Chapter 1

Introduction

Here for your delectation and edification is the entire collection of tales known as The Ocean of the Streams of Story. If you ever run out of material you will find plenty in here (Rushdie, Haroun 51).

The Kathāsaritsāgara, popularly known as The Ocean of Story, is a medieval text that has enthralled generations of readers and listeners, transporting them to a world of adventure and magic.* Waxing eloquent about this collection of tales which he says, for its size, is “the earliest collection of stories extant in the world” (xxxii), N. M. Penzer, an early twentieth century editor of the English text says in his introduction that it is truly an ocean full of stories of every conceivable description - tales of wondrous maidens and their fearless lovers, of Kings and cities, of statecraft and intrigue, of magic and spells, of treachery, trickery, murder and war, tales of blood sucking vampires, devils, goblins and ghouls, stories of animals in fact and fable, and

Note

* This dissertation has used The Ocean of Story by Charles Henry Tawney which is the complete English translation of Somadeva’s Kathāsaritsāgara as its primary material. Hence all the textual references are to The Ocean of Story henceforth referred to by the abbreviation OS. The popular title Kathāsaritsāgara has been used when referring to the original work by Somadeva because it portrays vividly the picture of various streams of stories flowing down to become an ocean.
stories too of beggars, ascetics, drunkards, gamblers, prostitutes and bawds. (xxx)

These tales have enthralled generations not only in the form of literature but also in film and television versions, cartoons and comic strips. Many of the embedded story cycles like *Vikramāditya and Veṣalā* and the *Pañcatantra* etc. enjoy great popularity and form an integral part of the Indian cultural milieu. Generations have enjoyed these enduring stories in their different versions without even realising that they owe their origin to this vast ocean of stories. Television shows like *Vikram and Betal* aired on DD National in the late eighties and early nineties had become a part of the mental makeup of a whole generation. Even today cartoon channels continue to telecast these age old stories with their interesting story line and endearing characters which still fascinate both children and adults. Their perennial appeal is once again brought to light as comic books based on these stories are newly launched. Large numbers of children have enjoyed the *Amar Chitra Katha* and various other comics in regional languages based on the *Kathāśaritśāgara*. A large number of comics and television series which make innovative use of the age old characters from the *Pañcatantra* and other stories and place them in the modern world are brought out. These versions help today’s generation to enjoy ancient Indian classics in the comic book format.

The *Kathāśaritśāgara* is often assigned to the realm of children’s literature. But its importance is not just one of entertainment value. Modern
scholars acknowledge the artistic value of fables and with the development of narrative theory the critics have turned their attention towards the structure of the frame tale. But our interest in the work is based on the valuable store of information which it provides about the contemporary society. As Satya Vrat Shastri states in the foreword to Nirmal Trikha’s *Faith and Beliefs in the Kathāsaritsāgara*:

> Literature is generally the mirror to the age in which it is produced. Whatever its motivation, the urges and aspirations of the people, the mould of their thinking, as a matter of fact, their entire way of life gets reflected in it. It, therefore, is the surest medium and a fairly reliable one at that in gauging the make-up of a society of a given age. It is bound to contain within it bits of information on its varied aspects which when pieced together can yield a fairly clear picture of the contemporary society.

> The bigger the work, the greater the scope for this exercise . . .

. . . Herein is dealt with a voluminous work, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* which, as the title itself makes out, is an ocean of stories. With an enormous variety of plots woven in them, they are a veritable ‘ocean’ of information to a sociologist, an anthropologist and a historian. (vii)

Commenting on the connection between texts and events Wendy Doniger equates texts with events and remarks that they are also “a major
source of information about material culture: If we cannot always find the archaeological remains of a plow, we might at least find a text that mentions a plow . . .” (34). In *The Language of Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India*, Sheldon Pollock bemoans the tendency to assume that “textualised representations” are somehow less real than material practices and are less “consequential in actuality, and so less worthy of historiographical scrutiny and analysis.” He asserts that to reject such representations on the grounds that they are not “true” is “a simple category error” (7).

A text may contain real as well as symbolic levels simultaneously because symbols are a product of real events and sentiments and vice versa. Doniger calls myth “the smoke of history” as “myths are responses to historical events.” Stories are also facts. They are the driving force behind the events that follow as they were what the present as well as the past generations had access to. Doniger remarks: “For we are what we imagine, as much as what we do” (24).

The *Kathāsaritsāgara* is the product of a particular socio-cultural milieu. The central premise of this project is that this medieval frame tale is of great importance, not as a source of mere entertainment, but as a valuable source of information regarding the society of the time. In Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the story teller Rashid tells his son Haroun: “In those long-gone days the Valley, which is now simply K, had other names. One, if I
remember correctly, was ‘Kache-Mer’... ‘Kache-Mer’ can be translated as ‘the place that hides a Sea’" (40). Doniger, who cites this conversation between father and son in text, remarks that the “sea that Kashmir hides (in this wordplay by Salman Rushdie) is the great Sanskrit Ocean of Story, composed in Kashmir, which Rushdie imagines lying submerged like other flooded lands in the Indian imagination” (503). An effort has been made to supplement the premises with evidences from historical works like Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī, written about 1148-1149, which gives a detailed history of the kings of Kashmir.

Somadeva, a Śaiva brahmana of Kashmir, is the author of this monumental work. But apart from a short poem towards the end of his work which provides the meagre biographical information that he was the son of Rāma, we have no other information about him. In the foreword to the first volume of The Ocean of Story, Richard Carnac Temple says that his “real name was Soma, deva being a mere suffix to the names of Brahmans, royalties and the like” (xii).

Scholars like A. Berriedale Keith, in A History of Sanskrit Literature, M. Krishnamachariar in the History of Classical Sanskrit Literature and Maurice Winternitz in the History of Indian Literature record that there were three writers named Somadeva in classical Sanskrit literature who lived in the medieval period. In chronological order, we have Somadeva who wrote the Yaśatilaka Campu in AD 951. He was patronized by the eldest son of Prince
Arikesari of the Calukya race, a feudatory of the Rastraskūta monarch Krishnarajadeva. He also wrote Nītīvākyāmrita, a work on polity. The colophon to his Nītīvākyāmrita mentions another work of his, Mahendramātalisanjalpa (Krishnamachariar 499-500; Keith 333; 463). Somadeva, the author of the Kathāśaritsāgara, lived in Kashmir and he wrote the collection of tales towards AD 1070 for the amusement of Queen Śuryamaṇī, the wife of King Ananta.

