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## **Sanskrit Language Practice in Ancient Bengal and its Causes of Decline**

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### **Abstract**

Scholars of ancient Bengal contributed significantly to enriching Sanskrit literature. Among them, the importance of Viśākhadaṭṭa, Śrīharṣa, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, Sandhyākara Nandīn and Murārī are illustrious. This paper outlines the enrichment of the Sanskrit language through their contribution in detail. Every language follows a different path of evolution and challenges, and Sanskrit is no exception. In spite of its enriched history, it comes to a point of less active scenario over time due to several reasons. This paper also detailed multiple reasons for its decline, especially signifying other important causes, than the most popular opinion of the Brahmin's hostile attitude. The ruling of foreign invaders, religious evolution, and economic uncertainty of Sanskrit authors are some of the major causes of decline.

**Keywords:** Sanskrit, Literature, Rule, Culture, Patronage, Relevance

### **Introduction**

In this world two main characteristics distinguish man from all other animals, one is contemplation, and the other is thought. A vehicle or medium is needed to convey the thoughts of one mind to another. And language is the vehicle or medium of expression. Language has emerged to express the thoughts and feelings of

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the individual to others. As a result, society was formed, and knowledge and science expanded. Language was born not only to meet the mundane needs of people but also it was born to express the feelings of the socialized human mind. Linguist Francis commented on this: “The first point we must make about language, then, is that it is a social, rather than a biological, aspect of human life.” ( Shaw, 2014: 4)

There are about 4000 languages in the world today. The languages are divided into 26 language families considering the similarity of basic sounds, basic vocabulary, word forms etc. Among these languages, the Indo-European language family is the largest. Its two divisions are Satem and Centum. A branch of Satem is Indo-Iranian. The Indo-Iranian branch split into two branches, one entering Iran, the oldest of which is the Avesta; The other entered India as Indo-Aryan or Indic language. The oldest works of this branch are the Vedas.

Language is only the variable. From time to time the ancient Indian Aryan language was also changing in the people’s mouths. But the thinkers and sociologists of Brahmanical culture believed the language of the Vedas to be the ‘Language of the Gods’. They considered this natural change to be distortion and to prevent distortion they wrote grammar. Thus, the idealized pure and elegant form of the Indian Aryan Language that they created with grammatical rules is called ‘Sanskrit’ (as in- reformed) Language. Among these grammarians, the name of Pāṇini is mentioned first. He composed his famous book *Aṣṭādhyāyī* around 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In a nutshell, this article focuses on the literature of the Sanskrit language written in ancient Bengal and elaborates on the causes of its decline.

### **Sanskrit practice in ancient Bengal**

In ancient times, there was no state system run by the government like it is today, there was a king’s rule then. There were no separate states as there are now; Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Myanmar etc. countries together were Bhāratbarsha or Akhand

Bharat. Bangladesh was known as Banga. From where exactly in ancient India the Sanskrit Language originated and spread cannot be said with certainty. It was practiced in Bengal since Before Christ. Literature like Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upanishads, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas etc. were read and the poets of Bengal composed various poetic works in the Sanskrit language.

It can be assumed that the Sanskrit language and literature began to spread in Bengal during the Maurya era. Some edicts of emperor Ashoka have been found at Mahasthangarh in Bogra written in Sanskrit and Brahmi script practiced on a small scale in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. The practice of the Sanskrit language regained its momentum when the political situation in Bengal calmed down and the law-and-order situation stabilized after the antagonism between the local powers was removed during the Pāla rule. As a result, Buddhists came from different parts of India. Following them, the influx of educated Brāhmaṇs from North India also increased. Both brought with them various Samhitas and literary works written in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. Apart from religion, grammar, literature, philosophy, ayurveda, music, painting, astrology, etc. began to be practiced in Brahmin tols and Buddhist monasteries. Its medium was Sanskrit language. Though their birth places are controversial but there are several works in Sanskrit literature whose authors are believed to have originated from Bengal. One of them is Viśākhadaṭṭa.

