[Ancient Indians] developed a scholarly idiom of an increasingly refined technicality that would leave critics of the abstruseness of modern jargon—Heideggerian existentialism, Derridean deconstruction, postcolonial critique—slack-jawed were they ever to encounter it...

From the Foreword by Sheldon I. Pollock, Columbia University, New York

The thinkers and philosophers of ancient India contemplated intensively and extensively about all aspects related to life, and art was one of the major domains they touched upon. A profound and intense analysis of the art experience in literature naturally led to the evolution of one of the most sophisticated and long-standing poetic systems in the world.

An Introduction to Indian Aesthetics: History, Theory, and Theoreticians offers a comprehensive historical and conceptual overview of all the major schools in Sanskrit poetics—one of the most sophisticated and long-standing traditions of literary criticism in the ancient world. The book, despite its primary focus on the major exponents of each school, also aims to give the reader a good idea as to how these concepts were treated before and after their major practitioners. An important part of Sanskrit poetics that often intimidates a modern reader is its seemingly difficult terminology. This book particularly addresses this issue by using contemporary idioms for readers who have no background of Sanskrit. It also aims to draw points of comparison, wherever relevant, between certain concepts in Sanskrit poetics and their western counterparts.

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An Introduction to Indian Aesthetics
An Introduction to Indian Aesthetics

History, Theory, and Theoreticians

Mini Chandran and Sreenath V. S.
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Foreword

It is a fact of stunning historical irony—or historical contumely—that some of the most advanced achievements of premodern thought in the domain of the human sciences, those of classical India, are today among the least well-known, whether in the West, East Asia, or India itself. There is no doubt a range of factors that go to explain this strange state of affairs. I can think immediately of three.

One is the standard scholarly bête noire of miscognition about India that in this case truly was a bête: Orientalism, or better Macaulayism, in England—like Sinocentrism (zhonghua minzu) in China, Oriental studies (toyoshi) in Japan, and other similar early-modern and modern forms of cultural self-congratulation—sought to denigrate as nescience everyone else’s science. One’s own science always has “intrinsic superiority”; that of others is always nothing but “false texts and false philosophy.” A second, at least in the West, and in some ways, a corollary to the first, lies in the fact that it was often missionaries who engaged, first and foremost, with classical Indian culture: Indians may have known nothing true about the world, they thought, but their spiritual achievements, however misguided, were noteworthy and a point of entry for conversion. Indian religion was, thus, foregrounded to outsiders while that very attention served at the same time to persuade insiders that the spiritual was the sum total of their intellectual achievement.

A third factor for the historical disregard or dismissal of classical Indian science stems from its having done what all
sciences do, but only more so. Over the centuries, Indian science created discourses of ever greater sophistication, complexity and subtlety in expression and formulation. Forms of disciplinary knowledge—I name in the first instance language analysis (vyākaraṇa), hermeneutics (mīmāṃsā) and logic (nyāya), the trivium of classical learning, but also and especially aesthetics-and-rhetoric (rasaśāstra, nāṭyaśāstra, alaṅkāraśāstra), the knowledge form where those three sciences of word, sentence and reason converged—developed in unbroken succession over two or more millennia. They accordingly embodied arguments that presupposed familiarity with the whole prior history of thought, without which that thought would remain largely unintelligible. At the same time, they developed a scholarly idiom of an increasingly refined technicality that would leave critics of the abstruseness of modern jargon—Heideggerian existentialism, Derridean deconstruction, postcolonial critique—slack-jawed were they ever to encounter it.

To be sure, there have been scholars in the modern past who learned to read across the classical Indian sciences with great proficiency, but their number has substantially decreased in the present. This is true even—especially, and sadly—in India itself. There, the great authorities of the previous century—I am thinking of traditional pandits like P. N. Pattabhirama Sastry as well as quasi-modernists, such as Ganganath Jha, who were concerned with addressing non-traditional audiences—have been succeeded by ideologues who today deliver ignorant pronouncements on the Sanskrit tradition without being able to read a word of it; who turn that tradition into a political weapon of a Hindu rashtra even while denouncing others for supposedly having done so. While intellectual frauds take center stage, who, today in
India, is publishing editions of any of the hundreds of works that remain in manuscript form, unedited? Who is writing the kinds of intellectual histories that give the world some sense of the actual development of the classical sciences and their astonishing achievements? Who is producing the English translations—the portal through which Indian science becomes part of the global history of science—of any texts, even the core ones? (It is going on a century since the Nyāyasūtras or the Mīmāṃsāsūtras have been translated; vyākaraṇa at least has the incomplete Mahābhāṣya of Joshi and Roodebergen.) As for alaṅkāraśāstra, the reader of Western languages has nowhere to turn for any authoritative translations, of even the leading figures—Daṇḍin, say, or Udbhaṭa, or Mammaṭa, or Hemacandra, or Jagannātha (the singular exception is the outstanding work of Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan on the Dhvanyāloka and Locana).