Another Somadeva composed the play LalitaVigrāhariṇa in AD 1153 in honour of King Vigrāhajadeva or Viśaladeva of Sakambhari or Sambhar, the son and successor of Arnoraj. It has been discovered as carved in two basalt plates discovered from a mosque in Ajmer (Krishnamachariar 643; Winternitz 3: 310). According to Krishnamachariar, “Somadeva, the author of Kathāśaritsāgara and Somadeva, the author of RasendraVyagamani and Somadeva, the author of Abhilasitārthacintamani are different persons” (499). So we can safely conclude that there were many Somadevas who lived during the same period and the author of the Kathāśaritsāgara was one among them. But he was undoubtedly the greatest among them in order of merit.

**Historical background**

Somadeva’s intention in writing the Kathāśaritsāgara was to amuse the Queen Śuryamaṇī and to help take her mind off from the troubles that plagued her. A brief look at the historical background would help us to gain a better understanding regarding the political situation of the time. The eminent historian R. C. Majumdar, in his Ancient India describes King Ananta as a
courageous ruler who “put down the revolt of the feudal chiefs and successfully repelled mohammedan invasions” (360). His wife, Queen Sūryamaāī played a leading part in this reign. She was a strong and efficient administrator who checked the extravagance and vagaries of the king. Gradually the authority of Kashmir was established over the neighbouring hill tracts. “But one feminine weakness destroyed all the good she had done. Blinded by filial affection she made the king abdicate the throne in favour of her son Kalasa (1063 AD). Kalasa was a licentious youth, and his dissolute character soon disgusted his parents” (360). Hostilities broke out, and after a prolonged struggle, Ananta committed suicide and the queen followed her husband to the funeral pyre. This historical event which is corroborated by Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī helps us in determining the date of composition of the Kathāsaritsāgara. Ananta surrendered his throne to his eldest son Kalaśa in AD 1063 only to reclaim it a few years later. In AD 1077 he again retired. This time Kalaśa attacked his father openly and seized all his wealth. Ananta killed himself in despair and Sūryamaāī threw herself on the funeral pyre. This was in 1081. Penzer in his introduction to The Ocean of Story concludes that Somadeva must have written the Kathāsaritsāgara “between the first and second retirements of Ananta from the throne . . . possibly about 1070” (xxxii).

Somadeva explicitly affirms that this store-house of tales and stories of all kind is not a composition of his own innovation. The Kathāsaritsāgara
is precisely on the model of that from which it is taken, there is not even the slightest deviation, only such language is selected as tends to abridge the prolixity of the work; the observance of propriety and natural connection, and the joining together of the portions of the poem so as not to interfere with the spirit of the stories, are as far as possible kept in view . . . (OS 1: 2)

The work is a Sanskrit version of an older and more extensive poem written in a vulgar dialect. Somadeva claims that he has not added to nor omitted anything from its contents. He has only abridged it and made a Sanskrit version of it taking care besides to embellish his work with the indispensable adornments required in a kavya and his main purpose has been to keep intact the relish of the tales narrated in the old poem. The monumental work, the Brhatkatha of Guṇāḍhya, which Somadeva reproduced in his Kathāsaritsāgara is unfortunately lost to the world now. Guṇāḍhya’s Brhatkatha or the “great romance” as J. A. B van Buitenen calls it (iii), “was apparently the first great novel produced by a kavi and probably the greatest Indian novel” (Warder 116). Guṇāḍhya wrote this in a language called Paiśāci which is “akin to Mahārāṣṭri Pākrit in many respects” (Deshpande 209). Brahmanand Deshpande mentions that the work was called Vaḍḍakaha originally but came to be known popularly by the title Brhatkatha (209).

Though the original text is irrecoverably lost, the Brhatkatha has come down to us in the form of various recensions. The most famous of them are
the two Kashmiri recensions, *Brhatkathāmaṇjari* by Kṣemendra and *Kathāsaritsāgara* by Somadeva. There is also a Nepali version, *Brhatkathāślokasamgraha* by Buddhaswamin. These are the three versions in Sanskrit. But scholars like Donald Nelson and A. K. Warder mention two other versions, the *Peruṅkathai* of Koṅkuveḷir in Tamil and Saṃghadāsaganin’s *Vasudevahimdi*, or Vasudeva’s wandering, a Jaina narrative in a Pṛākrit dialect called Old Jaina Maharaṣtri (Warder 117; Nelson 664). Another Sanskrit adaptation of the *Brhatkathā* is ascribed to the Gaṅga King Durviniṇīta in the mid sixth century (Pollock, *Language* 104). All versions except the *Vasudevahimdi* contain the story of the illustrious King Udayana and his son Naraṇāhanadatta who is fated to become the emperor of vidyādharas and to marry a host of women. Udayana was a historical king of the Vatsa country, with his capital at Kauśāmbi. Though there were several Udayanas, H. C. Seth in his essay “Identification of Udayna of Kauśāmbi with Udayin of Magadha” concludes, based on evidence from Buddhist, Jain and literary sources that both refer to the same person. But Naraṇāhanadatta is not a historical character. In *Vasudevahimdi*, Saṃghadāsaganī adapted the story of Naraṇāhanadatta, his adventures and marriages and attributed all these to Vasudeva, the ideal hero of the Jain (Rani Majumdar 23). So we may surmise along with Rani Majumdar that “while Udayana is a historical personality Naraṇāhanadatta is wholly a fictitious character invented by Guṇādhya” (21).
The story moves between the human world, Mount Kailāsa, the abode of Lord Śiva and also the other worldly kingdom of the vidyādharaś. The vidyādharaś or possessors of science are a race of celestial beings created by Śiva. They have their own kings and kingdoms. According to Hans van Buitenen, the vidyādha is “one among the twenty odd supernatural beings who occur in story literature” (306). Donald Nelson defines them as a class of magicians in possession of (dha) magical techniques (vidyā) that endow their possessors with extraordinary abilities such as the power to fly or to take any shape or to make oneself invisible. Vidyā are acquired by winning the favor of (śādhanā, ārādhana) or by ‘subduing’ (vaśikaraṇa) Vidyās, female godlings who possess and dispense such powers. (665)

Alberuni mentions in his work that vidyadhāraś are “demon-sorcerers, who exercise a certain witchcraft, but not such a one as to produce permanent results” (1: 91). Though Naravāhanadatta is a mortal he rises to the status of a vidyādha king by the powers of destiny and by marrying a host of vidyādha women, thereby acquiring the sciences himself. In his story the theme of “marital adventures were yoked with imperial conquest” (Nelson 667). Hans van Buitenen explains that though the vidyādha is originally a man, he represents “man becoming superman by virtue of knowledge” (306). The vidyādharas were not a creation of Guṇādhyya. Rani Majumdar also emphasizes Guṇādhyya’s debt to folk tradition. She quotes Ludwig Alsdorf on
the topic and states that Guṇāḍhya did not freely invent the vidyādhara but must have derived them from the folklore of the region (21).

