

Tradition and Innovation in the Languages and Cultures of Premodern South Asia

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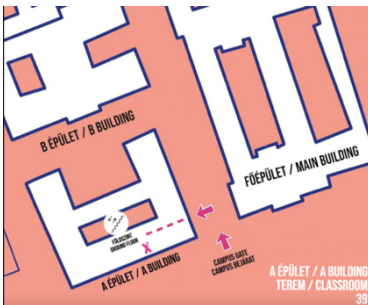
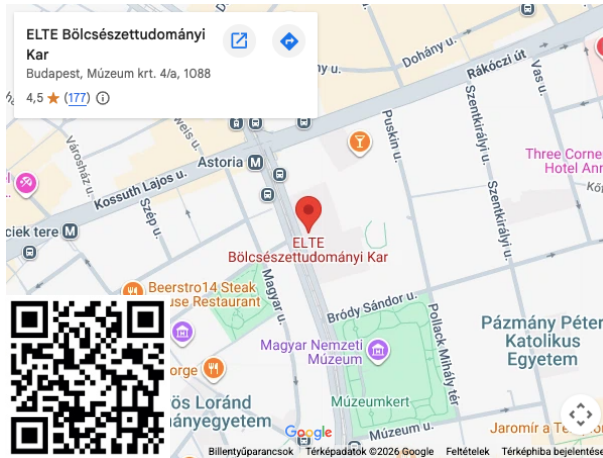
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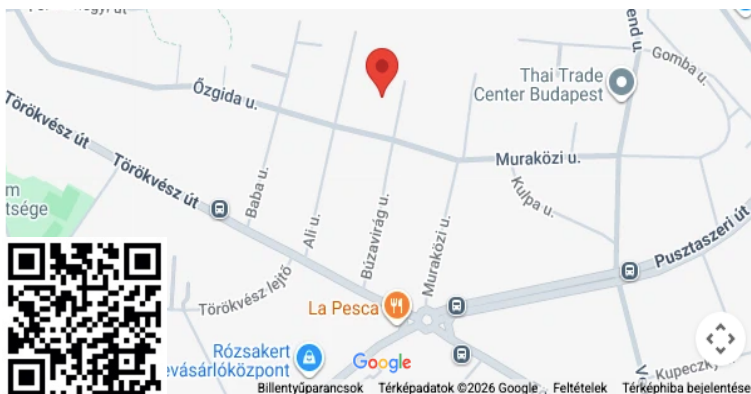
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Rāmānuja's commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.1

The best-known commentary to Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtra* (BS) is undoubtedly Śaṅkara's (8th century). He was not only the first one to leave an extant commentary to the foundational *sūtra* of his school, Vedānta, but his is also the most influential one. The Vedānta school provides an apt example for the study of tradition and innovation as the various branches of the school adhere to the same tripartite canon, the *Prasthāna-trayī* (the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra*), while all understand these sacred texts in greatly varying ways.

All subsequent commentators of the BS react to Śaṅkara's strict Advaita world view expounded in his magnum opus, the *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣya* (BŚbh) – either engaging in open debate, or simply alluding to his views, or sometimes even accepting and borrowing his ideas.

Rāmānuja (traditionally dated 1017–1137) is the most influential thinker of the Viśiṣṭādvaita branch, another *sampradāya* of the Vedānta school. He does not follow Śaṅkara's rigorous nondualism but admits some kind of a discrepancy between the Supreme Being, who is a *saṁyama Brahman*, namely Viṣṇu, and the individual souls, who relate to Brahman as the qualities (*viśeṣa*) inhere in their substrate. While Śaṅkara places an Introduction to his BŚbh, traditionally known as *Adhyāśabhāṣya*, expounding his fundamental views, Rāmānuja does it in his commentary to the first *sūtra* of BS: *athāto brahmajijñāsā* “Then, therefore, the desire to know Brahman.” (BS 1.1.1) This programmatic opening line has triggered various understandings and explanations among the various branches of the school. Rāmānuja's vast and profound commentary to this *sūtra* runs some 270 pages in the Melkote Sanskrit edition, where the Viśiṣṭādvaitin explains his main tenets and polemizes with most known schools within the *śaṅkarādvaita* tradition. His main opponent is an Advaitin, and the debate involves cognition, consciousness, causality, and liberation, all to prove that complete nondualism is impossible, the only reality is the existence of Brahman with special qualities. The present paper investigates some of Rāmānuja's main views, and explores his polemics with the representatives of rival Vedānta branches.

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The *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanīya-Bhāṣya* and the *Prapañcasāra*: Stylometry, philology, and the question of common authorship

A statistical stylometric analysis conducted in 2024 by Jacek Bąkowski and Ivan Andrijačić using the General Imposters Framework (GI) largely confirmed the most conservative assessments of Śaṅkara's authorship of works traditionally attributed to him, with one notable exception: the commentary on the *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanīya-Upaniṣad*. Although traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara, this commentary is generally regarded, and for good reason, as a later pseudepigraphic work. Intriguingly, its author refers to the *Prapañcasāra* as his own work. The *Prapañcasāra*, a tantric *mantrasāstra* digest traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara, therefore offers a valuable point of comparison. In this presentation, I first present new GI results based on an improved version of the *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanīya-Bhāṣya* e-text, which no longer attributes the work to Śaṅkara. Despite the explicit references to the *Prapañcasāra*, the GI analysis does not identify the two texts as the work of the same author. This apparent contradiction motivates a return to more traditional methods. I therefore compare the doctrinal and terminological peculiarities of the two works, demonstrating their remarkable affinity. Particular attention will be devoted to the Nṛsiṃha chapter of the *Prapañcasāra* (chapter 23[25]), whose comparison with the *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanīya-bhāṣya* reveals a shared tantric theological framework characterized by *mantra-aṅga* framework, *śakti-bīja* doctrines, ritualized conceptions of the divine body, and the integration of Nṛsiṃha into an esoteric ritual system. At the same time, some differences emerge. The *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanīya-Bhāṣya* displays a considerably stronger commitment to Advaita Vedānta, albeit in a later, post-Śaṅkarian doctrinal form reflected in its terminology and philosophical concepts. The presentation pursues three objectives. (1) First, it examines the references and similarities that support references pointing towards common authorship. (2) Second, it situates both works within a broader cultural and intellectual context, showing how tantric elements came to be incorporated into Advaita Vedānta during the relatively early period of the tenth or early eleventh century. (3) Third, it seeks to explain why the GI Framework, despite its otherwise considerable reliability, fails to identify the two texts as products of the same author.

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The formation of *Āyurveda*: Consolidation by brahmanisation

The foundational compilations of *Āyurveda*, as we know them today, are the outcome of a long compositional history. Although they contain vast material that was added over time they are often seen as witnesses of Indian medicine as it was practiced at the time of their suspected “original” composition. While it is well-known that such a date is hard to define, it is still common sense to understand works like the *Carakasamhitā* or the *Suśrutasamhitā* as originating in a specific century and describing the medicine of that time, despite the fact that they are partly based on older materials and contain many later additions. In this talk, I will argue that, when they were first compiled, the earliest medical compendia, attributed to legendary physicians such as Caraka, Suśruta, Bhela, and Kāśyapa, were not yet “āyurvedic” treatises. During the Kushan period (–100–300 CE), they still represented the knowledge of various medical schools, each focusing on specific disciplines and probably originating from different regions with different religious and cultural backgrounds. It was only during the Gupta period (–320–550 CE) that these treatises were revised to fulfil the requirements of an integrated medicine that accepted Brahmanism as the dominant religious tradition, uniting all preceding healing traditions under the term *Āyurveda*. Through close, critical, contextualised reading, by examining archaisms and innovations, and by taking into account the significant religious and political shifts of the time, it is possible to trace some of these changes in the surviving medical compilations, connect them with broader historical processes, and thus rewrite the history of the origins of *Āyurveda*.

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We are kings of kings, but how to pitch that to the world? Shifting conventions in Cālukya dynastic eulogy

From the early centuries of the Common Era onward, South Asian royal copperplate charters have served not only as title deeds confirming land ownership, but simultaneously as portable instruments for broadcasting the message of kingship, couched in conventionalised literary language in a eulogistic (*praśasti*) form. Honed over decades and centuries of replication enlivened by adoption, adaptation and invention, the copperplate eulogy delivers maximum impact in an optimum of space. It articulates the public image of sovereignty even while asserting that its issuer conformed to that image, and it distinguishes that ruler from rival claimants to the title of universal sovereign. If you see the words *śrīmatām sakala-bhuvana-saṁstūyamāna-mānavya-sagotrānām hāritīputrāṇām*... on a copper plate, you can tell that you are dealing with a Cālukya charter well before you get to the word *cālukyānām* after a long series of other qualifications. Some of these phrases go back as far as the inscriptions of the Cuṭu kings of the third and early fourth centuries CE; and they and others continue to appear, varying in sequence, detail and embellishment, in the eulogies of many dynasties of the Deccan well into the second millennium. In the records of the Cālukyas of Bādāmi (6th to 8th c.), Veṅgī (7th to 11th c.) and Kalyāṇa (10th to 12th c.) they tend to conglomerate into a eulogy of the dynasty as a whole, which segues into the pedigree of the reigning king. The elements of this dynastic eulogy evolve with the passing of the centuries and the shifting fortunes of the Cālukya branches, with elements appearing, dropping out and reappearing, coagulating into conventional patterns and unravelling before settling into a new template. Based on a sample of Sanskrit copperplate charters including the full corpus of known Veṅgī Cālukya records, this paper investigates how tradition and innovation shaped this particular expression of Cālukya dynastic identity.