### Viśākhadaṭṭa

He composed the play *Mudrārākṣasam* in 7 acts on the post-revolutionary story of Magadha. In the prologue of the play, the playwright introduced himself and said: “आज्ञापितोऽस्मि परिशदायथाद्य त्वया सामन्तबतेश्वरदत्तपौत्रस्य महाराज-पदभाकपृथुसुनोः कवेबिशाखदत्तस्य कृतिरभिनवं मुद्राराक्षसं नाम नातकं नातयितव्यमिति।” ( Sāstrī (ed.), 2011: 381) That means, the audience has ordered me that today you will stage a new play called ‘*Mudrārākṣhasa*’ written by Viśākhadaṭṭa., son of Prithu titled ‘Mahārāj’, grandson of Sāmantarājā Bateshwar Dutta.

“Vishakhadatta is believed to have appeared in the 5th century AD”. (Śāstrī (ed.), 2011: 256) He was the court poet of Chandragupta II or Vikramāditya. The dramatist while praising the meeting in the preface of *Mudrārākṣasam* said:

बहति जलमियं पिनशित गन्धा  
नियमियमुद्धृत्यते स्रजो बिचित्रा।  
मुसलमिदमियं च पातकाले  
मुहुरनूयाति कलेन हुंकृतेन॥ (१/४)

(Śāstrī (ed.), 2011: 381)

-A bunch of seeds sprouting in a fertile land brings a harvest of prosperity, the sower's achievement is no big deal. In that introduction, the playwright said in preparation for the festival at home.

Bringing water by pitcher, fragrant masala batter, and pounding rice to make pitha in a grinder during the festival season or on the occasion of entertaining distinguished guests is a very familiar scene in the villages of Bengal. In the fifth act of the play, the playwright praised Gaudiya women. In the eleventh verse of the fifth act the dramatist mentions the assembly of the ‘Khas’ soldiers at the head of the combined army of Malaiketu. These ‘Khas’ people are natives of the hilly regions of Northeast India. The status that the Khaseras do not deserve as a prominent race or tribe in terms of strength is given to them by the dramatist by placing them at the head of the vast army of Malaiketu. These facts indicate the geography of Viśākhadaṭṭa's residence, and that geographical place is Gauda - Bengal. “M. R. Kale, S. Roy, and Walimbe identify Viśākhadaṭṭa as a native of Bengal.” (Śāstrī, 1985 :253) Another work of dramatist Viśākhadaṭṭa. is ‘*Avisārikāvncḥitak*’.

### Śrīharṣa

He wrote the epic *Naiṣadhīya-carita*. At the end of the book, the epic poet introduced himself. His father's name is Srihir and mother's name is Mamalla Devi. He was a Brahmin of the Bharadwaja family. Based on the story of Nala-Damayanti from the *Mahābhārata*, he composed the poem *Naiṣadhīya-carita*. From various quotes in the book, it is assumed that he was Bengali.

He appeared in the twelfth century AD. (Chaki (ed.), 1982: 1) The *Naiṣadhīya-carita* epic says:

कापि प्रमोदस्फुटनिजिहानबनेब या मङ्गलगीतिरानसाम्।  
सैवाननेभ्यः पुरसुन्दरीनामुञ्चेरुलूढबनिरुच्चार॥ (१४/५१)

(Chaki (ed.), 1982: 361)

- Folk songs of Mangalgiti were uttered in a loud voice, like a sound bursting with joy.

अराधि यन्मीनमृगाजपत्रिजैः पलैर्मृदु स्वादु सुगन्धि तेमनम्।  
अशाकि लोकैः कुत एव जेमितुं न तत्तु संख्यातुमपि स्म शक्यते॥ (१६/८७)

(Chaki (ed.), 1982: 372)

- Fish, deer, goat and bird meat cooked as delicious and fragrant, people could not count it, how can they eat it?

### Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa

“Ādisura brought five wise and ascetic Brāhmins - Kshitish, Tithimedhā, Bitarāga, Sudhanidhi, and Souvari - to perform the Shakun yagna. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa was the son of Kshitish. He predates the 8th century AD.” (Śāstrī, 1978: 233) His famous literary works is *Veṇīsaṃhāra*. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa was popularly known by several names. For example: Nārāyaṇa, Mrigarajlakshana and Nishānārāyaṇa. So Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa can also be mentioned as the poet of this Bengal.

### Sandhyākara Nandī

Sandhyākara Nandī's *Rāmācharitam* is about the history of the rise, extent and destruction of the Pāla empire in Bangladesh. The composition of *Rāmācharita* Kāvya is followed by Kaviraj's *Rāghavapāṇḍaviya*. The poem is divided into 4 sections. The poem composed in Arya rhyme has 220 verses. Each verse of this wonderful satirical poem is written with such a technique that, if we use a different arrangement of words, we can tell the story of Rāmachandra of *Rāmāyaṇa* on one side and the story of Pāla

king Rāmpāla on the other. At the end of the book there is a poet's exhortation in 20 verses. From this, it is known that the poet was the son of Prajāpatinandin and the grandson of Pīnakanandin. His birthplace was Pundravardhan under Varendra, Sandhyākar's father Prajāpatinandī was the Sandhivigraha minister of Rāmpāla.

बसुधाशिरोबरेन्द्रीमन्धलचुआमनिः कुलस्थानम्।  
श्रीपौन्द्रवर्द्धनपुरप्रतिबद्धः पुन्यभूर्बु हृद्वतुः॥  
तत्र विदिते बिद्योतिनि नन्दिरत्नसन्ताने।  
समजनि पिनाकनन्दी नन्दीव निधिर्गुनौघस्य॥ (१-२)

(Śāstrī, 1969: 98)

-The village Brihadvatu, that land of holiness or bliss, which was the crest-jewel of the mandala of Varendri, the head of the Earth and which was situated close to the city of Pundravardhana, was the poets native place.

Sandhyākara Nandī composed his poem during the reign of King Madanāpalā. Madanāpalā's reign lasted from about 1140-1155 AD. So it can be assumed that Sandhyākara Nandin's life spanned from 1075-1175 AD. The description of the city of Varendra and Ramavati, the description of the battle with Bhima etc. are poetically enjoyable. Even though there is no lofty poetry, *Rāmacarita* bears the mark of dedication and skill in Bengali Sanskrit poetry.

### Murārī

*Anargharāghava* is a large-scale play based on Rāmakathā by playwrighter Murārī. He has been called a progenitor of the Vedic Brāhmins of Bengal. (Biswas, 2008:43) He was the son of 'Maudgalya Gotriya'. Murārī's mother's name was Tantumati. Apart from these few facts, there is no evidence to conclude that Murārī is a poet of Bengal and Palayuga.

A special literary style prevailed in Bengal in the 7th century, its name is Gaudi style. Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Harṣacarita* mentions this practice and says:

क्षेत्रप्रायमुदीच्येशु प्रतीच्येथमात्रकम्।  
उत् प्रेक्षा दक्षिणात्येषु गौरेस्वक्षरदम्बरम्॥

[Bānabhaṭṭa (ed. Śāstrī), 1987: 221]

- Udichya poets have an excess of puns, Pratichya poets are content only with rendering meaning, Southern poets love perspective and Gaudiya love rhetoric.

From this it can be assumed that a rich Sanskrit literature was written in Bengal by adopting this style.