The Kathāsaritsāgara, which Somadeva claims, is the exact representation of the Brhatkathā, opens with Pārvatī’s demand to Śiva for a story never told before. Śiva reminds her of her omniscience and tries to appease her with the story of her past life. Pārvatī chides him for not taking her seriously. Śiva relates the adventures of the seven vidyādhara princes because the gods are ever too self-contented and the mortals are perennially in distress which makes the vidyādhara ideal material for the stories as they combine in themselves human and divine nature. Pārvatī desires exclusiveness and expressly orders that no one should be admitted to the session but they are overheard by one of Śiva’s attendants, Puṣpadanta who had entered invisibly by means of his secret powers. He repeats these stories to his wife Jayā who happens to be Pārvatī’s doorkeeper. She, in turn repeats them to Pārvatī who is enraged that Śiva had told her a story which even her attendant knew. When she discovered the truth Pārvatī cursed Puṣpadanta in great anger that he might lose his rank which he was not to regain until he had met and related the tale to a yakṣa, Kāṇabhūti by name. Mālyavān, another attendant, who dared to intercede on behalf of Puṣpadanta was also placed under a curse which exiled him from heaven until he had heard the tale from Kāṇabhūti. Puṣpadanta was reborn as Vararuci, the great grammarian. He retired to the Vindhyas where he met Kāṇabhūti and remembered his former life. He
narrated the tale to Kaṇabhūti and was released from his curse. Mālayāvan, born as Guṇāḍhya was a member of the court of the Sātavāhana king. Guṇāḍhya has to give up the use of Sanskrit, Prākrit and the local dialect when he loses a wager to another courtier Sarvavarman. He wanders to the Vindhyas where he meets Kaṇabhūti who relates to him the tale of the seven vidyādhara princes. He then records these stories in Paīṣaci, the language of the goblins, as he is debarred from the use of other languages. This work is taken to the king by his disciples but the king rejects it as it was written in Paīṣaci using blood in place of ink since ink could not be obtained in the forest. When Guṇāḍhya heard about the rejection he began to burn the manuscript. He recites the great work one last time to the beasts and birds assembled there before confining them to the flames. Only one book consisting of the story of Naravāhandatta remained when the penitent king returned after having realised his folly. This one seventh part of the Brhatkathā was preserved. This is the framing tale which houses hundreds of other emboxed tales. Thus Guṇāḍhya himself becomes a character in his work though the introduction is said to have been composed by the Sātavāhana king himself. So this tale or string of tales can be considered to be an outcome of the “curse of curiosity” (Misra 106). One gets ensnared into the curse again and again and release is obtained only after one has shared it with a listener. Vidya Niwas Misra remarks that: “The string of tales relate to love and adventure, the most
potent excitants of human energy. They are born out of curiosity and give birth to a chain of accursed curiosity leading to love and adventure” (106).

The Kathāsaritsāgara is a kaleidoscope full of numerous resonant tales of various dimensions and purport. The preamble itself sets the tenor of the vast oceanic narration it is about to unravel. The deceptively simple, arbitrary sounding introduction conceals innuendoes and camouflage an amazing complexity. The choice of vidyādharas rather than mortals or divine beings to represent the spectrum of life, the recurrent motif of the curse, the reference to secrecy and to sharing and the co-existence of historical with fictional and mythical characters clearly indicates a meaningful purpose. Gulam Mohammed Sheikh observes that “secrecy and sharing serve as catalytic devices to reveal the wondrous, magical aspect” of the divine tales narrated (253). The curse is a means of introducing the tale within a tale; and deliverance from the curse is a return to the point which sets in motion a variety of temporal movements. The distinctions of the physical world of mortals from that of divine beings demarcate the world of tangible reality and the world of the fabulous but the narrative form combines the magical experience without losing touch with the real. The choice of the vidyādharas and the co-existence of the historical and fictional characters reflect a back-and-forth movement in time and space. The birds and beasts who starve as they listen to “the tales lost to humanity hint at the dimensions or frequencies alien to human sensibilities” (Sheik 253).
**Bṛhatkathā and its Author**

The name Guṇāḍhya which means one who is rich in virtue is not “very authentic sounding” according to J. A. B van Buiten (iii). Like other names in Sanskrit literature this name is also descriptive. Examples are Vyāsa which means the compiler and Vālmīki or the one who emerged from the *valmīka* (“anthill”). There are a few mythical anecdotes about Guṇāḍhya. Probably he belonged to the city of Prathiṣṭāna, the capital of Andhrabhatiyas or of the Sātavāhana, on the river Goḍavāri. However the scholars are not unanimous about the location of the city. Sisir Kumar Das suggests that he might have been an inhabitant of Kauśambi or the neighbouring area (105). J. S. Speyer sums up the situation thus: “the only conclusion permitted to us, and this at least is more than nothing, is this, that a celebrated work, the author or authors of which are half mythical persons, must be ancient” (60). But there are some other evidences which point to his existence.

Bāna’s *Kādambarī* which belongs to the first half of the seventh century mentions the *Bṛhatkathā* (70). Guṇāḍhya was placed on the same pedestal as Vālmīki and Vyāsa. Govardhanācārya, the author of the *Āryā-Saptasāḥ* who lived in the twelfth or the thirteenth century salutes Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Guṇāḍhya together and compares their poetry to a river with three branches. He even voices the feeling that Guṇāḍhya was Vyāsa incarnate, notes Nelson (663). Krishnamachariar records that the work, *Nepālamahātmya* also “draws a parallel between Vālmīki and Guṇāḍhya” (413). Warder opines that “almost
all who record anything of the history of kāvīs have enrolled Guṇāḍhya near the head of their list after Vālmīki with fulsome praise. Subandhu, Bāṇa, Daṇḍin, Uddyotana, Rājaśekhara, Somadeva Sūri, Dhanapāla, Someśvara and many other writers praise him” (141). This trend continues till the thirteenth century. But references are few after that. Warder feels that the reason for this must have been a change in literary tastes. But “upto that time, Guṇāḍhya’s fame blazed undiminished as a source of inspiration to the greatest writers in India . . .” (Warder 141).