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The transition from Apabhramsha to New Indo-Aryan in Jain narratives in Madhyadeśa

The talk will investigate the “breaking down” of literary Apabhramsha into a NIA Jain literary idiom in Madhyadeśa. Vit Bubenik in his *Historical Developments from Middle to Early New Indo-Aryan* (2015), among other things, underlined that the synthetic (inflecting) Middle Indo-Aryan developed into analytical New Indo-Aryan languages. The paper will revisit the question on the basis of two mid-fourteenth century Madhyadeśī Jain narratives and examine how on the wake of the collapse of the Middle Indic case system, the extensive use of postpositions emerged. It will also discuss what was further preserved of Apabhramsha grammar in the 14th century and in what context did literary innovation happen.

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Innovation, not revolution: The twelfth-century literary turn in Kannada literature

The twelfth century is considered by scholars as a watershed moment in Kannada literary history, as literary practices shifted from composing mainly in traditional or “classical” styles collectively referred to as *mārga*, written in Old Kannada (*haḷegannada*) and heavily influenced by Sanskrit, to composing mainly in local and more accessible styles collectively referred to as *dēśi*, written in Middle Kannada (*naḍugannada*). While the former literary culture was associated with courtly patronage and Jain poets, the latter was associated with larger audiences and patronage from religious institutes, composed first by Vīraśaivas and later also by Vaiṣṇava poets. This presentation explores this dramatic transition in linguistic features, meters, and poetic conventions through the lenses of innovation and continuity, arguing for a gradual development in literary practices, thus offering a correction to the prevalent and hyperbolic claim that Kannada literature at that time was revolutionized.

In describing the sea change in Kannada literary practices at this period, scholars have been pointing to the *vacanas*, short lyrical poems associated with the Vīraśaivas, as the revolutionary engine that ignited a drastic pivoting in Kannada literature. To illustrate: A. K. Ramanujan places high stakes on the *vacanas*, calling them “a literature in spite of itself” that voiced “a sweeping movement of protest and reform in Hindu society” (Ramanujan 1973: 12). Sheldon Pollock argues that the Vīraśaiva poets “attempted at once to retrieve a certain authenticity of orality and to undo a centuries-long cultivation of vernacular literacy” (Pollock 2006: 434). Against the above focus on the *vacanas* and their purportedly revolutionary effect on literature, I wish to recast the twelfth-century literary turn as primarily driven by new literary forms other than *vacanas*, forms which involved continuity as much as innovation.

I argue that the direct influence of the *vacanas* on literary practices in Kannada of their time was limited at best. For one, the *vacanas*’ textual and poetical features are open-ended: they were not composed in any fixed meter, they were transmitted in oral form until the fifteenth century, and their language register is inconsistent. Moreover, no literary work until the fifteenth century recognizes the *vacanas* as a literary form or even mention them by this name (Ben-Herut 2024; Nagaraj 2003: 364). Rather, innovation in Kannada literature unfolded within the recognized and conventional

literary parameter, by Viraśaiva authors who were trained in traditional styles but were committed to innovation who changed Kannada literature with their output. Among them, Hampeya Harihara was a early and important trendsetter. I will show how, in a bid to promote a new religious movement to multiple audiences, Harihara produced written literature in various forms, some of which traditional and some of which innovative. In previous publications, I analyzed Harihara's *ragale* collection of saints' stories, a work written in a completely new style (Ben-Herut 2018; Ben-Herut – Sundaram 2025). In this presentation, I will focus on two other works by Harihara, the *Girijā-kalyāṇa* and the *Rakṣāsatakam*, which the author composed in traditional styles (*campū* and *śatakam*). I will show that despite the stylistic continuities these two works presented, they also involved poetic innovation, complicating the simplistic notion about the "revolution" in Kannada literature.

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Sanatkumāra's teachings to Vyāsa: Reflections on purāṇic processes of canonisation

The fate of the *Skandapurāṇa* offers an illuminating case study for understanding processes of canonisation in premodern South Asia. The early *Skandapurāṇa*, long thought lost and known primarily through citations in medieval *nibandhas*, has survived in early Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts. Its critical edition, still in progress, continues to yield important new insights into Purāṇic transmissional history. The *Skandapurāṇa* that was published by the Venkatesvara Press in the early twentieth century bears little to no relation to this text. Instead, it consists of a collection of subsequent compositions, or *khaṇḍas* ("sections"), that were attributed to the *Skandapurāṇa* within the manuscript tradition. Rather than referring to a single work, the title *Skandapurāṇa* may therefore be understood as denoting a broader "meta-*Skandapurāṇa*": an evolving textual tradition composed of works claiming affiliation with and authority from it.

This paper first of all examines the significance of the narrative framework of the early *Skandapurāṇa*, in which Sanatkumāra, the mind-born son of Brahmā, is presented as the Pāśupata teacher of Vyāsa, the omniscient narrator and central character of the *Mahābhārata*. I argue that it effects a deliberate and carefully executed change of the religious identity of the epic's narrator, by turning him into a Pāśupata. I then trace its afterlife beyond the *Skandapurāṇa*, demonstrating, for the first time, how it was appropriated in the *Śivapurāṇa*, namely in the so-called *Sanatkumārasamhitā* ("Collection of Sanatkumāra"). This *samhitā* has remained largely neglected in Purāṇa scholarship (despite the existence of an important article by R. C. Hazra), no doubt because it was omitted from the influential Venkatesvara Press edition of the *Śivapurāṇa*, which became the canonical standard in modern times, also through its easy availability through the reprints of Nag Publishers.

The parallel histories of the *Skandapurāṇa* and the *Śivapurāṇa* invite broader reflection on the impact of print culture on the canonisation of the Purāṇic corpus. I argue that the advent of the printing press contributed to the stagnation and loss of what had previously been a fluid, living, and open-ended Purāṇic canon.

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**What is the price to pay for giving
a classical language an international outreach?
The case of Tamil and its Latin-speaking users**

Among the tools which were created in Tamil Nadu for the preservation and transmission of its poetical heritage, one must count the poetical vocabularies, which have their roots inside the *Uriyiyal*, 17th chapter of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the most ancient Tamil treatise. Among those poetical vocabularies, the most ancient is the *Tivākaram*, and it was followed by a number of others. They were meant to be memorized by native speakers of Tamil, who would at the end of a long effort of several years have managed to embed inside —or to graft on— their native linguistic capacity an additional competence, namely the mastery of *Centamiḷ* “perfect Tamil”, with its rich profusion of synonyms and its complex handling of homonyms. The first-millennium creators of those poetical vocabularies could not have anticipated that at some point in the future, from the 16th century onwards, some Westerners would come to *Tamiḷakam* and start to explore the Tamil linguistic universe. Those Westerners started of course with ordinary language, and created tools for its study, but at some point some of them discovered Tamil poetry and realized its importance. The most gifted among them was C. J. Beschi, who arrived in the 18th century, became a Tamil poet and composed grammars and dictionaries, either in Latin (both for ordinary Tamil and for *Centamiḷ*), or purely in Tamil (when dealing with *Centamiḷ* in his *Tōṇṇūḷ Viḷakkam* and in his *Caturakarāti*). The present communication will be centered on a close examination of a statistically representative extract from the two Tamil-Latin dictionaries compiled by Gury (1806-53) which were respectively printed in 1852 (without attribution) and in 1867 (posthumously). The main goal will be to determine the degree of entanglement of the data coming from the 1732 *Caturakarāti*, concerning *Centamiḷ*, and the data coming from Beschi’s 1742/43 Tamil-Latin dictionary, which deals with ordinary Tamil. Such an entanglement had in fact been strictly condemned by Beschi himself, in his Latin preface to his Tamil-Latin dictionary (323 words).

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Language politics in 11th-century India: Arguments concerning vernaculars and written media in the *Kālacakra*

The Buddhist *Kālacakra* tradition, one of the final developments of the Buddhist *man-tranaya* to emerge in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, represents an ambitious project that synthesises a vast array of Indian scientific, philosophical, and esoteric knowledge. Compiled under a perceived threat of impending Muslim conquests, the *Kālacakra* literature advances its comprehensive religious system alongside a vehement critique of the hegemonic Brahminical culture. A central aspect of this critique is the *Kālacakra*'s position on the Sanskrit language.

The *Vimalaprabhā*, the most broad-ranging and systematic of the *Kālacakra* texts, argues for the 'provincial' (*prādeśika*) nature of Sanskrit, despite its being recognised as 'the language of the gods'. The text instead advocates for the supremacy of a *sarvajña-bhāṣā* — the language of the Omniscient One, which manifests universally in all vernaculars to teach all beings. To undermine the status of Sanskrit, the text explicitly advocates breaking the rules of grammar and good usage. Furthermore, the *Vimalaprabhā* puts forward a sustained argument for the written word over orality, characterising the latter as a cynical strategy to monopolise knowledge and material resources. This radical media critique leads to a unique characterisation of the transmission of knowledge and scripture within the Buddhist tradition itself, with implication on the practice of translation. In this paper I will present an overview of these arguments and contextualise them as part of broader Indian debates about language use and knowledge transmission.