As a result of all this, the true measure of the achievement of the classical Indian disciplines has rarely been taken. Nowhere is this more true, as I just implied, than in the case of aesthetics-and-rhetoric. It is thus encouraging to find two scholars in India, Dr Mini Chandran and Dr Sreenath V. S., re-engaging with the intellectual history of this discipline—which we are gradually coming to see as more sophisticated than any other in the premodern world—and trying to help others do so with such introductory surveys as the one offered in the following pages. I hope other scholars will follow their example for other śāstras, and that a more intensive engagement with original research on these treasures will eventually be undertaken to supplement their overviews.

Professor Sheldon Pollock
New York, May 20, 2020
Preface

The thinkers and philosophers of ancient India contemplated intensively and extensively about all aspects related to life, and art was one of the major domains they touched upon. Art, which included the performative as well as written, was not a medium of mere entertainment for them, but a path that could lead us to a transcendental state that bordered on a spiritual experience. Naturally, the vocation of the artist and the process of artistic enjoyment were subsumed under philosophic speculations on life and the different goals of life. This profound and intense analysis of the art experience in literature naturally led to the evolution of one of the most sophisticated and long-standing poetic systems in the world.

The beginnings of this systematic exploration into the realm of art and its function can be seen in the Nāṭyaśāstra, the text ascribed to Bharata. His concept of rasa was an explanation of the pleasurable aesthetic experience that is evoked by any work of art, and it started a searching analysis of the nature of beauty in art and literature down the centuries by numerous philosophers and theorists who came after him, giving rise to multiple notions of the function of art and literature. These studies were by no means confined to the realm of the Sanskrit language and occurred simultaneously in the other ancient literary Indian language of Tamil. The Tamil counterpart to the Nāṭyaśāstra is the Tolkāppiyam, which is a compendious work that covered all aspects of language and poetry. So, contrary to popular perception, the
term “Indian aesthetics” refers to not just Sanskrit poetics but also the well-developed poetic system of Tamil.

Unfortunately, many of us do not have easy access to this world for a variety of reasons—irrevocable loss of texts, multiple recensions of the same text, obscurity of thought and language and a languishing interest in the field. The scholarly explanations of these concepts are often too dense for beginners to understand, and many of them assume that readers are well versed in Sanskrit. Besides this, there is the perception that Sanskrit literary systems belong to a bygone world and have no relevance in contemporary times.

This book is meant to be an introduction to the world of Sanskrit poetics, explaining its major concepts lucidly for even those who do not know Sanskrit. It offers a comprehensive historical and conceptual overview of all the major schools in Sanskrit poetics. The book, despite its primary focus on the major exponents of each school, also aims to give the reader a good idea as to how these concepts were treated before and after their major practitioners. It is hoped that such a bird’s-eye view will help the reader position these theories in the vast historical expanse of Sanskrit poetics. An important part of Sanskrit poetics that often intimidates a modern reader is its seemingly difficult terminology. This book particularly addresses this issue by using a contemporary idiom for readers who have no background of Sanskrit.

However, it does not deal with Tamil poetics or the other poetic systems that developed later in the various languages of India. It is meant to be a beginner’s guide to the awe-inspiring immensity of Sanskrit literature and literary thought, the first step in a journey that should ideally lead to the profundities of ancient thought. This book should be seen as a mere grain of sand that attempts to hold the infinity of a world.
Indian Aesthetics: A Historical and Conceptual Overview

Aesthetics is the broad generic term for a systematic exploration of beauty and the nature of beauty, and by extension, the philosophy of art. Poetics, which falls under the purview of aesthetics, is the theory of literary forms and devices, and the term is familiar to us mainly through the Greek philosopher Aristotle’s work of the same name. Aristotle’s *Poetics* is believed to be an incomplete treatise and the work that we have with us today is a systematic attempt to define only one genre, namely the art of tragedy. The treatise explores the various aspects of the genre, providing answers to what goes into the making of a tragedy and how it evokes the right kind of aesthetic response in a spectator. This attempt to systematize the study of poetry or all forms of literary composition is not specific to Greek or Western literature but can be found in all kinds of literature worthy of the name.