There is inscriptions evidence regarding the existence of Guṇāḍhya. Krishnamachariar mentions a Cambodian inscription of the ninth century which mentions the Brhatkathā (413). Mahesh Kumar Sharan also records that references to Guṇāḍhya have been found in several inscriptions in Cambodia (421). In the mid sixth century Gumma Reddipur copper plate record of Durviniṭa, a powerful Gaṅga King in what is today Kolaṭar district in Karnataka, the King is praised as the man who composed the Descent of Language which is now lost, and rewritten the Paiśaci Brhatkathā in Sanskrit (Pollock, Language 166; Deshpande 214). These references point to the fact that there was undoubtedly such a text. J. S. Speyer who has studied the two Kashmiri versions in detail writes: “There can be not the least doubt about the existence in Kashmere in the eleventh century of that encyclopedia of tales in the Paiśaci dialect which is acknowledged as the common source of both Brhatkathāmanijaṇī and Kathāsaritsāgara” (27). But both authors had
“abridged a voluminous ground-text independently.” Hence, “we may state as the main result of the comparison of the two Sanskrit redactions this, that Somadeva’s poem may be considered to give a faithful representation of the old Paičačī Bṛhatkathā . . .” (Speyer 40). G. Bühler has also proved that Kśemendra and Somadeva had worked on the same text though independently (Speyer 11).

Scholars have expressed various opinions regarding the date of Guṇāḍhya. Hans van Buiten calls the Bṛhatkathā “the Great Story Book” and feels that it belongs to the first half of the first century (309). “Guṇāḍhya’s personality is shrouded in myths, and this possibly attests to his antiquity. Perhaps he is earlier than Bhāsa, and may be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era” concludes A. N. Upadhye (Ancient 692). Speyer in his work Studies about the Kathāsaritsāgara has dealt with the question of the date of the Bṛhatkathā in detail and states that Bühler in his Detailed Report of a Tour in Kashmir published in 1897 places Guṇāḍhya in the first or second century (Speyer 44) and Weber places him in sixth (Speyer 46). Sylvain Lévi gives the date third century (Speyer 44) while Speyer himself is of the opinion that the Bṛhatkathā lies between AD 400 and 600 (Studies 51). Vincent A. Smith in an article on “Andhra History and Coinage” dates it in the latter half of the first century about AD 60 or 70 after considering epigraphical evidence (Speyer 44). Warder places Guṇāḍhya tentatively in the first or second century BC (122). Alsodorf notes that the Bṛhatkathā must be a product of the last few centuries
BC (Nelson 664). But Speyer avers that “it cannot be dated before 300 AD” (48).

The different recensions of the Brhatkathā share several common features but they also have marked differences. If we consider the chronology of these different recensions scholars agree that the Kashmiri volumes belong to the late eleventh century. Peruṅkathai is dated towards late tenth century. Brhatkathāślokaṃgraha is from the eighth or ninth century. According to Hermann Georg Jacobi Vasudevahimḍi is not later than the sixth century which makes it the oldest. Upadhye feels that “Vasudevahimḍi was definitely written earlier than 600” and that “it closely corresponds in form to the Brhatkathā by Gūṇāḍhya” (Ancient 693). Warder holds that “the Brhatkathāślokaṃgraha is closer to the original Brhatkathā and that the Prākrit abridgement incorporated into the Vasudevahimḍi by Samghadaśa” is probably the earliest extant version” (117). But it could not be the ur-text as it has no Udayana story and because it is a Jaina text. Jainas are great borrowers and this works against the argument that Vasudevahimḍi could be the ur-Brhatkathā. Another aspect points strongly towards the argument that Vasudevahimḍi could not be the ur-text. The Jaina kathā literature is not like the Pañcatantra and other tales in Sanskrit literature. The fundamental spirit underlying the Jaina kathā literature is religious. Its aim is the spiritual uplift of its followers. The Jaina philosophy is well known for its rigorous religious practices and principles. B. B. Kulkarni remarks that “in the kathā literature also the religious element is
always permeated with a view to bring a spiritual change in the mind of the listener” (80).

The language of the *Brhatkathā*, Paiśaci has also been a topic of discussion among scholars. Pollock calls Paiśaci “the joker in the deck of South Asian discourse on language, having an exclusively legendary status, since it is associated with a single lost text, the *Brhatkathā*” (*Language* 92). Several scholars are doubtful about the existence of such a language. Daṇḍin in his *Kāvyadarśa* attests to the fact that Sanskrit, Pṛakrit, Apabhrahmśa, Bhūtabhāṣa or Paiśaci were the four literary languages (Pollock, *Language* 90-92). Several scholars have attempted to discover the home of Paiśaci. According to Upadhye, Paiśaci is an important Pṛakrit dialect which shows closer relationship to Pāli and Sanskrit. He notes Pischel’s view that the name of the dialect was originally derived from the people of a country and as this name was similar in sound to piśaças, the language too was later referred to the demons called piśaças. The derivation of the name Peshawar from Piśacapura lends support to the above view (Upadhye, “Paiśaçı” 26). Grierson shows with references from the *Mahābhārata* and the Puṇāṇas that the piśaças were a clan of people from the North-West of India (Upadhye, “Paiśaçı” 22).

According to Felix Lacôte the Paiśaci of Guṇāḍhya was based upon an Aryan language of the North-West or West, but it was spoken by non-Aryan peoples (Upadhye, “Paiśaçı” 23). That piśacas or bhūtas were a mountain tribe in Himalayas is generally accepted. S. P. L. Narasimhaswami who has done a
comparative study of the Pūrṇāṇas voices the opinion that the bhūtas are an independent Himalayan tribe with distinct racial characteristics (Upadhye, “Paiśāci” 22).