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The two lives of a verse:

Ambiguity and its resolution from Bhartṛhari to Appayya Dīkṣita

From a marginal linguistic phenomenon in the old grammatical corpus, polysemy (*anekārthatva*) becomes in Bhartṛhari's works the sign of a fundamental indetermination (*sārvārthya*) in signification, by which (in principle, at least) all words can become expressive of everything. The related hermeneutic question of how to suppress ambiguity in language also receives its first systematic treatment in the *Vākyapadīya*, in three verses (2.314-316) with a lengthy - yet very badly preserved - auto-commentary. These verses, though not immediately influential, received sustained attention from late Sanskrit poetics thanks to their quotation by Maṃmaṭa in the *Kāvyaaprakāśa*. Second-millennium poetics, however, only knew the verses, and had to imagine anew what content Bhartṛhari could have given to the various 'factors of disambiguation' (*nimitta*) that are listed in them. In this paper, I wish to compare these late poetics' reading of these three verses with Bhartṛhari's own understanding as we can get it from the *Svavṛtti*. This, it is hoped, will help us highlight the complex history of a few crucial concepts of semantics throughout Indian linguistic disciplines.

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How the ‘*pīśāca* of poetry’ pushes poetics at the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Court: Puṣpadanta’s Apabhramsha *Mahāpurāṇu*

The tenth-century Jain poet Puṣpadanta has been described by several modern scholars as the most accomplished author of Apabhramsha literature. As only the third – and the second extant – author to write in the *sandhibandha* genre specific to Apabhramsha, he was instrumental in innovating Indian court poetry in terms of genre and language. Moreover, in comparison to his predecessor Svayambhū (see De Clercq 2018 and 2023), Puṣpadanta developed Apabhramsha poetry further through a denser use of poetic imagery, a more elaborate display of śāstric erudition, and a more explicit engagement with courtly politics.

Puṣpadanta made his career at the Rāṣṭrakūṭa court of king Krishna III in Mānyakheta, which fostered a flourishing multilingual literary culture. He wrote under the patronage of the minister Bharata, and later his son Nanna. For them, he composed three works on topics central to the Jain imagination. These are the *Nāyakumāracarīu*, narrating the adventures of the Kāmadeva Nāgakumāra, the *Jasaharacarīu*, telling the story of King Yaśodhara, and the *Mahāpurāṇu*, an immense work poeticizing the lives of all sixty-three illustrious men in the Jain Universal History, with particular emphasis on the life of the first Jina Rṣabha and his son Bharata.

In my presentation, I will analyse selected passages of the *Mahāpurāṇu* (5 vols., ed. Vaidya 1979-1999) to illustrate Puṣpadanta’s poetic genius. I will draw attention to how he innovates the *sandhibandha* genre, how he positions himself within the wider landscape of Indian *kāvya* literature through allusion, and how he sets the standard for later Apabhramsha authors. More specifically, I will elaborate on Puṣpadanta’s autobiographical introduction to the *Mahāpurāṇu* – possibly inspired by Bāṇa – which becomes the standard for Apabhramsha *sandhibandhas* after him; I will discuss his śāstrically inflected depiction of Nilañjana’s dance before the future Jina Rṣabha, an episode famously elaborated in Pampa’s Kannada *Ādipurāṇa* and only succinctly treated in Jināsena’s Sanskrit work of the same name; and I will highlight some of the passages rich in *alankāras* (e.g., in *sandhi* 4) to demonstrate Puṣpadanta’s mastery of Indian poetics – a skill contributing to his becoming exemplary for later authors.

At the heart of my discussion is the argument that Puṣpadanta was the first author to use Apabhramsha language for poetry that is at once timeless as well as of its own

time and place. His vast poem that incorporates all the key elements of a *mahākāvya* while explicitly articulating a commitment to poetic excellence, indeed, gives expression to the cultural-political complex, that here also includes *bhakti*, of his milieu.

**From description to classification:
The (un)making of linguistic and cultural canons
in Filip Vesdin's *Voyage to the East Indies* (1796)**

This paper examines Filip Vesdin's *Voyage to the East Indies* as a contribution to early European Indology and the study of South Asian languages, religions, and intellectual traditions. Filip Vesdin (1748–1806), better known by his monastic name Paulinus of Saint Bartholomew, was a Carmelite missionary born into a Burgenland Croat family. He spent thirteen years (1776–1789) in southeastern India, particularly in Travancore and Malabar (modern-day Kerala), where he combined missionary work with sustained intellectual inquiry into Indian languages, religions, and customs. During this period, he produced grammars of Sanskrit and Malayalam, contributing directly to the formation of an early linguistic canon, and engaged closely with Indian textual traditions and manuscripts, which he subsequently documents and discusses in his travelogue *Voyage to the East Indies*, written in Italian and published in Rome in 1796.

The analysis focuses primarily on the travelogue itself, which serves as the central text through which Vesdin, relying on Sanskrit sources like *Amarakośa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* and local textual materials, seeks to clarify what he perceives as earlier distortions or incomplete European representations of India. His ability to do so rests on his linguistic competence and his access to Indian books and manuscripts, allowing him to approach Hindu religious customs and philosophical systems through primary sources rather than second-hand European accounts. Yet, Vesdin closely followed the work of his contemporaries like William Jones, learning from them while also contributing to ongoing intellectual debates.

In his *Voyage to the East Indies*, Vesdin examines both indigenous South Asian traditions and the ways in which European mediation reshaped their interpretation and transmission. His method relies less on formal comparison than on identifying structural affinities across linguistic and cultural phenomena. At the same time Vesdin contributes to the formation of early cultural and linguistic canons by linking authors, narratives, and historical periods, thereby drawing a coherent framework for organizing knowledge about India grounded in textual evidence.

Overall, *Voyage to the East Indies* represents a shift from missionary objectives toward scholarly investigation and more systematic analysis of South Asian traditions.

Although Vesdin is widely recognized as a pioneer of Indology in both international and Croatian scholarship, his life and work were overshadowed by later Indologists and are yet to be discovered and evaluated. With this book Vesdin greatly influenced European understandings of India across Indology, comparative religion, linguistics, and the history of ideas.

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Translation as poetic practice in *kāvya*

Classical Indian poetics recognised four literary languages: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa, and Paīśācī. This paper surveys the surviving evidence for movement between these languages, examining theoretical works (*Dhvanyāloka*, *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, *Sarasvatī-kaṇṭhābharaṇa*, etc.) discussing poetic appropriation, the domains of these languages, the alterability of poetic texts, and the varieties of *bhāṣāśleṣa*. After a short survey of translations in the *kāvya* tradition, I shall introduce Vairocana's collection of Prakrit *muktakas*, which contains many translations from the Sanskrit.

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Rites of sovereignty: Vedic ritual practice in the Tamil royal courts

A closer reading of the ancient *Caṅkam* corpus reveals that the crowned kings — the Cēras, the Cōlas, and the Pāṇṭiyas — are frequently surrounded by Brahmins performing various sacrifices, that Vedic learning and ritual participation are repeatedly linked to royal prestige, and that at times the king withdraws from royal life in old age in keeping with Vedic *āśrama* ideals. This paper presents quantitative data on the occurrence of Old Tamil terms related to Vedic ritual and learned practice in royal contexts, traces their distribution across the internal chronology of the corpus, and examines the names assigned to the poets conveying this information during the process of canonisation. It then asks how a Tamil king of non-Aryan background, acting as *yajamāna*, could be incorporated into the Vedic ritual system, what this required of him, and what traces of this process survive in the texts. Finally, it considers the role of the Vedic priesthood in shaping constructions of sovereignty, and the extent to which South Indian kings sought to position themselves within a pan-Indian framework of royal legitimacy. In light of these findings, much of what we think we know about South Indian antiquity, the elevated status of the three ‘crowned’ kings, and the necessity of early medieval canonisation of the *Caṅkam* literary corpus may need to be reconsidered.

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Folk, folk-like, folk-less:

Traditions and innovations in the *Saṭṭaka* genre (9th–18th c.)

The *saṭṭaka* is a four-act classical love comedy belonging to the group of the *nāṭikā* in classical dramaturgy. This category is distinct as a hybrid rather than a “pure” dramatic genre. It differs from the ten “pure” genres by featuring more women, songs, and dance, reflecting its folk roots. The *nāṭikā* and the *saṭṭaka* are identical in core structure, plot, casting, staging, and subject matter, with dramatic differences being minor. *Nāṭikā* and *saṭṭaka* mean the same, “little theatre.” The former derives from the Sanskrit root *nṛt* through its Prakrit tadbhava form, whereas the latter goes back to the Dravidian root *aṭṭ*. The term *aṭṭa* still survives in names of numerous contemporary folk theatrical forms and some classical theatres in India.

The first *saṭṭaka* to reach us in written form is Rājaśekhara’s *Karpūramañjarī* (9th c.), notable for the author’s major innovation of writing it entirely in Prakrit. Thus, he broke the classical rules that distribute Sanskrit, literary, and minor Prakrit dialects according to the characters’ social status, as applied in the *nāṭikā*. He arguably opted for a genre similar to, but less popular than, the *nāṭikā*: its folk origins suited writing entirely in Prakrit, the “natural” vehicle of everyday speech, and unlike the well-established *nāṭikā*, it allowed him freedom to innovate.

He introduces numerous folk elements into a classical structure. Instead of the well-known or godlike protagonist prescribed for the *nāṭikā*, he employs an ordinary king, and the play was commissioned by his spouse, *Avantisundarī*, rather than a patron or higher authority. It also demonstrates poetic principles through a debate, emphasizing women’s skill in refined poetry and legitimizing any language in poetic composition—both unusual in a male-dominated courtly milieu. Thus, his *saṭṭaka* is the worldly counterpart of the *nāṭikā*. It represents a classical rendering of a non-divine, human-centred world.

Though sparking debate, Rājaśekhara’s innovation became the canonised standard for classical Prakrit drama. Legitimising this shift, a theory attributing his use of Prakrit to its role as the language of women and love was accepted by most theoreticians and added to copies of the *Karpūramañjarī* manuscripts. However, the theory fails—not only because Rājaśekhara never claimed it, but also because if it were correct, the *nāṭikā*

would also have been written in Prakrit. Only a few opposed it, and their voices were marginalised.