Also, a treatise on elephant treatment called *Hastyāyurveda* was written by Rishi Pālakapya. The book is divided into 4 volumes and 160 chapters. “According to Haraprasad Śāstrī it was composed in the 5th or 6th century BC”. (Biswas, 2008:42) According to many, Rishi Palakapya was a Bengali. Chandragomi’s *Chandragrammar* is particularly noteworthy. “Chandragomi is believed to have lived in the 5th or 6th century and was a Bengali.” (Biswas, 2008:43) The book *Gaupādkārīkā* written by the philosopher Gaupada is particularly famous. It is believed that he was a Bengali. The prologue of the play *Chandakoushik* by Kshemeshwar suggests that the play was composed at the meeting of King Mahipala. Mm Haraprasad Śāstrī considers this Mahipala to be identical with Palaraja Mahipala. Krishnamishra, the author of the play *Prabodhacandrodaya* is considered by some to be the Bengali dramatist of Palayuga. Nītivarmā’s *Keechakavadha*, a poem composed of 177 verses and 5 stanzas, is selected from a large episode of the *Mahābhārata*. Nītivarmā was a resident of Bangladesh or Bengal-Orissa border. A Bengali poet named Abhinand can be traced. The book written by him is called *Rāmacarita*. It has 40 sargas.

After the fall of the Pāla dynasty, Sena rule began in Bengal. They are thought to be exotic. Their original home was Karnataka in Deccan. Sāmanta Sen was the founder of the Sena dynasty in Bengal. But Sanskrit literature flourished immensely during the reign of King Ballal Sen. He was well-educated and had a great

passion for learning. He studied scriptures like Vedas, Smriti, Mahābhārata etc. His contribution to Sanskrit literature as a poet or writer is immense. Before him, no ancient king of Bengal could show such writing talent. He wrote two books named *Dānasāgara* and *Adbhutsāgara*. After Ballāl sena, Lakṣhman sena took over the rule of Bengal. Lakshman sena was a scholar and an intellectual. Many scholars and learned persons were present in his royal court. Among them, Umāpatidhar, Saran, Dhoyi, Govardhan Ācārya, Jayadeva etc. are particularly notable. Jayadeva says in his poem:

बाचः पल्लवयत्युमापतिधरः सन्दर्भशुद्धिं गिरां  
जानीते जयदेव एव शरनः श्लाघ्यो दुरूहद्रते।  
शृङ्गारोत्तरसतप्रमेयरचनैराचार्यगोवर्द्धन  
स्पद्धी कोऽपि न विश्रुतः श्रुतिधरो धोयी कविक्ष्णापतिः॥ (१/४)

(Mukhopādhyāya, 1384: 179)

- Poet Umāpatidhar beautifies the words. Sharan Kavi is admirable for his rapid composition of difficult verses. Acharya Govardhana has no equal in honest and modest works of Sringeraras. Dhoi Kaviraj is popularly known as Shrutidhar. Jayadeva is the only poet capable of writing pure references.

The tradition of Sanskrit poetry in Bengal forms a significant part of the region's literary and cultural heritage. While Bengal is widely known for its contributions to Bengali literature, especially from the medieval period onward, it also has a rich and often underappreciated history of Sanskrit scholarship and poetry. Bengali Sanskrit poets made lasting contributions to religious, philosophical, and literary discourse, particularly during the medieval and early modern period. The inscriptions of Deopārā and Mādhai Nagar bear the identity of Umāpatidhar's poetry. He wrote a book called *Saduktikārnāmṛta*. One of poet Dhoi's creations *Pavandūta* was written after the poem *Meghadūta* by Kālidāsa. Acharya Govardhana's *Aryasaptasati* composed in Arya Chanda is particularly noteworthy. Bengal's turning point poet Jayadeva wrote *Gita Govinda*. Which plays an important role in later Padavali literary works. A relatively less-known figure, Vidyādhara wrote *Ekāvalī*, a Sanskrit treatise on poetics, which includes poetic compositions. Scholars believe he



may have been based in Bengal, and his works were influential in literary circles across eastern India.

