjuna's deeds throughout the entire *Mahābhārata*. In the second, only a part of an actual event forms the basis, such as in Bhāravi's *Kirātārjuniya*, where a single episode from the *Mahābhārata* comprises the entire *kāvya*.

By making the *utpādyā* and *anutpādyā* distinction a high-order feature of a work as a whole, Rudraṭa foregrounds an aspect of literary genre that has been given little attention by earlier theorists—the role of poetic imagination.¹²⁷ Prior to Rudraṭa, only Bhāmaha mentions poetic invention, without further comment, as a genre feature when he lists *utpādyavastu*, “topics invented [by the poet],” as one of the four sources for *kāvya*.¹²⁸ While Bhāmaha's presentation suggests that works based on poetic invention are one of four clearly demarcated narrative sources for *kāvya* works, Rudraṭa's assessment, coupled with Nāmisādhū's commentary, suggests that even works categorized as *utpādyā* can, and should, be based on actual events. Alternatively, works defined as *anutpādyā*, by dint of being infused with the poet's own voice (*RuKĀ* 16.4cd), also draw upon poetic invention. This development of the role of poetic invention seen in the early theoretical treatises opens up broader conversations about the role of poetic imagination in literary production and about shifting conceptions of—to use inexact modern terms—the imagined and the actual in early-medieval South-Asian discourses on literary theory. What is most salient for this discussion of prose genre, however, is that, despite the focus of later theorists and modern studies on the inventedness of the *kathā* and the facticity of the *ākhyāyikā*, neither of these modes is mutually exclusive to the earlier theorists.

125. On Nāmisādhū's dating, see Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 155.

126. *nāyakam prasiddham grhītvā tadvyavahāraḥ sarva evāpūrvo yatra nibadhyata ity arthaḥ | yathā māghakāvye | prakārāntaram āha—kalpitā yuktā ghaṭamānotpattir yasya tam iṭhaṃbhūtaṃ nāyakam api kutracit kuryāt, āstām iti vṛttam | atra ca tilakamañjarī bāṇakathā vā nidarśanam ||* commentary to *RuKĀ* 16.3, p. 167.

127. Here, I distinguish between what is *utpādyā* and the concept of *pratibhā*. Whereas both are related to the imagination of the poet, the former has to do with what the poet creates through imagination. And the latter pertains to the poetic inspiration, or poetic genius. I discuss the latter further in Chapter Five.

128. *BhKĀ* 1.17b.

Ākhyāyikā and Kathā in the World: An Example

Despite pointing toward the broader theoretical and cultural shifts reflected in the *kathā-ākhyāyikā* discussion, I cannot overstate the importance of the formal aspects of these genres. While these discussions were not of the highest concern to the world of the *alaṅkāra* texts, their reach still extended beyond works of aesthetic theory and into *kāvya* itself. For example, the framing narrative of an eleventh-century *gadyakāvya* titled *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* (*The Story of [the Courtesan] Śṛṅgāramañjarī*) opens with the work's author, king Bhoja, ruler of the Paramāras (11th c. CE), being requested by his courtiers to tell a story (*katham kathayatu*). As a poet and aesthetic theorist himself, Bhoja is aware of the genre requirements for the prose *kathā*. So, he replies,

*evam etat; kintu kathā hi kīrtiyamānā nagarādivarṇanapurahsarāḥ
saundaryam āvahati |...| asyāś cādhiṣṭhātrtvaprasaṅgenātmāpi bhaṇanīyaḥ
| tac cānucitam ivāsmādrśām | iti |*¹²⁹

Let it be so. But a *kathā* being narrated bears beauty [only] when preceded by a description of the city, etc... And by dint of my being its ruler, I should speak about myself. And on the part of someone like me, that would be somewhat improper.

Literati themselves, Bhoja's courtiers immediately to respond:

*idam akhilair apy alaṅkāarakārair abhyadhāyi yathā—
“svaguṇāviṣkriyādoṣo nātra bhūtārthaśaṁśinaḥ” iti | tathā hi munibhir
api vālmīkapaṛāśara-vyāsādibhiḥ,¹³⁰ kavibhir api
guṇāḍhyabhāsavabhūtibānaprabhṛtibhir ātmaguṇāviṣkaraṇam
akriyata | asadguṇakhyāpanam hi doṣāya | yathārthaguṇākhyāpanam
punar anavagītam eveti |*¹³¹

It has been stated by all literary theorists that, “It is not a fault to reveal one's own virtues on the part of someone relating what really happened.” For instance, sages such as Vālmīki, Parāśara, and Vyāsa, as well as poets beginning with Guṇāḍhya, Bhāsa, Bhavabhūti, and Bāṇa have revealed

129. *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* of Bhoja. Singhi Jain Series 30. Edited by Kalpalata K. Munshi (Bombay: Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavana 1959), 1.

130. The use of the term *vālmīka* for Vālmīki is uncommon. It occurs once at *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* 1.2.7ab: *evam ukto bharadvāja vālmīkena mahātmanā* | *The Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa: Critical Edition*, vol 1: *The Bālakāṇḍa*, ed. G. H. Bhatt (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960).

131. *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* (ŚrMK), 1.

their own merits. Narrating merits that don't exist is a fault. However, narrating [one's] true merits is not to be criticized.

In this metadiscursive passage, Bhoja's *kathā* is not only aware of its own genre features, it directly quotes from Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* (1.24) to justify its author speaking about himself. However, as the framing narrative continues, Bhoja's resolve wavers. And, after describing his capital city of Dhārā at length and just prior to describing himself as the king of that city, Bhoja enlists a mechanical doll to narrate the rest of the story,¹³² thus reverting to Bhāmaha's prohibition against a high-born person narrating his own deeds.¹³³

2.4. *Ākhyāyikā and Ākhyāna*

Ambiguity in Gadyakāvya Genre

Despite De's suggestion that the *ākhyāyikā* and prose *kathā* genres reached their final stage of development on account of Bāṇa's celebrated works, a fair amount of ambiguity still remains on the question of genre. This ambiguity presents itself in the way that particular *gadyakāvya* works are classified in some grammatical treatises and commentarial literature, where well-known *gadyakāvyas* which possess the genre features commonly associated with prose *kathā* are referred to as *ākhyāyikā* works. Considering a primary distinction between the *ākhyāyikā* and the *kathā* is that they are *anutpādyā* and *utpādyā*, respectively, the former is typically referred to as "biography" and the latter as an invented story, such as a "romance" or a "novel." The situation in traditional sources is more complicated. In its list of textual genres, Amarasiṃha's lexicon *Amarakośa* defines the *ākhyāyikā* as having "a meaning that has been received [through tradition] (*upalabdhārthā*)" and the *kathā* as "an invented work (*prabandhakalpanā*)"¹³⁴ This view is in accord with that of the *alaṅkāra* treatises. However, the *Nāmaṅgānuśāsana* commentary to the *Amarakośa* glosses this definition of *ākhyāyikā* as "a meaning that is understood, in the sense of presenting a meaning that has been experienced, as in the *Vāsavadattā*, etc. (*ākhyāyikā upalabdhārthā dvayaṃ anubhūtārthapratipādakasya vāsavadattādeḥ*)."¹³⁵ Whereas Subandhu's *gadyakāvya*, the *Vāsavadattā* is considered one of the quintessential prose *kathā* works by traditional and modern scholars alike, this slippage between the *Vāsavadattā* as a *kathā* and an *ākhyāyikā* takes place regularly. This ambivalence in genre is also expressed in literary commentary about other prose *kathā* works. For example, the *Padadīpikā*, a commentary of Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita*, explains, "*Ākhyāyikās* are the

132. *ŚrMK*, 7.

133. The motif of a mechanical doll in Sanskrit literature is unusual but not unheard of. On this, see Daud Ali, "Bhoja's Mechanical Garden: Translating Wonder Across the Indian Ocean, Circa 800–1100 CE." *History of Religions* 55, no. 4 (2016): 460–93.

134. *Amarakośa* 1.6.5–6 (Jhalakikar 1907 ed.).

135. *Amarakośa* 1.6.5 and Maheśvara commentary, p. 35. I leave the words in the commentary separated as per the edition.

Kādambarī, the *Vāsavadattā*, and such.”¹³⁶ Not only are the better-known prose works, *Kādambarī* and *Vāsavadattā* referred to, at times, as *ākhyāyikās*, M. Ramakrishna Kavi tells us in the Introduction to the 1924 edition of the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* and the *Avantisundarī* that both Vāḍijaṅghālaḍeva and an anonymous commentator of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa* refer to the *Avantisundarī* as an *ākhyāyikā*.¹³⁷

A similar but earlier inquiry around genre has to do with the mention of both the *ākhyāyikā* and the *Vāsavadattā* as *ākhyāyikā* in Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* (ca. 2nd c. BCE).¹³⁸ Whereas the references above come from commentators flourishing after what De refers to above as the “fixing of the characteristics” of the *ākhyāyikā* and the *kathā*, these references in Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* substantially predate Bhāmaha and suggest that the *ākhyāyikā* genre had a life prior to entering the *alankāraśāstra* vocabulary. As such, reconciling the grammatical with the literary theoretical instances has proved to be a quandary for scholars of Sanskrit literature. In discussing the references to *ākhyāyikā* and the *Vāsavadattā* in Patañjali, Lidia Sudyka concludes:

However, there is not a single hint that one has to understand the term in the technical sense as a type of literary genre. After all the word *ākhyāyikā* can be understood and used in a wide and general sense—a story. So the information provided by the grammarians proves that there were some well-known stories in the past in which women were prominent characters, among them *Vāsavadattā*. One cannot be sure if this is *Vāsavadattā* known from the *Brhatkathā* tradition or the heroine of some other renditions.¹³⁹

This statement from Sudyka’s work—one of the few to seriously approach the question of genre in *gadyakavya* since De—brings into relief two of the current issues in discussing *kāvya* genre. First, it points to the polyvalence of terms such as *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*, specifically that these terms have the general meaning of “story” along with their respective technical meanings as literary genres. Secondly, it points to the repetition and recycling of both titles and narrative sources.

Literary works inspired by the story of *Vāsavadattā* known from the *Brhatkathā* tradition are well known across sources. Supported by both Buddhist and Jain chronicles, *Vāsavadattā*, daughter of king Pradyota of Avanti, is a historical figure, whose relationship with king Udayana of Vatsa has become legendary.¹⁴⁰ This relationship seeds numerous literary works, including but not exclusive to Bhāsa’s play the *Svapnavāsavadattam*, the *Vīṇāvāsavadattā*, and, of course,

136. *Daśakumāracarita* of Daṇḍin, ed. Narayan Ram Acharya (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1951; Reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1983), 23.

137. See Kavi, Introduction to *Avantisundarikathasara and Avantisundarikatha*, 12.

138. *Mahābhāṣya* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.2.60 and 4.3.87.

139. Lidia Sudyka, “Ucchvāsa, Sarga and Lambha: Text Divisions in Sanskrit Poems (*Mahākāvyas*),” *Cracow Indological Studies* 13 (2011): 24.

140. For an overview of the story of Udayana and *Vāsavadattā* according to different religious traditions, see Niti Adaval, *The Story of King Udayana: As Gleaned from Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit Sources* (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office. 1970), 68–134.

Subandhu's *gadyakāvya Vāsavadattā*.¹⁴¹ Perhaps most importantly, the epitomes of the *Brhatkathā* have Vāsavadattā and Udayana as the parents of Naravāhanadatta, the protagonist of these works. So famous is this love story between Udayana and Vāsavadattā that other literary works have been based, not only on Udayana, but on his ministers, as in Bhāsa's *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* titled after Udayana's minister.

Of these works based on a heroine named Vāsavadattā, Subandhu's prose *Vāsavadattā* has raised questions for its plot being distinct from the other works. Whereas the plays bearing the name and protagonist Vāsavadattā are clearly based on the chief queen of Vatsa and beloved wife of Udayana, Subandhu's Vāsavadattā is romantically involved with a king Kandarpaketu. Given these ambiguities, it makes sense to question the idea of a static genre called *ākhyāyikā* and of only one heroine in Sanskrit literature having the name Vāsavadattā.¹⁴² However, I suggest that a fuller reading of the grammatical treatises in conversation with the *alaṅkāra* treatises will offer some insight into the development of the *ākhyāyikā* genre and the contradiction in genre appellation for several of the early prose *kathās*.

The Ākhyāna-Ākhyāyikā Distinction in Grammar Considered

Some of the earliest mentions of *ākhyāyikā* appear in Kātyāyana's *vārttika* as quoted in Patañjali's second-century BCE grammatical treatise, the *Mahābhāṣya*. In its comments to Pāṇini's *Āṣṭādhyāyī* 4.2.60, Kātyāyana's *vārttika* adds to the list of nouns for which the *ṭhak* affix indicates that "one studies *or* understands" a particular noun. To the original list given by Pāṇini, Kātyāyana adds, "The *ṭhak* affix is also to be used for [names of] *ākhyānas* and *ākhyāyikās* and for [the words] *itihāsa* and *purāṇa*. (*ākhyānākhyāyiketihāsapurāṇebhyaś ca ṭhaḥ vaktavyaḥ*)."¹⁴³ Patañjali gives the following examples to illustrate Kātyāyana's *vārttika*, "one who studies the *ākhyāna* related to Yavakrīta is a *yāvakrītika*, to Priyaṅgu, a *praiyaṅgavika*, and to Yayāti, a *yāyātika*. One who studies the *ākhyāyikā* related to Vāsavadattā is a *vāsavadattika* and to Sumanottarā is a *saumanottarika* (*ākhyāyikā vāsavadattikaḥ saumanottarikaḥ*)."¹⁴⁴ Given that the *ākhyāyikā* is grouped here with *ākhyāna*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*—all genres depicting accounts from various sources of past knowledge—it stands to reason that, here, the *ākhyāyikā*, rather than have the general sense of "story," would also refer to a type of historical genre. Another pre-*alaṅkāraśāstra* reference to *ākhyāyikā* encourages this view; Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (*Treatise on*

141. For an overview of literary sources, see *ibid.*, xviii–xxix.

142. Gérard Genette has historicized the title as a paratextual element sufficiently to show that titles have a different valence in the modern world than they did in the past. On this, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Trans. Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge Literature, Culture, Theory 20 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 55–64.

143. That *ākhyāna* and *ākhyāyikā* are paired both conceptually and grammatically can be seen from Kāśika's comment on Pāṇini's *sūtra* as quoted in the *Mahābhāṣya*: "In the case of [the terms] *ākhyāna* and *ākhyāyikā*, there is an understanding of the thing they signify. In the case of [the terms] *itihāsa* and *purāṇa*, there is an understanding of the thing itself" (*ākhyānākhyāyikayor arthagrahaṇam itihāsapurāṇayor svarūpagrahaṇam*).

144. [*ṭhakvidhāyakam bhāṣyam*] *ākhyānākhyāyiketihāsapurāṇebhyaś ca ṭhaḥ vaktavyaḥ* | *yāvakrītikaḥ*, *praiyaṅgavikaḥ*, *yāyātikaḥ*, *ākhyāna(h)* || *ākhyāyikā vāsavadattikaḥ*, *saumanottarikaḥ* || *itihāsaḥ* || *paurāṇikaḥ* ||

Governance, c. 3rd–4th c. CE) tells us that, as part of a king’s training, he should study lore (*itihāsa*), which the treatise elucidates as *purāṇa*, *itivr̥tta* (tales of universal kingship), *ākhyāyikā* (tales of later kings), *udāharaṇa* (elucidating tales from the past), *dharmaśāstra* (treatises on *dharma*), and *arthaśāstra* (treatises on governance).¹⁴⁵ In this discussion, the *ākhyāyikā* appears again as part of a source of past knowledge, and not necessarily as a literary prose genre that has *kathā* as its counterpart.

In another reference to both the *ākhyāyikā* genre and to *Vāsavadattā* being part of this genre, we have Patañjali’s commentary on *Āṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3.87, which governs the use of a derivational affix to words that follow *adhikṛtya* “in relation to” when relating to a composition (*granthe*). Kātyāyana gives the following qualification, “The affix is elided variously for *ākhyāyikās*. Though not always.”¹⁴⁶ Patañjali gives the following examples for the former exception where the affix is elided: “of *Vāsavadattā* being a composition, which is an *ākhyāyikā* relating to *Vāsavadattā* and *Sumanottarā*, being a composition, which is an *ākhyāyikā* relating to *Sumanottarā*. For the latter, where there is no elision, therefore an affix is supplied, Patañjali gives the *Bhaimarathī* as an *ākhyāyikā* relating to *Bhīmarathī*. While the grammatical treatises are concerned with the linguistic-derivational aspects of these words, not their content, these references suggest that the works mentioned are well known enough to have specific morpho-phonological rules to express their collectivity. In other words, some of these *ākhyāyikās* were so well known that there were specific morphs-phonological rules to describe what to call the experts of these accounts. The second reference makes clear that these *ākhyāyikās* were not only passed down orally, they also possessed some compositional form.

Generally, these grammatical references have been marshalled simply to show that the term *ākhyāyikā* existed prior to its mention in *alaṅkāraśāstra*. However, scholars, such as V. Raghavan, have suggested relationships between the earlier references to those in *kāvya* theory. In his discussion of the grammatical references discussed above, Raghavan distinguishes between *ākhyāna* and *ākhyāyikā* in the following manner:

We can thus distinguish the *Ākhyāna* as describing in epic verse-form, in the form of what is known as *Itihāsa*, the story of the renowned kings of ancient India, and the *Ākhyāyikās* as later productions by poets in prose, describing the history and romances of the kings of later India. *Ākhyāyikā*,

145. *paścimam itihāsaśravaṇe || purāṇam itivr̥ttam ākhyāyikodāharaṇam dharmasāstram arthaśāstram cetītiḥāsaḥ || Arthaśāstra* 1.5.13–14. Here, according to Patrick Olivelle’s translation, a king should receive training, “during the latter part [of the day] in studying Lore (*itihāsa*). Lore consists of Purāṇas, Reports (*itivr̥tta*), Narratives (*ākhyāyikā*), Illustrations (*udāharaṇa*), Treatises on Law (*dharmaśāstra*), and Treatises on Success (*arthaśāstra*).” Patrick Olivelle, trans., *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 70. Olivelle suggests that this list of genres was perhaps a commentarial or marginal gloss for the term *itihāsa* in the previous sentence (1.5.13). Olivelle notes, “It is unclear what Narratives (*ākhyāyikā*) and Illustrations (*udāharaṇa*) refer to, although some think that they may refer to fables and stories, such as the *Pañcatantra*, also called *Tantrākhyāyikā*. He also makes reference to a commentator that refers to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as *itivr̥tta*. Ibid., 471, notes to *Arthaśāstra* 1.5.14.

146. *adhikṛtya kṛte grantha ity atrākhyāyikābhyo bahulaṃ lub vaktavyaḥ | Mahābhāṣya* on *Āṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3.87.

as distinguished from *Kathā*, dealt with a historical or traditional story. *Kathā* was mainly an imaginary and fictitious working out of a historical fact.¹⁴⁷

Raghavan's definition is prescient in terms of thinking about *ākhyāyikā* as a fluid genre. By describing *ākhyāyikās* as "later productions" he suggests that the *ākhyāyikā*—at least compared to the other three genres in this grammatical category—is a newer genre.¹⁴⁸ It also pertains to accounts of the kings of "later India." While the first "later" in Raghavan's statement refers to the period of composition of *ākhyāyikā* works relative to the *ākhyāna*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* works, this second "later" refers to the narrative time during which these accounts take place. Traditionally, the other three genres are known to take place variously during the first three *yugas*, "cosmic ages of humankind." As part of the *itihāsa* genre, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki takes place at the transition from the *treta yuga*, the second cosmic age, to the *dvāpara yuga*, the third cosmic age, where the world continues its moral decline. And the events taking place in the *itihāsa* the *Mahābhārata* transition the world from the *dvāpara yuga*, the third cosmic age, to the current and most degenerate age, the *kali yuga*. If the *ākhyāyikā* related to Vāsavadattā, an account dating to the sixth-century BCE, is a representative example, it stands squarely in the period of "later India" referred to by Raghavan.

In terms of the content of the earlier *ākhyāyikā*, Raghavan suggests that it describes both "the 'history and [my emphasis] romances of the kings of later India.'" What I understand Raghavan to suggest by these two aspects is that the *ākhyāyikā* referred to in the earlier grammatical texts is the source material for what in the *alaṅkāra* frameworks of Bhāmaha, etc., becomes two genres. The first, the *ākhyāyikā*, exemplified by one of its sole examples, the *Harṣacarita*, describes the "history of the kings of later India." And the second, the *kathā*, the genre of works such as *Vāsavadattā*, *Kādambarī*, and *Avantisundarī*, describes the "romances" of these kings. While there is no specific mention of a *kathā* genre that functions as a counterpart to the *ākhyāyikā* in the earlier grammatical discussion, perhaps a vestigial feature of the historical narrative based on the romances of kings can be seen in the titles of the earlier *ākhyāyikās* themselves. Like the titles of the literary *kathās*, the *ākhyāyikās* mentioned by Patañjali, are also named after women. So, along with the *ākhyāyikā* related to Vāsavadattā, there are works related to Sumanottarā, and Bhīmarathī. While the latter two works are unknown, it is notable that the *ākhyāyikā* from this earlier period follow one of the conventions of the later prose *kathā*, which, by convention, are named after the female protagonist of the work. Though not theorized in *alaṅkāraśāstra*, this convention of the prose *kathā* being titled after a female

147. V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras: Punarvasu), 615.

148. So, too, does Warder suggest this, "It appears to have originated as a branch of Tradition or history itihāsa and later to have been assimilated into the *kāvya* movement...It is not clear whether these grammarians regarded biography as already a *kāvya* form, but Bhāmaha (1.18) and other later critics are quite categorical that it was one of them." A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), 1:181.

protagonist is so accepted that it proliferates in the later *kathā* works composed in verse and *campū*, as well as in other languages, such as the Prakrits.¹⁴⁹

The Vāsavadattā: Ākhyāyikā or Kathā?

With the view that the earlier *ākhyāyikā*, narratives are based on the kings of later India, with “later” meaning those of the more recent historical past, as opposed to the Vedic and epic heroes whose deeds are related in the *ākhyāna*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* works, let us return to the relationship between the *ākhyāyikā* related to *Vāsavadattā* of the earlier grammatical texts and the ca. sixth-century CE prose *kathā* titled *Vāsavadattā* by Subandhu. Aside from the female protagonist being named *Vāsavadattā*, there are very few similarities between Subandhu’s prose work and the earlier plays that depict some aspect of the historical *Vāsavadattā*’s relationship with Udayana. However, a verse from the *Avantisundarī*’s poetic preamble nods, with praise, toward another Subandhu:¹⁵⁰

subandhuḥ kila niṣkrānto bindusārasya bandhanāt |
tasyaiva hṛdayaṃ baddhvā vatsarājo ||AS v. 6||¹⁵¹

It is said that Subandhu was released from Bindusāra’s imprisonment, the king of Vatsa having captured his heart....

Despite the final four syllables being illegible in the manuscript, the suggestion is clear. Given that this verse takes place in the *kavīpraśamsā*, the section of a work that praises past poets, Subandhu must be an author who has composed a *kāvya* pertaining to the king of Vatsa, that is, Udayana, *Vāsavadattā*’s beloved. Subandhu, having been in the disfavor of Bindusāra is released because his *kāvya* has pleased Bindusāra. The relationship between the poet Subandhu, Bindusāra, and a *kāvya*, here a play, about *Vāsavadattā* is mentioned in Abhinavagupta’s commentary to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the *Abhinavabhāratī*, where Subandhu, referred to as *mahākavi*, “great poet,” is noted for authoring a play of the *nāṭyāyita* type called the *Vāsavadattānāṭyādhara*. In it Bindusāra watches a play of the story of Udayana, who, in turn, is watches a play about the deeds of *Vāsavadattā*:

tatrāsya bahutaravyāpino bahugarbhasvapnāyitulyasya nāṭyāyitasya
udāharaṇaṃ mahākavisubandhunibaddho vāsavadattānāṭyādhārākhyah
samasta eva prayogaḥ | tatra hi bindusāraḥ prayojyavastuna (-vastuni)

149. On this, see Chojnacki, “Charming Bouquet or Wedding Garland?”

150. See Kavi, “Avantisundarīkathā of Dandin,” 196.

151. A. Rangaswami Saraswati, “Vasubandhu or Subandhu,” *The Indian Antiquary* 53 (January 1924): 12. cites a variant reading of the second hemistich: *tasyaiva hṛdayaṃ jahre vatsarājakathā...* | It is unclear where this reading comes from given that the GOML transcript used for the 1924 edition of the *Avantisundarī* doesn’t give this reading.

*udayanacarite sāmājikīkṛto 'pi, udayanaḥ vāsavadattāceṣṭite | eṣa cārthaḥ
svasmin sūtrarūpake (sarvasmiṃs tatra rūpake?) dṛṣṭe sujñāno bhavati |*

There, as an illustration of the *nāṭyāyita* that extends more greatly [than the first type of *nāṭyāyita* and] which has many *garbhas*, “inserted acts,” made to resemble a dream, is the entire dramatic representation called the *Vāsavadattānāṭyadhāra* composed by the great poet, Subandhu. For in it, Bindusāra is also made spectator in regard to the deeds of Udayana, which make up the plot to be enacted, [so, too,] Udayana [is made spectator] in reference to Vāsavadattā’s actions. And while this, which forms its own [narrative] thread is seen, the meaning is easily understood.¹⁵²

Both the *Avantisundarī* verse and Abhinavagupta’s reference point to a poet Subandhu, as an author of a work about Udayana and Vāsavadattā and as a contemporary of a Bindusāra. These references cannot be about Subandhu the prose poet whose work dates to the sixth century CE. Instead, this Subandhu is noted as a contemporary of the Maurya emperor Bindusāra (3rd c. BCE), son of Candragupta and father of Aśoka. Hemacandra’s *Pariśiṣṭaparva* (11th c. CE) speaks of Bindusāra and his ministers Cāṇakya and Subandhu.¹⁵³ While not imprisoned in Hemacandra’s account of the story, Subandhu does incur Bindusāra’s wrath for undermining the emperor’s trust in Cāṇakya.

While not directly identifying the Subandhu minister of Bindusāra with the great poet Subandhu who authored the *Vāsavadattānāṭyadhāra*, the network of references above strongly suggests that the two were one in the same—at least in the literary-historical imagination of authors composing in the centuries before the turn of the millennium. Following the logic of naming that we see among authors of Sanskrit *kāvya*, it would stand to reason that a sixth-century author composing a work titled *Vāsavadattā* and working under the name Subandhu would gesture toward the earlier Subandhu, author of a play related to the heroine Vāsavadattā. What we see here is the practice of taking on the name of a composer whose work one wishes to emulate. Through the power of naming, Subandhu the author of the prose *kathā* harks back to the earlier work by the earlier minister cum author Subandhu.

To consider then the difference in storylines, we need to return to the discussions of poetic invention. As emphasized earlier, the distinction between *utpādyā* and *anutpādyā* offers more flexibility than the modern fact-fiction divide. And here, I suggest that the earlier *ākhyāyikā* related to Vāsavadattā and, by association, Udayana, that we see referenced in the grammatical literature is the source narrative for both the play by the earlier Subandhu and the prose work by the later Subandhu. The latter author, however, has created a work of imagination based on the earlier *ākhyāyikā*. Perhaps it is through a conflation between the historical narrative of Vāsavadattā and Udayana, that is, the *Vāsavadattā ākhyāyikā* referred to in Patañjali’s

152. *Abhinavabhāratī*, Madras GOML, Ms. Vol. 3, p. 45. Quoted in V. Raghavan, “Subandhu,” *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1943): 70–71.

153. *Pariśiṣṭaparva* 8.194–9.13. See especially 8.446–9.13.

Mahābhāṣya, and Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* the prose *kathā* based on the *Vāsavadattā ākhyāyikā* that we see the *Vāsavadattā* being referred to as an *ākhyāyikā* in some later commentaries. In other words, there is a semantic shift that takes place between the genre of *ākhyāhikā* in earlier *śāstra* discourse and the later literary genres of *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*; whereas the former refers to the historical source material for a *kāvya*, the latter refers to literary prose expressions of this narrative source material in *kāvya*.

2.5. Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I locate *gadyakāvya*, “literary prose,” within its broader historical contexts. Through a close reading of the early works on poetics, beginning with Bhāmaha's *Kāvyālaṅkāra* (7th c. CE) and ending with Rudraṭa's *Kāvyālaṅkāra* (c. 850 CE), it proposes new ways of conceptualizing literary prose outside of the formal differences between its two main genres, the *ākhyāyikā* and the *kathā*. And, by investigating conversations around genre outside of these works on poetics, this chapter also traces the lines of contact between the historical *ākhyāyikā* genre of earlier *śāstra* discourses and the two literary-prose genres. While these two genres have traditionally been distinguished by the prose *ākhyāyikā* cleaving to actual events and the prose *kathā* as based on the poet's invention. This chapter emphasizes that both literary-prose genres are different expressions of historical source material about heroes from a past that is more recent than the past depicted in the epics, that is, from the historical past. Whereas the prose *ākhyāyikā* highlights the valorous deeds of the work's *nāyaka*, “male protagonist,” the prose *kathā* highlights the *nāyaka*'s romantic relationship with the work's *nāyikā*, “female protagonist.” In both cases, the sources themselves suggest that the distinction between actual and the imagined is not as clearcut as the terms themselves might imply. As an entry into the *Avantisundarī*, the next chapter continues this exploration of prose genre features, specifically, the *kāvyaārambha*, “verse preamble,” that opens works of *gadyakāvya*.