Pollock mentions that Von Hinüber takes Guṇāḍhya’s Paiśāci “to represent the failed attempt to turn an eastern dialect of “Buddhist Middle Indic” into a “worldly literary language” (Language 93). Keith places the home of Paiśāci in the Vindhyas (Upadhye, Paiśāci 25). Pollock notes:

A late grammar composed about 1550 in Andhra Pradesh, the Śadṛṣaḥsadṛṣacandrika (Moonlight of the Six Languages) describes the ‘regions’ of the Paiśacās as including Paṇḍya country [in the heart of Tamilnadu], the ‘land of the Kekayas [in Kashmir], Bāhlika [in northern Afghanistan], Siṃha [Sindh], Nepāla, Kundala [north Karnataka], Sugheṣṇa [?](sic), Bhoja [?, v.l. Bhoṭa, Tibet](sic) and Gāndhāra [the region of Peshawar in today’s Pakistan] and Haivakannojana [?](sic). (Language 103)

The presence of a Kashmiri Bṛhatkathā even in modern times is recorded by Trilokinath Raina who is of the opinion that the language Guṇāḍhya used was native Kashmiri of those days and that the “Bṛhatkathā has the distinction of being the first book written in Kashmiri of the Prakrit age”(10). He writes that even today “a Kashmiri Pandit family of priests at Bohri Kadal in Sri Nagar use Brihas Katha, which is supposed to be a
translation of the saved portion of the Brhatkatha, for interpreting omens. They have a large clientele of both Hindus and Muslims” (10-11).

**Narrative of the Brhatkatha**

It can be assumed that the “Brhatkatha narrates primarily the story of its hero, Naravahanadatta, who in the course of his adventures, marries several maidens and finally achieves sovereignty over the semi-divine Vidyadharas” writes Rani Majumdar in the article “Two Streams of Narrative in Guṇaḍhya’s Brhatkatha” (19). The main story is preceded by the story of Naravahanadatta’s father Udayana and his adventures. She is of the opinion that Guṇaḍhya was a redactor who compiled different narratives to form a great tale. Udayana and Naravahanadatta appear to be characters featuring originally in distinct story cycles. While Udayana figures prominently in the Buddhist tradition, Jain authors have repeatedly made use of the Naravahanadatta theme. “It was Guṇaḍhya who combined these two distinct streams of narratives by making Udayana the father of Naravahanadatta” (Rani Majumdar 21-22). Warder is also of the opinion that Naravahanadatta is the putative son of Udayana (119). “The Brhatkatha, therefore can be considered a confluence where two distinct streams of narrative meet; one probably Buddhist in origin and the other Jain; one semi-historical and the other semi-mythical” (Rani Majumdar 24). Penzer finds similarities between the plan of the Brhatkatha and that of the Ramayana to a certain extent in “the setting out of the hero to recover his lost love, acquiring others on the way, the
constant help of a trusty friend, the purity of the captive wife, and the final triumph of her safe recovery” (OS 9: 120).

**Structure of the Kathāsaritsāgara**

The ornate narrative prose in Sanskrit is generally divided into *kathā* and ākhyāyīkā. Though the poeticians have laid out different rules regarding these two types, they can be classified under the broad category of prose romance. Sukumari Bhattacharjee is of the opinion that originally *kathā* was composed for the entertainment of common people while ākhyāyīkā was for the elite. But ākhyāyīkā was discarded later in favour of *kathā* which continued till the sixteenth century (118). Though *kathā* was theoretically a prose composition, in practice it could have been either in prose or verse.

*Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Kādambārī*, and *Daśakumārācarita* are examples of *kathā* literature in Sanskrit. Of these the *Pañcatantra* belongs to the category of didactic fable while narratives like the *Kathāsaritsāgara* can be classified as adventure tales. According to Indira Viswanathan Peterson the *kathā* is “the literary version of the Indian folk tale; it differs from the myths and stories of gods, seers and heroes found in the epics and Purāṇas in subject matter and ethos” (111). She defines the *kathā* romance as “a picaresque tale wherein the adventures of human or superhuman protagonists are narrated, the primary purpose of the narration being the entertainment of the audience” (112).
A.R. Wright in the foreword to the sixth volume of *The Ocean of Story* remarks that the general framework of the stories “in which tales revolve one within the other like the multiple perforated balls of the patient Chinese ivory-carver, is obviously of pure literary origin” (xvi). Somadeva felt that his great work united in itself all stories, as the ocean does all rivers and following his metaphor he has divided his work into a hundred and twenty-four chapters, called *taraṇgās*—“waves” or “billows” —while a further division into eighteen *lambakās*—“surges” or “swells”—was made by Brockhaus (Sattar xxii). The whole work which contains twenty thousand ślokas is nearly twice as long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. The eighteen books are as follows: *Kathāpītha, Kathāmukha, Lāvānaka, Naravāhanadattajanana, Caturdārikā, Madanamancukā, Ratnaprabhā, Śuryaprabha, Alankāravāśī, Śaktiyaśas, Veśa, Śaśānkaśā, Madirāvāśī, Pānca, Mahābhiseka, Surasamanjarī, Padmāvāśī, Viṣamaśīla.*

*Kathāpītha* is the pedestal on which the great tale is built. It narrates how this divine tale came to be known on earth among humans. King Śatavāhana is believed to have composed this part. The framing tale consists of the story of Naravāhanadatta who is the God of love, Kāma born on earth as a result of Śiva’s wrath. He is fated to become the emperor of the semi-divine *vidyādharas*. Books 2 and 3 are preparatory books dealing with the story of his father Udayana, and how he married Viṣavadattā the daughter of Chaṇḍamaḥāśasena, the king of Ujjayinī who later became Naravāhanadatta’s
mother. It also deals with how Udayana married Padmāvati, daughter of Pradyota, the king of Magadha and how he achieved sovereignty with the help of his trusted minister Yaugandhaśāyaṇa. Book 4 deals with the story of Naravāhanadatta’s birth and predictions of his future greatness. Two entire books, 5 and 8, talk about the story of the exploits of his predecessors, who were vidyādhara kings. These two books Caturdārikā and Śūryaprabha appear to be entirely unconnected with the previous and subsequent stories and could be removed and inserted anywhere else without upsetting the text at all. Book 6, Madanamancukā is titled after the first queen of Naravāhanadatta. She is the embodiment of Rāti, Kāma’s wife. The early part of the book deals with the Buddhist King Kalingadatta, and his daughter Kalingasena, who wanted to marry King Udayana. But a vidyāadhara called Madanavega married her pretending to be Udayana himself. A son is born to her but by the order of Śiva, the child is replaced at birth by a girl who is an incarnation of Rāti. Naravāhanadatta, his ministers and the endless series of his wives, the obtaining of whom forms the chief subject of the other lambakās. Books 7, 9 and 10 titled Ratnaprabhā, Alankāravañ and Śaktiyaśas get their names from the vidyādhari maidens whom Naravāhanadatta marries. Book 10 also contains the whole of the Pañcatantra. The next book Velā too has Naravāhanadatta getting married again but it gets its name from the story of a merchant’s wife. Books 12 and 13 talk about the loss of Naravāhanadatta’s chief queen, Madanamancukā who has been abducted by
another *vidyādhara* called *Manasavega*. Books 14 to 16 contain the triumph of the hero, the narrative of his wars and heroic performances with which he won that sovereignty of the *vidyādharas* which was long promised to him. The story reaches a finale but not the books. Book 16 imparts the news that Udayana along with his wives and ministers has passed away. 