Between the 15th and 18th centuries, several *sattakas* were composed, four surviving in manuscripts: Nayacandra Sūri's *Rambhāmañjarī* (15th c.), Rudradāsa's *Candralekhā* (17th c.), Viśveśvara's *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* (17th–18th c.), and Ghanaśyāma's *Ānandasundarī* (18th c.). Each author expressed agreement or disagreement with Rājaśekhara, particularly in how they wrote their *sattaka*. Two trends can be observed. First, each writer used the *sattaka* as a medium for expressing their own opinions and introducing innovations. Second, over the centuries, the folk elements gradually disappeared, so that by the 18th century, the *sattaka* had become a fully classical theatre form in Prakrit, and a mark of outstanding knowledge. This paper presents the traditions, innovations, canonization and evolution of the *sattaka* genre.

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**Between mind and matter:
Reading materiality and embodied practice
beyond the canons of *śilpaśāstras***

Long before the commodification of products through design intervention and urban standardization, artisans in the Indian subcontinent contributed to the formation of exquisite artifacts through a non-hylomorphic, morphogenetic dialogue that unified mind and matter. While classical artisanal manuals (*śilpaśāstras*)—such as the *Mānasāra*, *Mayamata*, and *Śilparatna*—offer a foundational theoretical grammar, this paper argues that artistic innovation occurs in the tactile, sensory negotiation between the artisan’s hands and the material’s inherent flux. Adopting an interdisciplinary methodology grounded in Material Hermeneutics and Phenomenological Embodiment, this study expands the ontology of the ‘text’ beyond logocentric written scripts to encompass physical traces left on the medium itself. To demonstrate how these dialogues framed material as an organic participant—embracing its existence from initial emergence to eventual dissolution—this research analyzes a comparative spectrum of practice: from classical stone monuments (*Modhera Sun Temple* and *Adalaj* Stepwell) and organic woodcarving traditions in Gujarat, to vernacular folk practices (*Purulia Chhau* masks and *Jadupatua* scroll paintings). Employing a two-fold hermeneutic circle that synthesizes canonical analysis with field documentation and artisan interviews, this study envisages artifacts as ‘*Material Texts*’—experiential archives of co-emergent creation. Ultimately, by challenging top-down hylomorphic models and highlighting the intellect of premodern and living artisans, this paper positions material handling as a primary site of philosophical inquiry and ecological wisdom beyond the canons of *śilpaśāstras*.

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On enemies and stomachs: The *Lilātilakam* and the first standardisation of Malayalam

This paper examines the *Lilātilakam*, a late fourteenth-century work on the grammar and poetics of Maṇipravāḷam from Kerala, as the earliest sustained attempt to standardise Malayalam. It situates the text at a critical juncture between inherited Sanskritic authority and vernacular innovation. The paper addresses a central problem: how to codify a language for which no prior grammatical tradition exists? The *Lilātilakam* responds to this challenge by appropriating the conceptual and normative apparatus of Sanskrit grammar and poetics, while simultaneously adapting it to a Dravidian linguistic domain that exceeds those frameworks. Focusing on the second chapter, which deals with the “body” of Maṇipravāḷam, the paper analyses the author’s treatment of the relationship between Malayalam and Sanskrit words.

Adapting and expanding the Prakrit-derived *deśī-tatsama-tadbhava* template, the text proposes several categories for Malayalam words, depending on their relation to Sanskrit and to neighbouring regional languages. This synchronic framework, however, sits uneasily with the traditional view of Sanskrit as a beginningless (*anādi*) language and the ultimate source of all linguistic forms. These competing assumptions converge in the author’s discussion of etymology: Does every Malayalam word require a Sanskrit source? Are all “stomachs” (*vayar*, in Malayalam) to be understood as “enemies” (*vairin*, in Sanskrit)? The discussion illustrates the *Lilātilakam*’s overall pragmatic approach, systematically privileging actual usage over other forms of authority. This project of standardisation thus depends on a delicate balance. It invokes Sanskrit as a normative horizon while carving out space for Malayalam as a partially autonomous linguistic system. In doing so, it produces not merely a derivative grammar but a metalinguistic discourse that both legitimises and constrains vernacular expression.

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Mahāmeghasūtra – a Buddhist ritual text: Towards a critical edition

Perhaps the most widely known South Asian Buddhist source centred on Nāga serpents and rainmaking is the *Mahāmeghamahāyānasūtra*, often referred to briefly as *Meghasūtra*, "The Cloud Sermon" (ca. 2nd-4th c. CE). Cecil Bendall prepared the first Sanskrit edition of excerpts in 1880 and Mitsutoshi Moriguchi published the second edition a hundred years later which still covers less than half of this scripture. The present talk firstly gives an introduction to this sūtra, namely, the historical contexts related to these mythical serpentine beings and the rituals to be performed to tame them in order to bring sufficient rainfall for a respected region. Thereafter it reports on the process of a complete critical edition of this proto-tantric work based on five palm-leaf and seven paper manuscripts from the 14th-19th centuries.

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Prasiddhi:
**An inexhaustible ground of scripture
and the mundane world in the *Tantrāloka***

This paper first explicates how Abhinavagupta (*fl.* c. 975–1025 CE) addresses the challenge of scriptural diversity within his non-dualist framework of reality in the *Tantrāloka* (TĀ), and then argues that his doctrine of *prasiddhi* adds a novel aspect to our understanding of the world’s totality as a pre-discursive aspect of the world that makes possible the plurality of the mundane world as well as the scriptural word alike. Scripture, the revered “word,” by its very nature inherits its difference, a dissent in its demeanor, from the everyday world. Abhinavagupta’s scriptural sources, *tantras* and *āgamas*, are also no exception to it. The moment Abhinavagupta argues for a certain view of understanding as the means to “liberation” (*mokṣa*), he has already entered the realm of a highly debated question about the validity of such a view. Being based on one’s belief in one’s own scriptures does not constitute an argument. The real question Abhinavagupta must answer is: Which authority determines a scripture’s non-mundane purview, distinguishing it from yet another “product of human intellect” (*pum̐bud-dhiprabhavatvam*) to inunct a path to “liberation” that remains inaccessible in the randomness of mundane dwelling? In response, Abhinavagupta builds a new theory of authority that spans the first and thirty-fifth chapters of the TĀ. This is the theory of *prasiddhi* – a doubtlessness, a familiarity that shapes all the ways whereby we encounter all the *vyavahāra*, scriptural or mundane. The first part of the paper interprets it as a provider of surety of credibility, making us undoubted about what we encounter and making the world familiar, homely. Shifting the authority of any knowledge from a veridical cognition to the pre-discursive familiarity (*pratīti*), it is shown that a complex paradigm of language constantly transmitting itself through historical precedence (*śabdanātmi-kā; paurvakālikī*) lends itself as the ground of possibility of any meaning. It is this linguistic-historical precedence that, Abhinavagupta ironically argues, grants validity even to rival systems’ scriptures. Whether a scripture or an ordinary act, none are meaningful in themselves; they become meaningful only as mere regimes of doubtlessnesses (*prasiddhis*) – the sole “authority” of mundane/scriptural norms – rising and receding (*unmajjati/nimajjati*) in the totality of the world. The second part of the paper examines *prasiddhi* across the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarsinī* and TĀ 1, and argues that it is not

just another category of cognition occurring to a human being (such as inference). Contrarily, it already precedes every act of knowing, every specified apprehension of the world as well as that of our own being. This pre-discursiveness reveals a new aspect of our understanding of the world's totality: an initial and unspecified manifestation (*sāmānyasṛṣṭi*) that never exhausts itself and always carries an unending “potentiality to unfold newer and newer meanings” (*viśayatāpatti; vyavaharaṇabījam*). The conclusion asks: Does Abhinavagupta, by maintaining *prasiddhi* as an intermediary ontological ground—rooted in nondual totality yet holding the impending plurality within—successfully historicize all the notions of authority while preserving eternal nonduality? Consequently, are the *Tāntrāloka*, *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, or a washing machine manual equally scripture (*śāstra*), each illuminating nondual reality in different degrees?

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Homage, rivalry: Classical Sanskrit poets and their allusions to the poetry of their predecessors

A significant part of the richness of classical Sanskrit poetry arguably comes from its allusive nature. But many allusions may well be impossible for us now to detect, especially “local” topical allusions to persons and events of the poet’s immediate environment. Allusions to verses of earlier poets can sometimes be relatively easy to detect, if the verses alluded to are famous ones; but many of these too can be missed, especially since our knowledge of what earlier poetry a given poet knew and assumed his audience to be familiar with is rather limited. I will consider some hitherto unnoticed cases of allusions by Sanskrit poets to the works of predecessors, and consider some of the ways in which these allusions might have been intended to function.

Archaisms and innovations in the neuter *s*-stems of the Indo-Iranian languages

As is well known, the inflection of neuter *s*-stems in Late Proto-Indo-European was characterised by a qualitative ablaut of the derivational suffix, i.e. **-es-/-os-* (e.g. PIE **mén-os-/mén-es-* ‘thought, mind’ from **men* ‘to think’). For derivations from roots originally ending in a velar or labiovelar plosive, this contrast resulted in a palatal : velar alternation in the Proto-Indo-Iranian paradigm due to the so-called “Law of the Palatals” (e.g. PIE **wékʷ-os-/wékʷ-es-* ‘word, speech’ from **wekʷ* ‘to say, speak’ > PIr. **wákas-/wáčas-*).