Chapter 3: Verse Beginnings in the *Avantisundarī*

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter Two, I considered the genre history of *gadyakāvya* through close readings of the early *alaṅkāra* theorists and by exploring the relationship between the earlier historical genres and the later literary genres. This chapter will continue the discussion begun in Chapter Two of the genre features of *gadyakāvya* by focusing on the *Avantisundarī*'s *kāvyaārambha*, the verse “preamble to the work” that functions as the author’s introduction. Totalling twenty-seven verses, the preamble begins with homage to the Supreme Divinity in its triple form as Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu (*AS*, v. 1). This is followed by acknowledgement of great composers and their works (*AS*, vv. 2–22) and continues with praise of favorable critics and condemnation of unfavorable ones (*AS*, vv. 23–25). The introduction concludes with verses of praise and benediction to the audience (*AS*, vv. 26–27).¹⁵⁴ Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* refers to the different parts of the preamble as *prabandhālaṅkāras*, “ornaments of the work as a whole.”¹⁵⁵ While the *śabdālaṅkāras* and *arthālaṅkāras*, ornaments of sound and sense, have been the topic of numerous studies in poetics, the poetic preamble has not received much scholarly interest.¹⁵⁶ This lack of interest could in part be due to early works of *mahākāvya* not consistently having extended preambles. It appears that among the early Sanskrit verse *kāvyas*, only Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa*, a chronicle of the kings of the Raghu dynasty, has an extended *kāvyaārambha*.¹⁵⁷ However, the situation differs for the early Sanskrit prose *kāvya* works, which almost all begin with some sort of a verse preamble.¹⁵⁸

154. The opening folios are missing from ORIML 10863 (transcribed as ORIML T-704), the manuscript upon which the 1954 edition of *Avantisundarī* is primarily based are missing. Thus, the verse preamble and beginning of the prose section of the 1954 edition (up to p. 4, line 9) are from the folios that the 1924 manuscript is based on (transcribed as GOML R3454ab). From the transcript held at the Government Oriental Manuscript Library at the University of Madras, Chennai, it appears that there were at least two folios from separate manuscripts that contained a version of the verse preamble. The differences between the two are slight.

155. *ŚṛPra* 11, Joyser edition, vol. 2, 472–73.

156. An exception to this are the conference proceedings for the *Śāstrārambha* panel at the 13th World Sanskrit Conference in Edinburgh. Walter Slaje, ed., *Śāstrārambha: Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008). As its title indicates, the work primarily looks at the preamble to Sanskrit *śāstra*. However, two papers discuss literary preambles. See Giuliano Boccali, “The Incipits of Classical Sargabandhas” in *Śāstrārambha*, 183–205, and Walter Slaje, “‘In the Guise of Poetry’—Kalhaṇa Reconsidered” in *Śāstrārambha*, 207–244.

157. *Raghuvamśa* 1.1–1.10 (NSP edition). This is not to say that the poetic preamble was absent from verse *kāvya* in the mid-first millennium. One of the most extensive preambles is in Pravarasena’s *Setubandha*, a Prakrit verse *kāvya* based on Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*.

158. Some exceptions to this are Daṇḍin’s *Daśakumāracarita*, Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* (*The Story of [the Courtesan] Śṛṅgāramañjarī*, 11th c. CE), and Agastyapaṇḍita’s *Kṛṣṇacarita* (*Deeds of Kṛṣṇa*, 13th c. CE). The case for a missing beginning of the *Daśakumāracarita* have been discussed in the Introduction. Based on one manuscript, Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* is missing its first few folios. Given the missing folios, it is not clear whether the this *gadyakāvya* had a poetic preamble. This is also the case with Agastyapaṇḍita’s *Kṛṣṇacarita*, where

Given the prevalence of this poetic convention in literary-prose works and the paucity of discussion around it, I begin each of this chapter's two sections with a brief history of an aspect of the author's introduction. In the first section, I discuss the development of the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, the "auspicious verse or set of verses," that begins a Sanskrit *kāvya*. And, in the second, I discuss the *kavipraśaṃsā*, the "[verses] in praise of poets." Through an exploration of each of these elements in the *Avantisundarī*'s verse preamble, I consider how both the *maṅgalācaraṇa* and the *kavipraśaṃsā* act as discursive prefatorial spaces which help locate the *Avantisundarī* within a larger storytelling tradition.

3.2. The *Maṅgalācaraṇa*: Auspicious Beginnings

A Comment on the Maṅgalācaraṇa

In his contribution to the 2006 World Sanskrit Conference panel on the *śāstrārambha*, the "preamble (*ārambha*) to a treatise on the various systems of knowledge (*śāstra*)," Christopher Minkowski notes that the practice of beginning a *śāstra* with a *maṅgalācaraṇa*, that is, an auspicious verse invoking a deity, begins in the sixth and seventh centuries. After this, the rising popularity of the *maṅgala* verse causes later intellectual traditions to respond variously to the absence of *maṅgala* verses in earlier texts.¹⁵⁹ Given the near ubiquity of these opening verses, Minkowski notes, "That a Sanskrit text begins with a *maṅgalācaraṇa* is one of our most basic facts. For that reason, therefore, it is worthy of reconsideration, at least occasionally."¹⁶⁰ Though Minkowski's comment refers specifically to the beginning of *śāstra* works, it is equally germane to the openings of literary works, or *kāvyaārambha*. For, like their *śāstra* counterparts, the *maṅgalācaraṇa*—in the sense of an auspicious opening verse to a deity—also begins to gain currency in Sanskrit *kāvya* in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁶¹ While the *nāndī*, or benedictory verse opening a play has been a commonplace in *drśyakāvya*,¹⁶² this type of introduction becomes *de rigueur* for *śravyakāvya* works around the ninth century, if not sooner.

The term *maṅgalācaraṇa* does not appear in the earliest extant works on poetics, but theorists beginning with Daṇḍin note the import of a work's opening verse(s) whether or not they invoke a deity. Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaadarśa* speaks specifically of the *mahākāvya* as having as its introduction an *āśis*, "benediction," a *namaskriyā*, "respectful salutation," or a *vastunirdeśa*,

most likely about 22 verses with some prose lines were lost early on. See, T. Venkatacharya, "Some Nice Features in the *Kṛṣṇacarita* of Agastyaapaṇḍita." *East and West* 27, no. 1/4 (1977): 363.

159. Christopher Minkowski, "Why Should We Read Maṅgala Verses?" in Slaje, *Śāstrārambha*, 6.

160. Ibid., 3.

161. This is not to say that there are no literary works that begin with encomia to a deity before that. I will return to these works below.

162. Herman Tieken discusses the regional differences in terminology for the prologues of Sanskrit plays in Herman Tieken, "The *Pūrvaraṅga*, the *Prastāvanā*, and the *Sthāpaka*," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 45 (2001): 91–124.

“indication of the subject.”¹⁶³ Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaṭīkā* (c. 850 CE), while breaking down the prefatory material more specifically according to genre, describes both the prose *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* as opening with verse(s) of respectful salutation to gods and *gurus*, “revered teachers.”¹⁶⁴ Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (c. 1050 CE) states that the opening of a *kāvya* functions as the first *prabandhāṭkāra*, ornament of the entire work. Bhoja’s system follows and expands upon Daṇḍin’s three ways of opening a *kāvya* by adding two more options and applying them across literary genres. To the *namaskāra*, *āśis*, and *vastunirdeśa* noted earlier in the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* adds *stuti*, “praise,” and *vastūpakṣepa*, “hinting at the subject matter.”¹⁶⁵

This brief overview shows how the theoretical vocabulary for opening verse(s) developed over time. However, a survey of the literary works themselves shows that, by the turn of the first millennium, authors chose to introduce their works with verses dedicated to a deity, or otherwise revered figure. In other words, incipits indicating the subject of a work rather than invoking a deity, i.e., the *vastunirdeśa* and the *vastūpakṣepa*, were no longer in common use. Even the examples that Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* gives of these two types of openings come from much older, lost works: Meṇṭha’s *Hayagrīvavadha* (*Slaying of Hayagrīva*) and the Prakrit *kāvya* *Mārīcavadha* (*Slaying of Mārīca*).¹⁶⁶ What does this impulse toward the *maṅgala* verse and away from other types of opening verses suggest about the development of this convention, especially in works of literary prose?

In Giuliano Boccali’s study of the incipits of *mahākāvyas*, he considers opening verses from the earliest *mahākāvya* examples, Aśvaghoṣa’s works, the *Buddhacarita* (*Deeds of the Buddha*, 1st–2nd c. CE) and *Saundarananda* (*Beautiful Nanda*, 1st–2nd c. CE) to Māgha’s *Śiśupālavadha* (*The Slaying of Śiśupāla*, 7th c. CE). Boccali observes that, prior to the composition of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa*, the majority of opening verses for *mahākāvya* works are of the *vastunirdeśa* type.¹⁶⁷ Of the opening verses from the ten *mahākāvyas* studied by Boccali, only two works open with a *maṅgalācaraṇa* verse: Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* (*Lineage of the Raghu Dynasty*, c. 4th–5th c. CE) begins with a verse in praise of Śiva and Pārvatī. And Pravarasena’s Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit poem, *Setubandha* (*Construction of the Causeway*, early 5th c. CE), begins with four verses to various incarnations of Viṣṇu followed by four to Śiva.¹⁶⁸

163. *DaKĀ* 1.14cd (*āśir namaskriyā vastunirdeśo vāpi tanmukham*). Since Daṇḍin’s *vastunirdeśa* does not participate in invoking a deity, it would be more accurate to refer to these categories collectively as “opening verses” rather than *maṅgalācaraṇa*, “benedictory verses.”

164. For the *mahākathā*, see *RuKĀ* 16.20ab (*ślokaṭī mahākathāyām iṣṭān devān gurūn namaskṛtya*). For the *ākhyāyikā*, see *RuKĀ* 16.24ab (*pūrvavad eva namaskṛtadevaguru[h]....*).

165. *ŚṛPra* 11, Joyser edition, vol. 2, 472 (*tatra namaskārādyupakramatvam ity anena namaskārastutir āśir vastunirdeśo vastūpakṣepa ity upalakṣyante* |). Note, Daṇḍin refers to the respectful salutation as *namaskriyā*.

166. *ŚṛPra* 11, Joyser edition, vol. 2, 473 (*vastunirdeśo yathā hayagrīvavadhe....vastūpakṣepo yathā mārīcavadhe*).

167. Giuliano Boccali, “Incipits of Classical Sargabandhas,” in *Śāstrārambha: Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008: 183–205).

168. *Raghuvamśa* 1.1 (NSP edition). *Setubandha* vv. 1.1–8. Pravarasena’s *Setubandha: Original text in Prakrit accompanied with Sanskrit Rendering*, ed. and trans. Krishna Kanta Handiqui (rev. ed. New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan; D. K. Printworld, 2014, First published in 1976).

Turning our attention away from Boccali's focus on the *mahākāvya* during this earlier period, we see *maṅgala* verses opening other genres of *kāvya*. Hāla's first-century anthology of verses in Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit, *Sattasaī* (*Seven Hundred Centuries*) begins with an homage to Paśupati (Śiva) and, by extension, to the goddess Gaurī (Pārvatī), through her reflection in his water-filled palms.¹⁶⁹ The first verse of Āryaśūra's *campū Jātakamālā* (*Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, 4th c. CE) offers the poet's praise to the wondrous deeds of the Buddha.¹⁷⁰ And, most pertinent to the discussion at hand are the works of literary prose: in its opening verse, Bāṇa's prose *ākhyāyikā Harṣacarita* pays homage to Śambhu, while his prose *kathā Kādambarī* pays homage to Brahmā.¹⁷¹ Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* opens with praise to Sarasvatī.¹⁷² And, as noted above, Daṇḍin's own *gadyakāvya Avantisundarī* begins with a respectful salutation to Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu as the Trimūrti. From these representative examples of works in different literary languages, genres, and sectarian affiliations, we see that, most early *mahākāvya*s open with *vastunirdeśa* verses or with no introductory verse at all. However, *gadyakāvya* works, both *ākhyāyikā* and *kathā*, tend to open with *maṅgala* verses.

While the *kāvya* tradition of *maṅgala* verses does not originate in the early *gadyakāvya* works, the examples above show that they became a durable feature of the *gadyakāvya* genres. And, given their dates of composition beginning in the sixth and seventh centuries, their growth and rise in ubiquity follow the approximate history set forth by Minkowski in his discussion of the *maṅgala* verses in *śāstra* traditions. Given the widespread use of *maṅgala* verses by the turn of the first millennium CE, Minkowski raises a question that is equally relevant for the literary tradition: "What, then, did they [Sanskrit intellectuals] make of the undeniable fact that many of the old, foundational texts in the central disciplines which they studied and commented on had no *maṅgala* verses?"¹⁷³ In the realm of *kāvya*, these old, foundational texts would be akin to the early *mahākāvya* works opening with other types of verses, such as the *vastunirdeśa*. Minkowski points to the various ways that theorists and commentators negotiate the absence of *maṅgala*

169. *Sattasaī* 1:

pasuvaiṇo rosāruṇapaḍisāsamkaṃtagorimuhaamdam |
gahiagghapaṃkaam via samjhāsaliṃjalim ṇamaha ||

Homage to the hands of Paśupati cupped in supplication and filled with water at the twilight offering—[cupped hands] in which the image of Gaurī's face-moon is reflected red with anger, like a [red] lotus presented as an offering.

Das Saptaśatakam des Hāla. Edited by Albrecht Weber. Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 7, Bd. 4. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1881.

170. *Jātaka-Mālā* by Ārya Śūra, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 21 (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1959).

171. *Harṣacarita* 1. *The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. With the Commentary (Saṅketa) of Śaṅkara*. Edited by Kāśināth Pāṇḍurang Parab. Revised by Srīnivās Venkatrām Toppūr. 4th ed. Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagar Press, 1918. All citations refer to the NSP edition unless otherwise noted.

Kādambarī 1. *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, ed. with the *Candrakalā* and *Vidyotinī* by Kṛṣṇamohana Śāstrī, Kashi Sanskrit Series 151. 3rd ed. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1960). All citations refer to the CSS edition unless otherwise noted.

172. *Vāsavadattā* 1. *Vāsavadattā of Subandhu*, ed. with comm. T. V. Srinivasachariar (Trichinopoly: St. Joseph's College Press, 1906).

173. Minkowski, "Why Read Maṅgala Verses?" 10.

verses in earlier works.¹⁷⁴ An instance of this commentarial anxiety over a literary work's beginning can be seen in Kālidāsa's *mahākāvya*, *Kumārasambhava* (*Birth of the God Kumāra*, ca. 5th c. CE). The poem begins with an introduction to the mountain Himālaya, father of the work's protagonist, the goddess Pārvatī: "There is a divine mountain in the northern direction. His name is Himālaya, the overlord of mountains (*asty uttarasyāṃ diśi devatātmā himālayo nāma nagādhirāja*)."¹⁷⁵ Like most of the other early *mahākāvya* works noted in Boccali's study, Kālidāsa's opening has a straightforward narrative sense, which neither resembles a *namaskriyā* or a *vastunirdeśa*. Daniel Szaler notes, "This omission, moreover caused a headache for those mediaeval scholars who wrote their commentaries under the influence of the later works on poetics."¹⁷⁶ Given what Minkowski calls the ways of "retrofitting" the beginning of a text with a *maṅgala*,¹⁷⁷ the question arises whether the idea of the *vastunirdeśa* was a way of making sense of the absence of a *maṅgalācaraṇa* on the part of literary theorists.

Family Resemblances: The Avantisundarī's Maṅgalācaraṇa

In the introduction to this section, I discussed the development of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* verse as seen in first-millennium literature and works of poetic theory. The purpose of this introduction was to outline conventions specific to *gadyakāvya* as well as to articulate some of the constraints that composers might have worked with in the production of *kāvya*. Now, I consider how a shared vocabulary of tropes also connects authors and their works. Here, Ludwig Wittgenstein's classic discussion of "family resemblances" is productive. Using the example of games to problematize the existing criteria for defining language, Wittgenstein states,

For if you look at them [games] you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that....And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

174. Ibid., 10–17.

175. *Kumārasambhava* 1.1ab. *Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa: With the Commentary (the Sanjivini) of Mallinātha (1-8 Sargas) and of Sītārāma (8-17 Sargas)*, ed. Kāśināth Pāṇḍuraṅg Parab, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1893.) On the syntax of opening narratives.

176. Péter Száler, "On the Road with Kālidāsa: Countries, Cities and Sacred Places" (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, 2019), 162. For a more detailed discussion of this debate, see *ibid.*, 162–163. See *ibid.*, 304 for Aruṇagirinātha's and Nārāyaṇa's commentary.

177. Minkowski, "Why Read Maṅgala Verses?" 14. In the śāstraic context, Minkowski discusses the shift in commentaries of works that begin with words such as *atha*, "now" or "then next." According to Minkowski, commentators from the eighth century onward suggest that this word, as the opening of the *śāstra*, "had an auspicious effect, and hence that it provided a work with a *maṅgala* beginning." *Ibid.*, 12–13.

Commentators of narrative literature have used similar strategies with the term *asti*, "there is," and other finite forms of the verbal root, *as*, "to be," as well as the verbal root, *bhū*, "to be(come)." For a discussion of these terms as part of a syntactic formula to introduce new narratives, see Hueckstedt, *Style of Bāṇa*, 23–25. I discuss and modify this formula in Chapter Four.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. –And I shall say: “games” form a family.¹⁷⁸

In what follows, I examine the benedictory verses of the works attributed to Daṇḍin as well as the works that share the *Avantisundarī*/*Daśakumāracarita* narrative, which has Rājavāhana as its protagonist. Although these two families of texts are not identical, they are deeply imbricated. And the complicated network of similarities among these works nods toward their participation in a shared conceptual space that goes beyond genre, author, and historical period. Before considering these verses, let us focus on two works of *gadyakāvya*: Daṇḍin’s *Avantisundarī* and Bāṇa’s *Kādambarī*.

The *Avantisundarī* begins with a *maṅgalācaraṇa* verse in *śloka* meter that plays with the notion of unity in plurality through its invocation to the three-fold aspect of the Divine:

hiraṇyagarbham īśānam ādyaṃ ca puruṣaṃ harim |
trīṇ apy asatyanānātvān vande viśvaśarīriṇaḥ || AS v. 1
To Hiraṇyagarbha, Īśāna, and the Primordial Man Hari,
Though they are three from a false state of plurality,
I honor them as Viśvaśarīrin, *the One Whose Body is the Universe*.

The first half of the stanza highlights the Trimūrti, that is, Brahmā as Hiraṇyagarbha, Śiva as Īśāna, and Viṣṇu as Puruṣa and Hari. However, the second half of the stanza calls out the illusory nature of the plurality by referring to the three as the one possessing the entire universe as its body, that is the Self-Born, or Svayambhū Brahmā as Viśvaśarīrin. Addressing the historical development of the early-Vedic conception of Brahmā, from the Supreme Creator to the epic-purāṇic conception of Brahmā as the god responsible for creation is beyond the scope of this discussion. But what should be noted here is how the *Avantisundarī* plays with the distinction and the slippage between the two conceptions, with Brahmā as sectarian god, acknowledged in the first half-verse, and as Supreme Being in the second.

This conception of a single godhead manifesting as the three gods of the Trimūrti also opens Bāṇa’s prose poem *Kādamabarī*, where the poet pays homage to the supreme Brahmā as Aja, “Unborn One”:

rajojuṣe janmani sattvavṛttaye sthitau prajānāṃ pralaye tamaḥspṛṣe |
ajāya sargasthitināśahetave trayīmayāya triguṇātmāne namaḥ ||¹⁷⁹

178. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, rep. of English text, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 31²–32^o.

179. *Kādamabarī* 1.

Inclined toward activity (*rajas*) in the genesis of beings,
Existing as light (*sattva*) in their sustenance,
Touched by darkness (*tamas*) in their destruction,
Homage to Aja, *the Unborn One*,
The cause of creation, preservation, and dissolution,
Three in form, three in quality.

As with the paradox of the one whose body is the universe having three divine forms in the *Avantisundarī*, the *Kādambarī*'s opening *namaskriyā* glorifies the Unborn One (*Aja*), in its triple form consisting of the three constituent elements of the universe (*triguṇa*) and manifesting as the three gods associated with each of the three *guṇas*. While the gods are not named in the verse, their three-fold associations—Brahmā as the quality of *rajas*, “activity,” responsible for *sarga*, “universal creation”; Viṣṇu as the quality of *sattva*, “light,” responsible for *sthiti*, “preservation of the universe”; and Śiva as the quality of *tamas*, “darkness,” responsible for *nāśa*, “destruction of the universe”—would be well understood. By invoking this particular trope of divinity, the *Avantisundarī* acknowledges its predecessor Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, signaling an affiliation in both form and narrative content. For not only are the *Kādambarī* and the *Avantisundarī* composed in ornate literary prose, they also fall under the genre of what Christine Chojnacki refers to as the “heroine” novel, works that are named after and based, albeit sometimes tenuously, on a female protagonist.¹⁸⁰ That the *Avantisundarī* author held the *Kādambarī* in high regard can be seen not only from the generous lexical and stylistic borrowings throughout the text, but also from explicit mentions of both author and work. Not only does the work acknowledge Bāṇa in the *kavipraśaṃsā*,¹⁸¹ within the story proper, the *Avantisundarī* alludes to the work through word play, along with other famous works of *kāvya*, while describing the great city of Puṣpapura.¹⁸² Moreover, the *Avantisundarī* tells the story of *Kādambarī* as part of its own narrative.¹⁸³

The primacy of Brahmā and the notion of three-fold divinity in the *Kādambarī* and *Avantisundarī maṅgala* verses also thread through the other works attributed to and associated with Daṇḍin. The *maṅgala* verse attached to the *Daśakumāracarita* is dedicated to Viṣṇu as Trivikrama, an epithet for Viṣṇu's dwarf *avatāra* renowned for crossing the three worlds in three steps.¹⁸⁴ More specifically, the verse is dedicated to the god's stafflike foot (*aṅghridaṇḍa*), which is described as the victory-pillar staff of the three worlds (*tribhuvanavijayastambhadaṇḍa*). Despite Viṣṇu being the object of the verse's praise, the first word uttered in the verse is *brahmā*

180. Christine Chojnacki, "Charming Bouquet or Wedding Garland? The Structures of the Jain Heroine 'Novel' in Prakrit From Kuvalayamālā (779) to Maṇoramā (1082)," *Asiatische Studien / Études asiatiques* 70, no. 2 (2016): 365-398.

181. *AS*, v. 19.

182. *AS*, 20.

183. *AS*, 243–45.

184. The *Daśakumāracarita*'s *maṅgala* verse appears to have been composed separately and attached to the work after the eleventh century. See Bhoja's *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* 2.250 where the verse is quoted anonymously. *The Sarasvatī Kaṇṭhabharaṇa by Dhāreshvara Bhojadeva*, with Commentaries of Rāmsinha (I–III) and Jagaddhara (IV), ed. Paṇḍit Kedārṇāth Śarmā and Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Śāstrī Paṇśīkar, *Kāvyaṃālā* 94, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1934).

in describing Viṣṇu's foot as "the parasol-staff of Brahmā's egg, i.e., the universe" (*brahmāṇḍacchatraḍaṇḍa*). Brahma is recalled a second time as Śatadhṛti, "One of a Hundred Sacrifices," in the next description of that foot as the lotus-stalk staff of the lotus which is the home of Śatadhṛti, "One of a Hundred Sacrifices" (*śatadhṛtibhanavāmbhoruha*).¹⁸⁵ Similarly Brahmā, referred to as Caturmukha, "Four-Faced One," appears as the first utterance of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*:

caturmukhamukhāmbhojavanahaṃsavadhur mama |¹⁸⁶
mānase ramatām nityam sarvaśuklā sarasvatī || *DaKĀ* 1.1

Shining white, let my beloved, the *haṃsa*-like Sarasvatī for whom the mouths of the four-faced [Brahmā] are lotus groves, delight forever in the mind/in lake *Mānasa*.

Through the power of compound apposition and bivalent verse, Sarasvatī as wife, whose speech is placed in the mouth of her consort Brahmā, delights forever in the poet's mind. Simultaneously, Sarasvatī as a *haṃsa* in a grove of lotuses delights forever on lake *Mānasa* where *haṃsas* are said to flock in summer. The metaphorical relationship between Sarasvatī and a *haṃsa* appears in another work associated with Daṇḍin, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, an anonymous verse summary of the *Avantisundarī*. The *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* opens with three *maṅgala* verses, the first to Viṣṇu and the second to Śiva. We might expect the third verse to be dedicated to Brahmā. Instead, it is dedicated to Sarasvatī in a metaphor that strongly resonates with the *Kāvyādarśa*'s *maṅgala* verse:

manmukhe sukhavinyastasavilāsapadakramā |
haṃsīva viharantī stāt sarasīva sarasvatī || *ASKS* 1.3

With her playful series of steps/*quarter verses* placed joyfully in my mouth, let Sarasvatī be like a *haṃsa* roaming with pleasure on a lake.

Not only does the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* verse draw upon the metaphor of Sarasvatī as *haṃsa*, it also similarly presents the poet in first-person voice. But, where the relationship between the poet and the Goddess of Speech is mediated in the *Kāvyādarśa* through the mouth of Brahmā, the

185. *DKC* 1:

brahmāṇḍacchatraḍaṇḍaḥ śatadhṛtibhavanāmbhoruho nāladaṇḍaḥ
kṣoṇīnaukūpadaṇḍaḥ kṣaradamarasaritpaṭṭikāketudaṇḍaḥ |
jyotiścakrākṣadaṇḍas tribhuvanavijayastambhadaṇḍo 'nghridaṇḍaḥ
śreyastraivikramas te vitaratu vibudhadveṣiṇām kāladaṇḍaḥ ||

186. Given the position of the genitive *mama*, "my," I construe it with the compound in the first half line as "my beloved/wife, the *haṃsa*-like [Sarasvatī]." This rendering plays on the trope that the inspired poet is married to Sarasvatī in the same way that a king is married to the goddess Śrī. Alternatively, the verse could be read along the lines as follows:

Shining white, let Sarasvatī, the *haṃsa*-like wife in the lotus groves that are the mouths of the four-faced [Brahmā], delight forever in my mind/in lake *Mānasa*.

Avantisundarīkathāsāra places Speech directly in the mouth of the poet. The two verses share a similar syntactic structure with both of their first-half stanzas consisting of a long possessive *bahuvrīhi* compound qualifying Sarasvatī paired with the genitive referring to the author (*DKĀ*, *mama...mānase*, “in my mind”; *ASKS*, *manmukhe*, “in my mouth”). Both verses are grammatically governed by an imperative verb of benediction (*Kāvyādarśa* with *ramatām* “let [Sarasvatī] delight and *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* with *stāt* “let [Sarasvatī] be”).¹⁸⁷ And, they similarly punctuate the last quarter verse with meaningful sibilant consonance. Where the *Kāvyādarśa*’s verse begins with mention of Brahmā as Caturmukha and ends with Sarasvatī, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* begins with the poet and ends with the goddess.¹⁸⁸

While the *Kāvyādarśa*, *Avantisundarī*, and *Daśakumāracarita*—works attributed to Daṇḍin—and the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*—based on a work attributed to Daṇḍin—are in conversation through a shared conceptual and linguistic vocabulary, no single feature of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* threads through all of them. Nevertheless, the shared features above speak to an association between these texts. The works that are associated with Daṇḍin discussed above differ in genre on several levels. On the most fundamental level, the *Kāvyādarśa* is a *śāstra*, a treatise, while the other three works are *kāvya*, literary works. Of the three *kāvya*s, the two attributed to Daṇḍin, *Daśakumāracarita* and *Avantisundarī*, are works of ornate prose, while the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* is mostly in *śloka* meter. Despite these differences, they share a family resemblance through their opening verses. Likewise, the *maṅgala* verses of the *Kādambarī* and the *Avantisundarī* resemble each other through their object of devotion: the Supreme Brahmā manifesting as the Trimūrti. While invoking different deities, the *Daśakumāracarita* and the *Kāvyādarśa* both choose Brahmā as their opening image and invocation of him as their first utterance. And, while the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* is not attributed to Daṇḍin, its resemblance to Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa* is perhaps the closest of all.

The question then is whether this family resemblance holds any explanatory power. While the question of whether the works attributed to Daṇḍin were composed by a unified author is inconclusive, it is instructive to see how the later works, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* and the reconstructed beginning of the *Daśakumāracarita* reflected relationships with the earlier texts through their *maṅgala* verses. The relationship between the *Avantisundarīkathā* and the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* is clear from the title of the latter as a *sāra*, “digest of the larger work”; its faithful reproduction of the *Avantisundarīkathā* framing narrative where Daṇḍin of Kāñcī composes the *Avantisundarīkathā*; and its explicit acknowledgment of Daṇḍin as the author of the *Avantisundarīkathā* in its colophon history. Yet, rather than align itself further with the *Avantisundarīkathā* through its *maṅgala* verse, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*’s *maṅgala* verse resoundingly echoes the *Kāvyādarśa*’s, thus gesturing toward the author of the original work, if

187. The use of the imperative root *as*, “to be,” as *stāt* in the third person singular, as opposed to the second person, is nonstandard. On this, see William Dwight Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* (Repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005), §570–571, p. 213–14.