### **The causes of the Sanskrit language decline**

Bengal has always been an attractive destination for overseas people due to its rich geographical diversity and abundance of natural resources. Ārya-Anārya, Shaka-Huna, Pāthān, Mughal, English etc. came here for the attraction of wealth, for the purpose of trade. Rabindranath Tagore said in his poem:

No one knows from where and on which invitation.  
Streams of immigrant's gush and ease out into the ocean.  
Aryans, non-Aryans, Dravidians and Chinese, Shaka, Hun,  
Pathan and the Mughals –  
All merged as a single race.

(Tagore, 1912: 68)

The rule of the Sena's came to an end at the hands of external Muslim powers. Turkish general Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji defeated Raja Lakṣhmaṇasena and occupied a small part of Bengal. From 1204 to 1206 AD, Nadiā and some parts of North Bengal in the west of Bengal were in the possession of Bakhtiyar Khalji. Although Turkish rule was established in Nadiā and North Bengal, East Bengal remained under the Sena rulers for a long time. But through Bakhtiar, the way was paved for the rule of Turkish sultans in Bengal. After the death of Bakhtiar Khalji in 1206 until 1338, Muslim rule spread throughout Bengal. Literary works were written in Sanskrit language from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. But later literary practice became limited in form. It cannot be said that only Brahmin culture is responsible for the stagnation of Sanskrit language practice. But governance, power, economic uncertainty, and religious reasons are also behind it.

### **The influence of Muslim rule**

Turkish rule began in Bengal with the fall of the Sena dynasty. Sanskrit was the official and administrative language in the 12th century. But only Brāhmiṇs spoke this language. Common people spoke in Prakrita language. At that time, different types of Prakrita

were prevalent in different regions of India. For example: Gaur, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magadhi, Shauraseni, Paishachi Prakrit etc. With the introduction of Muslim rule, the ruling class started using a language called Persian. It is said in this context:

After the advent of the Muslims, though another foreign language namely Persian was uniformly introduced as an official language, local dialects began to get patronage from the court at the same time. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 272)

At that time, Persian and Arabic language had to be learned to work in the court of sultans. Common Hindus of the society started learning Persian language in hope of work. It is said:

While the Dabir-i-khas and the parwananavis belonging to the department of the royal chancery had to be adept in writing ornate prose in both Persian and Arabic, the other officials had to learn Persian as well as the skill of office work..Hindus took to the learning of Persian as a passport for employment. Important evidence says that Sultan Alauddin Khilji got at least eight to ten thousand Nawisinda knowing Persian and local dialects. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 270)

Apart from making Persian the official language, the Turkish rulers established a large number of Madrasas and Maktabas in India to educate common people. It is said that during the time of Muhammad Bin Tughluq (1325-1351) there were about 1000 madrasas in Delhi where immigrant Muslims and ordinary people of the country who were converted Muslims received institutional education. Dr. Akhtaruzzaman said in his book:

To substantiate and materials their education and cultural policies, rulers established Madrasha in different parts of Lakhnauti (Bengal) and Bihar immediately after the foundation of Muslim rule in the reign. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 272)

‘It is learnt that Ibn Bakhtiyar Khilji built many Madrashahs in different parts of Bengal and Bihar. Evidences suggest that during the time of Mohammad Bin Tughluq (1325-1351) there were one thousand madrasahs in Delhi. It is reported

that Firuz Tughluq (1351-1389) built about thirty Madrasah. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 272)

In the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Persian and Arabic were widely used in administrative works. In educational institutions Sarf (Arabic declension and conjugation), Nahw (Grammar and syntax), Tafsir (Exegesis of the Quran), Hadith (Traditions of the prophet), Fiqh (Jurisprudence), Usul-i-fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence), Kalam (Scholasticism), Mantiq (logic), Adab (Arabic literature) etc. education was imparted. If a guest arrived at the royal court, books of Hafiz and Shiraz were given as gifts. The common people of the society mastered the Persian language and concentrated on the royal work.