As an innovation, this alternation was later eliminated in the individual Indo-Iranian daughter languages (Old Indo-Aryan, Avestan, Old Persian) through paradigmatic leveling, almost without exception in favour of the allomorph containing the palatal (e.g. OIA *vácas-*, Av. *vacah-*). However, there are a few nouns in which a root-final velar is found (e.g. OIA *bhārgas-* ‘splendour, light’), and in isolated cases, both variants are attested for a single word – whether in the same language (e.g. OAv. nom.-acc. *aogō* ‘strength’ vs. instr. *aojaṇhā*) or in related languages (e.g. OIA *ókas-* ‘dwelling, abode’ vs. OAv. *anaocah-* ‘hostile (?)’; lit. without (shared) customs/dwellings (?)).

Based on a comprehensive survey of all relevant Indo-Iranian primary neuter *s*-stems, the presentation focuses on these “exceptional” cases, examines whether the nouns containing a velar may indeed be regarded as archaisms, as it is frequently asserted, and investigates the extent to which the direction of paradigmatic levelling in the noun type under study may be related to the frequency of the individual forms.

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The antonimic didactic:

Humans, animals, and flight from tradition in the *Hitopadeśa*

Based on my new critical introduction and translation of the text, this paper reopens the 9th century *Hitopadeśa* of Nārāyaṇa to argue that this Sanskrit work inverts/displaces literary and social rules and expectations in early India. Apparently a *nidarśana katha*, which is supposed to teach and reiterate a moral or behavioural norm by sometimes representing its opposite, I instead show that the *Hitopadeśa* purposively conveyed the transgressive messages that it did for their own sake. It was not to fortify any social values or conventions. The explanation or hypothesis I offer is that the text created a complex world where a flight from the traditional, the moral, the prescriptive and even the anthropic occurred. In a display of layered literary agency and critique, this was to show a mirror to the real, not enamelled world, where values and ideals did not always hold. And this antonimic nature of the *Hitopadeśa* was fittingly implicated in, and enacted by, its multispecies, more-than-human protagonists and plots.

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On the construction *odanaḥ pacyate*

The construction exemplified by *odanaḥ pacyate svayam eva* “the rice cooks by itself” is analysed in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition in terms of the *karmakartṛ*: a participant in the action that would be construed as the *karman* in a corresponding transitive expression but is here assigned the status of *karṭṛ*. At the same time, Pāṇini’s rule 3.1.87, *karmavat karmanā tulyakriyāḥ*, provides for this *karṭṛ* to be treated morphologically like a *karman*. The construction is therefore particularly intriguing because the same participant is assigned the status of *karṭṛ*, undergoes the process denoted by the verb, and is nevertheless treated morphologically as a *karman*.

The talk will examine the place of this construction within Pāṇini’s grammar, paying particular attention to the interpretation of the relevant rules and to the range of forms and meanings associated with them. It will also consider some of the ways in which the construction was understood, reformulated, and delimited in the subsequent grammatical tradition. Finally, a few possible points of contact with modern linguistic categories, particularly anticausative and middle constructions, will be briefly indicated, without assuming a straightforward correspondence between these categories and the traditional notion of *karmakartṛ*.

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Reconstructing the purāṇic imaginary of the *śyenakapotīya*

The *śyenakapotīya*, the story of the hawk and the dove, has been an important piece of lore for Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain traditions for more than two millenia. Although the story itself has, fundamentally, not changed much over time, its context has shifted dramatically — not only between religious traditions, with their accompanying hermeneutic and philosophical interpretations, but also across cultural boundaries, across the rise and fall of empires, and even intertextually, with its verses embedded into other stories. This paper will examine, firstly, the textual variants of the *śyenakapotīya* as they exist in the manuscripts of three compilations — the *Mahābhārata*, the *Itihāsasamuccaya*, & the *Vāhnipurāṇa* —, and, secondly, the ways in which later authors put this text to use. I will argue that the goal of editing and translating such a text should be, perhaps, not the reconstruction of a single, ancient version, but rather the complete history of its telling and retelling from the ancient past to the present day.

Between convention and intention: Mukula, Mammaṭa and Someśvara on the interpretation of idiomatic usage

Most ancient Indian philosophers accept two verbal functions: a primary or literal signification and a secondary or figurative one. The latter includes what we would call today a metonymy and a metaphor. However, when secondary meanings are used too frequently, they may lose their figurative power and become idiomatic.

This phenomenon, often discussed in modern linguistics under “dead metaphor”, has been long time noticed by Indian theorists of language. A first systematic treatment of this problem is probably that of Mukula (9th c.), who, in his *Abhidhāvr̥ttamāṭṛkā*, examines idiomatic usage from two different perspectives. The first one attributes it to a specific purpose of the speaker, namely the perpetuation of the idiom (*rūḍhyanuvṛtti*), which means that one follows what is taught by the elders. And the second, as a complement to the first one, claims that the secondary meaning is mentally identified with the literal one in the idioms. On both accounts, idiomatic usage is interpreted as a secondary signification being triggered only when three conditions obtain, namely 1) an obstruction of the literal meaning, 2) a relation between the two meanings and 3) a special purpose of expression.

By contrast, Mammaṭa (11th c.) takes idiomatic usage as a special case of secondary signification which does *not* involve any purpose at all. Although this idea is not fully developed in the *Kāvyaprakāśa*, his commentator Someśvara (12th c.) – also known as a follower of Mukala – elaborates it by drawing on Mukula’s earlier discussion. Generally speaking, he adopts the first perspective presented by Mukula, but does not attribute the use of idioms to a special communicative purpose. He therefore bestows on idiomatic usage a special status among secondary signification – the one which is understood as conventional, “as if it were a literal meaning”.

On this basis, I will argue that for Mammaṭa and his commentator, the third factor which triggers a secondary speech is not necessarily the speaker’s intention – as in most cases of figurative expressions – but could also be a mere conventional perpetuation, which is precisely the case of idiomatic usage. In other words, a secondary meaning is either idiomatic, or attended by a special purpose. This interpretation is further supported by a special case in poetic language mentioned by Someśvara, in which poets play on the proper form of the words.

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Post-caesura position and its importance in the Ṛgvedic meter

It is well known that certain words in the *Rgveda* must be scanned differently when they occur in Post-Caesura Position (PCP). For example, *Índra-* in PCP is scanned as *Índara-*. Yet the far-reaching significance of PCP has largely gone unrecognized in the scholarly literature. In fact, hundreds of words display deviating scansion in this position, a phenomenon that may account for a wide range of problems that have so far remained unexplained. In my presentation, I will discuss a number of these issues.

Is liberation natural (or spontaneous) in *Sāṃkhya*?

A little-known interpretation of the *Sāṃkhya* view of liberation as natural, or spontaneous, proposed by the illustrious and innovative Indian philosopher Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (1875–1949), has recently been seriously discussed and defended by Dimitry Shevchenko in an article published in the prestigious *Journal of Indian Philosophy* and in a chapter of a collective monograph in the renowned Routledge Hindu Studies Series.¹ According to this interpretation, liberation in *Sāṃkhya* occurs merely due to a spontaneous activity of unconscious nature (*prakṛti*), which is compared in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (*kārikā* 57) to the flow of milk for the growth of a calf. This flow underlies all mental events, including even one's reflection on the *Sāṃkhya* principles (the 25 *tattvas*) and the practice (*abhyāsa*) of internalising knowledge of these principles. What appears to be the result of free choice and effort is, in fact, a consequence of *prakṛti*'s spontaneity.

Polemicalising with the Bhattacharyya–Shevchenko interpretation, I argue that it contradicts the *Sāṃkhya* teaching of liberation set forth in all extant classical *Sāṃkhya* texts, which encompass Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (ca. 350–450) and eight commentaries on it: the commentary that survived in the Chinese translation of Paramārtha (composed ca. 500 and translated into Chinese between 557 and 569), the *Sāṃkhyavṛtti* (ca. 6th c.), the *Sāṃkhyasaptatīvṛtti* (ca. 6th c.), the *Sāṃkhyakārikābhāṣya* (ca. 6th c.) by Gauḍapāda, the *Yuktidīpikā* (ca. 7th c.), the *Jayamaṅgalā* (ca. 700 or later), the *Māṭharavṛtti* (ca. 800 or later) by Māṭhara, and the *Tattvakaumudī* (ca. 841 or ca. 976) by Vācaspati Miśra.

The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* begins by arguing that discernment (*vijñāna*) between *prakṛti* with its products and *puruṣa* is the only means of removing suffering completely and forever and should therefore be preferred over both empirical (*dṛṣṭa*) and Vedic (*ānūsṛavika*) means. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and its commentaries discuss these three means of eliminating suffering and encourage one to consciously *choose* the best among them. Although the means taught by *Sāṃkhya* is not widely known and requires considerable effort, it should nevertheless be chosen (*kārikās* 1–2 with the commentaries thereon). The classical *Sāṃkhya* texts next present the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), namely perception, inference, and verbal testimony, through which one can know the fundamental distinction between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* (*kārikās* 4–6 with the commentaries).

The *Sāṃkhya* path of liberation combines the attainment of knowledge through the *pramāṇas* (theory) with the practice (*abhyāsa*) of internalising this knowledge (*kārikā* 64 with the commentaries). In my paper, I focus on these and other key aspects of the *Sāṃkhya* system – such as its doctrine of perfections (*siddhi*; *kārikā* 51 with the commentaries) and its rejection of the view that liberation is produced by *prakṛti*, time, or fortune (*kārikā* 50, along with the commentary preserved in the Chinese translation, the *Sāṃkhyasaptatīvṛtti*, *Sāṃkhyakārikābhāṣya*, *Jayamaṅgalā*, *Māṭharavṛtti*, and *Tattva-kaumudī*) – that show that the *Sāṃkhya* path of liberation is a matter of conscious choice and effort, not the result of the spontaneous activity of unconscious *prakṛti*.