188. For a detailed engagement of speech *Vāc* and, by extension Sarasvatī as the goddess of poetic speech, see Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, “Speaking Gender: *Vāc* and the Vedic Construction of the Feminine,” in *Invented Identities: The Interplay of Gender, Religion and Politics in India*, pp. 57–83. Edited by Julia Leslie and Mary McGee, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2000.

not the work itself. The *maṅgala* verse attached to the *Daśakumāracarita* further reinforces this link between the *Kāvyaśāstra* and the *Avantisundarī*. Because the beginning and ending *ucchvāsa*-chapters of the *Daśakumāracarita* are lost, it appears, to use Isabelle Onians's wording, "a headless, tailless torso."¹⁸⁹ Thus, the beginning of the *Daśakumāracarita* has been reconstructed by an anonymous author. And a free-floating *maṅgala* verse has been adopted to open the work. It is notable that the verse adopted for this work shares features similar to other *maṅgala* verses in this family of works.

Pointing to this "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" has less to do with questions of historical authorship and more to do with the ways that later authors and literary communities imagined the seventh-century Daṇḍin as both a poetic theorist and a *gadyakāvya* author. The association of Daṇḍin extends beyond the Sanskrit works addressed thus far. We see it again in thirteenth-century Andhra Pradesh where the poet-scholar Kētana, referring to himself as the modern Daṇḍin (*abhinava-daṇḍin*) composes not only a Telugu verse rendering of the *Daśakumāracarita*, but also a grammatical treatise on the Telugu language, the *Āndhrabhāṣābhūṣaṇamu* (*Ornament of the Language of the Āndhras*). As the "modern Daṇḍin," Kētana fashions himself as both theorist and poet, more specifically, a poet of the *Daśakumāracarita*. While Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaśāstra* falls under the rubric of literary theory and Kētana's *Āndhrabhāṣābhūṣaṇamu* under grammar and linguistic theory, their affinities with the aesthetics of language allow a slippage that Appakavi acknowledges in his mid-seventeenth century work on Telugu grammar *Appakavīyam* (*Appakavi's [Treatise]*). In the introduction to his treatise, Appakavi relates how Viṣṇu comes to him in a dream. Referring to the earlier theorists, Tātana and Kētana, the god notes,

Tātana and Nūtna-Daṇḍi covered a little
of Telugu grammar. Good scholars though they were,
their works are not comparable to this.¹⁹⁰

Kētana's self-fashioning as the Telugu Daṇḍin, both authors of a *Daśakumāracarita* narrative as well as theoreticians, is not lost on Appakavi, who refers to his predecessor in this stanza as the new Daṇḍin (here using the Telugu term *nūtna*, "new"). While this example steps away from the discussion of the *maṅgala* verse, it highlights the imagining of later authors of Daṇḍin as an author of both *gadyakāvya* and *śāstra*. Concluding then with the *maṅgala* verses in Kētana's *Daśakumāracarita*, we see that they too bear a resemblance to the *maṅgala* verses from the Daṇḍin family. Kētana's *Daśakumāracarita* begins with verses entreating each of the gods of

189. Onians, *What Ten Young Men Did*, 23.

190. Quoted in Velchuru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 233–34. *Appakavīyam* of Appakavi (Madras: Vavilla Ramasvamisasthulu and Sons, 1966).

the Trimūrti, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā—as Aja—to bless Tikkana, his teacher and the dedicatee of the work.¹⁹¹

3.3. The *Kavipraśamsā*

The praise of past poets, or *kavipraśamsā*, comprises the bulk of the *Avantisundarī*'s preamble. Peopled with well-known authors the preamble's *kavipraśamsā*, along with the framing narrative, has received the lion's share of attention from scholars of the work.¹⁹² But aside from identifying these authors, their works, and their relative chronologies, not much more has been said of the *Avantisundarī*'s preamble. Given the numerous references to other authors and literary works in the *Avantisundarī* preamble, it will be instructive to consider how the *kāvya* preamble situates the *Avantisundarī* within a larger literary tradition. Sheldon Pollock provides a useful framework for thinking generally about the *kavipraśamsā* along three axes: as a form of literary history, canon- and classic-creation, and as a means of self-canonization on the part of the work's author.¹⁹³ To this, he notes, "As such, these verses reveal not so much inert traditions handed down from the past as orders of significance shaped in the interest of each particular present."¹⁹⁴ Rather than see the *kāvypaśamsā* as simply a literary convention, Pollock's theorization encourages us to think about how authors position themselves within a literary tradition and among other authors. Apart from these more global assertions of canon-creation mentioned by Pollock, in what follows, I would like to point toward more genre-specific types of affiliations taking place within the *Avantisundarī*'s *kavipraśamsā* and more generally in the *kavipraśamsās* of *gadyakāvya* works.

The Avantisundarī as Case Study

After the *maṅgala* verse, the *Avantisundarī*'s *kāvyaārambha* continues with an extensive list of past poets and works beginning with the Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* (v. 2) and the *Mahābhārata* (v. 3). The *Avantisundarī* continues with the following authors and works: the

191. *Daśakumāracaritra* of Kētana Kavi, ed. Bellaṅkōṇḍa Candramauḷīśāstrī (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy, 1967).

192. For example, see Kavi, introduction to *Avantisundarikathasara and Avantisundarikatha*, 6–11. Kavi notes, "In light of the recent research in literature and archaeology, the mention of the poets appears to follow some strict chronological order." Ibid., 6. And he reads *naḥ*, "our" as a nod to Daṇḍin's forefather's living under Pravarasena's rule in Vaidarbha. Ibid., 9. Mahādeva Śāstrī provides a chart with known authors and titles along with others in the frame and body of the work in the introduction to *Avantisundarī*, 23. For a detailed description of the *kavipraśamsā* verses, see J. Nobel, "Die *Avantisundarikathā*," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 5 (1927): 138–45. See, too, Sheldon Pollock, "In Praise of Poets: On the History and Function of the *Kavipraśamsā*," in *Ānanda Bhārati: Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy Felicitation Volume*, eds. B. Channakeshava, and H. V. Nagaraja Rao (Mysore: D.V.K. Murthy, 1995), 447–48.

193. Pollock, "In Praise of Poets," 452.

194. Sheldon Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 78.

earlier Subandhu (v. 6); the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya (v. 7); a work containing such well-known literary figures as Nārāyaṇadattā, Devadattā, and Mūladeva (v. 8); Śūdraka (v. 9); Bhāsa (v. 11); Sarvasena (v. 12); the Setubandha of Pravarasena (v. 13); Kālidāsa (v. 15); Nārāyaṇa (v. 17); Bāṇa and Mayūra (v. 19); and ending with Daṇḍin referred to as the descendant of his great-grandfather, Dāmodara (*dāmodaravaṃśaja*, v. 22). Of all of the *gadya* works from this period, the *Avantisundarī*'s *kavipraśaṃsā* takes special care to locate itself within the *Bṛhatkathā* tradition. Following its praise of the epics at the beginning of the *kavipraśaṃsā*, verses six to nine refer to literary works linked to the *Bṛhatkathā*. The first of these verses is in praise of Subandhu, the author of the play *Vāsavadattānāṭyādhāra* and minister of Mauryan emperor Bindusāra. In Chapter Two, I showed that despite the stark difference in narrative, both the earlier Subandhu the playwright and the Subandhu of the sixth-century prose *kathā* *Vāsavadattā* drew upon the same narrative source material, that is the *ākhyāyikā* referred to in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. The same Vāsavadattā and Udayana also appear as the parents of Naravāhanadatta, the protagonist of the three verse *kathās* the *Bṛhatkathāślokaṃgraha* (*Verse Compendium of the Great Story*, c. 6th–7th c. CE) of Budhasvāmin, the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (*Flower Collection from the Great Story*, 1050–1075 CE) of Kṣemendra, and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*Ocean of Story-Rivers*, 1063–1081 CE) of Somadeva.¹⁹⁵

Though incomplete, the following stanza clearly refers to the *Bṛhatkathā* through the rhetorical question, “What species of being has been left out by the *Great Story*, [the work] connected with Gomukha (*gomukhānvitayā jātiḥ kā bṛhatkathayojhitā*, *AS* v. 7cd).¹⁹⁶ Whereas *kavipraśaṃsā* references in other literary works might refer to the *Bṛhatkathā* and its traditional author Guṇāḍhya, this verse provides a unique level of detail into the narrative by referring to Gomukha, the minister and confidante of the protagonist, Naravāhanadatta. Since there is no available text of the *Bṛhatkathā*, we only know of Gomukha from the *Bṛhatkathā* verse retellings. And, aside from this *kavipraśaṃsā* verse, he is not mentioned elsewhere in connection with the *Bṛhatkathā*. The context for this reference is unclear given that only half of the verse is available. However, it is striking that this reference to Gomukha in connection with Naravāhanadatta gestures toward the *Avantisundarī*'s (and the *Daśakumāracarita*'s) story proper. For both stories feature the trope of the hero and his conatal companions being born at the same time. In the *Bṛhatkathā* verse epitomes, Naravāhanadatta is born at the same time as the sons of

195. For the most comprehensive review of Kashmiri *Bṛhatkathā* literature, specifically Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara*, up to 2020, see Jonathan A. Silk, “A Resurgent Interest in “Hindu Fiction,”” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 63, 3 (2020): 263–306. Along with the three Sanskrit *Bṛhatkathā* epitomes, the extant *Bṛhatkathā* corpus includes both Saṅghadāsagaṇi's Old Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī *Vasudevahiṇḍī* (*Wanderings of Vasudeva*) and Koṅkuvelir's Tamil *Peruṅkatai* (*Great Story*). For the *Vasudevahiṇḍī*, see L. Alsdorf, “Vasudevahiṇḍī, a Specimen of Archaic Jaina-Māhārāṣṭrī,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 8, nos. 2–3 (1936): 319–33. and Jain, *Vasudevahiṇḍī*. See also Jagdishchandra Jain, *The Vasudevahiṇḍī: An Authentic Jain Version of the Bṛhatkathā* (L.D. Series 59. Ahmedabad: L. D. Inst. of Indology, 1977). For the *Peruṅkatai*, see S. K. Aiyangār, “Bṛhat Kathā,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (July 1906): 689–92. See also R. Vijayalakshmy, *A Study of the Peruṅkatai: An Authentic Version of the Story of Udayana* (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1981).

196. Though the term *jāti* could refer to a general category here, I take it as meaning “species of being” specifically because there is a *bahuvrīhi* compound qualifying *Bṛhatkathā* in the first hemistich that ends with *-mānavadeva*, two species of being, mortals and gods, respectively.

his father's, Udayana's, ministers and chamberlain, including Gomukha, the son of Udayana's chamberlain.¹⁹⁷ In the *Avantisundarī*, Vasumatī gives birth to Rājavāhana at the same time that Rājahaṃsa's ministers and chamberlain, as well as a friend of Vasumatī's all give birth to sons.¹⁹⁸

The same level of detail appears in the next stanza referring to “a composition which has as its source Devadattā along with Nārāyaṇadattā...Mūladeva (*sanārāyaṇadattā yā devadattāśrayā kṛtiḥ | mūladevodi...., AS v. 8ab*).”¹⁹⁹ Also known as Kaṇṇisuta, Mūladeva spans the *kathā* literature as an expert gambler and, as described by Maurice Bloomfield, “a rogue whose pranks have endeared him to the popular heart as a shifty, yet delectable figure, who my however...occasionally be taken more seriously and padded out into a sort of hero.”²⁰⁰ Among the many works that Mūladeva populates are the verse-epitomes of the *Bṛhatkathā*, the *Avantisundarī*, and the *Daśakumāracarita*.²⁰¹ This particular verse could allude to Mūladeva's and the courtesan Devadattā's relationship as portrayed in the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* (*The Lotus Gift*), a *bhāṇa* attributed to Śūdraka. The relationship between Mūladeva and Devadattā appears in other works such as Māhuka's Prakrit treatise on medicine and perfumery, the *Haramekhālā* (*Hara's Waistbelt*, 9th–10th c. CE),²⁰² thus suggesting that this couple has narrative roots in sources earlier than the *bhāṇa*. In another *bhāṇa* of the four-play set known as the *Caturbhāṇī*, the *Ubhayābhisārikā* (*Mutual Assignations*) of Vararuci has Nārāyaṇadattā featured as its female protagonist and Devadattā playing a minor role. While there is no mention of Mūladeva in this *bhāṇa*, the question arises whether this *Avantisundarī* stanza could, as with the reference to Subandhu discussed in Chapter Two,²⁰³ refer to earlier narrative material from which these works are drawn. As with the mention of Gomukha in the previous stanza, this verse gestures toward the *Avantisundarī*'s story proper which begins with the history of Daṇḍin's ancestors settling in the city Acalapura (lit., the city of Acala), “founded by Mūladeva for his friend Acala.”²⁰⁴

The last of this series of *Bṛhatkathā*-related verses acknowledges a Śūdraka both for his martial skill and the composition of his own *carita*:

śūdrakenāsakṛjītvā svacchayā khaḍgadhārāyā |
*jagad bhūyo 'bhyavaṣṭabdhamaṃ vācā svacaritārthayā ||*²⁰⁵ *AS v. 9 ||*

197. *Kathāsaritsāgara* 4.3.57 (NSP edition).

198. *AS*, 159–60

199. Most of *pāda* c and all of *pāda* d are missing.

200. Maurice Bloomfield, “The Character and Adventures of Muladeva,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 52, no. 212 (1913): 619.

201. For a complete list of references to Mūladeva in śāstraic sources, Jain commentaries and other literary works, see, Harihara Sastri, introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, x–xi; Maurice Bloomfield, “The Character and Adventures of Muladeva,” 616–50.

202. Harihara Sastri, introduction to *Avantisundarī Kathāsāra*, x.

203. *AS*, v. 6.

204. *mūladevena sakhyur acalasya kṛte niveśitam [acalapuraṃ nāma]*, *AS*, 9.

205. I refer to the 1924 edition here. *Avantisundarikathasara and Avantisundarikatha*, 1–2 (of the *Avantisundarī* text).

Having been conquered repeatedly by Śūdraka with his shining sword-blade, the world was once again overcome by [his] words which had his own deeds as their subject matter.²⁰⁶

Known as the king of Ujjain and a great poet in his own right, Śūdraka is the author of numerous works including the *Padmaprābhṛtaka*, the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, and the *Vatsarājacarita*. He is also a well-known figure in the *Bṛhatkathā* related works, such as the Kashmiri *Bṛhatkathās*. Notably, his story is also included as an embedded tale in the *Avantisundarī*.²⁰⁷ By including several verses of praise to the *Bṛhatkathā* and affiliated works, the *Avantisundarī*'s *kavipraśaṃsā* locates itself within the *Bṛhatkathā* narrative tradition. As I will show below, other literary works that form part of this narrative tradition nod to the *Bṛhatkathā* in their *kavipraśaṃsās*. Yet the *Avantisundarī* does so more self-consciously by returning to the figures in the prose portion of the work.

The Kavipraśaṃsā in Other Works of Gadyakāvya

Having pointed to the *Avantisundarī*'s association through its *kavipraśaṃsā* with the *Bṛhatkathā* narratives, I now turn to other literary works from the second half of first–millennium CE South Asia—specifically those literary works that contain *kavipraśaṃsās* in their preambles. My first observation has to do with literary form: that is, that almost all of the works containing *kavipraśaṃsās* from the seventh through the mid-tenth century are works of *gadya* and *campū*. One of the few exceptions would Vākpatirāja's Prakrit *mahākāvya* the *Gauḍavaho* (eighth CE). But here the verses of praise are at the end of the work, rather than the beginning.²⁰⁸ Among the *gadyakāvya* and *campū* works with *kavipraśaṃsās* in their preambles are Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (604–647 CE), Uddyotanasūri's *Kuvalayamālā* (ca. 779 CE), Daṇḍin's *Avantisundarī* (7th–8th c. CE), the *Damayantīkathā* (also known as, *Nalacampū*) of Trivikrama (ca. 915 CE), and Dhanapāla's *gadyakāvya* *Tilakamañjarī* (1050). While these compositions differ in their doctrinal affiliation, they are all *gadyakāvya* or *campū* works. And with the exception of the *Kuvalayamālā*, composed in Prakrit, the works are in Sanskrit.

The most notable similarity among the *kavipraśaṃsās* of these works is that, without exception, they make reference to the *Bṛhatkathā* or to its traditional author Guṇāḍhya. Employing the rhetorical figure *śleṣa*, which allows for a bitextual reading of the first hemistich, the following *kavipraśaṃsā* verse of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* compares the *Bṛhatkathā* to the amorous play of Śiva, as Hara, with Pārvatī, as Gaurī:

samuddīpitakandarpā kṛtagaurīprasādhanaḥ |
haralileva no kasya vismayāya bṛhatkathā || HC v. 17 ||

206. Thanks to Prof. Robert Goldman for making my original translation more readable.

207. See *AS*, 200 and *ASKS* 4.175–185.

208. The Sanskrit *campū* *Yaśastilaka* of Somadevasūri (ca. 950 CE) has a *kavipraśaṃsā*. But it is in middle of the work.

Like Hara's amorous play,
 which enflames Kandarpa and gives Gaurī occasion for adornment,
 who does the Great Story,
 which inflames desire (kandarpa) and effects young women,
 not amaze?

Not only does the verse reflect a key feature in the textual iconography of Śiva and Parvatī, it also highlights the amorous effects of reciting the *Bṛhatkathā*. This aphrodisiacal quality of storytelling is depicted in the *Daśakumāracarita*, as Rājavāhana and Avantisundarī are spending their first night together.²⁰⁹

Uddyotanasūri's Prakrit *Kuvalayamālā* refers to the *Baḍḍakahā* (i.e., the *Bṛhatkathā*) as “the abode of all the arts and knowledge, a veritable mirror for poets, like Sarasvatī, and composed by Kamalāsana (i.e., Guṇāḍhya).²¹⁰ Certainly the *kaviprasaṃsā* is meant as a site of praise, but by likening the *Bṛhatkathā* to Sarasvatī, the goddess of all arts and knowledge, the *Kuvalayamālā* extends its highest praise to the work and its author. Trivikrama's *Nalacampū* (915 CE) also draws a link between Bāṇa and Guṇāḍhya in its introduction:

śaśvadbāṇadvitīyena namadākāradhāriṇā |
*dhanuṣeva guṇāḍhyena niḥśeṣo rañjito janah || Nalacampū 1.14 ||*²¹¹

Guṇāḍhya, “endowed with merits,”
 his body bending with Bāṇa as a constant companion.
 Delights people without exception,
 Like a bow endowed with its bowstring (*guṇāḍhya*)
 *its body bending supplied with ever-flowing arrows (bāṇa)*²¹²

By embracing two meanings through the poetic figure *śleṣa*, the *Nalacampū* likens the *Bṛhatkathā* author Guṇāḍhya to a bow. In the same way that a bow is bent from the tension of being drawn to shoot when arrows are in constant supply, so too is Guṇāḍhya's body continuously bowed down from the gravitas of having the poet Bāṇa as his successor.

This representative sample of the *Bṛhatkathā* verses in the *gadya* works of the first millennium highlights the central place that the *Bṛhatkathā* holds in the imagination of *gadyakāvya* authors. As with the epic poets, this acknowledgment transcends both language choice and doctrinal affiliation. While the *Bṛhatkathā*'s place in the *kaviprasaṃsās* above signal the respective *gadya* and *campū* works as part of the *Bṛhatkathā* tradition, this association between narrative source and prose begins to change around the tenth century. A representative

209. *Daśakumāracarita*, 54–55 (NSP edition).

210. *Kuvalayamālā* 3.23 (Singhi Jain Series edition).

211. Also titled *Damayantīkathā* (NSP edition).

212. Thanks to Prof. Robert P. Goldman for reminding me of the the bivalence in *guṇāḍhya*.

example can be seen in Govardhana's twelfth-century anthology *Āryāsaptaśatī* (*Collection of Seven–Hundred Verses in Āryā Meter*):

atidīrghajīvidoṣād vyāsenā yaśo 'pahāritaṃ hanta |
kair nocyeta guṇāḍhyaḥ sa eva janmāntarāpannaḥ ||
śrīrāmāyaṇabhāratabṛhatkathānām kavīn namaskurmaḥ |
trisrotā iva sarasāsarasvatī sphurati yair bhinnā || *Āryāsaptaśatī* 1.33–34 ||

Alas! Vyāsa lost his glory from the fault of living too long.
Who would not say that he attained his next birth as Guṇāḍhya?
We pay homage to the poets of the glorious *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and
Bṛhatkathā; divided by them, Sarasvatī flows forth like the three-streamed
Ganges.

The *kaviprasaṃsā* of Govardhana's verse anthology affords the highest praise to Guṇāḍhya and the *Bṛhatkathā*. The first stanza likens Guṇāḍhya to Vyāsa, the traditional author of the *Mahābhārata*, through the conceit of transmigration. And in the second stanza, the *Bṛhatkathā* not only equals the great Sanskrit epics in scope, together the three works comprise the textual embodiment of the goddess Sarasvatī. While the earlier of these works locate the *Bṛhatkathā* at various places within the *kaviprasaṃsā* list, from the tenth century onward, the *Bṛhatkathā* is placed alongside Vyāsa and Vālmīki at the head of the list of *gadyakāvya* poets, thus making the *Bṛhatkathā* the third canonical work—a third epic in the premodern literary tradition of South Asia. From this period forward, the *kaviprasaṃsā* becomes a standard convention in works of verse and prose.

3.4. Chapter Conclusions

By proposing preliminary histories of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* and the *kaviprasaṃsā* in works of *gadyakāvya*, this chapter challenges the view that the poetic preamble is just a literary convention. Instead, these features of *kāvya*, *gadyakāvya* in particular, create a paratextual space for works to identify with a larger tradition, canon, or family of texts. In other words, the poetic preamble shapes a particular imagining of the work as a whole. This imagining, I argue, is linked to a work's literary genre, including whether it is composed in prose or verse. We see this connection in the development of the introductory verse(s), where, as noted by Boccali, early Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* predominantly have introductory verses of the *vastunirdeśa* type, or no introductory verse at all.²¹³ On the contrary, the early Sanskrit *gadyakāvyas* open with a *maṅgalācaraṇa*, that is, a *namaskriyā* or another verse invoking a deity or revered teacher for the sake of an auspicious beginning. It is the latter form that becomes *de rigueur* for all *kāvya* works regardless of genre by turn of the first millennium C.E. As shown in the case study of the *Avantisundarī*, opening verses not only supplicate an author's *iṣṭadevatā*, “chosen deity,” they

213. Boccali, “Incipits of Classical Sargabandhas,” 183–205.

also engage in conversations with other works. When considering “family resemblances” among the opening verses of the *Avantisundarī* and other works related to Daṇḍin, a shared vocabulary of tropes and linguistic patterns arise, which cut across textual register and, in the case of Daṇḍin’s works, across language and region.

As with the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, the *kavipraśaṃsā* has a particular relationship with works of first *gadya*, then of *campū*. Here, I show that the *kavipraśaṃsā* first appears as part of the poetic preamble in *gadya* and *campū* works. This is not simply a matter of convention. Instead, these sections of praise—no matter how varied the list of poets—all include the *Bṛhatkathā* to signal their works as belonging to the larger Bṛhatkathā narrative tradition. The particularly abundant and unique references to the *Bṛhatkathā* and its related works in the *Avantisundarī*’s *kavipraśaṃsā* not only locate this *gadyakāvya* within a larger narrative tradition, they also create an aesthetic of repetition by foregrounding and foreshadowing elements of the story proper. In this exploration of the *kavipraśaṃsā*, we see that the genre conventions change as do the depictions of the poets and works therein. Thus, the *kavipraśaṃsā*, like the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, once distinctive of *gadyakāvya* works, becomes a commonplace for *kāvya* compositions, and the *Bṛhatkathā* gains currency as a work imagined to be as foundational as the Sanskrit epics. These shifts in the literary conventions associated with *gadyakāvya* works show the fluidity and the historically contingent nature of literary genre in Sanskrit *kāvya*. In what follows, I consider yet another commonplace in the Sanskrit literary tradition: the narrative frame, or *kathāpīṭha*, “the story’s pedestal.”

Chapter 4: Imagining the Author in the *Kathāvatāra*

4.1. Introduction: The *Avantisundarī*'s Frame Story

Modern studies have focused on the *Avantisundarī*'s framing narrative as a way to locate Daṇḍin as the historical author of the work. While scholars are of different opinions about whether the author of the *Avantisundarī* is the same author as of the well-known *Kāvyādarśa* and the *Daśakumāracarita*, most have factored in the framing narrative when considering these Daṇḍins. This has been the main reason for addressing the *Avantisundarī*. And following this has been reading the framing narrative to better understand the history, culture, and society depicted therein. As far as framing narratives go, the *Avantisundarī*'s is a particularly fertile field for both of these inquiries. While framing narratives abound as a literary convention in early South Asian literature, most provide little in terms of historical information. The *Avantisundarī*'s differs in that it not only refers to three historical South-Indian rulers from the sixth to seventh centuries CE, it also mentions Bhāravi, the famous author of the *mahākāvya Kirātārjunīya* ([*Poem of*] the *Hunter and Arjuna*). Moreover, it provides a genealogy for Daṇḍin from his great-grandfather onward. Along with the history of these figures, the *Avantisundarī* frame describes in detail the royal city of Kāñcī (now Kanchipuram) and the port city of Mahāmallapuram (now Mahabalipuram) with one of its temples dedicated to Viṣṇu.

While scholars have pored through this difficult and often damaged text to situate it historically, other ways of situating the work discursively have yet to be explored. Rather, the authorial situation has been taken at face value without considering questions of genre and rhetorical form. For instance, what is the narrative logic behind the *Avantisundarī*'s frame? And what can we understand about the author, specifically, and authorial presentation, more generally, through the framing narrative? Understanding the discursive contexts of the framing narrative will provide a more robust understanding of the particular literary milieu that produced this type of work. And while these questions require a different set of interpretive tools, they are not altogether distinct from questions of historicity. By exploring the frame in this manner, much can be clarified about how historicity is translated within the *Avantisundarī* specifically and, by extension, in *gadyakāvya* as a literary form. With this as a primary assumption, this chapter provides a revisionist reading of the framing narrative that focuses on its narrative structure and the tropes that organize the text. While such a reading might seem like a departure from earlier historical readings, I suggest that questions of genre and authorial self-fashioning allow us to see the connections between the framing narrative as history and as literary convention.²¹⁴

4.2. Structural Considerations in the *Avantisundarī*'s Frame

214. I use Stephen Greenblatt's idea of self-fashioning here to discuss how poets in early-medieval South Asia begin to present themselves as individual historical authors.

The *Avantisundarī* is striking for a number of reasons. Aside from the the level of historical detail it provides, it also situates the story proper within a uniquely structured frame.²¹⁵ It is not exactly structured as a double frame as in the Sanskrit epics. For example, the *Mahābhārata* begins in the Naimiṣa forest at the brahmin Śaunaka's sacrifice. Arriving at Śaunaka's from Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, Ugraśravas is asked to relate the story of the Bhāratas that he had heard performed there by Vyāsa's student Vaiśampāyana. By relating the the story to the brahmins gathered in the Naimiṣa forest, the work is also relayed to the audience outside of the text. The *Rāmāyaṇa* begins with Vālmīki hearing about the hero Rāma through sage Nārada. Then, through divine sight bestowed upon him by Brahmā, Valmīki teaches the extended version of the story to Rāma's own sons. But it is not until Rāma's sons recite his life story before him during his *aśvamedha* sacrifice that the story is revealed to us, its audience. In terms of *gadyakāvya* works, Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* begins first with the the goddess Sarasvatī's descent to earth where her son graces the progenitor of Bāṇa's family line. But only upon return to his natal home from his time in Harṣa's court does Bāṇa relate the deeds of king Harṣa.

While not a "double" frame as in the examples above, the *Avantisundarī*'s frame is instead a "crooked" frame in that it restructures the temporal narrative, at times amplifying events, at times attenuating them. In content, it details Daṇḍin's family genealogy beginning with his ancestors' migration from North to South India and how the family came to settle in Kāñcī. It then describes Daṇḍin's childhood and youth, and concludes with his inspiration for composing the *Avantisundarī*. But rather than provide a diachronic narrative beginning with the family's migration and ending with Daṇḍin's composition, the frame story begins in Kāñcī at the court of Pallava king Siṃhaviṣṇu where, a traveling musician relates the deeds of Daṇḍin's great-grandfather Dāmodara to the king. To consider what this structuring of the frame story might say about the overall concerns of the work, I apply narratology's fundamental distinction between "story," as the sequence of chronological events, and "discourse," as the presentation of these events in a particular narrative form. Through reordering, amplifying, and abbreviating events leading up to Daṇḍin's composition of the story proper, the frame introduces new imaginings of the author.