### **The Brahmin's hostile attitude**

At that time, under the patronage of the sultans, they began to compose poetry in Bengali language, which was derived from Prakrit, Abhatta. Only the Brāhmins continued to lag behind. During the Sultanate period, Sultans patronized Bengali poets to translate famous Sanskrit poetry into Bengali or Persian. But the Brāhmins' individualism and conservative mentality towards Sanskrit language did not accept this task easily. So, it is said:

The Brahmin's hostile attitude towards Sanskrit texts that were rendered into Bengali is a known fact of history. The Bengali couplet: Kritivasa (Bengali translator of the *Rāmāyaṇa*), Kālidāsa (Bengali translator of the *Mahābhārata*) and those who aspire to mix with the Brāhmins too closely are the greatest evil-doers. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 277)

Brāhmins also say about the translation of Sanskrit texts into Bengali:

In fact, the Brahmana's considered it sacrilegious to write religious books in a language other than that of the Vedas. A well-known Sanskrit couplet: 'If a person hears the stories of the eighteen Mahābhārata or of the Rāmāyaṇa recited in Bengali, he will be thrown into the hell called Rourava. (Akhtaruzzaman, 2009: 273)

The beginning of Muslim rule, the introduction of Arabic-Persian language, the establishment of Madrasa-Makhtabs, the conversion of the common people to learn Persian and concentrate on the government and the conservative mindset of the Brāhmins towards the Sanskrit language are the reasons of stagnation of Sanskrit language.

### **The lack of patronage**

Ensuring basic things like food, clothing, shelter etc. is a prerequisite for proper focus on education and full development of humanity. In ancient times, the kings of different kingdoms patronized poets, teachers, scholars and priests. So that they could pursue literary work without interruption. The kings used to patronize poets and writers by appointing them as poets in the royal assembly. Ancient poets used to express great reluctance to reveal the biography or lifetime of literary figures. But in their literary works, they used to express the greatness of the kings by mentioning the name of their patron king. Also, they used to pray for the empire to be uninterrupted and the reign to be long-lasting in the beginning or the end of the book. From this the biographies and lifetimes of those patron kings and literary authors are also known. Aśvaghoṣa is the first poet of classical Sanskrit literature. In his works, the poet calls himself Subarṇākshiputra, a resident of Sāket or Āyodhyā. According to Sylvan Levy and Chinese saga, Aśvaghoṣa was the spiritual advisor of King Kanishka and his time period is approximately 1st century. Aśvaghoṣa wrote famous epics, poems like *Buddhacarita*, *Soundarananda*, *Śāriputraprakaraṇa* under the patronage of Kaṇiṣka. The life story of the 2nd century AD poet Bhāsa is still shrouded in darkness as it is not known whether he was patronized by any king or not.

A bright constellation in Sanskrit literature is Kālidāsa. Sanskrit poetry and drama have been glorified in his tactics. He is the best poet and playwright in ancient India in terms of life-wide and art. As the boundaries of the country have passed, he has passed the border. His usual talent and relentless perseverance established him in honor of Mahakavi. Kālidāsa was a Ratna of King Vikramāditya. Astrology says:

धन्वन्तरिक्षपणकामरसिंहशङ्कुबेताभट्टघटकपर्करकालिदासाः।  
ख्यातो बराहमिहिरो नृपतेः सभायां रत्नानि वे बररुचिर्नवविक्रमस्य॥  
(JBRAS, 1987: 25)

-Dhanvantari, Khapanaka, Amarasingha, Shanku, Betabhata, Ghatakpara, Kālidāsa, Barahamihira, Barruchi - these nine jewels were in Vikramaditya's royal court.