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Root-ing for lexical aspect in derivative morphology: Findings from Early Vedic **-ti-* and **-tu-* derivatives

Since Benveniste (1948), Vedic *-ti-* and *-tu-* derivatives have been widely examined, either with respect to the type of nominalization encoded by these suffixes (Seiler 1986; Stüber 2002; Lazzeroni 1997; Benedetti 2002) or in terms of their functional opposition to verbal constructions (Ittzés 2024). However, the compatibility of these suffixes with the verbal roots that they select is yet to be investigated (Rix 1986; Bertocci 2022; Kotowski & Plag 2023; Huyghe et al. 2023). This study asks whether the selection of *-ti-* and *-tu-* suffixes can be accounted for through the inherent lexical aspect of the verbal roots to which they attach.

To do so, all verbal roots forming *-ti-* and *-tu-* (simple and bound) derivatives are extracted (Whitney 1885; Mayrhofer 1992-2001) from the R̥gveda. All occurrences of these derivatives are classified by type and token (Berg 2014; Levshina 2019, 2021). Then, adopting a text-based and lexical-semantic approach (Bartolotta 2009, 2016), we examine all occurrences of the verbal forms they come from (if they are less than 100; otherwise, 100 occurrences are analyzed: Luraghi *et al.* 2024) and conduct a set of semantic tests (Dowty 1979; Van Valin – LaPolla 1997) alongside morphological diagnostics (e.g., root/suffixed present vs. suffixed/root aorist, see Dahl 2010: 97-134), in order to determine the “granular” semantic traits of each root (i.e., [$\pm$ dynamic], [$\pm$ punctual], and [$\pm$ telic]). Finally, all verbal roots are grouped into five actional classes (i.e., state, activity, semelfactive, accomplishment, achievement, see Croft 2012: 31-44).

Results show that: 1) the suffix *-ti-* preferentially selects [$-$ telic] roots, whereas *-tu-* occurs with [$+$ telic] ones, and this distribution is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$); 2) the small subset of [$+$ telic] roots selected by the suffix *-ti-* belongs, in a statistically significant manner, to the semantic class of “accomplishment” roots, and yields derivatives attested preferentially in nominal compounds: this distributional asymmetry reflects the fact the first member of the compounds licenses a [$+$ telic] reading (e.g., $\sqrt{kr}$ ‘to make’ ([$+$ telic]): RV *brahma-kṛti-* ‘the making of the formula’, **kṛti*; $\sqrt{su}$ ‘to press’ ([$+$ telic]): RV *soma-sūti-* ‘extraction of the soma’, **suti-*); 3) these findings provide further evidence that the inherent lexical aspect of a verbal root in Old Indo-Aryan

crucially shapes not only its verbal paradigm (Bartolotta 2009, 2016; Dahl 2010) but also its derivative morphology (Alfieri 2024).

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Vernacular commentary and the reconfiguration of canon: The *Gaṇita Yuktibhāṣā* in early modern Kerala

This paper examines processes of canon formation and innovation in premodern South Asia through the case of the sixteenth-century Malayāḷam mathematical commentary, the *Gaṇita Yuktibhāṣā* of Jyeṣṭhadeva. Composed in Kerala as an expansive commentary on the Sanskrit astronomical treatise *Tantrasaṅgraha* of Nīlakaṇṭha Somayājī, the *Yuktibhāṣā* occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of tradition and innovation: it simultaneously consolidates an authoritative Sanskrit scientific canon and rearticulates it within a regional vernacular intellectual milieu.

Although the *Yuktibhāṣā* has enjoyed continuous authority within Kerala's scholarly traditions, its place within modern historiography has often been shaped by disciplinary and linguistic assumptions that separate "canonical" Sanskrit knowledge from vernacular production. Revisiting the text's nineteenth-century reception, I show how colonial assessments alternately elevated it as a source of mathematical discovery or diminished it as derivative commentary, thereby abstracting it from the regional processes of canonization that made its composition meaningful. Such evaluations reflect modern presuppositions about textual authority, originality, and linguistic hierarchy that do not fully capture early modern South Indian intellectual practice.

Situating the work within the sociolinguistic transformations of fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Kerala, I argue that the choice of Malayāḷam as the medium for a technically sophisticated mathematical treatise constitutes a deliberate intervention in ongoing debates about language, authority, and pedagogy. This period witnessed significant vernacular literary expansion, experimentation with genre, and permeability across disciplinary boundaries. In this context, the commentary emerges as a site not merely of preservation but of active reconfiguration: it transmits an authoritative Sanskrit text while reshaping its conceptual and linguistic form for a regional scholarly community. Scaffolded by the linguistic and mathematical architecture of Sanskrit, the vernacular itself becomes a site of exploration as a capacious medium for technical reasoning, capable of sustaining extended argumentation and precise conceptual articulation.

Focusing on the *Yuktibhāṣā*'s technical vocabulary, I demonstrate how the text negotiates between inherited Sanskrit terminology and vernacular linguistic resources. While importing substantial lexical material from its source, it also deploys Malayalam vocabulary

in rigorously technical functions and forges hybrid forms by adapting Sanskrit conventions to vernacular grammar and usage. These strategies reflect not mere translation but a conscious reconfiguration of scholastic discourse in a new linguistic register, complicating narratives of simple translation or derivation. The commentary thus participates in the consolidation of a regional mathematical canon even as it remains in dialogic engagement with the broader pan-Indian Sanskritic tradition.

The *Yuktibhāṣā* may, therefore, be read as a participatory intervention in ongoing regional linguistic transformations, crafted for a scholarly community that was at once localized and cosmopolitan. By thus foregrounding commentary as a mode of canon formation and linguistic experimentation, this paper argues that the *Yuktibhāṣā* exemplifies how premodern South Asian intellectuals navigated the tension between adherence to authoritative tradition and the creative transformation of its forms.

Tradition and innovation in the question of god:
The doctrine of *īśvara* in Pātañjala yoga
and Śaṅkara's response in the *Vivaraṇa*

There has been significant scholarly discussion around the *sūtras* that are dedicated to the concept of *īśvara* (Lord) in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali (c. 4th century CE) and whether they can be interpreted as theism. The *Yogasūtra* does not foreground 'God' as a central feature or framework of the text and, given the brevity of the discussion, it is challenging to reach a strong conclusion about the theistic status of *īśvara*. Nonetheless, it seems likely that the discussion of *īśvara*, most directly across *sūtras* 1.23-1.29, represents at minimum a doctrinal intertextual nod to other contemporary expositions of theism, such as that of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Thus Patañjali's discussion of *īśvara* maintains a certain strategic ambiguity, drawing in adherents who may be committed to theism, without excluding other adherents who may be less committed.

However, in the 8th-century commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, Śaṅkara's *Yogasūtrabhāṣya-vivaraṇa* (*Vivaraṇa*), we see a revised understanding of Patañjali's metaphysics to represent *īśvara* as a creator God and to better align the *Yogasūtra* with Hindu scriptural authority. Subsequently, Śaṅkara's Advaita-Vedānta framing of Pātañjala yoga becomes the most influential conduit for the historical reception and practice of this tradition – pivoting the text from a dualist to nondualist metaphysics and from a weak theism to strong theism. Through a series of rigorous epistemic debates (in his commentary on YS 1.23-1.29), Śaṅkara argues for *īśvara*'s omnipotence and provides proofs for an unambiguous creator God.

Patañjali does offer a basic proof of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra*'s first *bhāṣya* (if we attribute this to Patañjali), which rests on the assertion that the proof of God is scripture, since the authority of scripture yields particulars, while inference only yields universals (and God must be known through particulars). In contrast, Śaṅkara engages a comprehensive epistemology to offer a rich range of proofs for the nature of God. Śaṅkara draws on the *Bhagavadgītā* to frame *īśvara* in the terms of perfect being theology, especially omnipotence, significantly extending *īśvara*'s scope and attributes as delineated in the *Yogasūtra*. For Śaṅkara, the ideal of God is more impersonally perfect, ubiquitous, possessing aseity, transcendent, omnipotent and ultimate – maximally great in all possible worlds rather than only maximally excellent in the domain of consciousness. Yet

Śaṅkara does not abandon Patañjali's understanding of *īśvara*, retaining the concept of a teacher (prompting motivation and knowledge) while at the same time cultivating a stronger role for *īśvara* as the ultimate creator God. Indeed, on many levels Śaṅkara was not innovating, but was reviving: rather than introducing a '*bhakti* swerve' (to use Biarreau's term, 2002) to Patañjali's Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism, Śaṅkara re-anchored Patañjali's *śāstra* yoga in the earlier Vedic and epic traditions of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, which were more explicitly non-dual and theistic (Motegi 2013).

Once the bodhisattva was a lover: Rethinking the *Sudhanakumāra-avadāna* in the *Divyāvadāna*

The *Sudhanakumāra-avadāna*, the thirtieth narrative of the *Divyāvadāna*, presents a distinctive portrayal of the bodhisattva as a lover engaged in a secular relationship with the *kinnarī* Manoharā. While love narratives are not absent in *jātaka* literature—as seen, for instance, in the *Kusa-jātaka*—the Sudhana story foregrounds emotional endurance, fidelity, and suffering in response to separation, rather than the renunciation or instrumentalization of relationships typically associated with the bodhisattva path. In doing so, it both draws on and reconfigures established *jātaka* conventions.

This paper employs close textual and narrative analysis of the Sanskrit *Divyāvadāna*, with selective comparison to Pāli *jātaka* materials, in order to examine how emotional experience and ethical tension are constructed within the Sudhana narrative.