Preliminary Discussion: Syntax Matters in the Frame and Story

The framing narrative, opens with a *nagaravarṇana*, "description of the city," of Kāñcī. The description of Kāñcī begins with its primary river the Vetravatī, its fortresses, buildings, gardens, and courtesans, and it ends with a portrait of its ruler Pallava king Siṃhaviṣṇu. In theorizing the *gadyakāvya* style of Bāṇa's works, Robert Hueckstedt describes the syntax of

215. To date, most discussions of framing narratives in premodern South-Asian literary works pertain to individual works. The following discuss framing narratives more broadly as part of the early South-Asian narrative tradition: Raj Balkaran, "Synchronic Strategy: Rules of Engagement for Sanskrit Narrative Literature," *Journal of Dharma Studies* 4, no. 2 (2021): 199–221. Vishwa P. Adluri, "Frame Narratives and Forked Beginnings: Or, How to Read the Ādiparvan," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 147–214.

gadyakāvya sentences that begin a story.²¹⁶ Providing all of the *gadyakāvya*s as representative examples—except for the *Harṣacarita*—he notes that the first sentence of a story conventionally has “a copulative verb in the present or past tense, then adjectives modifying the subject, the [proper name of the] subject, and finally the word *nāma* [named] or *nāmnā* [by name].”²¹⁷ Hueckstedt adds that this first sentence is often followed by demonstrative or relative clauses that continue the description. In line with this syntax, the *Avantisundarī*’s opening sentence ends with the phrase “[there was] a capital city named Kāñcīpuram (*kāñcīpuram nāma rājadhānī*).”²¹⁸ And after a series of relative clauses containing descriptions of Kāñcī, there is a syntactic shift that introduces the demonstrative pronoun *tasyāḥ*, “of that [city],” introduces the next subject: “Of that city was a king among the Pallavas by the name, Rājasimhavarman (*tasyāḥ...simhaviṣṇuvarmeti nāmnā...pallaveṣu rājā babhūva*)” While the beginning sentences of the *Vāsavadattā*, the *Kādambarī*, and the *Daśakumāracarita* also follow this pattern,²¹⁹ Hueckstedt notes of Bāṇa’s *ākhyāyikā*, “The sentence beginning the *Harṣacarita*, however, is quite different from the rest.... The *Harṣacarita* begins with an emphasis on action, not description, and the common syntax does not accommodate stories begun in this way.”²²⁰

In this regard, I suggest that the difference has less to do with a sentence’s placement at the beginning of a *gadyakāvya* and more to do with the discursive function of what follows that sentence. In other words, while almost all of the *gadyakāvya*s mentioned above begin with the story proper, the *Harṣacarita* starts with a framing narrative. Thus its first sentence introduces the authorial frame, not the story proper. Reading ahead, we see the sentence pattern noted by Hueckstedt when Bāṇa begins to tell his kinfolk the story of king Harṣa’s ancestry, that is, at the point when the work transitions from extended frame to story proper. Here, Bāṇa introduces the work’s main story in the following manner: “Please listen. There is...a region Śrīkaṇṭha by name (*śrūyatām | asti...śrīkaṇṭho nāma janapadaḥ*).”²²¹ Bhoja’s *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā* also begins with a frame where the work’s author is compelled to tell a new story. Like the *Harṣacarita*, the first sentence of the *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā*’s frame does not follow the convention suggested above. However, the beginning of the story proper, a *nagaravarṇana* of Bhoja’s capital city of Dhārā, does by beginning with the sentences, “Please listen. There is...a city which has the name Dhārā (*śrūyatām | asti...dhārābhīdhānā nagarī*).”²²² Even though the *Avantisundarī*’s first sentence departs syntactically from the other early *gadya* works with framing narratives, its story proper does not. So, when about to share the tale that Sarasvatī has told him in a dream, Daṇḍin tells his

216. Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bāṇa*, 23–35. Hueckstedt discusses any new story within a work, that is when a new speaker begins to tell a story. For the purposes of this discussion, I focus on 1) opening lines of works and 2) of the story proper. He also describes this syntax in *padya*.

217. Ibid., 24. The bracketed phrases have been added for clarity.

218. *AS*, 6.

219. *Kādambarī*, 31–37.

220. Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bāṇa*, 24–25.

221. *Harṣacarita*, pp. 94–96. (NSP edition).

222. *Śṛṅgāramañjarīkathā*, 2. Though Bhoja’s composition employs the term *abhidhāna*, “name,” as part of a *bahuvrīhi* compound instead either the adverbial *nāma* or *nāmnā*, “by name,” the sense is the same.

friends, “Please listen. There were...people of a region, the Magadhās by name (*śrūyatām | āsan...magadhā nāma janapadāḥ*).”²²³

The examples above suggest that there is a syntactic division of labor in Sanskrit narrative literature, where the construction discussed by Hueckstedt signals an entry into the world of the story. As noted this construction is not exclusive to *gadyakāvya*. But, as with the *kavipraśaṃsā* discussed in the previous chapter it becomes a convention in early prose works. The *Avantisundarī* then is somewhat anomalous in introducing the framing narrative with a syntactic construction that signals the beginning of a story proper. The anomaly of the opening description does not stop there. By introducing the frame with a *nagaravarṇana* of Kāñcī—one whose first sentence consists of over thirty-eight lines—the framing narrative mirrors the opening of the story proper, which also begins, in this case, with a description of Magadhā and its people.

A Brief Sketch of the Avantisundarī’s Frame

Following the elaborate description of Kāñcī and Siṃhaviṣṇu, the language of the *gadyakāvya* shifts from a descriptive register replete with long sentences of densely compounded descriptions and chains of rhetorical figures to a narrative register composed of shorter sentences and direct quotation. Here we find Siṃhaviṣṇu who one day hears a verse being recited by a traveling musician.²²⁴ When the Pallava king asks the musician about the verse’s origin, he responds with the following story. Dāmodara’s ancestors, a family of *kauśika* brahmins, migrated from their ancestral home in the city Ānandapura in the northwest of Āryadeśa, “the country of the *āryas*,” to the city of Acalapuram.²²⁵ Here, one of the brahmins, Nārāyaṇasvāmin, had a son named Dāmodarasvāmin.²²⁶ As a youth, Dāmodara befriended the Śaiva poet-scholar Bhāravi, who introduced him to the prince Viṣṇuvardhana. While on a hunting expedition with the prince, Dāmodara broke his brahmin diet by eating meat, which is ritually impure for a brahmin. And as expiation for this transgression, he left Viṣṇuvardhana’s court to set off on a pilgrimage to sacred sites in other kingdoms. When Dāmodara was twenty years old, he met Durvinīta, ruler of the Eastern Gaṅgas of Kalinga.

After hearing the minstrel’s account, king Rājasimha invites Dāmodara to his court by way of several royal decrees. Eventually won over by the Pallava king, Dāmodara moves to Kāñcī where he settles on a tract of land that was given to him by Siṃhaviṣṇu. Here, Dāmodara marries and fathers three sons: Siṃhaviṣṇu, presumably named after his royal benefactor, Manoratha, and Atilobha. In turn, the middle son Manoratha fathers four sons: Dāmodara,

223. *AS*, 17–18. Following the convention used throughout the *AS*, *janapada* refers to the people of the land in the plural, not the land itself in the singular.

224. Here I take the term *abhinavagandharva*, “modern gandharva,” metaphorically to mean a wandering minstrel.

225. *AS*, pp. 9–17. To date, the most thorough consideration of the *Avantisundarī*’s framing narrative material vis-à-vis historical records has been . See, Francis, “Le discours royal,” especially 93–98.

226. I refer to Dāmodarasvāmin as Dāmodara as he is referred to elsewhere in the frame. Note *svāmin* here and *-śarman* later.

presumably named after his grandfather, Bhavadāsa, Siṃhaviṣṇu, again in honor of the king, and Vīradatta. The youngest, Vīradatta(śarman) marries Gaurī, a brahmin woman of the Māṭhara *gotra*. After having several daughters, the two have a son whom they call Daṇḍin.

At an early age, the talented and precocious Daṇḍin loses both parents so that by age seven he is being raised by Sarasvatī herself, the divine embodiment of learning. Sarasvatī's guardianship does not, however, protect him from a siege of Kāñcī caused by strife among the Dramiḷas, Coḷas, and Pāṇḍyas. On this account Daṇḍin is forced to flee from his home bereft of kith and kin. Flashing forward, Daṇḍin returns to Kāñcī and establishes his own residence. One day the famed craftsman Lalitālaya asks Daṇḍin to assess his repair of a Viṣṇu *mūrti* at a temple in the port city of Mahāmallapuram. After some convincing by his companions, Daṇḍin and his friends make a journey to Mahāmallapuram to the seaside Viṣṇu temple to see the artisan's work.²²⁷ While observing Lalitālaya's seamless repair work, Dandin and his friends

227. Walter Smith and Michael Rabe specifically have identified the temple with the present day Shore Temple. Walter Smith, "The Viṣṇu Image in the Shore Temple at Māmallapuram," *Artibus Asiae* 56.1/2(1996): 19-32; Michael Rabe, "The Māmallapuram Praśasti: A Panegyric in Figures," *Artibus Asiae* 57.3/4 (1997): pp. 189–241. Michael Willis has shown that the use of natural elements in temple construction was known in the work of the Bādāmi Cālukyas. Michael D. Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. In Mahāmallapuram, the Great Relief uses the natural element of water dripping between two halves of the stone as part of the relief of the river.

Daṇḍin and his companions see the royal palace, then follow a coastal trail for some distance before entering the temple grounds, which are "lined with betel and coconut trees." There is no description of the temple structure itself. But from the description below, it is clear that the Viṣṇu image is Anantaśayana, Viṣṇu reclining on his mount Ananta on the milk ocean:

*vyākośakuvalayadāmaśyāmalābhir lakṣmīkaṭākṣamālābhir iva
lavaṇasāgaratarāṅgarājibhir laṅghyamānaśarīraṃ
dūrotthitaphaṇāsahasrasphuritatāmrādṛṣṭimālena punar api
madhukaiṭabhadānavābhipatanaśaṅkānirūpyam ādiśateva* śeṣeṇohyamānaṃ
yoganidrāmantharamuklitekṣaṇaprabhāvapravāheṇa
nābhīrandhramuktenāścaryasahasrapatreṇānuḡrhyamāṇakamalāsanaṃ bhagavantam
utphullena cakṣuṣaikṣata | AS, 14*

* I follow the emended reading from the 1954 edition here from *ādiśeva*, AS, 14n4.

With eyes wide [with wonder], [Daṇḍin] saw the blessed one, whose body was being traversed by rows of waves from the salty ocean, as if by a succession of Lakṣmī's sidelong glances, dark like garlands of fully blossomed blue water lilies. It was being carried by Ādiśeṣa, whose streak of reddened eyes flash afar from beneath a thousand upraised hoods, as if pointing out his body which is viewed with apprehension flying forth toward the *dānavas* Madhu and Kaiṭabha yet again with majesty streaming forth from his eyes that had slowly opened from yogic sleep. From [that body], Brahmā, Whose Seat is a Lotus, is being graced with a wondrous thousand-petaled lotus growing forth from his navel.

While much of the description follows a metaphorical, rather than an empirical, logic, the grammar of the text suggests that the *mūrti* that Daṇḍin views is Anantaśayana with Brahmā resting on a lotus from the deity's navel and the demons Madhu and Kaitabha lying in wait. Aside from a depiction of Brahmā on a lotus arising from Viṣṇu's navel—an iconographical feature that doesn't appear in any Pallava monument in Mahāmallapuram—this image exactly matches the Anantaśayana relief on the southern wall of the vestibule of the Mahiśāsuraṃardinī cave temple in Mahāmallapuram. It is not impossible that today's Shore Temple, which was constructed during the time of Narasiṃhavarman II's reign, is the temple that Daṇḍin and his companions visit in the *Avantisundarī* framing

witness a red lotus floating on the waves by the feet of the reclining Viṣṇu. The lotus transforms into a *vidyādhara* that, after circumambulating the *mūrti*, disappears into the sky. Daṇḍin's awestruck companions ask him to explain this miraculous vision. So, after returning to Kāñcī, he performs penance and sacred rites in hopes of better understanding the vision. That night, Sarasvatī appears to Daṇḍin in a dream.²²⁸ Sent by Viṣṇu himself, she relays the events leading to the lotus turned *vidyādhara*. This is the story that the rest of the text relates as the story of *Avantisundarī*.

For all intents and purposes, the framing narrative serves its rhetorical function by detailing the ancestry and life of the work's author and by showing how the work at hand came to be composed. Yet, despite his being the author of the work, the subject of much of the frame is not Daṇḍin, but his great-grandfather Dāmodara. Providing abbreviated descriptions of the rest of Daṇḍin's forebears, the frame amplifies its account of Dāmodara by situating the narrative in the Kāñcī of Dāmodara's patron-to-be Siṃhaviṣṇu and having the traveling musician praise, not the author of the work but his great-grandfather. For the rest of this chapter, I consider this juxtaposition between Dāmodara and Daṇḍin through the themes of movement and sociability. While the two themes proliferate in each of the author's accounts, they suggest different understandings of what it means to be an author in courtly milieux.

4.3. Movement as a Theme in the *Avantisundarī* Frame

Movement as Migration

The framing narrative takes its audience from northwestern India to Kāñcī via Vidarbha and what is now Karnataka. Daṇḍin's family history begins with the poet's ancestors migrating from the city of Ānandapura in Āryadeśa, "the country of the *āryas*," to Acalapura in the Vidarbha region of northeastern Maharashtra.²²⁹ The contrast between Daṇḍin's ancestral home in northeastern to southern India is striking. Whereas Ānandapura, literally, "the city of bliss," is described as the crest jewel of the Āryadeśa (*āryādeśasikhāmaṇi*) and as a great residence of brahmins (*brāhmaṇānāṃ mahān āvāsaḥ*), the city of settlement, Acalapura, is founded by Mūladeva for his friend Acala.²³⁰ This is the same Mūladeva mentioned earlier in the *Avantisundarī*'s *kavipraśaṃsā*.²³¹ While gambling is a requirement for kings in the epic-based

narrative. However, the *Avantisundarī* refers to the temple itself as old by Daṇḍin's time. And, thus, any repair work on the *mūrti* would most likely have taken place long after the construction of the temple, not during its inauguration.

228. It should be noted that this Vaiṣṇava backdrop doesn't exist in *DKC* and that the *ASKS*, which is normally very close to the *AS*, elides Viṣṇu from the framing narrative's dream sequence.

229. The *ASKS* specifies that this city Acalapura is in the Nasik region, situated at the head of the Godavari river, in current-day Maharashtra: "Having reached the Nāsikya region, with anticipation, they inhabited the city named Acalapura, founded by Mūladeva) (*nāsikyabhūmāv autsukyān mūladevaniveśitām | prāpyācalapuram nāma purīm adhivasaty asau || ASKS 1.21*).

230. *AS*, 9

231. *AS* v. 8.

literature, it has also been the source of severe consequences.²³² Nevertheless, it has a certain amount of social capital in the *Bṛhatkathā* literature, where it can also be a feature of urban refinement. For example, gambling is listed as a requisite part of a prince's training in the *Daśakumāracarita*. So Rājavāhana and his companions are described as “confident in the crooked arts, such as thievery and gambling (*cauryadurodarādikapatakalāpraudhatvaṃ*).”²³³ Nevertheless, this description of Acalapura suggests that the brahmin family leaves their established residence to bring their erudition and ritual skills to a less-established region. Hence, the family is likened to the heavenly Sarasvatī river flowing from Brahmaloka. Even more to the point, the trope of brahmin migration to the south gets played out in the family being described as “favoring the south, like the incarnation of Agastya, which drank then spit out the deep ocean of learned speech” (*agastyamūrtir iva pītodgīrṇagambhīraśabdasamudrā dakṣiṇām diśam anugrṇantī*).²³⁴ Upinder Singh notes that, from the fifth century CE onwards, the purāṇic tropes of Paraśurāma and of Agastya crossing the Vindhya mountains were used to describe brahmin migrants extending Āryadeśa's boundaries south of the Vindhyas in order to bring Vedic learning to the South. The term in the text *anugrṇantī* as “favoring” suggests that Daṇḍin's ancestors moved from their home in the northwest city of Ānandapura in search of opportunity.

Movement as Courtly Mobility

Through the framing narrative's description of Daṇḍin's great grandfather, Dāmodara's, movement from court to court, the text suggests that mobility is an inherent part of early medieval courtly culture in South Asia. Dāmodara's travels offer a view of the regnal landscape of South India during the latter part of the sixth century—one to which the inscriptional record also speaks. While others have shown that Durvinīta, Siṃhaviṣṇu, a prince by the name of Viṣṇuvardhana, Dāmodara, and Bhāravi all lived in sixth-century South India, I point instead to the importance of literary production that the historical record accords this network of South Indian kings and their courts. Dāmodara, a poet in his own right, is introduced to the prince Viṣṇuvardhana by another poet-intellectual, Bhāravi. While Viṣṇuvardhana's identity cannot be ascertained as precisely as the other two kings through inscriptional records, it should be noted that Kubja Viṣṇuvardhana's elder brother Pulakeśin II, who ascended the throne in 615 CE, praised the famous poets Bhāravi and Kālidāsa in his Aihole inscription of 634 CE.²³⁵

232. The most famous examples of this would be Yudhiṣṭhira's and Nala's losses of their entire kingdoms through their penchants for gambling in the *Mahābhārata*.

233. *DKC* 1.1.80.

234. *AS*, 9. Both the ORIML T-704 and the 1954 edition read *anugrṇantī*, thereby not dropping the nasal for the athematic feminine root.

235. The two candidates for Dāmodara's patron Viṣṇuvardhana are Yaśovarman Viṣṇuvardhana the Aulikara ruler of Malwa dating from the earlier part of the sixth CE and Kubja Viṣṇuvardhana, the founder of the eastern line of Cālukyas dating from the early seventh century. While the former is closer in date, he is further in distance, taking Dāmodara from Nāsik to Malwa before making his way back across the Vindhyas to present day Karnataka to reach the court of Durvinīta in the capital on the banks of the Kaverī. The latter Viṣṇuvardhana would make a feasible candidate in terms of regional proximity, but he belongs to a later period than the other two.

After leaving Viṣṇuvardhana's court to atone for eating ritually impure food on a hunting expedition with the prince, Dāmodara wanders for some time in other regions on pilgrimage to sacred sites.²³⁶ It is during this time that Daṇḍin's itinerant forebear becomes attached to Durvinīta, founder of the eastern Gaṅgā dynasty. Durvinīta proclaims in various epigraphical records that he has commented on Bhāravi's work. In the Nallālu plates, Durvinīta's literary achievements are as follows: a Sanskrit version of the *Bṛhatkathā*, a commentary to the fifteenth *sarga* of Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, and the *Śabdāvatāra*, a work whose title indicates that it is a work of grammar. The inscription highlights Durvinīta's skill in *kāvya* composition and śāstric exegesis through his composition of a *Bṛhatkathā* retelling, a commentary on a *mahākāvya*, and a treatise on language.²³⁷ Śrīvijaya's Kannada treatise on literary aesthetics (9th c. CE), the *Kavirājamārga* 1.29, refers to Durvinīta as a great writer of *gadyakāvya*. That Dāmodara again comes under the tutelage of another royal patron, especially one with literary sensibilities, highlights the mobility of poets, specifically brahmin poets.²³⁸

Siṃhaviṣṇu Pallava is also presented in the *Avantisundarī* frame as a patron of the literary arts. When hearing Dāmodara's verse performed by the traveling musician, Siṃhaviṣṇu is described as a *rasika*, "man of taste":

*sa imām āryām ākarṇya guṇakutūhalī tam aprākṣīt—'bhadra! kasyaitāny
akṣarāṇi vikaṭabaddhāny ojasvīni ca lakṣyante, kasya ceyam varṇaracanā
mādhuryavatī prasannā cendukarakalikeva śravaṇānandam utpādayati' iti*
|²³⁹

Having heard this verse in *āryā* meter, [the king] curious about its good qualities (*guṇas*) asked him "Good sir, whose syllables, beautifully joined and possessing the poetic quality of *ojas*, are heard? And whose composition of phonemes (*varṇas*), which possess sweetness and are clear like a sliver of moonlight, bring about this bliss of the ears?

236. *AS*, 10. *ekadā ca mṛgayām gacchatāmunā nītas tannirbandhād asvakulasamucitam ahutaśeṣam māṃsam ā....2 nayaiva lajjayā pitror antikam anu(pa)sṛtya tīrthayātrāprasaṅgena digantarāny abhramat* | And one day, [Dāmodarasvāmin] taken by him [Viṣṇuvardhana] going hunting, because of his insistence [ate] meat that was not sacrificed (lit., not a remainder of what was offered to the fire) [and] not appropriate for his family. With much shame, not going near his parents, he wandered throughout different regions set upon pilgrimage to sacred sites.

237. Durvinīta as author of the *Śabdāvatāra*, the Sanskrit *Bṛhatkathā* here, *Vaḍḍakathā*, and a commentary of the fifteenth canto of *Kirātārjunīya*.

238. The notion that Durvinīta was a prince, rather than a king, when he met Dāmodara is not corroborated by the story. This assumption comes from Durvinīta being described as *bhramaṇaśīlakīrtter gāṅgeyakuladhvajasya durvinīta iti vi[parītanāmnaḥ]*. The 1924 edition (p. 6 of *AS* section) has as *viparītanāmnaḥ*, but 1954 edition (p.10) has in brackets then a lacuna of about 6 spaces. The phrase has been taken as "having fame for propensity to wander," scholars have suggested that, because a king would not have time to move about due to royal duties, that Durvinīta would not have time to move about. However, the compound *bhramaṇaśīlakīrtter* more likely construes as Durvinīta "whose fame has the quality of traveling," in other words, his fame spreads.

239. *AS*, 10. Cf. *Kāvyaadarśa* 1.80 on *ojas*: *ojassamāśabhūyastvam etad gadyasya jīvitam | padye 'py adākṣiṇātyānām idam ekam parāyaṇam*.

The poet uses the vocabulary of *kāvya*guṇas, the good features of poetry in *alaṅkāraśāstra*, reminiscent of that set forth in the *guṇa* section of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaadarśa*.²⁴⁰

Movement as Dislocation

Whereas the framing narrative presents Dāmodara as a *kavi* traveling from court to court before settling down in Kāñcī under the patronage of Siṃhaviṣṇu, Daṇḍin's social circumstances are presented altogether differently. The *Avantisundarī* author is orphaned at an early age, losing his mother first, and then his father by the time of his *upanayana* ceremony. After being separated from his parents, Daṇḍin loses the rest of his family when a siege on Kāñcī forces the author-to-be into exile. This episode is accompanied by a vivid description of the destruction that takes place during the attack on the city:

*tasmiṃś cāntare paracakrapīḍayā paryākuleṣu dramilacolapāṇḍyeṣu,*²⁴¹
parāmrṣtāsu kulavadhūṣu, virateṣv agnihotreṣu, vilupteṣu dhānyakūṭeṣu,
vidruteṣu kuṭumbiṣu, jṛmbhiteṣva bhinnāsu maryādāsu chinnāsv
ārāmapaṅktiṣu, bhagnāsu sabhāprapāsu, paryastāsu satraśālāsu, nihateṣu
dhaniṣu, prahateṣu kāpatheṣu, dramileṣv avalidheṣu,d iva kalau
kārayaty ekarājyam uparatapranaṣṭabandhuvargaḥ
pradru(ma?)taprāyaparijanaḥ pravṛttavṛttikṣayo durbhikṣakṣīṇakoṣaḥ
kauśikadārako daṇḍī...yā deśāntarāṇy abhramat | avasac ca cīram
abhilakṣiteṣu gurukuleṣu, alabhata cānavadyām vidyām |

And during that time, while the Dramiḷas [Pallavas], Colas, and Pāṇḍyas were in disarray by the devastation of enemy armies, virtuous wives were seized, sacrifices to Agni were halted, granaries were destroyed, householders fled, ... burst open, boundary lines were crossed, rows of rest houses were split up, travellers' lodgings and cisterns were destroyed, sacrificial halls were cut off, the wealthy were struck down, roads were cut off, the Dramiḷas were destroyed. It was as if the embodiment of the Kali *yuga* formed a single kingdom. Daṇḍin, whose entire family was annihilated or lost, whose attendants nearly all fled, to whom loss of livelihood was brought about, and whose wealth had been exhausted by scarcity, that son of the Kauśikas wandered across other lands.²⁴²

240. The *Kāvyaadarśa* passage before distinguishing *vaidarbha* from *gauḍīya* describes *vaidarbha* in the following manner: *śleṣaḥ prasādaḥ samatā mādhyamā sukumārātā | arthavyaktir udāratvam ojaḥkāntisamādhayaḥ || iti vaidarbhamārgasya prāṇā daśa guṇāḥ smṛtāḥ | DaKĀ 1.41–42ab*

241. The 1954 edition uses the retroflex *ḷ* in *dramilacolapāṇḍyeṣu*. I follow ORIML T-704, 347 which consistently uses the dental *l* throughout the passage. The 1954 critical apparatus doesn't acknowledge the reason why the text alternates between the two.

242. AS, 12.

The difference between the frame’s opening description of Kāñcī during Dāmodara’s time and this one during Daṇḍin’s could not be starker. Of the sixty-three lines of prose that comprise the work’s opening description, Kāñcī is compared to, among other magnificent things, “the painted streak on the face of the [southern] quarter, beautiful with every radiant color (*digāṅganāmke patrāṅgulir iva sakalajjvalavarṇasobhinī*)” and to “the slender staff that is the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpadrumayaṣṭir iva*).”²⁴³ Whereas poetic conventions such as these convey Kāñcī’s beauty and plenitude through awe-inspiring hyperbole and comparison, the Kāñcī of Daṇḍin’s youth is described with tangible images of violence and destruction. This passage is otherwise notable in that it uses a descriptive register that, through its length and density, disrupts the syntactically shorter and more straightforward narrative register used elsewhere in describing Daṇḍin’s youth and childhood.

Prior to the physical displacement of exile, Daṇḍin also experiences the displacement associated with the loss of parents. Immediately after his birth, we are told that Daṇḍin loses his parents to become figuratively adopted by Sarasvatī. Through poetic fancy, Sarasvatī is depicted as the co-wife of Daṇḍin’s mother and the favorite wife of Daṇḍin’s father:

*pitur asya preyasī sapatnīputra iti kṛtvā matsaram mahānubhāvā saptamād
varṣād ārabhya sarasvaty eva suprasannā daṇḍinam avarddhayat |
tasmiṃś copanīte paṭhati tadgurur gurudidṛkṣayeva svar agāt* ²⁴⁴

Having felt jealousy with the thought, “He is the son of my rival wife,” his father’s beloved, the magnanimous Sarasvatī, being well propitiated, raised Daṇḍin by herself, starting after seven years. And while he, invested with the sacred thread, was undergoing study, his father—as if wishing to see [his own] father—went to heaven.

This association with Sarasvatī and, by metonymy with the learning and poetic skill that she represents, is succinctly laid out in the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*:

*sa bāla eva mātṛā ca pitṛā cāpi vyayujyata |
ayujyata garīyasyā sarasvatyā śrutena ca || ASKS 1.33*

Though just a boy, [Daṇḍin] was separated from his mother and father. And he was joined with the more venerable Sarasvatī and with Śruta, the embodiment of sacred knowledge.

243. AS, 4. Note, the beginning is missing.

244. AS, 12. I follow the 1924 reading of *iti kṛtvā matasaram*, “becoming jealous,” versus the 1954 *akṛtvā* “not becoming jealous.” The former fits the context and the logic of Sarasvatī being a jealous co-wife. Neither of the readings affects the indirect depiction of Daṇḍin’s birth mother passing. Nevertheless, the grammar is wanting. The reading of *guru* as “father” is corroborated on p. 24 where Vasiṣṭha is referred to as *śaktiguru* in the sense of “the father of Śakti.”

The use of both the concessive *api*, “though,” and the comparative *garīyas*, “more weighty or significant,” suggest a replacement where, only after the loss of his birth parents, can Daṇḍin be fully graced by the gifts represented by Sarasvatī and Śruta. The *Avantisundarīkathā*’s depiction of Daṇḍin’s childhood evokes and is most likely inspired by the description of Bāṇa’s childhood as depicted in the framing narrative of the *Harṣacarita*:

*sa bāla eva vidher balavato vaśād upasampannayā vyayujyata jananyā |...|
krtopanayanādikriyākalāpasya samāvṛttasya caturdaśavarṣadeśīyasya
pitāpi śrutismṛtividhitam kṛtvā dvijajanocitam nikhilam puṇyajātam
kālenādaśamīstha evāstam agāt* |²⁴⁵

That boy [Bāṇa] was separated from his mother, who had died by the command of mighty fate. . . . When he was around fourteen years old, after he completed the brahmin rites beginning with the *upanayana* ceremony, his father, too (*api*), having done all that arose from merit, befitting a brahmin, and enjoined by sacred tradition both heard and remembered, eventually passed away not yet in his tenth decade of life.