Naraṇāhanadatta hastens to meet his uncle Gopālaka, who has retired to the hermitage of Kaśyapa. It is here among the *Rshis* that he relates the story of his adventures. Books 17 and 18 are stories that he had listened to when he was separated from Madanamancukā.

If the order of books is examined we reach the conclusion that the order has undergone much reshuffling in course of time. Some follow the logical progression of the story while others have merely been introduced as a means to lay down other story cycles. Sometimes this leads to confusion among readers. For example we have Naraṇāhanadatta pining away for his beloved Madanamancukā even before she is lost (OS 6: 9). The hermit Piśangajaṭa tells him the story of Mṛgānkadatta to impart courage to endure his affliction and concludes “so, my son, as Mṛgānkadatta in old time gained Śaśankavatī after enduring affliction, you also will regain your Madanamanchukā” (OS 7: 192). But it is actually much later that Naraṇāhanadatta in Kauśambi realises that he “could not find his principal charmer Madanamanchukā anywhere in the female apartments, nor could her attendants find her either” (OS 8: 21). Lalitaločana, also his wife, seems to
be lost too (OS 6: 9) but she turns up later (OS 8: 17) and nobody knows how, when and where it happened. These are clear indications that the original order of these stories must have been altered to suit the needs of the time.

Krishnamachariar quotes Wilson who remarks:

The stories all wind up at the end of each book or infrequently sooner. The action is never suspended for any prolonged interval and the complication is not of such a nature or extent as to convert variety into confusion. The stories are always characterised by the features of Hindu nationality and are illustrations of Hindu opinions, usages and beliefs. They exhibit in a striking and interesting manner, the peculiarities of the social condition of India, and in the exposure of its follies and vices furnish those delineations of the similar imperfections of all civilised society of which the general applicability and truth have recommended their imitation to the satirists and story tellers of Europe. The greater number of them turns upon the wickedness of women, the inconstancy, profligacy, treachery and craft of the female sex. These attributes no doubt originate in the feelings which have pervaded the east and are unfavourable to the dignity of the female character; but we are not to mistake the language of satire or the licentiousness of wit, for truth, or to suppose that the pictures which are thus
given of the depravity of women owe not much of their
colouring to the malignity of men. (qtd. in Krishnamachariar
422-23)

Frame Tales

An analogy from Rushdie summarises the narrative structure of *The
Ocean of Story*: “Think of the ocean as a head of hair, . . . . Imagine it’s as full
of Story Streams as a thick mane full of soft, flowing strands. The longer and
thicker a head of hair, the knottier and more tangled it gets”(83). *The Ocean
of Story* is

made up of a thousand thousand thousand and one different
currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one
another like a liquid tapestry of breathtaking complexity; and
. . . these were the Streams of Story, that each coloured strand
represented and contained a single tale. Different parts of the
Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories
that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of
being invented could be found here, the Ocean of the Streams of
Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And because
the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability
to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with
other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike a
library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much
more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead but alive.

(Rushdie 72)

The seemingly disjointed tales and themes of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* are interconnected and the structural scheme is an integral part of the work. The *Kathāsaritsāgara*, follows the structure of a frame narrative, one in which several smaller tales are narrated inside the framework of another tale. There are three major frames in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The outermost frame is Pārvatī’s demand to Śiva for a story. Another frame is the story of Vararuci and Guṇḍāḥya which leads to the writing down of the story. The adventures of Naravāhanadatta are a frame to several cycles of stories including several distinct story cycles like the *Pāncatantra*. “The great tale is spread out petal by petal, one episode leading into another, the heroes and heroines assuming one form after another and the relationships continuing through different existences” (Misra 106-07). Sheik exclaims that it is indeed difficult to disconnect the tales as each one sprouts organically from another giving clues for still others to extend the back and forth arterial rhythms. For instance, the tale of a past life running parallel to a ‘timeless’ parable intervenes into a tale of prophecy gradually unfolding into the present! (254)

Frame tales were probably one of the earliest sophisticated narratives in the world. The frame narrative provides a peripheral frame into which individual tales are embedded. In the introduction to *Tales from the*
Kathāsaritśāgarā, Arshia Sattar writes: “The pleasure of encountering a framed narrative is somewhat akin to the search for the heart of an onion; you peel away the layers and then reach a moment when you realize that the essence lies in the layers themselves” (xxx). The frame tale provides a framework to tie up the loose strands of tales. Some tales act as the covering layer, or skin around the complex tales which has to be peeled or gradually uncovered to reveal the core. “The tales circulate, run in concentric or spirally looping movements to make connections or reconnections or run zigzag and even zoom out” (Sheik 254). But they cannot be considered as mere boxing devices. The boxed in format sometimes turns into a labyrinth. Often the experience of retrieving the original tale after several layers of successive tales is dizzying and exhilarating. The writer or compiler uses this ingenious device to give a new significance to these tales. Though stories were told orally in the beginning, the frame narrative makes them more complex and it occupies a golden mean between the oral and literary traditions. It is an essentially Indian device though some scholars believe that it is a Middle Eastern contribution. Sattar also supports this view (xxxii).

