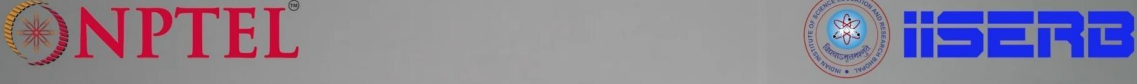


An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory
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Lecture- 09
Sanskrit Literary Theory in the Colonial Period

Hello everyone. So far, we have been talking about the history of Sanskrit poetics in the early and medieval phases. Now, what was happening to Sanskrit poetics during the colonial and the postcolonial phases? This is what we are going to explore in this lecture. Scholars like Pollock argue that the colonial period marks an important period in the history of Sanskrit poetics since this period literally brings the active period of Sanskrit poetics to a closure or end. In his article, Indian knowledge systems on the eve of colonialism Pollock remarks,

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“With the spread of European power, however, this dynamism of Sanskrit knowledge systems to produce something new diminished so much that by 1800, the capacity of Sanskrit thought to make history had vanished. The production of moral–legal texts, for example, which was so extensive throughout the seventeenth–century, ceased entirely, and in core disciplines like hermeneutics or literary theory no significant scholarship—that is, significant in the eyes of the tradition itself—was again to be written.”

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Here what Pollock is saying is that the vigour with which treatises on Sanskrit poetics were being produced in the Indian subcontinent during the colonial period considerably dwindled. This does not mean that there were no treatises on Sanskrit poetics from this period.

It is interesting to note that even during the colonial period, scholars continue to produce treatises in Sanskrit poetics. A few cases in point in this respect include Ciranjivi Bhattacharya's Kavyavilasa, Hariprasada Mathura's Kavyarthagumpha, Garalapuri Sastri's Krsnabhupaliyam, Candamarutacarya's Citramimamsodhara, Ram Pisharody's Dhvanyalokalocanakhayika, Acutacarya's Sahityasasra, and Gulaba Rava Maharaja's Kavyasutrasamhita. So, these works were getting produced during the colonial period. So, it is not like colonial period is actually marked by the total absence of theories or treatises in literary theory. But the interesting fact is that none of these texts turned out to be the decisive works shaping the trajectory of Sanskrit poetics as Jagannatha's Rasagangadhara or Appayya Diksita's Kuvalayananda did in the previous period.

A lot of warnings should also be sounded here now. Though Sanskrit kavyasastra texts continued to get produced in the 19th century, the amount of original thought that went into these texts remains to be determined. Any categorical observation about the originality of these texts in terms of their interaction with the tradition requires a great amount of work. However, one thing we can say for certain is that none of these texts composed during the colonial period could become landmarks in the history of Sanskrit poetics as Jagannatha's Rasagangadhara or Appayya Diksita's Kuvalayananda could do in the previous epoch.

So, what triggered the sudden plummet of Sanskrit the literary theory or Sanskrit kavyasastra from its apotheosis was obviously the policies of the colonial government. The most prominent among them was undoubtedly the educational charter of 1813.

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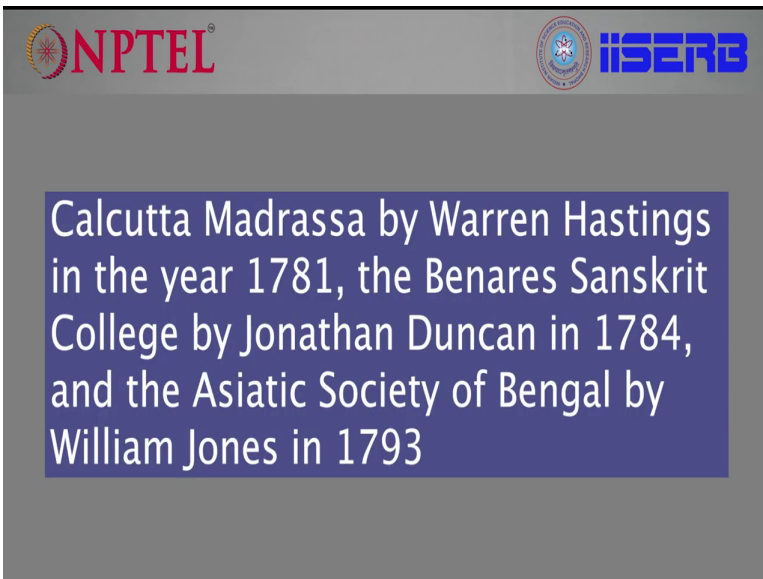
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The charter announced that a sum of not less than one lakh rupees in each year shall be set apart for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India. Following this charter, there emerged a heated debate regarding the medium and the mode of instruction or education that should be implemented in the educational institutions in colonial India.

While a group of intellectuals called the orientalist favoured the policy of encouraging oriental literature in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. Another sect known as Anglicists stood for the promotion of western education. Finally, the disputes of both the parties were submitted to Thomas Babington Macauley, who in 1835 recommended that western education should be promoted in India through the medium of English.