Bāṇa’s and Daṇḍin’s childhood biographies are similar in both detail and linguistic phrasing. Both the *Harṣacarita* and the *Avantisundarīkathā* descriptions end in the root aorist *agāt*, “he went,” which is joined with an *adhikaraṇa*, “locus of motion,” indicating death: *sva*, “heaven,” in Daṇḍin and *astam*, literally, “setting” in Bāṇa. The *Harṣacarita* and *Avantisundarīkathā*’s passages also open with the identical phrasing *sa bāla eva*, “that boy” and both employ the finite verb *vyayujyata* to express the death of the authors’ respective mothers.

These depictions of both authors’—Bāṇa’s and Daṇḍin’s—childhoods, emphasize the deaths of their mothers followed by their fathers, who are described as dutiful brahmins, dying after their sons have had the investiture of the sacred thread. As youths, both authors leave their childhood homes to gain understanding of the world. During Daṇḍin’s exile, we are told, “And he resided for a long time in select *gurukulas*, centers for traditional learning, and obtained impeccable knowledge (*avasac ca ciram abhilakṣiteṣu gurukuleṣu, alabhata cānavadyām vidyām* |).²⁴⁶ After Bāṇa’s father dies, he leaves his brahmin settlement with a diverse group of companions, not with Daṇḍin’s exigency but “with a heart seized by curiosity of seeing other countries (*deśāntarālokanakautukākṣiptahṛdayaḥ*).”²⁴⁷ Despite this initial difference between the two authors’ reasons for leaving home, Bāṇa ultimately takes a similar path of learning that Daṇḍin does during his perambulation:

*atha śanaiḥ śanair atyudāravavyavahṛtīmanohṛnti br̥hanti rājakuḷāni
vīkṣamāṇaḥ niravadyavidyāvidyotitāni ca gurukulāni sevamāṇaḥ,*

245. *Harṣacarita*, 41.

246. *AS*, 12. I render *gurukula* here as the system of studying under a teacher.

247. *Harṣacarita*, 42 (NSP edition).

*mahārḥālāpagambhīraguṇavadgoṣṭhīś copatiṣṭhamānaḥ
svabhāvagambhīradhīrghanāni vidagdhamāṇḍalāni ca gāhamānaḥ, punar
api tām eva vaipaścitīm ātmavaṃśocitām prakṛtim abhajat |*

Then eventually, observing great royal households captivating with their noble ways, and frequenting *gurukulas* illuminated by faultless knowledge, and attending societies of the talented deep in worthy conversation, and getting access to refined circles whose wealth was their lofty and deep disposition, he [Bāṇa] took recourse once again to the natural learned state befitting his lineage.²⁴⁸

While doing straightforward biographical work in the framing narrative, such depictions also form a particular imagining of the author. The death of an author's parents, especially the father, appears frequently, sometimes as the only detail of an author's childhood. And, whether due to political exigence or youthful indulgence, it is not uncommon to see authors leaving home during their youth.²⁴⁹ These are tropes that become part of a larger discourse around literary production: the trope of the author as orphan and the trope of the wandering brahmin.

4.4. Narrative Circumstances of Production

Durable Tropes

While the tropes discussed above do not appear in every *kāvya* with an authorial framing narrative, they appear in the two earliest extent *kāvya* biographies of historical authors, both of which happen to be prose works. These tropes get used in later representations of authors as well. Elsewhere I have discussed extensively similar depictions from *kāvya* works from eleventh- and twelfth-century Kashmir.²⁵⁰ Like the earlier prose authors, the biography of Kashmiri polymath Kṣemendra (11th c. CE) aestheticizes the death of his father, Prakāśendra, and highlights his generosity in his verse epitome of the *Bṛhatkathā*, the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (*Flower Collection from the Great Story*):

*sūryagrahe tribhīr lakṣair dattvā kṛṣṇājinatrayam |
alpaprado 'smīty abhavat sa lajjāntakamdharaḥ ||
svayambhūnilaye śrīmān yaḥ pratiṣṭhāpya devatāḥ |*

248. Ibid., 42–43. What follows at the same narrative juncture in Daṇḍin's text (*AS*, 12) is too damaged to parse. However the remnants suggest that the description would have followed a similar vein as Bāṇa's. In other words, after Daṇḍin's exile from Kāñcī, he too went to study among learned people.

249. Another example of this would be Bilhaṇa's biography in the eighteenth *sarga* of his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.

250. This section develops and greatly expands upon earlier research in Janet Mijung Um, "Crossing the Ocean of Story: The Kashmiri *Bṛhatkathās* in Literary Context (MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2014), 50–59.

dattvā koṭicaturbhāgaṃ devadvijamathādiṣu ||
pūjayitvā svayaṃ śambhuṃ prasarabāspanirbharaḥ |
gāḍhaṃ dorbhyāṃ samāliṅgya yas tatraiva vyapadyata ||BrKM 19.33–
*35||*²⁵¹

After donating three black antelope hides with three *lakṣas*²⁵² during the solar eclipse [rite], he, with neck bowed with modesty, said, “I am one who gives little.” That munificent one had the deities erected in the abode of Svayaṃbhū, “The Self-Born One,” [and] gave a quarter *koṭi* with respect to the gods, twice-borns, centers of learning (*maṭhas*), and the like. Having worshipped Śambhu himself, with a great torrent of tears, he embraced [the image] tightly with both arms [and] died there on the spot.²⁵³

The *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* (*The Deeds of the Beautiful-Throated Śiva*, 12th c. CE), the literary work of another Kashmiri author, Maṅkha, provides an account of its author which shares features with Kṣemendra’s work. For instance, both works employ the trope of fathers dying during an act of religious devotion. Maṅkha, however, describes the event on a more panoramic scale:

atidrutaṃ tasya yiyāsato divaṃ navā raṇasvāmini bhaktir udyayau ||
tataḥ sa kāle śivarātripāvane manāg iva kliṣṭaśarīrasauṣṭhavaḥ |
daśām agāt tīrthapathopapattimatkuśāgraśayyāsukhasuptikāsakhīm ||
līlāmuktamanuṣyavigrahamayagranthigrahaḥ śārṅgiṇas |
tīrthe so ’tha tithau vahaṭvavanibhṛtputrīpater abhyagāt |
vāmārdhadhvajarājadaṇḍajapatitrastāparārdhaskhalat- |
kelīkaṇkaṇadandaśūkabahulotphālāvacūlaṃ vapuḥ ||SKC 3.68cd–70||

When he [Maṅkha’s father] desired to go quickly to heaven, new devotion to [Śiva as] Raṇasvāmin arose. Then, at the time of purificatory rites for Śivarātri, he, with ease in [his] body as if hardly suffering,²⁵⁴ went to that state, which is the companion of peaceful sleep, on a bed of *kuśa* grass tips,

251. Kṣemendra’s *Vyāsāṣṭakastotra* 4–6, which is appended to the *Bhāratamañjarī* reads almost verbatim except for the following: stanza 4d reads *kṣaṇaṃ lajjānatānana[.]*, “[he whose face is bent down with modesty for a moment”]; *pāda* 5a reads *svayaṃbhūśambhuvijaye*, “for the victory of [Śiva as] Śambhu, “The Self-Born One”; *pāda* 6a reads Śarva as an epithet of Śiva; and *pāda* 6b reads *nirjharah*, “cascade.”

252. *tribhir lakṣaiḥ*: Literally, “with one hundred thousand by three,” i.e., “with three hundred thousand.” No denomination of currency is given either here or below at *koṭicaturbhāgaṃ* (lit., “a quarter of ten million,” i.e., “two hundred and fifty million”).

253. I have rendered most of the gerunds in *BrKM* 19.34–35 as finite verbs and have elided the correlative pronoun *yaḥ*.

254. *manāg iva kliṣṭaśarīrasauṣṭhavaḥ*: Literally, “he whose ease of the body which suffered as if only a little.”

which seemed to appear on the way to the sacred site.²⁵⁵ Then on the lunar day [of Śivarātri]²⁵⁶ at the sacred site of Śārṅgin, the lord who had a wedding ceremony with the daughter of the mountain, the one whose grasp on the knot composed of the mortal body was released with ease obtained a body which had a banner crest on which, because of the lord of birds [i.e., Garuḍa] ruling over the left-half, there was much moving about by the snakes, who had the form of toy bangles, skittering to the other half from fear.

Through the description of a banner crest bearing Viṣṇu's mount, the eagle Garuḍa, on one side and snakes, which are iconographically associated with Śiva, on the other, this dense metaphor envisions Maṅkha's just-deceased father in the form of Harihara (half-Viṣṇu and half-Śiva). The conceit is that, fearful of Garuḍa, the snakes have leapt across to the other side of the banner, thus creating the two halves of the crest on Harihara's banner. Despite the difference in style and diction, Kṣemendra's and Maṅkha's accounts are similar in that both their fathers die in an act of religious devotion to Śiva specifically: the former while embracing an image of Śiva as Śambhu and the latter, in the temple of Śiva as Raṇasvāmin.

While similar in narrative scope to Bāṇa's and Daṇḍin's biographies, the representative examples from Kṣemendra's *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* and Maṅkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* differ on terms of literary genre. Both of the Kashmiri works are *padyakāvya*, "verse poetry," with Kṣemendra's work being a *kathā*, an epitome of the *Bṛhatkathā*, and Maṅkha's work, a *mahākāvya*. And in terms of location, Kṣemendra's work places its authorial biography in its *upasaṃhāra*, "postface." Maṅkha's is located in the third *sarga* of a twenty-five *sarga* poem. Despite these differences in genre, I suggest that there is a continuity between the earlier *gadya* and these later *padya* works. Kṣemendra's work, like the *Avantisundarī*, is part of the *Bṛhatkathā* narrative tradition. In fact, it claims to be a verse retelling of the *Bṛhatkathā*. K. R. Norman articulates the relationship between works like Kṣemendra's and Daṇḍin's by noting,

Although Guṇāḍhya's *Bṛhatkathā* has disappeared, it has left a two-fold stream of works in its wake. First there is a series of texts which retell the story of the *Bṛhatkathā*, and from which our knowledge of the lost masterpiece is derived. Secondly, there is the whole genre of romantic literature, in which Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita* and Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* hold pride of place.²⁵⁷

255. Jonarāja glosses –*upapattimat-* with *upapannā* (yā...śayyā), "which bed appeared." *ŚKC* 3.39 commentary, p. 46.

256. From the context we need to understand *tithau*, "on the lunar day," as "on the fourteenth lunar day of the dark half of the month," i.e., "on Śivarātri."

257. K. R. Norman, review of *Tilakamañjarīkathoddhāraḥ* of Paṇḍita Padmasāgara by N. M. Kansara, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1986): 124.

As stated by Norman, the two works are affiliated by having a common *āśraya*, “narrative source,” that is, the *Bṛhatkathā* tradition. On the other hand, both Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* and Maṅkha’s *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* are—as seen from their respective titles—*caritas*, works rehearsing an individual’s heroic “deeds.” In the latter case, the deeds are not those of a human *nāyaka* but of the god Śiva especially in his victory over the Tripura demons.

While this chapter highlights the framing narrative of *gadyakāvya* works as the discursive site for a particular type of authorial presentation, the Kashmiri examples highlight the broader conceptual distinction between the story proper as text and the authorial context of the work as paratext.²⁵⁸ In the same way that the introductory frame to the *gadyakāvya* works serves a paratextual function, so too does the postface in Kṣemendra’s work. While the authorial context in Maṅkha’s *mahākāvya* takes place in the third *sarga*, the story proper does not begin until the fourth *sarga*. In Maṅkha’s expansive work, the first three *sargas* function as an extended preamble with the first *sarga* paying homage to Śiva and other deities, the second praising favorable critics and censuring unfavorable ones, and the third *sarga* providing a description of the author and his genealogy.²⁵⁹ And while Maṅkha’s work does not have a postface like Kṣemendra’s, the final *sarga* of the work, the twenty-fifth, does narrate how the work came to be composed. In the following section, I discuss these narrative “circumstances of production” as they appear in the paratextual material of these literary works.²⁶⁰

Inspired Dream Motifs and Authorial Self-Fashioning

The *Avantisundarī* framing narrative ends after Daṇḍin and his companions return from the Pallava port city of Mahāmāllapuram where they see the red lotus turn into a *vidyādhara*. Hoping for an explanation, Daṇḍin propitiates Viṣṇu:

*tadāścaryaśravaṇarāgāvarjitamanobhis tu māṭṛdattarāmaśarma-
prabhṛtibhiḥ priyasakhair muhur muhuḥ preryamāṇo gaṇarātrakṛtātma-
śodhano²⁶¹ dvādaśyām aśrāntabhaktiyogaḥ kalpoktena vidhinā vidhāya
viṣṇupūjām darbhaśayanam adhyaśeta |*

Then being urged again and again by his dear friends, beginning with
Māṭṛdatta and Rāmaśarman, whose hearts were overcome with desire to
hear about this wonder, [Daṇḍin] performed his [rites of] self-purification

258. Gérard Genette’s discussion of paratext is key to my understanding. Especially helpful for this project has been his work on the pre-history of what Genette refers to as the “prefatorial situation,” that is, an introductory part of a text no matter its location. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161–70.

259. The *sūcīpatram*, or table of contents, and the colophon for the first three *sargas* of the KM edition titles them as follows: *namaskāravaraṇanam*, “description of praise”; *sujanadurjanavarāṇanam*, “description of good and bad people”; and *deśavaṁśādivaraṇanam*, “description of locale, family, and such.”

260. Um, “Crossing the Ocean of Story,” 50–59.

261. The text reads *śobhana*, “the act of adorning,” I follow the editorial emendation which reads *śodhana*, “purification.” See *AS*, 16n2.

over a series of nights. **On the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight** (*dvādaśyām*), his *yoga* of devotion being unwearied, having worshiped Viṣṇu with procedures prescribed by the ritual manuals, he lay down on a bed of *darbha* grass.²⁶²

The passage focuses on Daṇḍin's state of ritual purity and the assiduousness with which he performs his worship to Viṣṇu during the auspicious time of *dvādaśī*. As discussed in Chapter Two, Daṇḍin's worship gratifies the god, who sends Sarasvatī to him in a dream to relay the story of Avantisundarī. Similarly, we see the narrative circumstances that bring about the Kṣemendra's *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*:

kadācid eva vipreṇa sa dvādaśyām upoṣitaḥ |
prārthito rāmayaśasā sarasaḥ svacchacetasā ||
kathām etām anudhyāyan dīneṣu vipulekṣaṇaḥ |
vidadhe vibudhānandasudhāsyandatarāṅgiṇīm ||
sa śrīdevadharākhyasya dvijarājyapadasthite |
sarvajñasyājñayā cakre kathām etām vinodinīm || *BṛKM* 19.39–41||

Once while fasting **on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight** (*dvādaśyām*),²⁶³ he [Kṣemendra], endowed with aesthetic emotion (*rasa*), was sought out by the clear-minded brahmin Rāmayaśas. Concentrating, the farsighted one composed, in a matter of days, this *kathā*—a flowing river of nectar that is bliss for the wise.²⁶⁴ He crafted this entertaining story by the order of the all-knowing one named Śrīdevadhara when he was stationed in the royal office of brahmins.

262. The Sanskrit has been modified in the translation for ease of reading, the text reads more literally as follows: Then being urged again and again by his dear friends, beginning with Mātṛdatta and Rāmaśarman, [Daṇḍin] by whom self-purification was performed over a series of nights (*gaṇarātra*), on the 12th night, he whose *yoga* of devotion was unwearied, having performed the workshop to Viṣṇu with procedures (*vidhi*) prescribed (*ukta*) by the ritual manuals (*kalpa*), lay down on a bed of *darbha* grass.

263. Elsewhere I have challenged the view that *dvādaśyām* in this stanza indicates “in the twelfth year.” Using the phrase “in the twelfth year” as shorthand for “in the twelfth year of the *saptarṣi* era,” which translates to 1037 CE, scholars have dated Kṣemendra's *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* to 1037 CE. See for example, Leo von Mañkowski, ed., *Der Auszug aus dem Pañcatantra in Kshemendras Brihatkathāmañjarī* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1892), iv; Sūryakānta, *Kṣemendra Studies*, Poona Oriental Series 91 (Poona, India: Oriental Book Agency, 1954), 6–7, including 6n1; Ludwik Sternbach, *Unknown Verses Attributed to Kṣemendra* (Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, 1979), 10; and *ibid.*, *Aphorisms and Proverbs in the Kathā-Sarīt-Sāgara* (Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, 1980), 37–38. Cf. *ibid.*, *Unknown Verses Attributed to Kṣemendra*, 1. Along with this misreading of *dvādaśyām*, others, such as von Mañkowski, follow Lévi's claim that Kṣemendra's *Mahābhārata* digest, the *Bhāratamañjarī*, was also composed in the twelfth year “de l'ère cachemirienne,” i.e., 1037 CE. See Sylvain Lévi, “La Bṛhatkathāmañjarī de Kshemendra,” Pts. 1 and 2, *Journal Asiatique*, 8ième sér., 6 (1885): 400; 7 (1886): 218. For a full discussion, see Um, “Crossing the Ocean of Story,” 52n187.

264. *dīneṣu*: Literally, “in [three of more] days.” In this account, the adverbial phrase suggests that Kṣemendra composed the *BṛKM*, a work of over seven thousand stanzas, in a very short time, i.e., in a matter of days, rather than weeks, months, or years.

Like Daṇḍin, Kṣemendra is in a ritually pure state through fasting on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight. And the narrative sequence here suggests that this ritual state allows Kṣemendra to compose the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*, a work of over seven-thousand stanzas, in a matter of days. A similar act of preternatural transmission occurs in Kṣemendra's *Bhāratamañjarī*, a verse epitome of the *Mahābhārata*. In this work, the son of Satyavatī, i.e., Vyāsa, the traditional author of the *Mahābhārata*, comes to Kṣemendra in a dream and narrates the story of the Bhāratas to Kṣemendra directly:

*kadācid brahmaṇenaitya sa rāmayaśasārthitaḥ |
saṃkṣiptāṃ bhāratākathāṃ kuruṣvety āryacetasā ||
sa tam ūce karomy aham eva prāg etac carita[m] mama |*²⁶⁵
*hr̥ṣṭaḥ satyavatīsūnuḥ svapne jñānanidhir dadau ||*²⁶⁶

Once, having arrived, he [Kṣemendra] was solicited by the noble-minded brahmin Rāmayaśas with the words, “Compose a concise *kathā* of the Bhāratas.” He said to him [Rāmayaśas], “I alone will do it. Gratified, the ocean of knowledge, the son of Satyavatī, previously shared that *carita* with me in a dream.”

The care that Kṣemendra, a brahmin author, takes in locating his works within particular networks of production is not only limited to his verse digests of brahmanical narratives. His *Avadānakalpalatā* (*The Wish-Fulfilling Vine of Avadāna Stories*), a collection of *avadānas*, “past-life stories about bodhisattvas and others in Buddhist literature,” describes a similar process of narrative unfolding where Kṣemendra is solicited by a certain Nakka to compose the work. After composing three *avadānas*, Kṣemendra stops until the Buddha himself impels the author in a dream to continue his composition.²⁶⁷

The similarities among these authorial biographies become even more apparent when considering how Mañkha becomes inspired to compose his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*. In the events

265. *Bhāratamañjarī*, *Vyāsāṣṭakastotra* v. 11b of the KM edition reads *prāg etac carita mama*. I add an *anusvāra* to *carita* in what looks to be a printing error. *etac carita[m] mama...dadau*: Literally, “gave the deeds to me.”

266. *Bhāratamañjarī*, *Vyāsāṣṭakastotra* vv. 10–11.

267. *Avadānakalpalatā*, *bhūmikā* vv. 10–11:

*ity uktas tena vinayāt tāṃ kathāṃ kartum udyataḥ |
avadānatrayaṃ kṛtvā virarāmātidairdhyataḥ ||
tataḥ svapne bhagavatā jinena preritaḥ svayam |
so 'grahīt punar udyogam avadānārthasaṃgrahe ||*

Addressed by him [Nakka] in this fashion, he [Kṣemendra], on account of politeness (*vinayāt*) endeavored to compose the narrative [requested by Nakka]. Having composed three *avadānas* he stopped due to their excessive length. Then impelled by the blessed Jina in a dream, he again took on the effort of making a digest of the *avadānas*.

following the death of his father, Maṅkha also observes a vow on a ritually significant day:

*ekādaśyām vrataniyamavān ekadā tatkanīyān
ekākī san bhavanavalabhīm maṅkhakaḥ so 'dhiśīṣye | ŚKC 3.72ab
svapne tatra dadarśa sa svapitaram dehaṃ vahantaṃ milat-
tāpicchacchadaketakacchavivapuṣkhaṇḍadvayīkalpitam |
ekārdhena vamaṇṭam agracaraṇadvāreṇa maṇḍākinīm
anyārdhena ca bibhrataṃ paṭuraṭadvīciṃ jaṭāvartmani ||ŚKC 3.73||*

Once on the **eleventh day of the lunar fortnight (*ekādaśyām*)**, observing the vow [of fasting],²⁶⁸ Maṅkhaka,²⁶⁹ the youngest of those [brothers], being alone, went to sleep on the upper level of the house.... There in a dream, he saw his father bearing a body that was composed of two sections of [different] bodies that had the color of *ketaka* flowers joined with the bark of *tamāla* trees, with one half [of the body] gushing the Maṇḍākinī through its toes and with the other half conveying [the Maṇḍākinī] whose torrents are crashing intensely on the path of its matted locks.

In Maṅkha's second dream, his father appears once more in the form of Harihara, with a body that is dark like the bark of a *tamāla* tree on the side representing Viṣṇu as Hari and light like the pale flowers of the *ketaka* tree on the side representing Śiva as Hara. Regarding the former, the verse calls to mind the purāṇic account of Viṣṇu as his dwarf *avatāra* Vāmana, who pierces the universe with his big toe so that the heavenly river Maṇḍākinī, the Ganges, flows to earth, sanctified by contact with his foot.²⁷⁰ And on the latter, the poet nods to the same heavenly Ganges who, with the assistance of Śiva's matted locks absorbing the force of her waters, descends to earth for king Bhagīratha.²⁷¹ On account of this dream, Maṅkha becomes inspired to dedicate a poem to Śiva.

Like Daṇḍin during his moment of poetic revelation, the eleventh to twelfth-century poets also become inspired while in a liminal state of purification and most often brought about through the performance of ritual and revealed in a dream. This type of textual authorization is by no means new. It appears in the framing narrative of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* where Brahmā approaches sage Vālmīki, who has been purified by a ritual bath. Bestowing upon him divine

268. Though not explicit in the stanza, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*'s commentator, Jonarāja, explains that Maṅkha undertakes a vow of fasting: *ekādaśyām vrataśyopavāsasya niyamo vidyate yasya saḥ [vrataniyamavān]*, "on Ekādaśī, he who has an observance of a vow, that is to say, [a vow] of fasting, [is *vrataniyamavān*]. ŚKC 3.72 commentary, p. 44.

269. Maṅkha is also referred to as Maṅkhaka.

270. For example, see *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 5.17.1 (critical edition).

271. This episode can be found at *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.43. For comprehensive references to this account, see Robert P. Goldman, ed. and trans, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, vol. 1: *Bālakāṇḍa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. Repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 355, opening note to *sarga* 37.

sight, Brahmā has Vālmīki compose the deeds of Rāma.²⁷² In these representative examples, there are some striking similarities in the way that the author is depicted in a work's paratextual material. These similarities include the loss of one or both parents, a period of wandering during youth, and—most commonly—the liminal state of the author when he receives some preternaturally inspired authorization to compose the work. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that all authorial frames contain these tropes, their repeated usage suggests that it becomes part of a particular aesthetic of authorship, one durable enough to travel across historical moment, regions, and genre.

4.5. Friendship and Other Affective Relationships in the *Avantisundarī* Frame

Imbricated with themes of movement and mobility, the *Avantisundarī* frame highlights the importance of friendship and other affective relationships within the court and city. Intimations of these relationships appear as early as the *vedas* in the concepts of the *sakhi* and *sakhyam*. Though generally translated as “male friend” and “friendship” respectively, Sally J. Sutherland Goldman clarifies that in the Vedic material “*sakhyam* refers to an élite circle of men who are able to share a common body of restricted knowledge and *sakhi* refers to a member of that circle who has access to that knowledge.”²⁷³ While a history of friendship has yet to be undertaken in the context of premodern South Asia, the conversation has been started through conferences leading to the publication of a special issue of the journal, *Studies in History*, “Friendship in Indian History.”²⁷⁴ In this issue, Daud Ali points to new forms of sociability in the early-medieval South Indian context around the double axes of the royal court and the temple. While relationships between kings and courtiers have received scholarly attention, Ali notes, “What is less appreciated (and yet may help us in understanding the hegemony of such social relations) are the ways in which the practices of lordship also fostered a vast array of graded hierarchies and ‘lateral’ social bonds that had their own often very powerful affective dynamics.”²⁷⁵

Both the vertical and lateral social relationships referred to by Ali find voice in the authorial frame of *Avantisundarī*. Dāmodara's “big break,” so to speak, takes place through his introduction to Viṣṇuvardhana through Bhāravi:

272. *Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* 1.2.19–33 (critical ed.).

273. Goldman, “Speaking Gender,” 64,

274. Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt, eds., “Friendship in Indian History,” special issue, *Studies in History* 33, no. 1 (2017).

275. Daud Ali, “The Death of a Friend: Companionship, Loyalty and Affiliation in Chola South India,” *Studies in History* 33, no. 1 (2017): 39.

*kauśikakumāro mahāśaivam mahāprabhāvam gavāṃ prabhavam
pradīptabhāsam bhāraviṃ ravim ivendur anurudhya²⁷⁶ darśa iva
puṇyakarmaṇi viṣṇuvardhanākhye rājasūnau prañayam anvabadhnāt²⁷⁷*

The young Kauśika—having stayed close to the great Śiva devotee
Bhāravi,

of great might (*mahāprabhāvam*),
the source of [eloquent] speech (*gavāṃ prabhavam*),
whose luster shines forth (*pradīptabhāsam*)—

Like the moon—having stayed close to the sun
of great splendor (*mahāprabhāvam*),
the source of rays (*gavāṃ prabhavam*),
whose light shines forth (*pradīptabhāsam*)—

Became bound in friendship to the prince called Viṣṇuvardhana,
whose deeds were righteous (*puṇyakarmaṇi*)

Like the new-moon day
on which there are pious rites (*puṇyakarmaṇi*).

The comparison of Dāmodara, a *kauśika* brahmin, to the moon and Bhāravi to the sun plays on the name of the poet Bhāravi, “light which is the sun” or “sunlike light.” It is made more dense by comparing Viṣṇuvardhana to *darśa*, “the new-moon day.” Also known as *amāvāsyā*, this is the time when the sun and moon appear at their closest, a conceit which is reinforced in the passage by the use of the term *anurudhya*, literally meaning “to adhere to.” Through the metaphorical logic of this *vākya*, “statement,” we see that Viṣṇuvardhana, as the new-moon day, creates the conditions for Dāmodara and Bhāravi, as moon and sun respectively, to meet. In other words, the text suggests that the friendship between Dāmodara and Bhāravi takes place in Viṣṇuvardhana’s milieu. While this reference to Viṣṇuvardhana in this *vākya* as *rājasūnau*, “to the son of the king” (i.e., prince), has been pondered over in attempts to date Bhāravi, Dāmodara, and Viṣṇuvardhana,²⁷⁸ I suggest that, along with historical constraints, there are rhetorical and aesthetic constraints to consider to make this verse legible. And by employing the compound *rājasūnau*, the poet thickens the description of the three men’s meeting by employing a term suitable on both the Viṣṇuvardhana side as a *tatpuruṣa* compound “to the son of the king” (*rājasūnau*) while resonating with the new-moon day side as a *dvandva* compound meaning “in reference to the moon and sun” (*rājasūnau*).

The *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* elucidates the relationship further in *śloka* form:

sa medhavī kavir vidvān bhāraviṃ prabhavam girām |

276. I follow the editorial suggestion of amending *anurūpya* from the text to *anurudhya*. *AS*, 10n1. *ASKS* 1.23 also reads *anurudhya*.

277. *AS*, p. 10.

278. On this, see Francis, “Le discours royal,” 80–81.

Having stayed close to Bhāravi, the source of [eloquent] speech, that wise,
learned poet made friends with the lord of men, Viṣṇuvardhana.

Despite the *Sāra*'s project to condense the *Avantisundarī*, it repeats the term *anurudhya*, suggesting how apropos it is in describing of the poets' relationship. The *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* also clarifies that Dāmodara "formed a friendship with Viṣṇuvardhana" (*akaron maitrīm*).²⁷⁹

Dāmodara's relationship with the Gaṅgā ruler Durvinīta is also described as one that goes beyond the transactional relationship of poet and patron—or perhaps more accurately—these depictions inflect the poet-patron relationship. Using the conceit of white water lilies blossoming at night, the author likens Dāmodara meeting Durvinīta to "a pond of white water lilies under the purview of the moon (*amṛtadhāmna iva kumudākaro gocaram [agamat]*)."²⁸⁰ Likewise, Durvinīta is described as winning over the poet by showing him "friendliness through actions, beginning with introducing himself [to him], by which extent the source of [Dāmodara's] transgression [for eating ritually impure meat] was rectified (*sādhulaṅghanamūlamātram ātmanivedanādisaujanyam*)."²⁸¹ Here, again, the sense is that Dāmodara has been sought out by Durvinīta. Such descriptions highlight the cultural capital of having a talented poet in one's royal court.