In ancient Indian literary works we find the author himself featuring as a character in his own work. Well-known examples are the Rāmāyāna and the Mahābhārata in which both Vālmīki and Vyāsa participate actively. Vālmīki, the sage provides shelter to Śītā who was abandoned by Rāma and her sons are born and brought up in his hermitage. Vyāsa, in fact, creates the
story of the *Mahābhārata* by fathering Dhritaraṣṭra and his brothers. Viṣṇu Śarma of the *Pañcatantra* and Guṇāḍhya of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* also follow this tradition. Hence they are all different from the traditional western figure of the author who is the master brain creating an imaginary world in which his characters live. In the words of Sattar:

On one level, framing is a narrative device that allows the teller of a tale to participate in the story that he/she is telling. The teller places him/herself at the centre as well as at the margin of the story being told . . . . But along the way, as the text gets deeper and deeper into itself, we lose sight of the first story and the first teller as characters within stories begin to tell other stories and so on, even though everything is still contained within the first story. Though our reading may have left the first frame on the outer edge of the narrative, each inner story carries each and every frame with it through to the end of the text in the form of inverted commas. (xxxi)

The complex narrative of the frame tale in which the author himself becomes an active participant blurs the logic of the inside and the outside. “Somadeva may well be the ‘author’ outside the text, Śiva and Guṇāḍhya are the authors inside the text” (Sattar xix). Sattar writes:

The magic moment in the framed narrative is the point at which the text turns into a Moebius strip, presenting one continuous
unbroken surface to the reader, when the putative author of the text himself enters the story and at the same time, continues to tell it. The reader, at this point is no longer sure what s/he is reading: is it still a report of everything that happened in the past, or is it now an account of events being described as they happened or are they being made to happen by the creator/author? (xxxiv)

Frame texts do not simply insert the narrator into the story. They set up a world in which the magical becomes the normal and the normal becomes the magical. We encounter a multiplicity of authorial voices in the Kathāsaritsāgara. One, Śiva the original narrator of the story, two, Guṇāḍhya who retells the story to escape from the curse inflicted on him, three, King Satavahana who rescues one seventh part of the Paiśacī version and who is said to have composed the introductory Kathāpīṭha or the pedestal on which this collection of tales was placed, and finally Somadeva who reproduced these tales for the amusement of his patron. All the narrators except Somadeva are active participants in their stories. Somadeva does not act in the story but he is the omniscient narrator. Sometimes the hero of the story Naravahanadatta himself becomes the teller of his own tale. These embedded narratives mystify the reader at times and lead him to wonder about the narrator of the earlier stories. Similarly there is a multiplicity of narratees in the Kathāsaritsāgara. Pārvaśī to whom Śiva, the original narrator
tells these stories, Puṣpadanta who listens by stealth, Guṇāḍhya who becomes the narratee as well as the narrator, King Sātavāhana who rejects the story at first but later is fated to compose the introduction, Queen Śūryamaṇī for whose amusement Somadeva composed this work and the present reader who is promised release from all his sins, are a few of them.

The Sanskrit–Paiśa-Śrīcā-Sanskrit transmutation that the text undergoes is also worth mentioning. Guṇāḍhya, the cursed gana reborn, is debarred from the use of Sanskrit, Pṛkrit and the local dialect as a result of losing a wager. King Sātavāhana is humiliated for his lack of grammatical knowledge by one of his queens. The dejected king is consoled by Sarvavarman, his courtier who promises to teach him the complexities of Sanskrit grammar in six months instead of the customary twelve years. Guṇāḍhya lays down the wager that he will forego the use of the commonly used three languages and complies with it when Sarvavarman emerges victorious with the help of Lord Karttikeya. Guṇāḍhya retires to the Vindhyaś and composes the Brhatkathā in Paiśaci and sends it to the king who rejects it outright as it was written in a demonic language. Later the king who suffers a change of heart rescues the one seventh part of the great tale which escaped from burning and composes the introductory Kathāpīṭha to record the history of the tale written in Paiśaci. Śiva narrates the story in Sanskrit but Guṇāḍhya, perforce has to resort to the language of the goblins to reproduce the story. The Sātavāhana King composes the introductory Kathāpīṭha in Sanskrit. Then the text again
dons the garb of Sanskrit in further translations. Thus it undergoes various transmutations from the language of the Piśācas to the language of gods in the world of mortals. Pollock remarks: “The logic of the narrative rests entirely on a cultural convention that renders the idea of literature not written in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhramsa a bizarre, even demonic anomaly” (Language 97).

It is only after the Kātantra grammar has converted the king to Sanskrit that he begins to regard Paiśāci as a barbarous language. This has led scholars to enquire into the identity of the king. Saṭavāhana is the family name, in inscriptions, of the Andhra dynasty who ruled the region in the Deccan, between the rivers Gokhāvari and Krishna (Bhandarkar 37). Penzer writes that their capital was Pratiṣṭhāna, the modern Paithan on the north bank of the Gokhāvari which makes Guṇādhyā’s connection of king and capital “historically correct” (OS 9: 98). Another important point to note is that the Andhra kings were patrons of Prākrit. It was only late in the history of the dynasty that Sanskrit was finally accepted as the court language, and Prākrit was ousted from its former place of honour. Hāla, a Saṭavāhana king was a great patron of literature which prompts Penzer to comment that “in connecting any tale about the introduction of Sanskrit in the place of Prakrit with a Saṭavāhana, it is Hāla that at once would be thought of.” A change so important and far reaching as the use of a different language at the court, and in literature generally, would, undoubtedly take a considerable time to take effect. As
patrons of Prākrit the Satavahanas would be the most vigorous opponents of such an innovation, and it is only in the time of Daṇḍin (sixth century) that we find the use of Prākrit becoming rare. These arguments make Penzer doubt whether Guṇāḍhya was a contemporary of Hāla (OS 9: 98-99).

**Migratory Possibilities**

It is interesting to find the same story being told in various parts of the world though appropriate changes have been made to suit its new environment. Regarding the migratory possibilities of tales in the East, Penzer remarks in his introduction to *The Ocean of Story*:

India is indeed the home of storytelling. It was from here that the Persians learned the art and passed it on to the Arabians. From the Middle East, the tales found their way to Constantinople and Venice, and finally appeared in the pages of Boccaccio, Chaucer and La Fontaine. (xxxiv–xxxv)

The eminent philologist and Sanskrit scholar Maurice Bloomfield writes:

As is well known, the ancient treasury of narrative which India pours out lavishly from the time of the Rig-Veda to this day, passed freely beyond the bounds of India. Not only the stories and fables of entire cycles, such as the Pañcatantra, or the 'Seventy Tales of the Parrot,' were exported bodily and taken over by other literatures, but numberless individual stories and individual story traits penetrated to the farthest ends of the
earth. It is, at any rate, rather hard to find, in the rest of the world, fable or fiction traits of marked character which do not own to an Indian analogon; many a time they may, at least, be suspected to be of Indian origin. ("Muladeva" 618)

The Arabian Nights and Grimm’s Fairy Tales are likely to have borrowed from the Kathāsarītsāgara. In the terminal essay to the translation of The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, Richard F. Burton sums up the subject matter of the Kathāsarītsāgara in comparison with the Arabian Nights in these words:

The thaumaturgy of both works is the same: the Indian is profuse in demonology and witchcraft; in monsters as wind-men, fire-men and water men; in air-going elephants and flying horses; in the wishing cow, divine goats and laughing fishes and in the speciosa miracula of magic weapons. He delights in fearful battles fought with the same weapons as the Moslem, and rewards his heroes with a ‘turban of honour’ in lieu of a robe. There is a quaint family likeness arising from similar stages and states of society: the city is adorned for gladness; men carry money in a robe corner and exclaim ‘Ha good!’ (for ‘Good by Allah’); lovers die with exemplary facility; the ‘soft-sided’ ladies drink spirits and princesses get drunk whilst the Eunuch, the
Hetaira and the bawd (kuttini) play the same prepondering parts as in The Nights. (10: 160-61)

**Different Editions**

H. H. Wilson, was the first European scholar to draw the attention of the Orientalists to the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. He published the summary of the first five chapters of Somadeva’s work in *The Oriental Quarter Magazine* in 1884. The first complete edition was done by Brockhaus who made use of six different manuscripts. The first part of Brockhaus’ edition appeared as early as 1839 though the work was completed only by 1866. In 1889 the Nirṇayaśāgara press, Bombay brought out the Sanskrit edition by Durgaprasad. Speyer considers the edition by Durgaprasad to be more authoritative than the Brockhaus edition. Most of the translators to vernacular languages have made use of the edition by Durgaprasad. Between 1880 and 1884 Charles Henry Tawney produced a complete translation which was published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Tawney used the Brockhaus edition as well as three other independent manuscripts for translation. This was later edited by Penzer in 1919 with exhaustive additions like footnotes, appendices, commentaries etc. which increased the size of the book from two volumes to ten. This is still considered to be the most authoritative version and has been used as the primary source of this study. In 1994 Sattar brought out a modern English translation of selected stories which was published by Penguin titled *Tales from the Kathāsaritsāgara*. Scholars like
Lacôte, Bühler, Lévi, Mańkowski and Speyer have contributed immensely towards our understanding of this great work. Lacôte, the French scholar, discovered and translated the Nepali text, *Bṛhatkathāślokasamgraha* by Buddhswamin and studied it along with the Kashmiri versions in his *Essai sur Gunadhya et la Bṛhatkathā*. The last eight chapters of the translation were done by Louis Renou after Lacôte's death. Speyer and Bühler have also studied the two Kashmiri versions of the *Bṛhatkathā* in great detail. Penzer comments:

Somadeva has presented us with one of the greatest collections of tales the world has ever seen—tales which not only mirrored contemporary customs and beliefs, and exhibited the versatile genius of the story-teller, but tales which were destined to inspire the genius of unborn giants of European literature—Boccaccio, Goethe, La Fontaine, Chaucer and Shakespeare. (OS 9: 121)

The present thesis attempts a cultural study of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. By piecing together the rich data that lie scattered in the work an effort has been made to throw fresh light on the social and cultural milieu of the period. The work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter offers an introduction to the work while the second chapter portrays the religious life of the people. The multiple sectarian manifestations of Hinduism are seen in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* but Buddhism is also seen practised. The principal sectarian
faiths in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* include the Śaiva faith, the Vaiṣṇava faith and the Śakta faith. We also come across a large number of gods and divine beings. The tendency of the Śaivas to show other deities as inferior to Śiva is powerfully depicted in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. Pārvatī, Karttikeya and Gaṇeśa are also worshipped. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* depicts Gaṇeśa not only as the son of Śiva but also as an independent god. Proto-Tantric Śaiva sects like pāśupatas and kāpālikas feature in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The Tantric goddess, Čamundā, with whom human sacrifice is often associated, appears at some places. The Śakta faith is also quite popular. Belief in witches, witchcraft and magic was widely prevalent.

The third chapter entitled “Social, Cultural and Economic Life” traces the social, cultural and economic life of the people. It deals with the division of society into different varṇas and their way of life. Apart from the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra, tribes like the śavara, pulinda, bheel, domba, bhilla, mātanga, kiṟata, niśada, caṇḍāla, and mleccha are seen. Raṉput warriors were also a major part of the society. Affluent merchants played a significant role in social life. They were fond of the good things in life as well as the company of the courtesan. Untouchability is seen practised but the rules regarding it were not very rigid. Slavery was a part of social life. Matters of everyday life like food habits, pastimes, coinage also shed light on the life of the people. Established customs like betel chewing and drinking wine are commonly seen. The fondness of men as well as women in adorning themselves with
ornaments and unguents is clearly evident. Several clues are available regarding the dress of the people and their popular pastimes which included hunting, gambling and water sports. Dance and music were also favoured. Even princesses did not lead a sequestered life and had the freedom to dance and exhibit their talent before an audience. A number of festivals were celebrated by the people and among them the spring festival seems to have been the most popular. An idea about the weights, measures and the coins of the time as well as the law and order of the time can also be gathered from the stories. The educational system also is revealed in these stories.

The fourth chapter discusses marriage, the most important *samskāra* which was a method of forming individual bonds as well as political alliances. Marriages were of various types and several factors were taken into account before choosing a suitable partner. The different preliminary procedures before a proposal is finalised, the age of marriage, the preparations for marriage, the various customs and ceremonies, dowry system, the living arrangements of the newly married couple after the wedding are discussed in detail. Inter-caste marriages are frequent and enjoyed social sanction. This chapter also looks at domestic life. Though the work under consideration deals primarily with royalty, both human and semi-divine it also gives us a picture of the life of the common people around them.

The fifth chapter deals with the life of women during the times. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara* whether a woman is married or has chosen the profession
of a courtesan, thereby electing to offer her body to the customer who is willing to pay the price, determines her identity. Within the family her powers of reproduction as a procreator and outside it, her capacity to provide sexual entertainment defines her. Patriarchy has laid down a code of conduct for the wife and the courtesan and they function within limits set by the society. A courtesan is, by definition, greedy and cannot form lasting relationships. A wife, on the other hand, is meant to be eternally faithful to her husband. Surprisingly, the majority of the wives that we come across in these stories are only too eager to form extra marital alliances. This seems to endorse the notion that women are by nature fickle but a close reading reveals faithful courtesans and wives while fidelity to the wife is the rarest of rare cases when it comes to men. Thus patriarchal double standards are exposed.

Marriage is the turning point in the life of a woman in medieval society. Her life can be divided into two stages: before marriage in her paternal home, and after marriage, which is life in the home of her husband with his family. It is very rarely that we find a woman going back to her natal home after marriage. The sixth which is the last chapter summarises the conclusions that have been arrived at.