Bronner

An Alankara Reader

Classical Indian Poetics

Classical Indian poetics prized the skillful use of alankaras, or “ornaments”—literary figures of speech. Across more than a millennium, Sanskrit writers developed and elaborated an account of literary embellishment that is perhaps the world’s most complex and long-standing theory of figuration. Yet it remains the least studied of India’s major classical systems of thought. An Alankara Reader is a groundbreaking panoramic overview of this tradition, presenting extensive and accessible translations of key works that span its history, from the sixth century CE to the eighteenth. These texts vividly show how Indian theorists analyzed simile, metaphor, allegory, and dozens of other figures that are distinctive to their world. Yigal Bronner’s commentary makes Sanskrit concepts of ornamentation approachable while placing them in historical context. He provides a new account of the history of Sanskrit poetics, showing how it underwent successive waves of theoretical revolutions and emerged as a prestigious field that attracted a variety of scholars in the early modern era. Featuring many previously untranslated texts, An Alankara Reader is an essential resource for the study of classical Indian thought, the intellectual history of South Asia, and comparative literature. It reveals the depth and nuance of Sanskrit’s “science of ornaments” for anyone interested in poetic theory, figuration, and aesthetics across world traditions.

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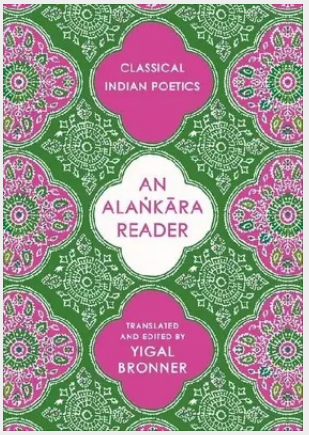

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