Similarly, after hearing about Dāmodara from the traveling minstrel, Siṃhaviṣṇu also entreats Dāmodara to Kāñcī with the promise of wealth. As spoken by the subjects who deliver the royal proclamation to Dāmodara, "The king, my supporter, in whom curiosity has arisen, honoring you [Dāmodara], like the plough-bearing Balarāma honoring the sacred fords along the river Sarasvatī, has made you, attracted by many direct royal proclamations, a subject (*madbhṛtibhūpatir jātakautūhalo haladhara iva sarasvatītīrthāni sambhāvayan anekaśrīmukhaparamparānukṛṣṭam enam ātmasād akarot*)."²⁸² Through several *śrīmukhas*, or royal proclamations that come directly from the "royal mouth"—a process that Timothy Lubin tells us was already part of the Tamil inscriptional record by the time of Siṃhaviṣṇu's father, Siṃhavarman III (early fifth c. CE)—Dāmodara comes to Kāñcī.²⁸³ Whereas Dāmodara's earlier patrons are described as friends, Dāmodara's relationship with Siṃhaviṣṇu Pallava is paternal. Siṃhaviṣṇu is thus described as one by whom extreme favor was shown by treating him like a

279. ASKS 1.23c

280. AS, 10. *amṛtadhāmna*: moon, lit., 'the abode of the nectar of immortality'

281. The bracketed section is missing from ORIML T-704 and recovered from the 1924 edition.

282. AS, 10. I have rendered the third person pronoun *enam*, in this case, "him," as "you."

283. Timothy Lubin, "Legal Diglossia: Modeling Discursive Practices in Premodern Indic Law," in *Bilingual Discourse and Cross-Cultural Fertilisation: Sanskrit and Tamil in Medieval India*, eds. Whitney Cox and Vincenzo Vergiani (École française d'Extrême-Orient / Institut français de Pondichéry, 2013), 430. "It is this particular trope [of an order coming from the king's "own mouth"] that inspired phrases that become typical of the Tamil records....The notion even gets ritualized in the treatment of the royal order itself, which is referred to as the *tirumukam* (Skt. *śrīmukha*, "holy mouth") and placed on the heads of those receiving the order (a practice described already in one of the earliest Tamil records, the bilingual Pallankovil plates of Siṃhavarman III, ca. 546 CE)."

son (*putrīkaraṇena darśitātiprasādaḥ*).²⁸⁴ This paternal relationship gets played out when Dāmodara gets married “upon the insistence of the king” (*nṛpatinirbandhapariṇītaḥ*, literally, “he who was married because of the insistence of the king”).²⁸⁵ This permeable boundary between king as patron and affectively in the role of a father appears again when Dāmodara names his first born after the king. It is also interesting to note that Dāmodara’s middle son Manoratha names his first son after his father and his third son after the king.

This portion of the framing narrative foregrounds the affective relationships between poets, as seen with Bhāravi and Dāmodara, and also between poets and royal patrons, as seen with Dāmodara and his South Indian patrons. In this way, it speaks not only to the valorization of literary production in court relationships, it also highlights the politics of patronage where talented poets, such as Dāmodara are in high demand at different courts. Here, however, by focusing on the movement of poets, the *Avantisundarī* framing narrative pushes against the tendency to fetishize the literature itself. What the *Avantisundarī* framing narrative does not depict is the struggle between these kingdoms that the epigraphical records foreground. Instead, the narrative sublimates the political rivalries, presenting instead a battle over social capital, where poets are wooed by rival courts.

Given the focus on Dāmodara’s travels from court to court and his relationships with his patrons, the absence of such details in Daṇḍin’s biography is glaring. The *Avantisundarī* framing narrative says nothing about a king. And the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, which details each of Dāmodara’s relationships only mentions that Daṇḍin is summoned to return to Kañcī by an unnamed king:

athāhūtaḥ kṣitīśena praśāntopadrave pure |
svasuhṛdbandhumadhyasthaḥ sa bheje nijam āspadam ||ASKS 1.36||

Then beckoned by the lord of the earth in the city in which calamitous
 siege had been pacified, standing among his friends and relatives, he took
 recourse to his own abode.

There is a sharp contrast between the framing narrative’s depiction of Dāmodara as poet-courtier in several royal courts and of Daṇḍin’s uncertain social milieu. Rather than note any royal patronage, the framing narrative presents Daṇḍin as the *de facto* patron. Hence, the artisan Lalitālaya comes to Daṇḍin to request that he view his handiwork in repairing the *mūrti* of Viṣṇu in Mahāmallapuram. Nor does the framing narrative depict Daṇḍin as a court poet. Instead, Daṇḍin composes the *Avantisundarī* at the request of his friends.

Where Dāmodara’s biography contains the names of several historical kings, Daṇḍin’s contains the names of his friends. The military general’s son Raṇamalla, who convinces Daṇḍin to go to Mahāmallapuram, is described as having “the sportive demeanor worthy of being

284. *AS*, 10.

285. *AS*, 11.

imitated by all urbane gentlemen (*sarvanāgarikānukaraṇīyalīlāsaṣṭhava*).²⁸⁶ Māṭṛdatta, the son of Bhavarāta and author of a sub-commentary of the *Kalpasūtra*, Devaśarmā from Kerala, Śrījayanta, Nārāyaṇa, and Bhajanānanda, among others, accompany Daṇḍin to the seaside temple in Mahāmallapuram.²⁸⁷ And Rāmaśarman, “a man of taste (*rasika*) who relishes the literary sentiments of *kathā* and *itihāsa*...skilled in the refined arts, educated in the sciences, [and] confided in among friends (*kathetihāsarasāsvādarasika...vicakṣaṇaḥ kalāsu, vinīto vidyāsu, visrabdhaḥ suhṛtsu*),”²⁸⁸ urges Daṇḍin to uncover the mystery of the lotus-turned-*vidyādhara* for them.²⁸⁹ While the frame depicts Daṇḍin’s companions variously, the traits most common among them are learnedness, loyalty, and, most notably, urbanity. Some of these companions are childhood friends. Raṇamalla is described as “one in whom a great deal of affection (*sneha*) has accumulated [for Daṇḍin] on account of [them] playing together in the dirt. (*sahapāmsukrīḍāsambhṛtasneharāśi*).”²⁹⁰ And Rāmaśarman is referred to as *bālamitra*, “friend from boyhood.”²⁹¹ But whether acquainted from an early age or not, the *Avantisundarī* frame foregrounds the friendship among this group of men by referring to them, individually and collectively, as *mitra* and *sakha*, “friend” (p. 13 and 16), *mitrajana*, “friends” (p. 14), *priyasakha*, “dear friend” (p. 17), *suhṛdgaṇa*, “group of friends” (p. 17).

While helping to fill out the contours of this type of sociability is important in its own right, I highlight here that these friends are integral to the *Avantisundarī*’s production. It is through the urging of his friends that Daṇḍin accepts the invitation to Mahāmallapuram where they witness the lotus-turned-*vidyādhara*. And it is through the urging of his friends that Daṇḍin propitiates Viṣṇu to explain the awe-inspiring sight. It is also Daṇḍin’s friends to whom he narrates the story after its divine transmission to him in a dream. While these circumstances of literary production differ from the idealized model of the poet-patron relationship depicted in his great-grandfather Dāmodara’s account, it provides another, and perhaps more legitimate, mode of textual authorization. Similarly, the Kashmiri examples from the *kathā* and *carita* literature discussed above foreground the role of “lateral bonds”²⁹² in the production of their respective works. For Kṣemendra’s verse epitomes, it is other brahmins and courtly associates who commission him to produce his respective works. Maṅkha, on the other hand, shares his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* on the occasion of a literary salon held by his brother.²⁹³ These themes of mobility and movement and social networks of friendship are not only present in works where no explicit patron is mentioned. As shown above, the same tropes of loss and wandering drive the account of Bāṇa’s youth before meeting his patron, king Harṣa. Similarly, Bilhaṇa, the author of

286. *AS*, 13.

287. *Ibid.*, 11.

288. *Ibid.*, 16.

289. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

290. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

291. *AS*, p. 16.

292. I use Ali’s term here. See Ali “Death of a Friend,” 39.

293. *ŚKC* 25th *sarga*.

Vikramāṅkadevacarita (12th c. CE), the patron-centered work dedicated to Cālukya ruler Vikramāditya VI, describes his peregrinations after leaving his beloved natal home of Kashmir.²⁹⁴

4.6. Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I considered the *Avantisundarī* framing narrative as both literary convention and as a window into the history of the author. As a literary convention, the framing narrative is not an innocent account of an author's life and the circumstances of a work's literary production. Instead, the frame is a narrative technology that locates the work in a particular discursive milieu through tools such as syntax, figuration, and structure. While syntax and patterned phrases often signal the beginning of a narration in *gadyakāvya*, these tools also work on the level of the sentence to signal larger structural shifts from frame to story proper, thus making the entry from paratext into the world of the text more legible for its audience. And by taking figuration seriously, it becomes clear that the *Avantisundarī*'s narrative tropes such as those based upon the themes of movement and sociability are part of a larger conceptual vocabulary for thinking about literary production and authorial presentation outside of the poet-patron model. Rather than come into the purview of a patron, Daṇḍin's account highlights social networks. And ultimately he is authorized to compose his work through the divine intervention of both Viṣṇu and Sarasvatī. The dream episode seen in the *Avantisundarī* frame and the later works discussed in this chapter are no other than literary representations of the process of *pratibhā*, "poetic inspiration," described by Daṇḍin and other theorists in *alaṅkāraśāstra*. To better understand the intersections of *kāvya* and *alaṅkāraśāstra* as they relate to questions of sociability, poetic inspiration, and imaginings of the author in Daṇḍin's works, I now turn to the *Kāvyaḍarśa* in Chapter Five.

294. *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.86ff. (1875 ed.)

Chapter 5: Word Play in Learned Societies: The Poet in Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa*

5.1. Introduction

In the final episode of the *Avantisundarī*'s framing narrative, Sarasvatī appears to Daṇḍin in a dream and conveys the wondrous story that he will then compose. This moment of divine transmission is what poetic theorists call *pratibhā*, "inspiration," specifically poetic inspiration. Literally, meaning "light" or "appearance," Sarasvatī addresses Daṇḍin using the imperative form of *pratibhā* with the words, "Let this (*etat*) object of wonder appear (*pratibhātu*) to you."²⁹⁵ Chapter Five invites further questions about poetic inspiration and the social world of the poet that came to life in both the *Avantisundarī* frame and in textual representations of other early-medieval poets. In this chapter, it returns to the conversations taking place in the works of poetic theorists, namely in Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa*.

Given the history of Sanskrit poetics and some of the earlier debates about Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, the two remain imbricated figures. While questions of priority have less currency now, these conversations are still important in their own right. For here we have two theorists of not so distant time periods. By considering their respective stances and points of agreement and departure, we are able to see that, despite both identifying their works as *alaṅkāraśāstra*, formal treatises on literary aesthetics, the two authors' projects differ in many respects that go beyond their different views on *alaṅkāras*, "rhetorical figures," *doṣas*, "literary faults," *guṇas*, "literary merits," and *mārgas*, "poetic styles." In other words, by using Bhāmaha's work to backlight Daṇḍin's, we are able to get a better sense of the contours of Daṇḍin's project. To this end, this section will discuss the intellectual contexts within which each text situates itself. That is, it will examine how each work defines itself as *śāstra* using the traditional diagnostic of the *anubandhacatuṣṭaya*, the fourfold-criteria of a *śāstra*. While both works present themselves squarely in the field of *śāstra*, specifically *alaṅkāraśāstra*, their preambles suggest a key difference in their views on the poet and the social contexts of *kāvya*.

5.2. True Poets and the Quick-Witted: Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin on the Qualifications of a Poet

Bhāmaha on satkavitva

As conventional of the *śāstra* form, both theorists begin their works with the *anubandhacatuṣṭaya*, "fourfold qualifications of a *śāstra*": the *viśaya*, "subject matter," the *prayojana*, "purpose of the *śāstra*," the *sambandha*, "relevance [of the subject matter to the

295. AS, 13.

purpose],” and the *adhikāri*, “the qualified audience.”²⁹⁶ Bhāmaha devotes the opening twelve verses of his work to laying out the fourfold qualifications, and Daṇḍin, the opening nine verses plus the final verses of the first *pariccheda*-chapter of his work. The *viśaya* of both works is clearly stated early on in each theorist’s introduction. It appears in the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of Bhāmaha’s work where he states that “He will expound the ornaments of poetry (*kāvyaḷaṅkāra*) / the *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* to the best of his intellect” (*kāvyaḷaṅkāra ity eṣa yathābuddhi vidhāsyate*, *BhKĀ* 1.1).

Dandin’s introduction features the syntactically similar claim, “we have set forth the definition of *kāvya* / the *Kāvyaḷakṣaṇa* according to our ability (*yathāsāmarthyam asmābhiḥ kriyate kāvyalakṣaṇam*, *DaKĀ* 1.2cd). Since the discovery of Ratnaśrījñāna’s commentary on Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḷadarśa*, it has come to light that Daṇḍin’s work would have originally been called *Kāvyaḷakṣaṇa* rather than *Kāvyaḷadarśa*. In light of this, both theorists make clear the subject matter of their *śāstras* in their titles. In stating the *viśaya* of their projects, both theorists acknowledge the limits of their scholarship in light of the past great teachers by noting that they compose to the best of their intellect (*yathābuddhi*) or their ability (*yathāsāmarthyam*). Rather than being a humble admission of limitation, this scholarly convention acknowledges respect to past intellectual traditions and situates the authors of both works within them.

While the introductory verses present a shared scope for the two works in terms of the first of the fourfold criteria, they reveal different attitudes toward the the second, the *prayojana*, “purpose of the *śāstra*,” for composing their treatises. Bhāmaha’s introduction focuses on the results of composing poetry:

dharmārthakāmamokṣeṣu vaicakṣaṇyaṃ kalāsu ca |
prītiṃ karoti kīrtiṃ ca sādhuḷkāvyānibandhanam ||BhKĀ 1.2||

The composition of excellent *kāvya* brings about expertise in [the life goals of] moral duty (*dharma*), material gain (*artha*), sensual delight (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*) and in the refined arts. It also brings about pleasure and everlasting fame.

Bhāmaha specifies the composition of excellent poetry brings about the desired results in the *puruṣārthas*, or four aims of life. Moreover, it brings about skill in the *kalās*, the “[sixty-four]

296. The *anubandhacatuṣṭaya* are listed in Śaṅkara’s *Sarvavedāntasiddhāntasārasaṃgraha* 1.5–6:

asya śāstrānusāritvād anubandhacatuṣṭayam |
yad eva mūlaṃ śāstrasya nirdiṣṭaṃ tad ihocyate ||
adhikārī ca viśayaḥ sambandhaś ca prayojanam |
śāstrārambhaphalaṃ prāhur anubandhacatuṣṭayam ||SarVed 1.5–6||

Because this work is conformable to a *śāstra*, the four-fold criteria (*anubandhacatuṣṭaya*), which is considered the very root (*mūla*) of a *śāstra*, is discussed here. The qualified audience (*adhikārī*), the subject matter (*viśaya*), the purpose of the text (*prayojana*), and the relevance of the subject matter to the purpose (*sambandha*)—people call these the *anubandhacatuṣṭaya*, whose fruit (*phala*) is the preamble to the *śāstra*.

arts,²⁹⁷ conversance in which marks aesthetic refinement. And, importantly, it brings about everlasting fame, a point that Bhāmaha returns to later in his discussion of the everlasting body of poetry created by the poet.²⁹⁸ While the *prayojana* is the attainment of these fruits, both worldly and otherworldly, Bhāmaha’s *śāstra* is clear that it is not the composition of any *kāvya* that will result in the attainment of these fruits. Rather, he specifies throughout the preamble that it is *excellent* poetry that does. Not only does Bhāmaha highlight the importance of composing excellent poetry, he cautions against composing bad poetry, the undesirable fruits of which I will get into later.

After pointing to the *viṣaya* and the *prayojana* of the *śāstra*, Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaṭīkā* refers to the *sambandha*, “connection between the scope and purpose,” with the term *atas*, “therefore,” at the beginning of the eighth stanza of the preamble:

upeyusām api divaṃ sannibandhavidhāyinām |
āsta eva nirātāṅkaṃ kāntaṃ kāvyamayam vapuḥ ||
ruṇaddhi rodasī cāsya yāvat kīrtir anaśvarī |
tāvat kilāyam adhyāste sukṛtī vaibudhaṃ padam ||
ato (atas) 'bhivāñchatā kīrtiṃ stheyasīmābhuvah sthiteḥ |
yatno viditavedyena vidheyaḥ kāvyalakṣmaṇi ||BhKĀ 1.8||

Even those accomplished in excellent literary compositions, who have attained heaven, continue to abide in a body made of *kāvya*, lovely and free from pain. And, so long as his everlasting fame continues on heaven and earth, it is said, that the accomplished one attains a divine station. Therefore, desiring everlasting fame for as long as the earth endures, a person known for being learned should make effort in mastering *kāvya*.

Here, the *Kāvyaṭīkā* indicates that it is for the sake of receiving fame that one should compose poetry. As in previous stanzas from the preamble, Bhāmaha specifies that it is only excellent poetry that is under discussion here. And in order to compose this quality of *kāvya*, one ought to study the features of *kāvya* elucidated in Bhāmaha’s *śāstra*. The everlasting fame that the *śāstra* promises is one that transcends the mortal body in the form of a body made of *kāvya*. Bhāmaha’s *kāvya*-body reverses the soteriological analogies of his era; rather than the *avatāra* coming to earth in an embodied form, the accomplished poet sheds his mortal body and takes to heaven with a body—both transcendent and immanent—made of poetry.

This view of the poet that Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaṭīkā* holds falls in line with that of the “professional poet,” one who flourishes in his relationship with an elite patron and ultimately seeks fame through a body of poetry. A literary example of this poet-patron relationship is that of the Bāṇa and his patron king Harṣa in *Harṣacarita*. And in the *Avantisundarī*, Daṇḍin’s great-

297. For other conceptions of the *kalās*, not totaling sixty-four, see A. Venkatasubbiah, *The Kalās* (Madras: The Vasanta Press, 1911).

298. See, *BhKĀ* 1.6

grandfather Dāmodara travels from court to court before ultimately living under the tutelage of Pallava king Siṃhaviṣṇu. As noted by Pollock, “The court was the source of both patronage and the glory (*yaśas*) conferred by the approbation of the learned—the former being pragmatically what kept the poet writing, the latter being what ultimately made writing worthwhile, at least for most poets.”²⁹⁹ It is this poet, whom we can refer to as a “professional poet,” that the *Kāvyālaṅkāra* addresses as its *adhikārī*, or authorized reader.

Then who precisely is the person that the *Kāvyālaṅkāra* addresses as worthy of trying their hand at poetry? In other words, who is the *adhikārī*? Bhāmaha continues at length to show that the person capable of writing *kāvya* is the one who has first attained skill in the following: *śabda*, “grammar,” *chandas*, “prosody,” *abhidhānārtha*, “semantics,” *itihāsa*, “history,” and *kathā*, “lore,” *loka*, “[ways of the] world,” and *yuktiḥ*, “logic.”³⁰⁰ Moreover, he prescribes a sequence of learning where poetry should be composed after both grammar and vocabulary have been developed, along with the study of other *kāvya* works.³⁰¹ However, as indicated from the stanza below, these skills alone do not make a good poet:

gurūpadeśād adhyetum śāstram jadadhiyo 'py alam |
kāvyam tu jāyate jātu kasyacit pratibhāvataḥ ||BhKĀ 1.5||

Even a dim-wit is able to learn *śāstra* through a guru’s instruction. But, only now and then, does *kāvya* arise from inspiration on the part of a rare person.

To have a chance at being a poet, one must have poetic inspiration, or insight (*pratibhā*, *BhKĀ* 1.4),³⁰² a gift that, according to Bhāmaha, cannot be acquired through traditional learning (*gurūpadeśāt*). *Pratibhā*, “poetic inspiration,” along with *vyutpatti*, “traditional learning or training through an authorized teacher,” and *abhyāsa*, “practice,” are the three touchstones of poetic skill. For Bhāmaha, all three are necessary to attain the fruits of being a poet. But the latter two, *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa*, are useless without the former, which can only become manifest through the genius that one is born with or receives through the divine grace of the goddess Sarasvatī.

It is the composition of excellent poetry (*sādhukāvyanibandhanam*, *BhKĀ* 1.2d) that confers rewards in this world. And it is specifically great composers (*sannibandhanavidhāyinām*, *BhKĀ* 1.6b) who reap immortal fame in the world beyond. This requirement for poetic excellence is reinforced by Bhāmaha’s warning of the fate that befalls one who writes faulty poetry:

299. Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, 184.

300. *BhKĀ* 1.9.

301. *BhKĀ* 1.10.

302. For further discussion of term *pratibhā* in Sanskrit poetics, see David Shulman, *More Than Real: A History of Imagination in South India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 80–108.

sarvathā padam apy ekaṃ na nigādyam avadyavat |
vilakṣmaṇā hi kāvyena duḥsuteneva nindyate ||
nākavitvam adharmāya vyādhaye daṇḍanāya vā |
kukavitvam punaḥ sākṣān mṛtim āhur manīṣiṇaḥ ||BhKĀ 1.11–12||

Not even a single recited word should contain fault. For one is condemned because of bad *kāvya*, which is like a bad son. Not being a poet does not lead to immorality, disease, or punishment. On the other hand, being a bad poet leads to death in bodily form. So, say the wise.

In sum, it is better to avoid writing poetry altogether than to be a bad poet, at least according to Bhāmaha. While composing good poetry (*satkavitva*, *BhKĀ* 1.4) bestows benefits in this life and the next, being a bad poet (*kukavitva*, *BhKĀ* 1.12) leads to one's demise. By highlighting through the rhetorical figure of litotes (double negative) what will not befall the non-poet (*akavi*), i.e., immorality, disease, and punishment, Bhāmaha indirectly warns the reader that these misfortunes will befall the unsuccessful or bad poet (*kukavi*). The comparison of bad poetry to a bad son (*duḥsuta*) is especially evocative considering Bhāmaha's views on the imperishable nature of good poetry. For, as the birth of a good, or dutiful son would ensure that a father and the family's ancestors would live eternally, supported in the afterlife in the world of the manes (*pitṛloka*) through the son's offerings, the birth of a bad son, who neglects these filial duties, marks the end of, not only the father's place in the afterlife, but of the entire family line.

For Bhāmaha, the business of writing poetry is a zero-sum game. It is only for those who possess the prerequisites of *pratibhā*, *vyutpatti*, and *abhyāsa*. If they succeed, they reap the highest gifts attainable in this world and the next. But if they fail, they suffer a metaphorical death and ignominy. Let us now turn to Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* to better understand how this work departs from the model that Bhāmaha presents.

Daṇḍin's Rejoinder

While the composition of good poetry is also central to Daṇḍin's project, his work presents a less rigid stance on what constitutes good poetry. He also exhorts the proper use of language, suggesting that words (*gauḥ*) when properly used are a wish-fulfilling cow (*gauḥ kāmādugdhā*); when used improperly, the user attains the state of a cow—*gotvam*” (*DaKĀ* 1.6). Through his play on the term cow “*gauḥ*” and its compound form “*go-*” Daṇḍin explains the semantic range of the term cow, its direct denotation, and both its specific and metaphorical usage. Referring back to *gauḥ* as words from this verse, the *śāstra* continues in the next verse by

likening even a small fault in speech to a patch of the skin disease vitiligo.³⁰³ Despite such unequivocal statements, Daṇḍin soon takes on a more liberal tone. After setting forth the requisite features of the *mahākāvya*, he qualifies,³⁰⁴

*nyūnam apy atra yaiḥ kaiś cid aṅgaiḥ kāvyam na duṣyati |
yady upātteṣu saṃpattir ārādhayati tad vidah || DaKĀ 1.20 ||*

Though missing some parts [mentioned] here, a *kāvya* is not ruined. If there is excellence in what has been produced, then those in the know will be gratified.

Rather than seeing this as a contradiction in the *śāstra*, I argue that this is one of several places where we see the diverse audience to which the *Kāvyādarśa* speaks. Unlike Bhāmaha's work, which is restricted to poets striving to achieve everlasting glory through their excellent compositions, here—and as I will discuss below—Daṇḍin's work acknowledges the importance of being able to distinguish the *kāvyalakṣaṇas*, that is, the *guṇas*, “poetic merits,” which make literature beautiful (*sundaram*), from the *doṣas*, “poetic flaws,” which spoil it (*duṣṭam*). As discussed in Chapter Two, Daṇḍin employs the analogy of the *kāvyaśarīra*, “poetry-body,” recalled from Bhāmaha's text as the *kāvyamayam vapuḥ*, “body made of poetry.” But the later theorist turns it on its head by taking Bhāmaha's vision of the physical body sublimated into a body of remembered literary works that beget everlasting fame and, in turn, valorizes the metaphor of the physical body made beautiful with its ornaments of sound and sense.

Like Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin acknowledges the need for *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa* in the making of a poet. On *vyutpatti*, the *Kāvyādarśa* says:

*guṇadoṣān aśāstrajñāḥ katham vibhajate janah |
kim andhasyādhikāro 'sti rūpabhedopalabdhiṣu ||
ataḥ prajānām vyutpattim abhisamdhāya sūrayaḥ |
vācām vicitramārgāṇām nibabandhuḥ kriyāvidhiṃ || DaKĀ 1.8–9 ||*

How does a person, who doesn't know the *śāstras*, distinguish [literary] merits from faults? Does a blind person have the capacity to distinguish

303. DaKĀ 1.7:

*tadalpam api nopekṣyam kāvyam duṣṭam kathaṅcana |
syād vapuḥ sundaram api śvittraikena durbhagam ||*

Therefore, it [speech] even somehow slightly wanting, ought not be considered *kāvya*.
Though beautiful, a body with a single patch of vitiligo is blemished.

Perhaps building upon Bhāmaha's imperishable *kāvyamayam vapuḥ*, body made of *kāvya*, Daṇḍin carries forward the metaphor to its negative conclusion. See too DaKĀ 1.10, where Daṇḍin notes that the body and ornaments of *kāvya* has been pointed out by them, i.e., they have been pointed to by others elsewhere, perhaps a nod to Bhāmaha's *kāvyamayam vapuḥ*.

304. DaKĀ 1.14–1.19.

differences in visual form? On this account, having had the traditional training (*vyutpatti*) of our descendants in view, our learned forebears have set forth the rules for the composition of words that follow the manifold paths of poetry.

Along with *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa*, which he refers to with the terms *abhiyoga*, “perseverance,” and *yatna*, “effort,” Daṇḍin also brings the reader’s attention to *pratibhā*, the inspiration to make good poetry. However, the final statement in the *Kāvyaḍarśa*’s first chapter departs from the *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra*’s more pedantic view:

naisargikī ca pratibhā śrutam ca bahunirmalam |
amandaś cābhiyogo 'syāḥ kāraṇam kāvyasaṃpadaḥ ||
na vidyate yady api pūrvavāsanāguṇānubandhi pratibhānam adbhutam |
śrutena yatnena ca vāgupāsītā dhruvam karoty eva kam apy anugraham ||
tad astatandrair anīṣam sarasvatī śramād upāsyā khalu kīrtim īpsubhiḥ |
kṛṣe kavitve 'pi janāḥ kṛtaśramā vidagdhaḡṣṭhīṣu vihartum īṣate ||DaKĀ
1.103–105||

Natural inspiration, faultless training, and diligent application. These are the cause of excellent poetic skill. Even if wondrous inspiration (*pratibhāna*), connected to the qualities attained through previous impressions, are not to be found, through effort and instruction one who reveres the Goddess Speech (Vāc)³⁰⁵ will surely garner some favor. Thus, Sarasvatī is worshipped constantly and with effort, by those desiring fame, who have cast off their sloth. *Even though their skill in poetry may be weak, people, who try hard, are able to find pleasure in assemblies of clever people* [emphasis mine].

Daṇḍin begins by noting the three prerequisites of the poet set forth by Bhāmaha—inspiration (*pratibhā*), faultless training (*vyutpatti*, here—*śrutam*), and practice (*abhyāsa*, here—*abhiyoga*). But, for Daṇḍin, *kāvya*-composition is not only for the rare poet of Bhāmaha’s world graced with inspiration (*pratibhāna*). Daṇḍin clearly states that, even if not naturally endowed with *pratibhāna*, one can compose excellent poetry by propitiating Sarasvatī, Goddess of Speech, through *śrutena*, learning, or *yatnena*, effort, two terms that stand in for the *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa* noted in Bhāmaha’s work.³⁰⁶ By taking poetic inspiration (*pratibhā*), in other words, a predisposition toward poetic inspiration, out of the equation, Daṇḍin counters Bhāmaha’s stance

305. Here, Vāc and Sarasvatī are the same Goddess of Speech.

306. Daṇḍin, Mammaṭa, and Rājaśekhara, among others see *satkavitva* coming from the triad of *pratibhā* (genius, inspiration), *vyutpatti* (training), and *abhyāsa* (practice). Later Jagannātha adds destiny/unseen forces (*adrṣṭa*). See David Shulman, “Illumination, Imagination, Creativity: Rājaśekhara, Kuntaka, and Jagannātha on *Pratibhā*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36, no. 4 (2008): 481–505; *ibid.*, *More Than Real*, 80–108.

that only a person naturally endowed with *pratibhā* is qualified to compose poetry without retribution.