In Sanskritic cultural history, the term “poetics” in its broadest sense was concerned with two domains of art, namely *nātya* (a play which blended drama, music and dance) and *kāvya* (poetry and other forms of literary composition). The factors that distinguished *nātya* from *kāvya* in terms of form as well as content were so discernible that Sanskrit poetics virtually got bifurcated into two streams, namely
The nātyaśāstra and kāvyāśāstra tradition of poetics, as the term denotes, focused primarily on nātya or performance of plays on stage with the accompaniment of dance and music; these aspects were technically termed in Sanskrit as āṅgika (pertaining to gestures), vācika (verbal elements), āhārya (make-up and dress), and sāttvika abhinaya (representation of emotions). Kāvyāśāstra, on the other hand, was exclusively concerned with the ontology of kāvya (poetry and literary prose). However, Bharata’s Nātyaśāstra, which is a text based on the performance arts, should be seen as a seminal work in both the nātya and kāvya traditions, primarily for its conceptualization of rasa. It cannot be said with certainty whether Bharata was the first person to propound the concept of rasa—that rasa or aesthetic enjoyment is the ultimate purpose of art—but this theory was to monopolize all discussions of the nature of art and literature for centuries to come. Later theoreticians in the nātya and kāvya traditions did not contest this basic notion; all they did was think of the various paths through which one could arrive at the final destination of rasa.

Sanskrit in which kāvya was later profusely written was originally a Vedic language, used mainly for liturgical and ritualistic purposes. It was not the language used every day by the people or the language used in administration. The presence of Sanskrit in the public realm was felt prominently only by 200 CE. According to available historical evidence, the first major non-Vedic employment of standard Sanskrit was found in the Junāgarh inscription (150 CE) from present-day Gujarat. It was composed by the Western Kṣatrapa ruler Rudradāman to mark the reconstruction of a great water reservoir, Sudarśana, which was heavily damaged in a storm.
Close on the heels of Sanskrit’s emergence outside the closet of the Vedic realm is the beginning of the kāvya tradition in the language. At the earliest, the beginning of the kāvya tradition can be traced back to the last centuries before the advent of the common era (CE). Creative writers and literary critics of Sanskrit literary culture consider Vālmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa as the first kāvya (ādikāvya) in Sanskrit. The earliest testimony regarding this is given by Aśvaghoṣa who in his Buddhacarita (200 CE) says, “Vālmiki created the first poem” (vālmikir ādau ca sasarja padyam; I.43).

Whatever may be the theory of historians about the genesis of the ādikāvya, the Rāmāyaṇa self-reflexively proposes an altogether different story about its origin. According to the omniscient narrator of the text, the events which lead to the composition of the Rāmāyaṇa begin with Vālmiki asking the celestial sage Nārada about the worthiest of all human beings then living on earth. In response to this query, Nārada narrates to Vālmiki the legendary story of Rāma, the king of Ayodhyā. Thereafter, Nārada leaves, and Vālmiki, along with his disciple Bharadvāja, goes to the riverside for his prayers. At the riverside, Vālmiki chances upon an act of violence—a hunter shooting one of a mating pair of birds. The sage overcome with pity for the mourning mate curses the hunter, which surprisingly comes out in the form of a śloka. Astounded by his own accidental invention, the sage returns to his hermitage and finds Brahmā, the lord of creation, patiently awaiting him. Brahmā tells Vālmiki that what he has just accidentally invented is a śloka and commands him to compose the whole story of Rāma using that format. He also assures the sage that whatever he says in his poem will be absolutely true. Thus, at the behest of
Brahmā, Vālmiki reproduces the story of Rāma in a unique way that is quite distinct from the ordinary form of speech.

