COMMENTORIAL LITERATURE

Commentaries on

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CHAPTER II

COMMENTORIAL LITERATURE

Commentaries in Sanskrit are important; perhaps more important than the original treatise. Commentaries are unique criticisms of the original texts. Mīmāṃsa one of the six darśanās that interpret the intent of Vedic hymns can be considered as the earliest representative of commentaries.

Commentary is important in the field of aesthetics too. The difference between commentary and criticism is subtle. Some scholars have even gone to the extent of declaring that there are only commentaries in Sanskrit, not criticisms. The difference is that literary criticism provides a total evaluation of the work; commentary is satisfied with explaining the difficult terms. It does not generally comprehend the text as a whole.
Criticism may have three functions - training the poets, explanation of difficult terms and evaluating in comparison with other works. The former is intended to give clear instructions to those who begin to compose poetry. Kāvyamāṁsa of Rājaśekhara and Kavikaṁṭhābharaṇa of Kṣemendra can be cited as examples.

Literary criticism has a wider range than commentary. It guides the reader as to why a work is worth reading pointing out its qualities. It also consists of discussions regarding different literary theories. The critics evaluate the composition and point out its merits and fix them in the proper historical context.

The Indian thinkers were of opinion that the commentary should find out the latent meaning in the work commented upon. A commentary should stand to reconstruct the sense intended by the poet. A work may have diverse meanings. Stress need not be on what the poet intended to express. Thus the saying कवितारसमाधुर्यं व्याख्यातां वैति, नो कवि शोष भनेर shows the relevance of the commentators. Commentary in Sanskrit aims not only at explaining word meaning, but at criticising the work also.
It is traditionally believed that a commentary has to perform five functions.

They are:

1. Splitting the words
2. Giving the prose order
3. Distinguishing the compounds
4. Giving their subtle details
5. Deciding the sense conveyed by the author

The commentator generally concentrates on the words and their senses. By commentary the ancient preceptors did not mean a total view of the work commented upon. Rarely do the commentators glance over the rasa contained in the whole work.

Great scholars considered commentaries as an intellectual exercise and also an expression of their aesthetic enjoyment. The commentator stands in between the poet and the reader. He transmits the cultural milieu of the author to the reader of different
time and ethos. A commentary analyses, interprets and evaluates the original work. The contribution of the great philosopher, Śaṅkarācārya and the great thinker and aesthetician, Abhinavagupta are in the field of commentaries and they are more original and valuable than the works commented on.

The contribution of Kerala to the commentorial literature is very great. The Kerala commentaries lift themselves to a level at which the functions of a critic are fulfilled. They help the reader in understanding and enjoying the original work. They discuss the aesthetic theories and the long discussion found in other commentaries regarding the qualities of the original work. This very quality of the Sanskrit commentaries raises them to the level of criticism.

The Kerala authors have commented on the works of all the branches of knowledge. Most of them are themselves great poets. A sastraic work or a poetic piece anything they take, they do the work very nicely and with much freedom. This has made their commentaries more attractive and useful. On account of the intrinsic qualities some of them are elevated to the level of
Bhaṣyās. Kerala scholars with their extensive knowledge in all the branches of study have written commentaries for works in all disciplines. For the sake of convenience, they can be grouped into three.

Commentaries on:

i. Technical Literature

ii. Literary Works

iii. Dramatical Works

I. TECHNICAL LITERATURE

Commentaries of works on upaniṣads, vēdaṅgās come under this section. A brief survey of the most important contributions in this field is attempted here.

Mātrdatta (7c. AD)

Mātrdatta’s commentaries on the kalpaśūtras, śrautasūtras and gṛhyasūtras of Hiraṇyakēśin are unique and the products of a mature intellect. The commentator and his father, Bhavarāta are referred to in the Avantisundarikathā of Dandin. There is one more commentary on the Gṛhyasūtras written by one Paramesvara who was a contemporary of Mātrdatta. The work is primarily meant for ritualistic performances.
**Brahmasūtrabhāṣya (8 c. AD)**

Brahmasūtrabhāṣya on the Uttaramīṃśā of Bādarāyaṇa stands foremost among the commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya. It expounds the theory of advaita and is more popular than the original. Next in importance are his bhaṣyās on Daśōpaniṣads and on Bhagavadgīta. The commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya are deep and authoritative. Actually they form the foundation of Indian philosophical studies.

**Daśādhyāyi (13 c. AD)**

This is a commentary in ten chapters on the Brhajjātaka of Varāhamihira. The commentary is by Gōvindabhaṭṭatiri of Talakkulam. The work is pregnant with morals and beneficial to the students of Jyōtiśāstra. Tradition connects him with the pazhur family of astrologers and it is believed that his physical mass is buried at pazhur Padippura.