Had Daṇḍin stopped here, we might not have paid heed to his more open-minded view of the poet—his stance here and elsewhere being generally more liberal than Bhāmaha’s. But in the final stanza of his introductory chapter Daṇḍin takes a rather remarkable position on who is authorized to compose poetry. According to Daṇḍin, even those who lack skill in composing good poetry (*kṛśe kavitve’pi*) are encouraged to find pleasure in this avocation by composing *kāvya* in assemblies of clever people.³⁰⁷ Daṇḍin’s verse is significant in that it ends the first *pariccheda*-chapter, thus it stands out in its placement as well as its corresponding difference in meter (*vaṃśastha*). Not only in position but in content, this mere hemistich (*DaKĀ* 1.105cd), I suggest, has great significance for how we understand audience in *Kāvyādarśa* and, perhaps more importantly, for how we constitute the social nature of poetry in early-medieval India. In this stanza, Daṇḍin prescribes a space for the less talented who wish to compose *kāvya*—a literary form that, as mentioned above, confers greatness upon the talented composer. Through Daṇḍin’s carefully structured preamble, and as counterpoint to Bhāmaha’s, Daṇḍin suggests that mediocre poets, not only can compose poetry, but that they have the right to enjoy (*vihartum*) poetry with their peers in assemblies of the quick-witted (*vidagdha*).

By using the infinitive *vihartum*, “to amuse oneself” or “to pass time” from the root *vi+√hr*, Daṇḍin takes the language of the erotic mode, *śṛṅgāra*, with its associated valences of pleasure, and resituates the activity of writing poetry from the realm of patronage and fameseeking, or *artha*, with which it has normally been associated, to the realm of pleasure, or *kāma*, associated with *śṛṅgāra*. In these stanzas, Daṇḍin shifts the focus from genius, a feature one is born with or aspires to through divine grace, to effort. It is the one who makes assiduous effort (*DaKĀ* 1.103), who worships with effort (*DaKĀ* 1.104, 1.105), one who has cast off sloth (*DaKĀ* 1.105a). In Daṇḍin’s view, what is lacking in natural talent can be striven for through training, effort, and worship of the Goddess of wisdom and the arts.

Thus far, I have investigated the agents and action that Daṇḍin’s *śāstra* enjoins for a restricted member of his audience: those who lack talent even in composing poetry. They are a far cry from those poets whom Daṇḍin mentions who would not leave even a single poetic blemish. And they are a far cry from Bhāmaha’s poets who produce excellent work that arises from inspiration, training with an authorized teacher, and diligent consistent practice. While acknowledging the “professional poet” of Bhāmaha’s work, the poet of natural genius, trained by an authorized teacher in the requisite sciences and arts, and diligent in practice, whose work will confer undiminishing fame, Daṇḍin’s text now opens up another sphere for composing poetry—one for a “social poet” to enjoy poetry in the convivial space of the *goṣṭhī*.

307. These two passages, like so many others in Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin could be seen as Daṇḍin’s direct response to Bhāmaha. Hence the repeated use of the concepts of *pratibhā(na)* and *vāgvidagdha*

5.3. The “Social Poet” in Daṇḍin’s Kāvyaḍarśa

This final stanza of the *Kāvyaḍarśa*’s first *pariccheda*-chapter not only indicates what type of person has access to the business of composing poetry, but in what milieu: in societies of the clever (*vidagdhagoṣṭhīṣu*). Most commonly translated as “salon” or “assembly,” the term *goṣṭhī* has been considered the site for performing poetry by scholars, primarily as an adjunct to the court.³⁰⁸ For example, S. K. Belvakar and B. D. Chattopadhyay offer the two most common renderings of the *goṣṭhī*. Referring specifically to the stanza under discussion, Belvaker’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* translation renders the term *vidagdhagoṣṭhīṣu* “assemblies of the wise.”³⁰⁹ Referring to the more general purpose of the *goṣṭhī* in ancient India, Chattopadhyay renders the term a “salon-like gathering.”³¹⁰ Referring to the *śāstra* on social refinement and erotics, Vātsyāyana’s *Kāmasūtra*, Chattopadhyay draws the salient links between the *nāgaraka*, the refined city-dweller, and the *goṣṭhī* as a gathering place to participate in poetry-making *kāvya* and in the *kalās*, most commonly referred to as the sixty-four arts. However, Chattopadhyay’s otherwise accurate description does not consider the multivalent meaning of *goṣṭhī* as both abstract concept and concrete autonomous body. Here, Wendy Doniger’s and Sudhir Kakar’s rendering of the term *goṣṭhī* as “society” is instructive.³¹¹ As with the term “society” in English, *goṣṭhī* contains the three-fold sense of a group of people sharing geographical or social space, a group of individuals joined for particular purpose, and of the physical space where these individuals assemble. Though how we render the term will vary depending on context, what is important here is the social aspect of the *goṣṭhī*, which the translation “society” explicitly reflects.

The meaning in this final stanza of Daṇḍin’s first *pariccheda*-chapter most certainly pertains to the more localized definition of *goṣṭhī* as both the group of individuals gathered for a shared social purpose, here entertainment through poetry and the like, and the physical space where these groups meet. The semantic overlap with larger society is significant here because it offers one of the only specific references to the *Kāvyaḍarśa*’s audience. While ideal poets aspiring to everlasting fame through their work are addressed, as in Bhāmaha’s work, they are referred to abstractly. Only in this case, do we have the social milieu of another type of poet—

308. As a counter history to this court-focused view, see Daud Ali, “The *Subhāṣita* as an Artifact of Ethical Life in Medieval India,” in *Ethical Life in South Asia*, eds. Anand Pandian and Daud Ali (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 2010), 22–23.

309. S. K. Belvakar, *Kāvyaḍarśa of Daṇḍin*, Sanskrit text and English translation (Poona: The Oriental Book-Supplying Agency, 1924), 12, translation of 1.105.

310. “The *nāgaraka*, the city-dweller of *Kāmasūtra* is enjoined to cultivate a way of life which is worthy of emulation; in doing so, he has access to institutions like the *goṣṭhī*, which provide ways of refining one’s way of life. *Goṣṭhī* provide access to community, and subtle problems of culture, such as problems of *Kāvya* and *Kalā*, can be discussed and resolved in the salon-like gatherings of the *goṣṭhī*.” B. D. Chattopadhyaya, “The City in Early India: Perspectives From Texts,” *Studies in History* 13, no. 2 (1997): 201.

311. See for example Vātsyāyana *Kāmasūtra* 1.4.31, 37, and 39 in Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, trans., *Kamasutra*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20–21. Cf. Vātsyāyana *Kāmasūtra* 1.4.9, 14, and 19, where *goṣṭhī* is translated as “salon.” Ibid., 18–19. For other terms used historically for *goṣṭhī*, see Jitendra Lal Bose, “Notes on Club Life in Ancient India,” *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* 3.3 (1917): 406–15.

one who might not have natural talent, but who aspires to refine his skill through persistence among like-minded compatriots in societies which have the purpose of entertainment.

Daṇḍin mentions the *goṣṭhī* again twice in *Kāvyādarśa*: once in a verse exemplifying *sūkṣma*, an *arthālaṅkāra*, “rhetorical figure of meaning,” and once in noting the appropriate places for the performance of *prahelikā*, “word games.” In the latter verse, which I will discuss below, the text uses a similar semantic configuration as in the verse under discussion: “while passing time in pleasurable societies” (*DaKĀ* 3.97a: *krīḍāgoṣṭhīvinodeṣu*). It is interesting to note that, nowhere else in the *Kāvyādarśa* do we see references to the world at large and how this poetry might be performed in it. Given the context of our verse, I suggest that Daṇḍin’s work, unlike Bhāmaha’s, subtly offers a space for a type of poet whose focus is not that of achieving the everlasting fame of producing excellent poetry. While speaking to the “professional poet,” Daṇḍin’s preamble also nods toward “social poets” who relish *kāvya* by disporting themselves in social circles.

Before moving on, it is important to interrogate this verse further by understanding the valence of the type of *goṣṭhī* specifically referred to here, in other words the *vidagdha-goṣṭhī*. The term *vidagdha*, has been rendered most frequently as clever or skilled or as a general term for the learned. Coming from the prefix *vi-* “away” and root *dah* “to burn”, it stands as “to burn away” or “to consume by fire.” In line with the idea of fire as indicated by the epithet of fire, *pāvaka*, as the purifier, *vidagdha* refers to that which has its impurities removed by fire, in other words that which is “refined.” Following this semantic logic, *vidagdha*, like the term *saṃskṛta*, refers to a sense of refinement of the individual(s) in question. While learnedness through *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa* bring about refinement, lexically it is cleverness, or quick-wittedness that gets associated with *vidagdha*. Thus, Dharmadāsa’s work of mind-bending *prahelikās*, “word games,” and *citrakāvya*, “pictorial poetry,” is titled *Vidagdhamukhamanḍana* (*Ornament of the Mouth of the Quick-Witted*). This is not to say that the term *vidagdha* does not simply describe a learned person. Instead, it highlights the term’s association with a particular type of learnedness. However, this leveling of the playing field for the untalented, so to speak, is not open-ended. These poets who lack skill are, by Daṇḍin’s tenets, enjoined to participate in learned societies of *vidagdhās*, or refined, clever people (*vidagdhagoṣṭhīṣu*).

Commentarial Negotiations

To better understand the social milieu of these poets, it would be productive to look at how the earlier *Kāvyādarśa* commentaries understand Daṇḍin’s statement (*DaKĀ* 1.105) discussed above: the *Ratnaśrī* of Ratnaśrījñāna (10th c. CE), the *Śrutānupālinī* of Vādijaṅghādeva (10th c. CE), the commentary of Taruṇavācaspati (13th c. CE), and the

anonymous *Hṛdayaṃgamā* (13th c. CE?).³¹² These four commentators agree that, as noted in *DaKā* 1.103, the three causes of success in *kāvya* are *pratibhā*, *vyutpatti* (here as *śruta*), and *abhyāsa* (here as *abhiyoga*). In line with Taruṇavācaspati's concluding statement on the stanza, “together these three are the cause of the arising of the state of being a poet (*kavitva*) and in the appearance (lit., shining forth) of imagination (*manasaḥ*).³¹³ Aside from some variation in Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary, which I will discuss below, the commentators are pretty much in agreement about the criteria for success in *kāvya* composition. But, perhaps due to the uniqueness of this acknowledgement regarding the talent needed for composing poetry, the *Kāvyaḍarśa* commentators show some disagreement over who these poets of meager talent are.

Vāḍijaṅghādeva seems to interpret the first half stanza of the verse as indicating one group of poets, i.e., those who seek fame but don't acquire it without propitiating Sarasvatī. Here, he highlights the bare requirements of the poet who lacks innate genius, *pratibhā*:

*kṛśe kavitve 'pi janāḥ kṛtāśramā vidagdhaḥgoṣṭhīṣu vihartum īśate nanu
yadi pratibhādayo na svābhāvikāḥ santi guṇāḥ, tataḥ kiṃ
sarasvatyupāsanena vṛthā hṛdrogajanenety ata āha—kṛśa ityādi |
kavitāguṇe kṛśe 'pi kṛtaḥ śramaḥ śāstrābhyāso yais te kṛtāśramāḥ puruṣāḥ
vidagdhanāṃ śāstrābhyāsavutpannabuddhīnāṃ kavīnāṃ ca goṣṭhīṣu
vihartum kṛḍitum vaktum ca īśate prabhavo bhavanti, vidvanmadhye
ganyanta ity arthaḥ |*³¹⁴

[The root text says,] “Even though their skill in poetry may be weak, people, who try hard, are able to find pleasure in assemblies of clever people.” But if the qualities beginning with poetic genius are not inherent, then what is the use of propitiating Sarasvatī, which would only beget useless heartache (*hṛdrogajana*). On this account, he [Daṇḍin] makes the statement beginning with “*kṛśe*.” Though meager in skill to be a poet, those men by whom effort, that is to say, training and repetition of the *śāstras*, has been made. They have license, that is to say, they become able (*īśate*) to enjoy (*vihartum*), that is to say, to play and converse, in the assemblies of the learned, or, of intellectuals (*kavīnāṃ goṣṭhīṣu*, *vidanmadhye*), endowed with learning from the *śāstras*, i.e., *kavis*. Thus, the sense is that they are counted in the midst of the learned.

312. For Vāḍijaṅghādeva (aka Vāḍighaṅkāla and Vāḍighaṅghala), see Sheldon Pollock, “Ratnaśrījñāna,” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Wisdom: Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri Felicitation Volume*, ed. Ramkaran Sharma (Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 2005), 1:637–38; for Ratnaśrījñāna, whose commentary refers to *Kāvyaḍarśa* as *Kāvyalakṣaṇa* (*Characteristics of Literature*), see *ibid.*, 1:638–41; and for Taruṇavācaspati, see *ibid.*, 1:638. The anonymous *Hṛdayaṃgamā* is possibly the commentary of Keśava Bhaṭṭāraka, the son of Taruṇavācaspati. See Timothy C. Cahill, *An Annotated Bibliography of the Alaṃkāraśāstra* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 41.

313. *iti trayāḥ samuditāḥ kavitvotpattau manasa ullāse ca hetuḥ* | TVP on *DaKā* 1.103, p. 62.

314. VJD on *DaKā* 1.105ab, p. 63. *tad astatandrair aniṣaṃ sarasvatī śramād upāsyā khalu kīrtim īpsubhiḥ*. *DaKā* 1.105cd:

Vadijaṅghālaḍeva highlights the importance of śāstraic learning and of training in his commentarial glosses of the terms *kṛtāśrama* and *vidagdha*. He follows the status quo in stating that learning the *śāstras* is key to being a good poet. Vadijaṅghālaḍeva considers the *goṣṭhī* a legitimate space for the non-expert trying at to compose poetry as a means to play (*krīḍitum*). This is especially apparent in his concluding statement, “They are counted in the midst of learned people.” Vadijaṅghālaḍeva seems to say that they are considered among the learned in the space of the *goṣṭhī* or that they gain authority in that space, whereas they might not outside of it. Here, the sense is that effort and training trump natural talent in terms of inclusion into these societies of learned people. In other words, *kavitva* is something that can be *cultivated*.

Taruṇavācaspati glosses “*kṛśatve 'pi*” as having an absence of poet-ness (*akavitva*), i.e., not having what it takes to be a poet. Even these people who worship Sarasvatī will be given the skill (*vaidaghdya*) to discriminate between *doṣas* and *guṇas* within societies of the learned (*paṇḍitagoṣṭhīṣu*).³¹⁵ And in an even more intense statement, the *Hṛdayaṅgamā* commentator says that the state of being a poet (*kavitva*) is available even to those who are totally bad, i.e., those who are totally bad at writing poetry (*kavitve kārtsnyena*³¹⁶ *asaty api*).” Even they are authorized to amuse themselves in assemblies of the learned, as long as their effort is superior.³¹⁷ In sum, all three commentators say to varying degrees that it is appropriate for people lacking talent to try their hand at composing *kāvya* in societies of the learned (*paṇḍita-goṣṭhī*), among their peers, as long as they try really hard and have fulfilled the prerequisite learning.

These three later commentators take the verse in basically the same way. But, in his usual exegetical style, the earliest of the *Kāvyaādarśa* commentators, Ratnaśrījñāna, takes a more granular approach. For this verse, he gives specific examples of what it means to be weak in the making of poetry:

315. TVP on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 63:

*tad iti | tat sarasvatyupāsanasya avandhyatvāt, astatandraiḥ mantrajapādīnā
kāvyalakṣaṇādīparīśīlanena ca anīśam upāśyamānā kīrtim īpsubhiḥ sarasvatī
kavitvābhāve' pi paṇḍitagoṣṭhīṣu doṣaguṇavivecanavidagdhyam dadāti.*

The stanza beginning with “*tad*” | Therefore, because the propitiation of Sarasvatī is fruitful, being worshiped nonstop by those who have cast off sloth with the muttering of mantras and with the study of the characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) of *kāvya*, by those desiring fame though there is a lack of *kavitva*, Sarasvatī gives cleverness to distinguish *doṣas* from *guṇas* in societies of clever people.

316. Either the editors have left the vowel hiatus between *kārtsnyena* and *asati* purposefully. Or there is a misprint.

317. *Hṛd* on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 63:

*...kavitve' kārtsnyena asaty api, prayatnaprābalyena janā vidvadgoṣṭhīṣu vihartum īśate,
krīḍitum samarthī bhavanti, ity āha—tad iti | astatandraiḥ nirastālasabhāvaiḥ |
vidagdhaḥgoṣṭhīṣu vidvadsamājeṣu | śeṣam subodham ||*

Though not having any poetic ability at all, people, through the power of effort, can take pleasure in societies of the wise, that is to say, they have the ability to play. Thus, he says the statement beginning with “*tad*”. By those who have cast off sloth, he means by those whose state of laziness has been cast aside. In societies of the the clever, he means in assemblies of those possessing knowledge. The rest is clear.

*kṛśa ityādi | kavitve svayaṃ kāvyakaraṇe kṛśe mande 'pi sati
sargabandhādyanirvahanāt | kṛśe vāsati kavitve 'pi muktakāder api
akaraṇāt | tathāpi darśanāt | bhinnā hi śaktiḥ puṃsām* |³¹⁸

Though being weak, meaning being dull-witted, at being a poet, that is to say, in the making of one's own poetry, as evidenced from not finishing works such as *sargabandhas*. Or being feeble even in what it takes to be a poet, as evidenced from not being able to compose lesser works such as *muktakas*. Nevertheless, from observation [it is seen that] the capacity of men differs.

In Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary, we see a consideration for the differing capacities. Unlike the other three, Ratnaśrījñāna takes the *kṛtaśrama* as *a-kṛta* with an elision of the initial “a-” through *sandhi*. Hence, he states,

*vihartum abhijñātayatayāntarbhavitum īśate kalpante | akṛtaśramāṇām tu
pallavagrāhiṇām avalopinām anātmavidām vidagdhaḥṣṭhīvihāra upahāsa
eva syāt* |³¹⁹

“*vihartum īśate*” means to be fit to be included by being recognized. “On the part of those by whom effort has not been made,” that is to say, those who have superficial knowledge, who have interrupted [training], who do not know the essence [of poetry], they should have the amusement of the *vidagdhaḥṣṭhī*, that is to say, in which to joke around.

Hence, Ratnaśrījñāna distinguishes between those discussed in the first hemistich and previous stanza, who make effort through worship of Sarasvatī and through study, and those in the second hemistich, who do not make an effort and just want to enjoy themselves. This understanding of the verse's syntax differs drastically from the other three commentators who see this statement about weak-minded poets as a continuation of the lines pertaining to the poets who gain insight from the Goddess. In Ratnaśrījñāna's attempt to portray the “on the ground” situation of humans with different capacities, we are inclined to think that his commentary is in fact describing a person, who, though aspiring to be a poet, is not naturally endowed with skill. Moreover Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary describes a poet who does not seek everlasting fame through the language arts. Like the refined urban gentleman of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, the poet at one end of the spectrum in Daṇḍin's text and the one presented by his commentators, represents a different demographic from the professional poet. Moreover, it speaks to the changing attitudes as to what defines a poet.

318. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 61 (1957 ed.). For clarity, the editor has broken up the *sandhi* at *kṛśe vāsati* to *kṛśe vā asati*.

319. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 61 (1957 ed.).

While the commentators differ on their view of the type of poet under discussion in this stanza, for the most part they treat the meaning of *vidagdhagoṣṭhī* as self-evident. Vadijaṅghādeva simply glosses the compound as *vidvanmadhye*, “in the midst of the learned,” thus pointing more to the collective than to the physical space of the *goṣṭhī*. And he clarifies that the *vidagdhās* referred to are those poets whose intellects have become proficient through study and practice. Taruṇavācaspati finds it sufficient to gloss *vidagdhā* with *pañḍita*, “wise,” again highlighting the learnedness of the group, and leaves no comment for *goṣṭhī*. Like Vadijaṅghādeva, the *Hṛdayaṅgamā* commentator glosses *vidagdhā* with *vidvat*, “learned” (lit., “possessing knowledge”). And he uses the commonly interchangeable term *samāja* to gloss *goṣṭhī*.

Ratnaśrījñāna says little more in terms of defining the *vidagdhagoṣṭhī*. Like Vadijaṅghādeva, he glosses *vidagdhās* as *kavis*, “poets,” specifically and explains that, in this context, the *goṣṭhī* is a place for conversation about *kāvya*.³²⁰ For all of the commentators, the *goṣṭhī* is a space for learned people in general and for *kavis* specifically to meet and discuss poetry and to compose poetry for others, no matter that the quality is not elevated. Moreover, this is a place where entertainment is clearly the goal. We also see this in Ratnaśrījñāna’s gloss of the term *gītagoṣṭhyām*, “in societies for singing,” in another stanza where Daṇḍin cites a verse exemplifying the figure of speech *sūkṣma*.³²¹ In his commentary to this stanza, Ratnaśrījñāna notes, “the *gītagoṣṭhī* is the *goṣṭhī* in which the aim is song, wherein there is entertainment” (*gītalakṣaṇagoṣṭhī vinodas tasyām*).³²² Here, too, *goṣṭhī* is associated with the act of enjoyment itself rather than the location.

While spare in his gloss of the *goṣṭhī*, Ratnaśrījñāna spends much time discussing the nature of the *goṣṭhī*, not through his gloss, but by waxing poetic about the *goṣṭhī*. In a dilation of twenty metaphoric images of the *goṣṭhī* in the form of *rūpaka samāsas*, each following the grammatical form of the locative plural that the original term *vidagdhagoṣṭhī* stands in Daṇḍin root text. Taking his depiction to epic proportions, Ratnaśrījñāna states,

vidhagdhah kavayah teṣāṃ goṣṭhiṣu kāvyālāpeṣu
vidyāramaṇīmekhalānūpura[śiñjiteṣu] sakalakalānadīviśrāmasamudreṣu
nānārasabhāvābhinayamahānaṭeṣu
śabdapārāyaṇamahārṇavaratnāṅkureṣu
śāstrapariśramaphalodayamahotsaveṣu kavīśāgarāmṛteṣu
budhajanamanastaskareṣu vividhālāṅkārahāriṣu vandanīyeṣu
vidagdhātābhūmisīmānteṣu vidvatsaraṇiprapābhūtātīśayeṣu svayaṃkrteṣu
adhyātmaśāstrakalākauśalavaraneṣu satām uciteṣu tadekarūpeṣv api
pratipurūṣam apūrvaparīṇāmitayā paramātmadeśīyeṣu

320. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 62 (1957 ed.): *kṛtaśramā yathāvidhānam upāsītavāco janāḥ puruṣāḥ kṛto 'nuṣṭhitaḥ śramah śravaṇādi lakṣaṇo vyavahāro yair iti vighrahaḥ, parakāvyaakovidatvāt | vidagdhagoṣṭhiṣu vihartum īśate | vidagdhāḥ kavayah teṣāṃ goṣṭhiṣu kāvyālāpeṣu....*

321. *DaKĀ* 2.261 (1957 ed.).

322. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 2.261, p. 156 (1957 ed.).

*sarasvatīprasādamahāvareṣu lakṣmīpūjābhājaneṣu
 nirudvegasukhasvabhāvatvāt kaivalyakalpeṣv atalabhāvagambhīratvāt
 parārthaprasattiguṇayogāc ca sāgaṛeṣviva mahāhradeṣu
 satpuruṣacaritādarśabhittiṣu yaśaḥkusumāmodasurabhiṣu
 mahākavikīrtistambheṣu kiṃ bahunā saṃsārasārasandoheṣu |*

“*Vidagdha*,” that is to say, “poets,” “in their *goṣṭhīs*,” that is to say, in conversations about *kāvya*. They [*vidagdhagoṣṭhīs*] are the tinkling of the delightful waistbelt and anklets of knowledge; the ocean which is the resting place of the rivers of all the arts; the great actor of dramatic action of various *rasas* and *bhāvas*; the pearl-sprout of the great ocean which is the refuge of *śabda*; the *udaya* festival which is the fruit of the effort of the *śāstras*; the nectar of the ocean of poets; stealing the hearts of the wise; captivating with varied ornaments; praiseworthy; the borders of the country of cleverness; the pre-eminence being the roadside cistern for travelers; self-made; the bridge of cleverness between the S/self, the *śāstras*, and the *kalās*; fit for the virtuous; belonging to the place of the *paramātmā* because of their transformation without precedent for each person though having a single form; the great boon of Sarasvatī’s grace; the fit receptacle for the worship of Lakṣmī; the *kalpa* for liberation because their nature is tranquil joy; the great lake, like the ocean because they are deep [below the ground] like the quality of Atala hell and from being yoked to the quality of purity as its highest goal; the mirror-wall of the deeds of good people; having the scent of the fragrance of the flower of fame; [and] the fame pillar of great poets. Why continue when it is so with regard to the entire world?³²³

It is unclear what Ratnaśrījñāna’s intention is in this passage with this list of superlatives, each one pointing to the *goṣṭhī* as the ultimate on several metaphorical fronts. It is source, refuge, highest goal, delight, and culmination. While providing the highest praise for these societies, the dilation in this passage also suggests a hint of irony in its excess. Taking it in the context of Daṇḍin’s verse, Ratnaśrījñāna’s description seems to elicit the type of exaggerated poetry that he expects the fun-loving, albeit less talented, poets to produce in such societies of learned poets.³²⁴

The differing ways that the commentators negotiate this verse suggest that Daṇḍin’s statement may not reflect the ways that they, in their respective eras, understand the qualifications of a poet. For them, Daṇḍin is saying something a bit opaque or at odds with current understandings of the *goṣṭhī* and who is authorized to participate in poetry-making. But while the interpretations differ slightly, all commentators agree that a particular type of

323. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 1.105, p. 62 (1957 ed.)

324. Notably, Ratnaśrījñāna uses a similar style of prose as that found in ornate *gadyakāvya* works such as the *Avantisundarī*.

interaction takes place within the milieu of the assembly. By offering a space for educated and refined people to come together as “amateur” poets, Daṇḍin invites such people to be an audience for this *śāstra*, thus speaking to a range of poets—and his praise of the multiple functions of language in his preamble also corroborates this wide-ranging view.

The Cult of Cleverness

To better understand what is at stake in this conversation, let us return to Bhāmaha’s understanding of *vidagdhas* in relation to later Daṇḍin’s work. As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, Daṇḍin’s views on who qualifies as a poet are less doctrinaire than Bhāmaha’s. Not only do the two theorists’ respective stances on who gets to write poetry and for what purpose differ, their definition of what skills are required differ. As discussed in the section above, Dandin’s *śāstra* creates a space for the poet of less than stellar natural ability. Thus, he considers literary ability (*kavitva*) along a continuum—one that, at one end, requires, at the least, effort and a fraternity of clever people (*vidagdhas*) and, at the other end, the trifecta of innate genius, training, and intense effort. While the terms *kavitva*, literary skill, and *vidagdhātā*, intellectual refinement, are semantically independent, they are not conceptualized as mutually exclusive.

Daṇḍin’s stance on *vidagdhātā* appears in his discussion of *mārgas*, or style-ways where he distinguishes the types of people who enjoy a particular type of florid verse that characterizes the *gauḍa* style:

lokātīta ivātyartham adhyāropya vivakṣitaḥ |
yo 'rthas tenātituṣyanti vidagdhā netare janāḥ ||
devadhiṣṇyam ivārādhyam adyaprabhṛti no grham |
yuṣmatpādarajahpātadhautaniḥśeṣakilbiṣam ||DaKĀ 1.88–89||

Refined people (*vidagdhāḥ*)³²⁵ are extremely pleased by a meaning expressed through excessive superimposition, transcending worldly convention, as it were. Others are not. [As per example:]

Like the abode of the gods, our house is to be worshiped from this day
on as one from which all sin has been cleansed by the falling of dust
from your feet.

This reference to *vidagdhas* as connoisseurs of *kāvya* takes figuration to an extreme, as Daṇḍin claims the *gauḍa* path does. This verse comes is after depicting other types of figuration, some of which is liked by all. In this case, the implication is that only a certain type of person, one who can take an image to an extreme, can find delight. The second half-line consists of a single

325. In his translation of *DaKĀ* 1.89, Belvaker defines *vidagdhas* as “connoisseurs.” S. K. Belvalkar, trans., *Kāvyaḍarśa of Daṇḍin*, Sanskrit text and English translation (Poona: The Oriental Book-Supplying Agency, 1924), 11.

compounded element modifying the house of the poet. Thus, Ratnaśrījñāna glosses the term *vidagdhāḥ*, “refined ones,” with *vyutpannāḥ*, “cultured ones,” not once but twice, making it the replacement term throughout his commentary on the stanza.³²⁶ Because their intellects are unimpaired, these cultured folk are extremely gratified by poetic expressions of this type. On the other hand, Ratnaśrījñāna labels the others as *avidagdha*, “unrefined,” on account of having an uncultured nature. This excessive attachment is impossible on the part of these uncultured folk. Vāḍijaṅghādeva and Taruṇavācaspati are silent on the *vidagdhās* in this verse. While the *Hṛdayaṃgamā* commentator notes, “Cultured people” (*vidagdhāḥ*), that is, learned people (*paṇḍitāḥ*) become gratified on account of hyperbole (*atyukti*) being dear to them, “cultured people” refers to *gauḍas*, people who follow the *gauḍa* path of poetry.”³²⁷ Interestingly, while the earlier two commentators have very little to say about Daṇḍin's stanza, this later commentator *only* comments on the use of the term *vidagdha*.