But this Vikramāditya is not a name, it's a title. Chandragupta II, son of Samudra Gupta, is believed to have had the title Vikramaditya, reign (380-413 AD). He patronized these nine learned scholars including Kālidāsa. This view is supported by A.B. Keith said: "...And we must remember that Chandragupta 2 had the style of vikramaditya, with whose name tradition consistently connects Kālidāsa." (Keith, 1973: 80)

The 7th century poet Bāṇabhaṭṭa, being motherless, was wandering around the country and abroad with unscrupulous company, later King Harṣhavarḍhana brought him to the court and appointed him as the chief poet. Bāṇabhaṭṭa says at the end of the second chapter of *Harṣhacharita* Kāvya:

परमप्रीतेन प्रसादजन्मनो मनस्य प्रेम्नो बिलम्बस्य द्रविणस्य नर्मणः  
प्रभावस्य च परां कोटिमान्नीयत नरेन्द्रणेति। (Śāstrī, 1987:248)

-Thus, the emperor was pleased with him and placed him at the top of his honor, love, trust, wealth, scorn and influence.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa later wrote a narrative called *Harṣhacharita* and a kathakavya called *Kādambarī*.

Sandhyākara Nandī wrote *Rāmcharita* on the history of Palavansh. Sandhyākara Nandī (1084-1155) composed poetry under the patronage of King Madanapāla. His father Prajapati Nandī was Rampal's sandhivigraha minister. The origin and history of Palavansh is known from Sandhyākara Nandī's poetry book, Rampal's biography which is also considered as a valuable document of the history of Bengal.

Bengal's poet of juncture period Jaydeva was born in Kendubilvagrama of Birbhum district. He composed the *Gita*

*Govinda* based on the story of Rādhā-Krishṇa. Ancient Bengali literature is mainly divided into two parts. One is Padavali, the other is Mangalkavya. *Gita Govinda* can be said to be the main source of both these genres. “Jayadeva (1179-1205), the first poet of Padavali and Mangalkavya, was the court poet of King Lakṣmaṇasena. he was the last king of the Sena dynasty, patronized Jayadeva”. (Śāstrī, 2011: 147)

There are numerous poets in Sanskrit literature like Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Sandhyākara Nandī or Jayadeva who were honored and patronized by various kings as poets in the royal court, thereby enabling the poets to practice their studies. But later, when the Muslim rule started in Nadiā, Bihār, Bengal and the whole of India, no king or sultan patronized the Brāhmiṇs who practiced the Sanskrit language. This trend also continued during the Sultanate period and the Mughal period. And even if sponsored, the example is very insignificant. During the Portuguese, Dutch and 200 years of British rule, this India was plagued by poverty, hunger, exploitation and almost forgot its past glory and heritage. The practice of Sanskrit language has also been stagnated. Like a waveless river, the Sanskrit language has also stopped. Thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are said to be the dark ages of Bengali literature but basically it is the dark ages for Sanskrit language and literature too. The main reason for this darkness is the lack of attention towards art and culture when the Muslim rulers spread their dominance. The use of Arabic-Persian language during the Mughal period and the use of English language during the English period. The establishment of schools, colleges, and universities instead of madrasas-maktabas is a repetition of the previous incident.

### **Present condition of Sanskrit language:**

Many people now call Sanskrit a ‘Dead Language’. Mṛ + kṛta = Mṛta(dead). ‘Mṛ’ dhātu means dead. That is, which has no existence. But Sanskrit is still relevant in the 21st century. It is being studied in various schools, colleges and universities and research activities are ongoing. Literary works written in this language still fascinate the learned readership. Also, Sanskrit

language is used in religious and social functions of Hindu community. So, this language cannot be called a dead language. It is better to accept that Sanskrit is not used as a spoken language in everyday life, but people simultaneously do research on it.

### Conclusion

Sanskrit is one of the oldest and richest languages in the world. The Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakaś and Upanishads were written in the ancient Indian Aryan language. Many foreign-learned scholars have been enthralled by reading Sanskrit literature. The Sanskrit language is still relevant today so its practice is essential to sustain this language. Efforts to revive the language by providing scholarships to university students and by sponsoring institutions that practice the language are highly desirable.

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