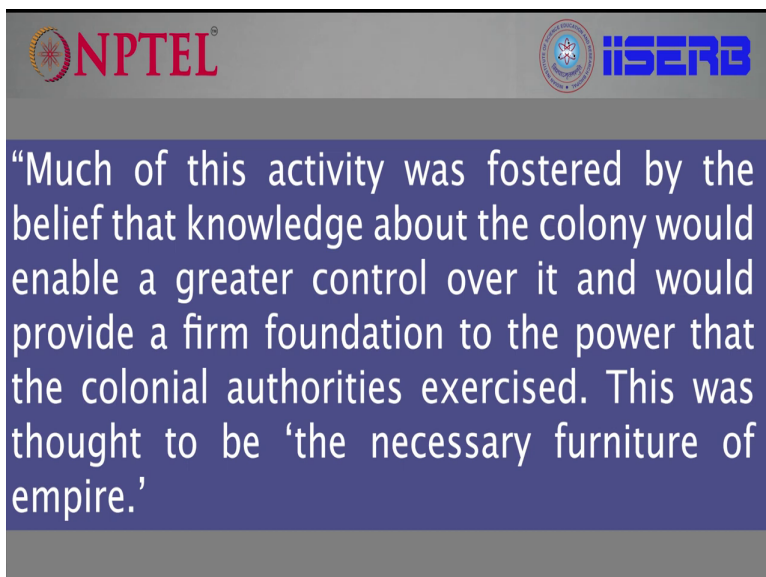
Despite the upper hand of the Anglicists in academia, the efforts of the orientalists, especially European orientalists, to keep up interest in the classic and knowledge system undoubtedly bore fruit.

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Particularly important among their initiatives was the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa by Warren Hastings in the year 1781, the Banaras Sanskrit College by Jonathan Duncan in 1784 and the Asiatic Society Of Bengal by William Jones in 1793. This does not imply that the actions of the European orientalist to promote the classical epistemologies in India were absolutely unmotivated.

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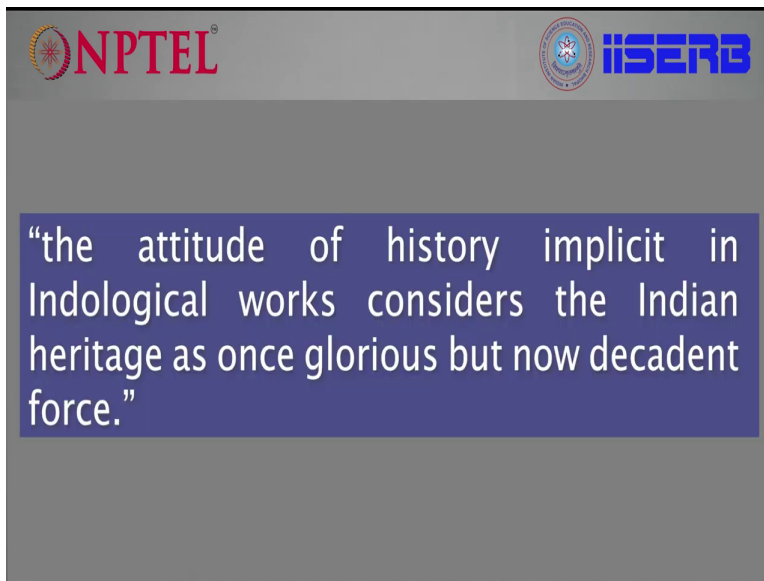


Thapar observed much of this activity was fostered by the belief that knowledge about the colony would enable greater control over it and would provide a firm foundation to the power that the colonial authorities exercised. This was thought to be the necessary furniture of empire.

The aim behind the establishment of the Fort William College at Calcutta in 1800 was specifically to teach the British officials the local language and tradition.

It also served as a very effective tool especially ideological tool, for them to warrant their civilizing mission. By presenting Sanskrit literature and other scholarly disciplines from what they call the Hindu period, the orientalist historiographers indoctrinated the idea that early India marked the heyday of Indian civilization and what followed the early Indian period, namely the medieval or the Muslim period, was a period of decadence and stagnation without any remarkable high points of cultural achievements.

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So, according to Devy, “the attitude of history implicit in Indological works considers the Indian heritage as one's glorious but now decadent force.”

Presenting the western intervention as a sole panacea for the restoration of Indian civilization to its past glory, the orientalist historians often emphasize the necessity of their civilizing mission. Since the orientalist's engagement with the scholarly disciplines from the past remained only at the level of reconstructing a glorious past to juxtapose it with the present state of decadence, they paid very little attention to critically deal with these traditional epistemologies or concepts.

Even the Indian scholars who were working in this area could not pose a considerable resistance to this general trend that was happening at that time. But what is generally significant about this period is that many texts of Sanskrit the literary science which were thought to be lost forever, were reconstructed from their available fragments. A glance at the

various stages through which Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita was reconstructed bears witness to the amount of energy and meticulous research that went into this process.

Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita, which was long thought to be lost and known only through the citations in later texts of kavyasastra was available to us primarily through the efforts of S. K. De and Krishnamoorthy. S.K. De brought out a copy of Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita in 1923 based on two Devanagari manuscripts of a Malayalam manuscript which was also lost at some point from the oriental manuscripts library in Madras.

The manuscript seemed to have contained four chapters, but the last chapter in the manuscript broke off without any conclusion. The third chapter also contained a lot of gaps in it. So, there was unable to publish a readable text. However, he brought out an edition of Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita with the two chapters and the resume of the contents of the last two chapters. This arrangement was still necessary even in the second edition in 1928. When a new edition of Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita was brought out after a new manuscript was actually found in Jaisalmer. Despite these limitations, his edition was quite crucial in introducing Kuntaka's idea of Vakrokti to the readers of modern India. A coherent and readable text of the Jivita, along with a translation, came out in 1977 through the efforts of Krishnamoorti. For this edition, Krishnamoorti, in fact, collated a transcript of the last two chapters of the madras manuscript and combined it with the same portions of the new Jaisalmer manuscript and the Vakroktijivita extracts in the Kalpalatakaviveka. For the first two chapters, he made use of the Jaisalmer manuscript along with De's 1928 edition. These efforts finally came to fruition in the form of a readable text for Vakroktijivita.

Almost all other key texts of Sanskrit poetics that we now have access to have gone through similar process of editing and careful textual scrutiny. The second important aspect which characterizes this period is the dissemination of the text of Sanskrit literary theory through printing as well as the translation of these texts into English and other vernacular languages.

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Bibliotheca Indica, Gaekwad Oriental series,
Nirnayasagar press, Motilal Banarsidass,
Anandashram Sanskrit Series, Trivandrum
Sanskrit Series and so on

The vital force behind this process was obviously the publishers of classical series such as Bibliotheca Indica, Gaekwad Oriental series, Narnyasagar press, Motilal Banarsidass, Anandashram Sanskrit series, Trivandrum Sanskrit series and so on. The translation of many key texts of Sanskrit kavyasastra into English and other languages also played a vital role in disseminating knowledge about Sanskrit poetics among modern scholars who could not read and understand the original text written in the Sanskrit language.

Some of the most prominent works in this direction include S. K. De's translation of Kuntaka's Vakroktijivita, Manmohan Ghosh's English translation of Bharatha's Natyasastra, Vavila Venkateswara Sastralu translation of Dandin's Kavyadarsa, George Hass's translation of Dhananjaya's Dasarupaka, Daniel H. H. Ingalls translation of Anandavardhana's Dhvanyaloka with the commentary of Abinavagupta Locana, C. Sankara Sastri's translation of Dandin's Kavyadarsha, P. V. Nagananda Shastry's translation of Bhamaha's Kavyalankara. K. Ganganath Jha's translation of Mammata's Kavyaprakasa, Krishnamoorthy's English translation of Abinavagupta's Abhinavabharathi, Vamana's kavyalankarasutravratti, Mammata's Kavyaprakasha and Ksemendra's Aucityavicaracarca and Kavikanthabharana by some other translators. Along with the translation of the key text of Sanskrit poetics, many handbooks giving a cursory glance that the various concept of Sanskrit poetics also got published during this period.

They played a vital role in creating awareness about Sanskrit poetics among modern academicians. The most important ones among them are S. K De's history of Sanskrit Poetic in 2 volumes, A. Shankaran's Some Aspects of Literary criticism in Sanskrit, V. Raghavan's

Some concepts of Alankarasastra, Kuppuswamy Sastry's Highways and Byways of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit, P. V. Kane's History of Sanskrit Poetics, Edwin Garro's Sanskrit Poetics, K. C. Pandey's Comparative Aesthetics, Surya Narayana Hedge's The Concept Of Vakrokti in Sanskrit poetics: A Reappraisal etc. Through the recovery of texts central to Sanskrit poetics and their translation into modern languages, this space in Sanskrit politics played a vital role in disseminating the knowledge about Sanskrit poetics among scholars who did not have any organic relationship with Sanskrit or Sanskrit scholarship in general.

So, these are the major points that we need to keep in our mind when we think about the colonial phase in the history of Sanskrit politics. So, I will just give an overview of all the major concepts that we have discussed so far. First of all, during the colonial period, we can see many treatises in Sanskrit politics being composed. But we are not sure about the amount of originality that has actually gone into the making of these texts.

The second thing is that there happened a lot of translation of Sanskrit works, especially treatises in Sanskrit poetics, from Sanskrit into English and other vernacular languages. And also, the printing helped the dissemination of the texts in Sanskrit poetics. I hope you have understood all the major lessons that we have discussed in this lesson. Thank you.