The examples from the commentaries above suggest that the term *vidagdha* should be considered as more than simply “learned” or “wise.” Instead, we should understand that it implies a sense of being cultured or sophisticated. With the negative or pejorative prefix *duḥ-*, we see the opposite term being used in writing from the period to suggest “uncouth.” For instance, Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* mentions *durvidagdha* in three instances the first one being in the framing narrative where the irascible sage Durvāsas, after being laughed at by the young goddess Sarasvatī, for dropping a tone in his Vedic recitation, calls her in the vocative “you, who are uncouth (*vidagdhā*) for [your] pride in a bit of ill-begotten knowledge” (*durgrhītavidyālavāvalepadurvidagdhe*).³²⁸ Bāṇa's commentators confirm this reading in their glosses, Raṅganātha with *durlalitā*, “ill-mannered,” and Bālabodhinī with *avanītā*, “indecorous.”³²⁹ In Budhasvāmin's *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha*, Sānudāsa relates his first visit to the cosmopolitan city of Tāmralipī where he is told by its citizens, “Brother, in the city of Tāmraliptī, people are more clever than you. You are a rustic type (*grāmya*) living in the city, with the speech of an unrefined (*durvidagdha*) person” (*tāmraliptyāṃ pure bhrātās tvatto dhūrtataro janaḥ durvidagdhajanālāpo grāmyanāgarako bhavān*).³³⁰ In both these examples, the term *durvidagdha*, has the sense of “unrefined” or “uncultured,” not “unintelligent.” And by association, *vidagdha* would indicate the opposite.

326. RŚJ on *DaKĀ* 1.89, p. 53 (1957 ed.). *vyutpannās tu rajyante |...|vidagdhā vyutpanna atituṣyanti anurajyante sutarāṃ tathāvidhoktyā, ahatabuddhitvāt | itare 'vidagdhā nātituṣyanti, tādrśām abhāvitāsvabhāvatvāt | asaṃbhāvyam etad atiprasaṅgo 'yam iti nānurajyante ity arthaḥ |ata eva sarvajagatkāntaṃ na bhavati, vidagdhānām eva rañjanāt | yathety udāharati—...*

327. *Hṛd* on *DaKĀ* 1.89, p. 57. Removing the *daṇḍa* here makes for a better reading (1936 ed.): *vidagdhāḥ paṇḍitāḥ tuṣṭā bhavanti | atyukter abhīṣṭatvāt teṣāṃ (|) vidagdhā iti gauḍān ākṣipati*

328. *Harṣacarita*, 9 (NSP ed.):

drṣṭvā ca tām tathā hasantīm sa muniḥ 'āḥ pāpakāriṇi, durgrhīta-vidyālavāvalepa-durvidagdhe, mām upahasasi' ity uktvā |

And having seen her laughing like that, the muni, having said “Āh, evil-doer, uncouth from haughtiness/pride from a bit of knowledge that was ill-begotten, you laugh at me”

329. *The Harshacharita of Banabhatta (Uchchhvasas I to IV)*, ed. with Sanskrit commentary (*Balabodhini*) by S. D. Gagendraḡadkar and A. B. Gagendraḡadkar (Poona City: A. P. Bapat & Brothers, 1918), 15

330. *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha* 18.222.

A Return to Bhāmaha's Stance

Bhāmaha's treatise sheds more light here. As established, for Bhāmaha, *kavitva* is synonymous with *satkavitva*, the ability to compose, not any poetry, but the right kind of poetry. In other words, the kind of poetry that will bring everlasting fame. And, while one possessing *satkavitva* would also be *vidagdha* one possessing *vidagdhatā* is not necessarily a *satkavi*, a great poet. Bhāmaha makes this clear in his preamble when describing the relationship between śāstraic knowledge and the ability to compose excellent poetry:

adhanasyeva dātṛtvam klībasyevāstrakauśalam |
ajñasyeva pragalbhatvam akaveḥ³³¹ śāstravedanam ||
vinayena vinā kā śrīḥ kā niśā śaśinā vinā |
rahitā satkavitvena kīdṛśī vāgvidagdhatā ||BhKĀ 1.3–4||

Having knowledge of the *śāstra* without being a *kavi* is like having generosity without having wealth, like a eunuch having skill in weaponry, like having pride without having knowledge.
What is prosperity without proper conduct? What is night without the hare-marked moon? Without the ability to compose good *kāvya*, what is cleverness in speech?

While Bhāmaha goes on to prescribe several branches of śāstraic knowledge as a requirement for the serious poet,³³² he begins his discussion by pointing to the uselessness of these branches of learning without the ability to compose poetry. Bhāmaha seems to be saying that knowledge of the *śāstras*, while necessary, is nothing without the ability to compose poetry. In considering this claim that Bhāmaha makes at the very beginning of his work in the *anubandhacatuṣṭaya*, one wonders if the title of Bhāmaha's work, *Kāvyaśālākāra*, could then be rendered as a *rūpaka*-compound rather than a *tatpuruṣa*-compound, as the *Ornament that is Literature*.

As Bhāmaha and the commentators on Daṇḍin's *śāstra* indicate, the term *vidagdha* has the valence of educated or learned. In the former case, the term refers to those who have had traditional training in the *śāstras*. In the case of Daṇḍin's commentators *vidagdhās* of the *goṣṭhī*, while educated, are referred to as such due to an ability to appreciate *kāvya*, especially *kāvya* of the more ornate type, as is indicated by the *gauḍa*-path. However, in the compound *vāg-vidagdhatā*, the term *vidagdha* needs to be understood in the sense of refinement and its associated cleverness. I suggest this because of the use of *vidagdha* in common usage. The word *vidagdha* gets used most frequently with the term *kalā*, skilled in the arts, including the art of

331. Victor D'Avella justifies the translation "for s.o. other than a poet" with the following: "I understand the a-privative (nañ) in the sense of *anyatā*, "otherness." Victor Bartholomew D'Avella, "Creating the Perfect Language: Sanskrit Grammarians, Poetry, and the Exegetical Tradition" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018), 69n40.

332. *BhKĀ* 1.9–10.

composing poetry. So here, *vidagdha* as used in Bhamaha and Daṇḍin, also has the sense of refinement as cleverness, or quick-wittedness—an ethos of connoisseurship in the making.

In the same way that the first stanza considers śāstraic knowledge useless without the ability to make poetry, the second stanza sets apart the quality of cleverness in speech (*vāgvidagdhatā*) from *satkavitva*. Note here the specification that we are in the realm of excellent poetry—*satkavitva*.³³³ Through the logic of the syntactic parallelism in the first half-line, we see a comparison between two objects of comparison (*upamāna*) with their most highly touted quality, with a wealthy person's (*śrī*) best quality being good conduct (*vinaya*) and night's (*niśā*) best quality being the moon (*śaśin*). In the same way, the verse assigns excellent poetry's (*satkavitva*) best quality as refined language (*vāgvidagdhatā*). This is all done in the negative by asking what each of the objects of comparison would be without their best quality. Here I point to the shift in tone. While each of the three comparisons in the first stanza (*BhKĀ* 1.3) contains a syntactic parallelism of similes with the state possessed by a genitive agent in the negative, the two in the second stanza (*vinayena vinā kā śrīh kā niśā śaśinā vinā*, *BhKĀ* 1.4ab) referring to the state of cleverness in speech shift registers by employing rhetorical figures of sound and meaning. In this half stanza, the repetition of the labial and dental elements *vi-na/ā* create alliterative bookends holding in the cerebral and velar *kā* and *ś-* elements in the center of the first half line, while the second half line interweaves the two general points of articulation.³³⁴ Also at play is the rhetorical figure of *vinokti*, a figure of speech using *vinā*, “without,” mentioned, not by Bhāmaha but later by Mammata in *Kāvyaṇprakāśa*.³³⁵ I suggest that this shift into a more figural mode is an intentional gesture to show, not just tell, what is meant by this state of cleverness in speech.

From the stanzas above, we see parallels between Daṇḍin's use of *vidagdha* and Bhāmaha's of *vāgvidagdhatā*,” as well as Daṇḍin's *kavitva* and Bhamaha's *satkavitva*. The two theorists agree that even the untalented might be able to master *śāstra* through training. However, while Daṇḍin offers hope for the clever amateur poet, Bhāmaha judges cleverness as useless without the ability to write good poetry. Whereas Bhāmaha seems to be writing for the rarefied audience of the already talented, Daṇḍin offers a social space for other types of poets and literati. While Bhāmaha's preamble has immortal fame as the ultimate goal of his ideal poet, Daṇḍin, on the other hand, allows that poetry can and should be produced as entertainment, given the proper circumstances. Thus far, I have suggested that unlike Bhāmaha's *Kāvyaṇlankāra*, Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* offers the scope of its work, not only to the professional poet, seeking immortal fame through their work, but also to the social poet using *kāvya* as a means to entertain and socialize with other learned folk. This gestures toward the types of sociability that formations like the *goṣṭhī* allow. Moreover, it breaks down monolithic notions of *kāvya* composition only

333. D'Avella translates the *sādhu* as “sound” poetry. D'Avella, “Creating the Perfect Language,” 67.

334. This type of *anuprāsa* is one that is authorized in *BhKĀ* 2.5. Though not given a special name, Gerow considers it *upanāgaraka*, or an urbane type of alliteration versus the *grāmya* version exemplified in *BhKĀ* 2.6. Edwin Gerow, *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 103. Of the three types of *anuprāsa* that Bhāmaha lists, (the default type, *grāmya*, *lātā*) this one falls under the category of default.

335. *Kāvyaṇprakāśa* of Mammata 171, pp. 673–74 (BORI ed.).

existing under the auspices of courtly patronage. Rather, the idea of elites enjoying poetry as a social act comes to the fore.

In summary, Daṇḍin's stance on the qualifications of a poet and his overarching view of language as stated in the opening *pariccheda*-chapter suggest that he intends a broad audience for his work. This view is placed into strong relief when compared to Bhāmaha's work and the more rarefied vision of the poet that he sets forth. Although Daṇḍin's *śāstra* makes only three mentions of the *goṣṭhī*, the discussion above suggests that this in itself is a break from Bhāmaha who does not mention any site of *kāvya* production. To further the view that the later theorist locates his text, at least partly, in a social milieu is suggested in the content of the larger work. While Bhāmaha's work emphasizes the philosophy of language, i.e., traditional *śāstra* and both its priority for and culmination in composing excellent poetry, Daṇḍin's work focuses on the other areas of refinement. For instance, while no longer available through the *Kāvyādarśa*'s manuscript tradition, Daṇḍin's discussion of *doṣas*, "poetic faults," suggests that there was once included a chapter on the *kalās*. This priority of the *kalās* comes into relief in the *doṣa* section of Daṇḍin's work. In his discussion of the poetic fault of *kalāvirodha* (inconsistency in [the poetic representation of] the *kalās*, "refined arts")), Daṇḍin refers to a missing *pariccheda* in his work. Noting an example of this *doṣa*, he says, "In this way, let inconsistency in reference to the sixty-four arts be brought out. The form of these will appear in the *pariccheda*-chapter on *kalās*."³³⁶ Although this section of the *Kāvyādarśa* is no longer available, its inclusion in Daṇḍin's work points to the work's overall focus on the arts and the skills of social refinement in a way that Bhāmaha's does not. Daṇḍin's work is as much a work about social refinement as it is for the professional poet.

Among all of the differences between Bhāmaha's and Daṇḍin's philosophies of poetic composition, one that has rarely been discussed up to this point is the question of *adhikārī*, the authorized poet. By considering how the two theorists situate both their works and the composition of poetry in general within the context of a *śāstra*, we see that Bhāmaha writes for the rare poet blessed with poetic genius and unwavering in attaining the knowledge of the linguistically oriented *śāstras* to produce *satkavitva* that will bring about everlasting fame. Daṇḍin, on the other hand, allows for a range of poets—from those endowed with all three traits of poetic genius, excellent education, and intense training—to those who, though not naturally gifted, make an effort and are therefore entitled to compose poetry in the context of the *goṣṭhī* as a means of socializing with their peers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: The Emergence of the Social Poet

336. *DaKĀ* 3.171:

itthaṃ kalācatuṣṣaṣṭau virodhaḥ sādhu nīyatām |
tasyāḥ kalāparicchede rūpam āvirbhaviṣyati ||

It has been well shown that the *kalāpariccheda* is not a separate work by Daṇḍin. It is either a missing section of the *Kāvyādarśa* itself. Alternatively, this could be a reference to another work called the *Kalāpariccheda*.

The discussion above focuses on the aesthetic debates between Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha. These debates are not insular. Instead, they indicate larger aesthetic practices in the world in which these texts were created. Primarily, the analysis above suggests that literary production in early-medieval South Asia did not only take place through horizontal relationships like that of the poet and patron. Through the discussion, we see that Daṇḍin's treatise points to a different type of poetic practice outside of the economically transactional practice of poet-patron to a social practice—a means of social interaction, an interaction grounded in the aesthetics of poetic performance. By seeing the *Kāvyaḍarśa* as a handbook for both the professional poet and the social poet, the structure of the work also becomes more legible. For example, when considering some of the different figures outlined in Bhāmaha's and Daṇḍin's works, scholars have observed that Daṇḍin places more emphasis than his predecessor on *śabdālankāras*, "figures of sound." In fact, he dedicates nearly the entire third *pariccheda*-chapter to figures such as *yamaka*, the "twinning" or repetition of the same words or phrases that provide different meanings (*DaKĀ* 3.1–77), *citrakāvya*, "picture poetry" (*DaKĀ* 3.78–82), *niyama*, "restrictions" on individual phonemes or places of articulation (*DaKĀ* 3.83–96), and *prahelikā*, the "riddle" or "word game" (*DaKĀ* 3.97–124). Let us consider the reasons why figures of sound might play such an important role in the *Kāvyaḍarśa*.

Here Stephen Vose's work on Jinaprabhasūri, a fourteenth-century Jain scholar, is productive. Highlighting the idea of the *goṣṭhī* as the primary space for word games and other types of *citrakāvya*, "tricky poetry," or as Daṇḍin calls it, *duṣkarakāvya*, "difficult poetry," Vose argues that these difficult figures theorized by Daṇḍin and then later rejected as by Ānandavardhana and the *rasadhvani* school had a specific purpose: "to establish a poet's *bona fides* to his peers—Jain and non-Jain intellectuals alike—by demonstrating one's mastery of grammar, lexicography, poetics, prosody, and allied subjects essential to participating in the *goṣṭhī*, the premiere intellectual stage in late medieval and early modern India."³³⁷ Though Vose's study investigates a later historical period, the relationship between these figures in the *Kāvyaḍarśa* and the passages discussed in this chapter suggest that these specific figures highlighted by Daṇḍin, and not by Bhāmaha, play a role in the making of the social poet. The *Kāvyaḍarśa* points to this as well in its discussion of *prahelikā* and the contexts for its use:

prahelikāprakārāṇāṃ punar uddiśyate gatiḥ ||
krīḍāgoṣṭhīvinodeṣu tajiñair ākīrṇamantraṇe |
paravyāmohane cāpi sopayogāḥ prahelikāḥ ||DaKĀ 3.96cd–97 ||

Now the way of [composing] various kinds of word games (*prahelikā*) is about to be shown. Word games are used by those in the know for amusement during social meetings in the *goṣṭhī*, for consulting privately in public spaces, and also for bewildering others.

337. Steven M. Vose, "Jain Uses of *Citrakāvya* and Multiple-Language Hymns in Late Medieval India: Situating the *Laghukāvya* Hymns of Jinaprabhasūri in the 'Assembly of Poets,'" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 20, no. 3 (2016): 313.

The *prahelikā* discussed here is specifically meant in the context of the *krīḍāgoṣṭhī*, a purely social gathering, where only those conversant in word games are able to participate. The passage gives two other situations for using word games, to consult privately with others and to confuse others. In each of these cases, the ability to play word games provides social capital for those who know them (*tajjñaiḥ*).

Conclusion

The *Avantisundarī* is an understudied work that has been overshadowed by the other works attributed to Daṇḍin, the *Kāvyādarśa* and the *Daśakumāracarita*. This dissertation calls for a more serious engagement with the *Avantisundarī*, and in doing so, it calls for a re-engagement with theories of *gadyakāvya*. For, despite conforming in its ornate prose style to the other early prose works of Bāṇa and Subandhu, it defies several of the genre features of the *kathā*, thus creating a more complex picture of the *gadyakāvya* form. Moreover, its rich paratextual material with its biographical depiction of its author invite new ways of envisioning both its author Daṇḍin and authors in general. While the dissertation is anchored in its engagement with the *Avantisundarī*, it reaches beyond the world of the text, its genre, and its author to intervene in conversations with other early theorists such as Bhāmaha, Vāmana, Rudraṭa. It also puts itself in conversation with other early *gadyakāvya* works. And it attempts to better understand how the historical poet was imagined, not only in Daṇḍin's prose, but in his theoretical work as well.

Genre in *Alaṅkāraśāstra*

The dissertation began by locating *gadyakāvya* within a broader history of *alaṅkāraśāstra*. The current view of *gadyakāvya* has focused on the formal features of the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* genres as set forth by Bhāmaha's *Kāvyālaṅkāra* as a starting point and Rudraṭa's *Kāvyālaṅkāra* as an end point. In this discussion, the features of Bāṇa's influential prose works, *Kādambarī* and *Harṣacarita*, ultimately became the models for their respective genre. While this model has been productive in terms of thinking about genre in the history of premodern South Asian poetics, its broad acceptance has created some complacency about other possible ways to conceive of *gadyakāvya* genre during this period. In this regard, my dissertation makes two primary interventions. The first has to do with definitions of the field of Sanskrit poetics and the second has to do with the relationship between literary genre and narrative source material.

Through a close reading of the earlier *alaṅkāra* texts, this dissertation points to a number of diachronic shifts taking place in theoretical discussions around genre. Most notably, it argues that, by using rhetorical strategies of omission and reordering, the early Sanskrit literary theorists present themselves as part of a dynamically changing field. More specifically this is a field that distances itself from the established field of *drśyakāvya* as expressed in earlier works of dramatic theory, such as Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. This is exemplified by the way that Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, and Vāmana pass over any significant discussion of plays as a literary genre and, instead, prioritize the genres of *śravyakāvya*—namely, *mahākāvya*, *kathā*, and *ākhyāyikā*. This is not to say that early theorists undervalued *drśyakāvya*. Rather *śravyakāvya* was being redefined as an independent field. We also see a historical change in the way genre is prioritized and conceived of in the placement of genre features within a text. Whereas Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin locate their breakdowns of literary genre in the introductions of their works, after Vāmana the discussion of

the *prabandha*, “composition as a whole,” and, by metonymy, discussion of genre gets relegated to the later chapters of *alaṅkāra* works. Reading these treatises through the lens of genre not only points to innovations specific to genre, it also brings to the fore changes in the role of the poet’s imagination when composing *kāvya*. This is seen in the more complex ways that plots—whether they are *utpādyā*, “invented,” or *anutpādyā*, “uninvented”—are negotiated in later discussions of *gadyakāvya*. In all of these genre-related discussions, there is a sense that the early poetic theorists are navigating a field that is still in flux. While this observation, especially in the case of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, has been made before, reading this shift through developments in genre more fully invigorates our understanding.

The second intervention arises as an answer to a question: while the *Avantisundarī* and other works such as *Vāsavadattā* and *Kādambarī* have the features of prose *kathās*, why do commentators regularly refer to them as *ākhyāyikās*? Here the historical precedent of Patañjali’s grammatical treatise, *Mahābhāṣya* (2nd c. BCE) with its earlier references to *ākhyāyikā* and to the *Vāsavadattā* as an *ākhyāyikā* are helpful. If we follow the logic of the grammatical grouping that the *ākhyāyikā* falls under, it becomes clear that the *ākhyāyikā* of the *Mahābhāṣya* is not a literary genre. Rather, it functions in this sense as a narrative genre, or more specifically, a historical genre that narrates a particular imagining of the past. In this case, it relates the deeds of historical kings. To put the two *ākhyāyikās* in conversation, the *ākhyāyikā* of the *Mahābhāṣya* serves as the *kathāśraya*, “narrative source,” for the literary prose genres, both *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*. The relationship between the *Vāsavadattā* of the grammatical text and the famed *gadyakāvya* is governed here by a certain logic. In this case it is the logic of its genre. While the historical *Vāsavadattā*, beloved of king Udayana of Vatsa, might have been the narrative source for the prose poet Subandhu, with *utpādyā*, “invention,” as a genre feature for his *gadyakathā*, the early *Vāsavadattā* was transformed beyond recognition.

In locating *gadyakāvya* within a broader historical context, this dissertation sets the groundwork for a history of *gadyakāvya* that has yet to be written. Engaging with earlier sources outside of the *alaṅkāraśāstra* tradition opens the door for a more extensive study of *gadyakāvya*’s “pre-history.” And working with a broader number of *alaṅkāraśāstras* would inflect the conversations started here on the relationship between *nāṭyaśāstra* and *alaṅkāraśāstra*; the poet’s imagination as a genre consideration; and the place of the *prabandha* in poetics. For the latter, Kuntaka’s discussion of *prabandhavakratā*, “indirection on the level of the composition” in the fourth *unmeṣa*-chapter of *Vakroktijīvitā* (*Essence of Indirect Speech*, 950–1050 CE) would be a good starting point. Due to its scope, this project addresses the literary theorists from the sixth to the mid-ninth century who address *gadyakāvya* directly in their treatises prior to the *rasa-dhvani* turn. Thus, Udbhaṭa’s *Kāvyaālaṅkārasārasaṃgraha*, Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka* and the *alaṅkāra* sections of the *Agnipurāṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* were not part of this conversation. Given that theorists continued to discuss *gadyakāvya* and other genre-related topics beyond the early-medieval time frame, a complete history of *gadyakāvya* would benefit from a longer diachronic reach. Given Viśvānātha’s engagement with both the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*, when looking forward, it would be productive to have his *Sāhityadarpana* (*Mirror of Literature*, 14th c. CE) as an ending point.

Poetic Conventions in the *Avantisundarī*

Having discussed *gadyakāvya* in the early history of Sanskrit poetics, my dissertation then turns to the *gadyakāvya* works themselves. Given the robust paratextual material in the *Avantisundarī*, my project looks closely at the *kāvyaārambha*, “the [verse] preamble to a poem.” And a close reading of the *kāvyaārambha* suggests that the verse introduction to a literary work serves both an aesthetic function, as an ornament of the work as a whole, and a rhetorical function, as a space where authors might articulate their projects and their affiliations with other texts and traditions. A longue durée view of the preamble’s *maṅgalācaraṇa* and *kavipraśamsā* suggest that, during the second half of the first millennium CE, literary genre played a role in the type of opening verse a Sanskrit *kāvya* had. Whereas most *mahākāvyas* opened with a *vastunirdeśa* verse, “indication of a work’s plot,” *gadyakāvyas* tended to open with a *namaskriyā* verse, “respectful salutation.”³³⁸ Not only does this hold true for the *Avantisundarī*, which opens with a salutation to the Trimūrti, but a closer examination of the *Avantisundarī*’s *maṅgalācaraṇa* in conversation with verses of other works related to Daṇḍin shows that these verses resonate with each other in their use of literary tropes and choice of *iṣṭadevatā*, “chosen deity.” While not all sharing the same features, the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of these works do share a “family resemblance” which suggests that later literary traditions imagined a single Daṇḍin as both theorist and prose poet.

If the opening benedictory verses of works attributed to and associated with Daṇḍin nod toward shared authorship, imagined or otherwise, the *Avantisundarī*’s *kavipraśamsā* points to narrative affinities through a deeply intertextual relationship with the *Brhatkathā* and related works. The *kavipraśamsā*, as a poetic convention, does not appear in every *kāvyaārambha*, nor is it a regular feature in any particular *kāvya* genre. However, during the period under discussion, the works that have a section of praise to poets in their preambles all praise the *Brhatkathā* or its traditional author Guṇāḍhya. This association with the *Brhatkathā* in the *kavipraśamsā* is in accord with the genre of the works themselves; for the most part, these works are composed in prose, and later in a mixture of prose and verse. Drawing from these connections between literary genre and narrative source, I contend that the relationship between genre, source material, and poetic convention is not arbitrary. Instead, together these three elements signal a *kāvya*’s affiliations and performative contexts.

By analyzing the *maṅgalācaraṇa* and *kavipraśamsā* of the poetic preamble in the *Avantisundarī* and in *kāvya* more broadly, I strengthen the claim that these literary features have discursive power and histories of their own. This is not to say that these features function similarly across textual genres, communities, regions, and historical periods. While this research has focused on intersections and commonalities as a baseline theory, more work is needed in considering contingencies of time, place, and community. For example, this research into the poetic preamble has brought to light a Kashmiri textual exceptionalism in regard to the

338. Cf. Boccali, “Incipits of Classical Sargabandhas,” 183–205

kāvyaārambha, at least during the period under study. Given the project’s focus on the *Avantisundarī*, other *gadyakāvya* works with different features in their poetic preambles have yet to be explored using analytical frameworks based on questions of literary and narrative genre.

Sociability in the *Avantisundarī* and Beyond

Along with the poetic preamble, the *Avantisundarī* has a framing narrative that rivals the descriptions of the author in the frame of Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita*. Given that the *Avantisundarī* frame depicts the family history and life of Daṇḍin, as author, up to the point when he retells the story of *Avantisundarī* to his companions, there has been an impulse to read the material as a transparent biography without considering form, narrativity, and other aesthetic concerns of the poem. Rather than seek the historical author in the *Avantisundarī*’s framing narrative, this project focuses on the work’s literary qualities to better understand how the historical author was imagined in *gadyakāvya* works. The *Avantisundarī*’s framing narrative emphasizes mobility and social networks in the representations of its poets, namely Daṇḍin and his great-grandfather Dāmodara. In representations of Daṇḍin, Bāṇa, and the later Kashmiri verse poets Kṣmendra and Maṅkha, we see similar coming-of-age tropes that highlight the loss of a father. And, in Daṇḍin’s and Bāṇa’s cases, they include a period of education through their travels. Even more striking are the similar circumstances of literary production that take place between Daṇḍin and the Kashmiri poets. These involve a request from a social peer for a story, either in written or oral form, followed by a period of ritual purification where the author receives the story through divine transmission, often in a dream. These representations of the divinely inspired author foreground social connections over royal patronage. And their narrative portability across literary genres, locations, and centuries suggest a new social aesthetic of the author.

Having considered representations of Daṇḍin as the poet-author of the *Avantisundarī*, the dissertation comes full circle retuning to the *alaṅkāraśāstra* works, this time with its focus on the poet-author in Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa*. The question of audience for works of *alaṅkāraśāstra* has been widely debated. And, aside from such works as Rājaśekhara’s *Kāvyaṁīmāṃsā*, the world in which *kāvya* is produced and performed has been subsumed within these texts by taxonomies of the *kāvya* itself, what animates it, what makes it beautiful and what makes it faulty. This is especially the case for Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa*, which has influenced numerous regional-language works in South Asia and beyond. An exploration of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa* in conversation with his commentators and with Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaālankāra* suggests that, as in the *Avantisundarī*’s frame, aesthetic sensibilities grounded in the poet’s social milieu are coming to the fore.

While much ground has been covered in this exploration of a single work of *gadyakāvya*, there is much more ground to traverse. As part of the tradition of Sanskrit *kathā* literature—with *kathā* being used in the broader sense of literature based on narrative traditions like the *Bṛhatkathā*—the *Avantisundarī*’s story proper has yet to be explored. This would be the next step in this study. And, along with the tools of analysis presented here, relatively recent scholarship on story literature at large would also offer productive conceptual frameworks and reading

practices to approach these future studies.³³⁹ As a preliminary discussion of the *Avantisundarī* and its relationship to issues of genre and narrative, this dissertation has asked new questions about prose poetry. In doing so, it has suggested ways to better understand how *gadyakāvya* has been theorized and ways of understanding the social world of authors in early-medieval South Asia.

339. Although the bulk of the following literature pertains to verse *kathā* literature, most of the analytical frameworks and other tools for reading can also be applied to prose: Daud Ali, “Temporality, Narration and the Problem of History: A View From Western India C. 1100–1400,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50, no. 2 (2013): 237–59; Whitney Cox, “Literary Register and Historical Consciousness in Kalhaṇa: A Hypothesis,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50, no. 2 (2013): 131–60; Luther James Obrock, “Translation and History: The Development of a Kashmiri Textual Tradition From ca. 1000-1500” (diss., UC Berkeley, 2015), 13–30; Herman Tieken, “Bāṇa’s Death in the *Kādambarī*,” in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, eds. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 263–76.

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