Though *kāvya* is often flaunted as a unique product created by Vālmiki, it is greatly possible to draw a parallel between *kāvya* and the Vedic tradition that antedated it. First of all, the use of defamiliarized language in versified form, later conceptualized as the hallmark of literary language, had already been used to its optimum by many Vedic scriptures such as *Ṛgvedasamhitā*. The function of the Vedas and *kāvya* (according to literary theoreticians) was the same, in the sense that both these traditions ultimately aimed to transform their readers into ideal subjects. While the Vedas performed this deontic function explicitly, *kāvya* served this purpose implicitly by consistently showing the eventual victory of the righteous (*dhārmika*) hero and the decay of the degenerate (*adhārmika*) villain. In his commentary on Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka* (9th century), Abhinavagupta talks about the different ways in which the Vedas and *kāvya* carry out their deontic functions. According to Abhinavagupta, while *kāvya* implicitly “instructs after the fashion of a wife,” the Vedas explicitly “instruct after the fashion of a master” (1.1 e L).

**Origin and Evolution of Kāvyashāstra**

As is and should be the case, the theorization of *kāvya* evolved and gained a definite shape only after its writing had been prevalent for some time. Although *kāvya* originated as early as the beginning of the common era and flourished through the works of writers like Aśvaghoṣa (2nd century), and Kālidāsa (4th century), there was no attempt to develop
a śāstric tradition for kāvyā until the 7th century. According to available historical evidence, Bhāmaha’s Kāvyālaṅkāra (7th century) is the earliest available text in the kāvyāśāstra tradition. This does not mean that prior to Bhāmaha there was a total absence of discussions about kāvyā. The reason for the lack of texts could be that the deliberations about the art of composing poems were conducted orally by poets and lay connoisseurs of verbal art without collating their ideas into a systematic body of knowledge; Bhāmaha must have been the first to produce a written text. But his influence upon later writers and theoreticians was so great that they often treated him as the founding father of Sanskrit poetics.

So, it is safe to consider Bhāmaha’s Kāvyālaṅkāra as the beginning of a systematic discussion of poetics in the Sanskrit literary tradition, which lasted till the 17th century. Mastering kāvyāśāstra (the formal study of literature as well as what makes good literature) was considered an essential prerequisite for an aspiring poet. This is attested by all major theoreticians and practitioners of the art of poesy. According to Bhāmaha, an aspiring poet should venture into composing kāvyas only after achieving mastery over all the śāstras related to it (I.10). Daṇḍin’s (7th century) observation regarding the importance of education in poetic composition stresses the value of acquired skill besides inherent poetic genius. According to Daṇḍin, just as a blind person cannot distinguish between different colors so also a poet untrained in poetics cannot differentiate between poetic merits and faults (I.8). He went on to say that a poet, irrespective of whether he is naturally endowed with poetic genius or not, can master the art of poetry simply by learning and practising kāvyāśāstra (I.104). Vāmana in
his *Kāvyālankārasūtravr̥tti* (8th century) held that a poet should understand the *guṇas* or poetic qualities, and *doṣas* or blemishes of *kāvya* by being educated in *kāvyāsāstra*, and even if a person was endowed with poetic talent by birth, s/he should definitely undergo training in poetics (I.1.4–5). In his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (10th century) Rājaśekhara emphasized the importance of education in *kāvyāsāstra* by saying that the prior knowledge of *śāstra* was essential for an appreciation of *kāvya*. According to him, just as nothing is visible in the dark without the aid of light, so also a poet cannot create without the knowledge of *śāstra* (20). All these observations attest to the fact that mastery over *kāvyāsāstra* was as important as *pratibhā* (inborn genius) for a person to become a *kavi* or poet.

### Centers of Learning

As in the case of Sanskrit *kāvya*, the royal court was often one of the major locations for the production of treatises on literary science. Daṇḍin, for example, was associated with the court of Śivaskandavarman of the Pallava dynasty in Kāñcipuram; Vāmana and Udbhaṭa (8th–9th century) were associated with the court of King Jayāpīḍa of Kashmir; Ānandavardhana and Mukula (9th century) with King Avantivarman in Kashmir; Dhanañjaya (11th century) with the court of the Paramāra King Vākpati Muṇja, the uncle of King Bhoja; Vidyādhara and Viśvanātha (14th century) with an unknown king in Kaliṅga; Jagannātha (17th century) with the court of Shah Jahan and Viśveśvara (18th century) with the royal court of Almora. Bhoja (11th century), the author of the voluminous *Śrīṅgāraprakāśa* and
Sarasvatikanṭhābharana, himself was a king who ruled the city of Dhara (today’s Madhya Pradesh). Arjunavarmadeva, who is the author of Rasikasamjīvanī (13th century) was a king in the lineage of Bhoja of Dhara. Śīṅgabhūpāla (14th century), the author of Rasārnavasudhākara, was the king of a small country in today’s Andhra Pradesh.