Structured around three key narrative junctures—union, separation, and reunion—the story elaborates Sudhana’s emotional and physical perseverance after Manoharā’s departure to the *kinnara* realm. His unwavering commitment is expressed through sustained effort, risk, and suffering, culminating in their eventual reunion. However, a close reading reveals that the narrative privileges Sudhana’s interiority while largely silencing Manoharā’s perspective. From their initial encounter in the forest to her departure from the human realm, her voice remains notably absent, rendering the story effectively a one-sided love narrative. Sudhana’s emotions—his attraction, devotion, and distress—are described in detail, whereas Manoharā’s responses remain opaque until the moment of reunion.

Moreover, Sudhana’s actions raise significant ethical questions. Notably, his concealment of Manoharā’s *cūdāmaṇi*—which enables her mobility between realms—prevents her departure and may be interpreted as an act of control. While the narrative appears to frame this act within a broader logic of devotion and attachment, it simultaneously exposes a tension within the bodhisattva ideal. From Manoharā’s perspective, Sudhana’s conduct may be seen as disregarding her autonomy and consent, complicating the conventional portrayal of the bodhisattva as an embodiment of compassion and selflessness.

This paper argues that the *Sudhanakumāra-avadāna* not only expands the emotional range of the bodhisattva figure by situating him within an intimate, affective

relationship, but also introduces a productive ethical ambiguity into the bodhisattva career. As such, the narrative may be understood as an innovative reworking of traditional *jātaka* motifs, one that foregrounds tensions between compassion, desire, and moral responsibility within Buddhist narrative literature.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* as worldly manual: Innovation and circulation in the ‘greater *Gītā*’ traditions

V. Raghavan’s significant work on the ‘Greater *Gītā*’ traditions emphasized the extent to which the idea of the *Bhagavad Gītā* was treated as genre as much as canonical text in Sanskrit devotional literatures (Raghavan 1938). Multiple works based on the famous dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna from the *Mahābhārata* were composed by various authors, often focussed on other gods, taking the *Gītā* as a model of devotional literature. Raghavan’s cataloguing and discussion of the ‘Greater *Gītā*’ phenomenon was limited mainly to works in Sanskrit. These texts, however, took multiple forms, often based very loosely on the *Bhagavad Gītā*’s dialogue between a god and his devotee. The production of this larger corpus of *Gītā* texts, I suggest, is an important but overlooked aspect of the textual processes of canon-creation that fed into the *Bhagavad Gītā*’s centrality in the premodern philosophical canon. In this paper, I take these insights forward to ask how the *Bhagavad Gītā* itself was remoulded through the ‘Greater *Gītā*’ model to become a worldlier text across early modern and modern South Asia. I ask, in particular, how these works placed themselves within a tradition of reading the *Bhagavad Gītā*, while producing shorter didactic texts aimed towards a non-scholarly audience.

Drawing from Raghavan’s valuable observations on this expansion of the *Gītā* canon, in this paper I examine a set of texts, composed and copied between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which draw from the narrative of the Sanskrit *Bhagavad Gītā*, but which adapt the text into the early Northern Indian vernaculars. These works include the *Arjuna Gītā*, *Bhaṁvara Gītā*, and several others, which are extant in both manuscript and printed form. Where the ‘Greater *Gītā*’ phenomenon casts the net wide to include the ‘*Gītās*’ of different gods, my analysis will instead focus on works which depict Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna specifically in dialogue, but which cannot, I argue, be easily categorized either as translations or commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Explicitly modelling themselves on the Sanskrit *Gītā*, these works adapt and transform the root text by engaging with unique sets of issues and genres, often framing the figure of Kṛṣṇa in relation to Rāma and focusing on the intimate personal relationship between god and devotee. By isolating specific issues from the root text of the *Gītā*, and sometimes adding new ones, they thus created new texts, framed as manuals for

worldly life, which contained brief and digestible teachings on the nature of sin and the consequences of action. I ask how these modes of adaptation allowed the *Gītā* to be framed and circulated differently from its earlier commentarial and scholastic exegetical treatments. Finally, I argue that this idea of the *Gītā* as genre or meta-genre in the context of early vernacular textual production further allows us to understand the alternative genealogies of the *Gītā*'s continued canonization in premodern South Asia, and its emergence in modern India as a popular, everyday text.

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Complex predication between Old and New Indo-Aryan

A notoriously prevalent feature of modern Indo-Iranian languages is the use of complex predicates—also known more precisely as *conjunct verbs* or *support-verb constructions* (noun/adjective + light verb)—to populate the verbal lexicon. See, e.g., Persian *duzdī kardan* or Hindi-Urdu *corī karnā* ‘steal’ (THEFT + DO). Most often (as here) the verbal component is a reflex of Proto-Indo-Iranian **kar-* ‘make, do’, though each language uses a range of light verbs in this capacity. Scholarship concerning this phenomenon focuses heavily on modern prestige varieties (Hindi-Urdu and Iranian Persian); however, neglecting the rest of the family produces questionable historical narratives. It has been argued (e.g., Bahri 1960, Masica 1993, Montaut 2016) that the Indo-Aryan propensity for complex predication originated through contact between Persian and (per Montaut) even specifically Hindi as a pattern for assimilating loanwords, modelled on Persian parallels, at the height of Mughal influence in the 17th–18th centuries CE. While this period of contact may account for much of the modern Indo-Aryan lexicon, it is not needed to explain the prevalence of complex predicates on a structural level. The present contribution synthesizes evidence from Old and Middle Indo-Aryan (Ittész 2013, 2015, 2016, 2022, 2024; Roy 2025), the geographically removed and archaic New Indo-Aryan languages Romani and Domari (Matras 2004: 119; 2012: 241–4), and the medieval New Indo-Aryan language Old Marathi (collected from Tulpule and Feldhaus 1999 and Feldhaus 2024), to argue against a Persian origin for the frequent use of complex predicates across the New Indo-Aryan languages and, further, to posit a functional innovation in their use with respect to Old and Middle Indo-Aryan.

The potential for complex predicates to proliferate is already present, if not as extensively exploited, in Old and Middle Indo-Aryan from the earliest attested period, especially with reflexes of PIIr. **kar-* (see, e.g., Ittész 2024 with refs.). While rarer in the Sanskrit corpus than in most New Indo-Aryan languages, the type is still visibly entrenched in the lexicon by the time of the Sanskrit Epics (Roy 2025). Meanwhile, the shapes of certain denominative affixes in Romani and Domari suggest that complex predication was a productive coining strategy in their respective prehistories—independent of Persian contact—before the verbal component ultimately underwent grammaticalization. Finally, Old Marathi shows, already in the 13th century CE, frequent

use of complex predicates built with a range of inherited, Sanskritic, and (rarely) Persianate vocabulary. Rather than arising from contact with New Persian, it will be argued, this feature developed organically from productive patterns witnessed in the earliest layers of the Indo-Aryan corpus onward. A key innovation between the Old–Middle and New periods of Indo-Aryan, then, is the increasingly prevalent role of complex predication in the adoption of loanwords—a common crosslinguistic trajectory (Bowern 2008: 173). While Persian and Arabic nouns later contribute substantially to the inventory of Indo-Aryan complex predicates, the early New Indo-Aryan data suggest that the pattern first operated on Sanskrit loans born from a Sanskrit-vernacular diglossia in place prior to widespread use of Persian.

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Are epic formulas traditional?

The proposed paper will explore different dimensions of traditionality in the framework of the two great Sanskrit epics: the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These texts provide a special field for such a line of research because they are characterised by a highly formulaic language with origins in oral epic performances and were composed in what John Brockington called a "Sanskrit epic tradition" (see his well-known cycle of articles). This raises the question whether, and in what sense, epic formulas themselves can be considered traditional. An answer requires careful methodological reflection which I attempt through a classification of formulaic elements; the latter, in turn, is the result of a computational analysis of both epics that takes into account metrical positions and structures.

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A thorny road to canonicity?

Glimpses from the hitherto unknown Buddhist Sanskrit *sūtra*

In this paper, I would like to present the latest findings regarding the *Māyājāla-sūtra*, a unique canonical Buddhist *sūtra* on which I have been working for many years. The *sūtra* is contained in the recently recovered Sanskrit manuscript of the important Buddhist canonical collection known as the *Dirgha-āgama* (lit. “Long collection”). Prior to that sensational discovery, the Sanskrit version of the collection was considered lost. The manuscript contains many of the known “long” Buddhist *sūtras*, although it differs significantly in the order of their presentation and in the inclusion of *sūtras* from other, shorter collections. The only *sūtra* that doesn’t have any parallels in other known canonical collections is the *Māyājāla-sūtra* (“The *Sūtra* on the Net of Illusion”), a unique Buddhist *sūtra* which I edited and studied for my Ph.D. thesis (recently published, Sharygin 2025). This *sūtra* is unique in “early Buddhist”, “Śrāvakayāna” canonical literature, both in terms of its content, its phraseology and terminology and in terms of how much light its different citations, fragments and parallels shed on the likely trajectory that led it to its canonization. It is this last aspect that I would like to concentrate on in this paper, presenting the most important findings from the last couple of years. The most important ones include, in chronological order, likely *Māyājāla-sūtra* quotations in Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika sources, 2) its intertwinement with the *Yogācārabhūmi* corpus and especially the cardinal *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, 3) peculiarities of the transmission of the *sūtra* from India and Central Asia to China, which I have only very recently identified, 4) likely quotations in the Candrakīrti corpus of commentaries on Nāgārjuna works.

The complex picture that crystallizes from those enquiries is of the radically innovative *sūtra* that likely emerges in the heterogeneous and heterodox environment of a cultural “melting pot” in Greater Gandhāra under Kushans, and slowly, at the pace of many generations finds its way into the canonical literature of at least one of the Buddhist “schools”, very likely affecting the inception of a cornerstone Buddhist tradition of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda, later becoming so authoritative in the eyes of learned Buddhist commentators and scholars that it was sometimes regarded equally authoritative to the *sūtras* of the later Buddhist tradition (Mahāyāna). In this paper, I attempt to trace

that development by uncovering instances of its quotation and the peculiarities of its transmission through various sources across many “Buddhist” languages.

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“Parallel lives”: Kaṃsa and Karṇa

A cursory examination reveals few parallels between the lives of Kaṃsa and Karṇa. Kaṃsa is depicted as an unbelievably evil tyrant, whereas Karṇa is portrayed as an unlucky tragic hero. This paper posits the hypothesis that, despite their divergent narrative roles, the early lives of these mythical characters are, in fact, composed on the same pattern.

The initial phase of Kaṃsa's life is predominantly overlooked in the epic-purāṇic sources. Despite the presence of allusions to his past actions, primarily expressed by his bereaved wives in the aftermath of his demise, these are not elaborated upon in any comprehensive manner. In order to comprehend these indications, it is essential to acknowledge the value of Jain sources. While these works have frequently overlooked in scholarly inquiries into the Kṛṣṇa myth, it is asserted that they occasionally contain pertinent information for a more complete understanding of the epic-purāṇic material.

Following the presentation of Kaṃsa's life story, it is demonstrated that his biography, as it is particularly preserved in the Jain tradition, bears a strong resemblance to Karṇa's early life as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*. In context of the recent scholarly works on the shared characters, these similarities should be given due consideration. In understanding the process of canonisation of these mythological figures, it is necessary to examine whether these narratives derive from a common “bio-blueprint”, as proposed by Strong (2001) in the case of the Buddha and Mahāvīra Vardhamāna, or whether they are two manifestations of the same archetype, in accordance with the “story-matrix” proposed by Pollock (1986).

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How to open your eyes? Kṣemarāja's (1000–1050) innovative reply

The *Aphorisms on Vibration* (*Spandakārikā*, 9th century CE, Kashmir) describes briefly (*kārikā* 3.9 or 41) a *śaiva* meditative practice metaphorically called *unmeṣa* or 'the opening of the eyes.' Most commentators agree on the interpretation of what is meant by this term, but Kṣemarāja's understanding differs substantially. He cites a passage from another *śaiva* work on tantric yoga, the *Bhairava of Knowledge* (*Vijñānabhairava*, verse 62), to support his explanation—but this passage is also ambiguous and has different readings, with altogether six possible ways of understanding an important detail. After looking into the textual and interpretational problems, we shall attempt to see why Kṣemarāja proposes a unique understanding of this practice and what inspired him to do so.

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From ornament to satirical device: *Śleṣa* in Kṣemendra's *Deśopadeśa*

One of the features that makes Sanskrit belles-lettres (*kāvya*) *kāvya* is the skilful use of double entendre (*śleṣa*). Sanskrit poets made great efforts to compose verses in which multiple meanings are simultaneously expressed through polysemous words or through multiple possible segmentations of words and compounds. When two meanings emerge in a single sentence, depending on the context, they are often differentiated into a primary and a subordinate meaning. Moreover, one meaning may be apprehended first, whereas the other is recovered only afterwards. In such cases, *śleṣa* frequently works together with poetic figures such as simile (*upamā*) and metaphor (*rūpaka*), supporting comparisons between two objects at the level of language.

This presentation examines how this traditional *alaṃkāra* is skillfully diverted into a satirical device by Kashmiri poet Kṣemendra. He composed three satirical poems, among which this presentation focuses on the *Deśopadeśa*. This work, which is also valuable as a depiction of local social types and manners, is filled with unique and at times vulgar comparisons, in contrast to his more ornate writings. In his theoretical works, Kṣemendra defines the life of poetry through the concept of propriety (*aucitya*). Raghavan has already shown, at the level of Sanskrit poetics, that in comic writing, the lack of propriety (*anaucitya*) may itself become a source of aesthetic effect. Gomez, in turn, reads Kṣemendra's satirical works in a similar light: their apparent breach of *aucitya* is not a lapse from his own theory, but a deliberate deviation. Building on these observations, this paper asks how such a strategy is realized at the level of poetic language, focusing on the role of *śleṣa* in the *Deśopadeśa*.

The affinity between satire and *śleṣa* lies not simply in the fact that two meanings become apparent at the same time, but in the fact that an identification which would ordinarily be invalid and violate *aucitya* can appear valid, if only for a moment, through the sharing of words. One example is

in *Deśopadeśa* III.1, where an old prostitute (*bandhakī*) is compared to a poet's speech (*kaver vāṇī*) and both concepts are simultaneously described through such double-meaning words as *artha-*, *prauḍha-*, *citrālaṃkārahārin-*, and *svacchanda-*. By making such ill-matched comparisons (*adhikopamā*) persuasive for only a very short time through *śleṣa*, Kṣemendra intentionally elicits delayed recognition and laughter from his audience. This argument is supported by his own statement that his aim is to make

people “ashamed through laughter” (*hāsena lajjito*) and the poem is composed “by means of pretense” (*vyapadeśataḥ*). As Bronner has already observed, *śleṣa* is a powerful device that can “reintroduce” one prior notion “with a punch.” In the *Deśopadeśa*, *śleṣa* thus emerges as a central technique of satirical narration.

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The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* available to Mallināthasūri: A study of pre-Kaumudī *Sūtrapāṭha*

The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (A.) has been transmitted through various traditions, including the *Mahābhāṣya*, *Kāśikā*, and *Siddhāntakaumudī*. The text of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* differs in the *Mahābhāṣya*, *Kāśikā*, and *Siddhāntakaumudī*. While these traditions often present a uniform text, discrepancies arise at specific points. Commentaries such as *Nyāsa*, *Padamañjarī*, *Pradīpa*, and *Udyota* testify to variations and interpolations. [For instance, Bālaṃanoramā & Tattvabodhinī on A. 3.1.118- *vṛttikṛta tu sūtre prakṣiptam*, Bālaṃanoramā on A. 3.1.118-*bhāṣye tatpāṭhas tu prakṣipta eveti bhāvaḥ*, Padamañjarī on A. 4.1.166 *vṛttikāreṇā tu sūtreṣu prakṣiptam*] in the *sūtrapāṭha* at certain junctures, indicating a complex history of transmission and interpretation.

Scholars like Böhtlingk (1887), Cardona (1997), etc. have highlighted that several *sūtras* in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* may actually be Vārtikas (explanatory or supplementary notes), originally introduced by *commentators* like Kātyāyana and Patañjali. It has also been noted that modern scholars have also daggled with the text. For example, A. 1.1.6 *didhīvevītām*- Böhtlingk added *ca* at the end of the rule in his edition (1887). Nāgeśa-bhaṭṭa (quoted by Ajotikar et al., 2021) comments that in the aphorism A. 4.2.21-*sāminpaurnamāsīti samjñāyām*, the word ‘*samjñāyām*’ is interpolated, but he does not specify any sources of interpolation. The said word is observed in the *Siddhāntakaumudī* but not in the *Kāśikā*.

Against this background, there is a strong need to understand the *sūtrapāṭha* apart from the grammatical texts, especially commentaries. Palsule (1977-78) places the record of the grammatical rules and their variants quoted in Sthiradeva’s commentary on the *Meghadūta*. For instance, Sthiradeva quotes the rule (verse 11) as *patyuh dīptau yajñasaṃyoge* – this rule does not correspond merely to Pāṇini (A. 4.1.33), but also diverges from the parallel readings found in Cāndra (2.3.30), Jainendra (3.1.33), etc.

This paper will deal with the Pāṇini-*sūtras* quoted by Mallināthasūri in his commentaries on various important Sanskrit texts. Trivedi (1898: pp xxiii-xxix) has stated that Mallinātha flourished before Bhaṭṭojī Dikṣita. Hence, Mallinātha quotes and substantiates the *sūtras* from the *Kāśikā*. But at certain places, he gives another variant of some *sūtras*. For instance, on *Śisupālavadha* 8.53 [Shastri (ed.), 2013 & Durgaprasada-Shivadatta (eds.), 1933], he quotes the rule as *apratyayāt*, whereas the available text

of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* quotes the sūtra as a *pratyayāt* (A. 3.3.102). Hence, it is imperative to understand the text of *Aṣṭādhyāyī* in front of Mallināthasūri, who dates before the Kaumudī-era. The proposed study will consolidate the *Aṣṭādhyāyī-sūtrapāṭha* known to Mallinātha, including any variations from the available *sūtrapāṭha*. This will also help us to understand the *sūtrapāṭha* of the *Kāśikā* tradition, which slightly differs from the *Kaumudī* tradition (Kulkarni-Kahrs, 2015), which will eventually reveal the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*'s variants from the non-grammatical texts.

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Flooded, eaten by insects, or simply forgotten: How do Tamil's canonical texts survive?

India, probably the land which transmits the world's largest corpus of written texts, at least with respect to the sheer number of surviving manuscripts, is also a land full of stories about texts, about manuscripts and about the people entrusted with keeping them alive. Among these stories are the foundation legends of various traditions and their canonical works.

The planned presentation will compare three such legends of origin – for the early classical Tamil corpus of the *Caṅkam*, for the Śaiva canon and for the Vaiṣṇava canon of the same region – and will ask which kind of inference they do allow with respect to the long-term transmission of these groups of works.