Among the various centers of Sanskrit scholarship, what rose to fame as the prime locus of the production of Sanskrit literary theories was undoubtedly the place which we now call Kashmir. A few names that mark the prominence of Kashmir in the intellectual history of Sanskrit kāvyāśāstra include Bhāmaha (7th century), Vāmana (9th century), Udbhaṭa (9th century), Ānandavardhana (9th century), Rudraṭa (9th century), Pratihārendurāja (10th century), Mukula Bhaṭṭa (9th century), Kuntaka (10th century), Bhaṭṭa Tauta (10th century), Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa (11th century), Mahimabhaṭṭa (11th century), Abhinavagupta (11th century), Ruuyaka (12th century), and so on. Even though Kashmir’s tradition of literary science began with Bhāmaha’s Kavyālāṅkāra in the 7th century, what gave it a real impetus was the reign of King Jayāpīḍa (8th to early 9th century). King Jayāpīḍa was the grandson of King Lalitāditya, a celebrated patron of art and science. Lalitāditya’s reign was followed by an age of political turmoil and a consequent stagnation in intellectual and creative works. Jayāpīḍa who wished to restore his grandfather’s era of glory generously funded intellectuals and creative writers and this led to an output unparalleled in range and breadth. One can undoubtedly say that it was under King Jayāpīḍa that the school of literary criticism in Kashmir properly came into being. As far as kāvyāśāstra
is concerned, this crucial movement was led by two major intellectuals namely Udbhaṭa and Vāmana.

Udbhaṭa and Vāmana’s texts were undoubtedly the forerunners of systematization of Sanskrit poetics in terms of their size, style, and approach. First of all, the critical corpus of Vāmana and Udbhaṭa alone is as large as all the earlier works on poetics put together. Udbhaṭa authored three books on kāvyaśāstra namely Kāvyālaṅkāra-sārasamgraha, Bhāmahavivaranaṇa and a commentary on Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra. These works set an example for his followers in the composition of manuals on poetry. While Udbhaṭa’s predecessors like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, for the most part, spontaneously composed stand-alone verses in order to explicate the literary tropes and figures of speech, Udbhaṭa used verses from his own full-fledged poem Kumārasambhava to serve this purpose. This was the first time when kāvyaśāstra borrowed verses from an independent literary work to explicate various critical concepts. Vāmana, Udbhaṭa’s successor, even went a step further by incorporating poems from other writers of his period. Through his Kāvyālaṅkāra-sārasamgraha, Udbhaṭa also set a new model for the composition of literary treatises, which was the method of adding critical commentary to an already existing text. So Kāvyālaṅkāra-sārasamgraha was essentially Bhāmaha’s text along with the commentary of Udbhaṭa. This method proved useful in the preservation of texts; many of the critical works would have been lost in oblivion if they had not been cited by critics like this.

After Jayāpīḍa’s reign, the second crucial landmark in the history of kāvyaśāstra in Kashmir occurred during the rule of King Avantivarman of Utpala dynasty in the 9th century.
During the reign of kings before Avantivarman, the critics and practitioners of kāvya did not get much support and patronage from the royal court probably because of the political instability during this period. It was in Avantivarman’s court that the great literary theorist Ānandavardhana produced his famous Dhvanyāloka which revolutionized Sanskrit literary science through the concept of dhvani. After the death of king Avantivarman (883 CE), courtly patronage for literature and literary criticism again faced a setback.

During the reign of Śaṅkaravarman in the late 9th century and that of Queen Diddā in the mid-10th century, Sanskrit literary production declined again because of political turmoil. Diddā’s reign was particularly a period of rebellion and violence. Following her husband’s death, she placed her son Abhimanyu on the throne and ruled on his behalf for some time. To secure her own safety, she fomented rivalry between the military and political factions of the country. Not long after his coming of age, Diddā’s son Abhimanyu passed away. After Abhimanyu, Diddā, by turn, placed three of her grandsons on the throne, but they were all murdered after enjoying brief stints of sovereignty. Finally, from 980 CE to 1003 CE, she assumed power in her own right and finally left the kingdom to her nephew whom she had chosen after careful examination (Ingalls 9).

The withdrawal of royal patronage during the time of Śaṅkaravarman and Diddā eventuated in a near dearth of literary production in Kashmir. We have no Sanskrit lyric or play from Kashmir during this period. The only mahākāvya that is available from this period is Abhinanda’s Kādambarī-kathā-sāra. However, the tradition of Sanskrit scholarship,
especially Śaiva philosophy and *kāvyāśāstra*, continued to flourish chiefly because of the Brahmans living in the capital or on their tax-free grants of land. They made sure that their sons were trained in grammar and other scholarly disciplines in Sanskrit (Ingalls 28–29). So, we have a lot of texts on literary theory from both the 10th and 11th centuries, such as Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s *Hṛdayadarpana* (10th century), Bhaṭṭa Tauta’s *Kāvyakautuka* (10th century), Kuntaka’s *Vakroktijīvita* (10th century), Abhinavagupta’s *Abhinavabhāratī* (11th century), Mahimabhaṭṭa’s *Vyaktiviveka* (11th century), and Mammaṭa’s *Kāvyaprakāśa* (11th century).

Of all these texts, Mammaṭa’s *Kāvyaprakāśa* deserves special mention because of the large number of commentaries it invited from both his contemporaries and successors. These numerous commentaries bear testimony to the popularity that *Kāvyaprakāśa* enjoyed in Sanskrit literary circles. Indicating the large number of commentaries on *Kāvyaprakāśa*, Bhāskara (15th century) bragged that there were almost a thousand commentaries on *Kāvyaprakāśa* and among them his was the best one (Jhalakikar 30). In his commentary on *Kāvyaprakāśa*, Bhīmasena Dikṣita (17th century) expressed his belief that although several commentaries on *Kāvyaprakāśa* were available, none of them was as good as his (Jhalakikar 34). Maheśvara (17th century), the author of *Kāvyaprakāśādarśana*, said that although a commentary of *Kāvyaprakāśa* was prepared in almost all the houses, most intellectuals were unable to comprehend it because it was such a pathbreaking study (Jhalakikar 39). Among the numerous commentaries on *Kāvyaprakāśa*, some of the important ones include *Kāvyaprakāśasaṅketa*-s of Ruyyaka (11th century), Māṇikyacandra (12th century),
Someśvara (12th century), and Śrīdhara Thakkura (13th century); Bālacittānurañjanī of Narahari (13th century) and Sarasvatītīrtha (13th century); Kāvyaprakāśadīpikā of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (13th century); Sāhityadīpikā of Caṇḍidāsa (14th century), Kāvyaprakāśādarśana-s of Viśvanātha (14th century), and Maheśvara (17th century); and Kāvyaprakāśaṭīkka of Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa (17th century).

Kāvyaprakāśa was mostly a reformulation of the ideas already discussed in detail by other literary theoreticians, so it is still a matter of wonder as to what element in Kāvyaprakāśa endeared it so much to scholars. Two possible reasons could be its text-bookish nature and the comprehensive collation of almost all the ideas from preceding scholars; this could have helped both the preceptors and disciples of Sanskrit literary science to have a comprehensive overview of all the major lessons of kāvyaśāstra. Under King Harṣa’s reign in the 12th century (not to be confused with King Harṣa of 7th-century Kanauj), Sanskrit learning in Kashmir again faced a serious crisis from which it could never revive. After the 12th century, no new literary theory was produced in Kashmir and the last major kāvyaśāstra text to be circulated outside of Kashmir was Alaṅkāraratnākara of Śobhākaramitra from the end of the 12th century (Pollock, “Death of Sanskrit,” 396).

**Major Theoreticians**

However, the field of Sanskrit aesthetics, before its gradual decline, was dominated by towering personalities. Most of them left very little evidence of their personal lives, and this fact coupled with the loss of significant texts like Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s Hṛdayadarpaṇa makes it very difficult for us to