**Siddhāntadīpika (14-15 c. AD)**

Siddhāntadīpika on the Mahābhāskarīyabhāṣya of Gōvindasvāmi is written by Paramēśvaran Nampūtiri of Vaṭṭasēri ilam. This is an authoritative work on astronomy.
Karmadīpika on Āryabhaṭīya, Muhūrttaratnavyākhyā
Laghubhāskarīyavyākhyā on the Laghubhāskarīya of Bhāskara I,
Vākyadīpika, Praśnāṣṭpāṇcāśikāvyākhyā, Līlāvatīvyākhyā,
Jātakakarmapaddhativyākhyā, Dr̥ggaṇita (in two versions),
Gōḷadīpika, Jātakapaddhati, Śūryasiddhāntavivaraṇa and
Ācārasaṅgīrha are his other works.

Gōpālikā (15 c. AD)

The Gōpālikā commentary on the spōtasiddhi stands su-
preme among the commentaries on Mīmāṃsa. It was written
by Parameswara II of Payyur who enriched the Mīmāṃsa Phi-
losophy in Kerala. The Tattvavibhāvana on the Tattvabindu of
Vācaspatimiśra, commentaries on Nītitattvāvīrbhāva of
Cidānanda and Vibhramavivēka of Mandanamiśra are also his
contributions. All these commentaries are supplementary to the
original texts and they enable the readers to grasp the difficult
language and the complex ideas of the original texts.

Jaininīyasūtrārthasaṅgraha (15 c. AD)

This is an elaborate commentary on Mīmāṃsa by
Parameswara III of Payyur. Mīmāṃsāśālōkavārtikakāśikāṭikā is
his another work, having remarkable intrinsic merit.

Āryabatīyavyākha (15-16 c. AD)

Āryabatīyavyākha of Nīlakaṇṭhasāmaya, popularly known as Keśallur Cōmātiri, is not a mere commentary but is an independent treatise on astronomy and it reveals the author’s deep knowledge in various sastras and remarkable power of thinking. He has also written Gōlasāra Gṛhanirṇaya, Grahaṇāśṭaka, Grahaparīkṣākrama, Tantrasaṅgraha, Siddhāntadarpaṇa, Siddhāntadarpaṇavyākhyā and Sundarārājapraśnottara.

Vimarśini (15 c. AD)

Vimarśini commentary on the Tantrasamuccaya of Cēnnās Nārāyaṇan Nampūtiri, written by his son Cēnnās Śaṅkaran Nampūtiri is an important work which goes deep into the ideas contained in the original work. Both the original text and the commentary got wide-popularity among the tantrīs and architects.

Laghuvivṛti (16 c. AD)

Laghuvivṛti on the Tantrasaṅgraha is an important commentary which was written by Śaṅkara Varier of Trīkuṭaveli
Karaṇasāra and Kriyākalpa are his other works. Kriyākramakarī, a commentary on Lilāvatī is also attributed to his authorship.

**Puruṣākāraṃ**

Puruṣākāraṃ, a commentary on Daivam, a Vyakarana text is a work with considerable merits. The commentator Bilvamaṅgalam (Krṣṇalilāśuka) opines that the sense of the original text cannot be understood without his commentary. The simple and lucid style of the work renders valuable help to the students of grammar. Śaṅkaraḥṛdayaṅgama, a commentary on the Kēnōpaniṣad is his another important work. It was written out of the authors devotion and respect towards Śrīsaṅkaraśārya. He has to his credit several important works.

**Nīvī (16-17 c. AD)**

The Nīvī on Rūpāvatāra of Dharmakīrti is a unique commentary which offers valuable help to the beginners for a better understanding of Sanskrit grammar. It was written by Sankara Varier. Tatvārthadīpika by Nīrāyaṇakavi is another commentary on the work.
Pravēśaka (17 c. AD)

The Pravēśaka of Trikkaṇṭiyūr Acyutapiśāraṭi is a valuable guide for the students of grammar.

Subōdhini (20 c. AD)

The Subōdhini is an excellent commentary on the Bhāṣāparicchēda, Muktāvalī, Dīnakoṣa and Rāmarudrīya. It is a unique contribution of Darśana Kalāṇidhi Rāmavarma Parīkṣit Tampurān in the field of Nyāyaśāstra. It is the result of remarkable effort of a scholar who was an authority on the Nyāyaśāstra. He has written two more commentaries, viz, Bhāvarthadīpika on Rūgmiṇīsvayamvaracampū and Sārārthadīpika on Śākuntalā (in collaboration with Rāmapiśāraṭi).

II COMMENTARIES ON LITERARY WORKS

Bhaktapriya

Bhaktapriya is a well known Sanskrit commentary on the Nārāyaṇīya of Mēlputūr, an excellent devotional lyric in Sanskrit literature. Explanation of the different scientific principles of various sastras and depiction of the essence of Bhāgavata make the work unique in the field of commentary literature. The au-
thorship of the work is attributed to Rudra varier. Another important commentaries on the Nārāyaṇīya are the Rasikapiṭhya of Sahādayatilakā Rāma Piṣārati and Bālabodhini of Koṇattu Kṛṣṇa varier.

Kṛṣṇapadī

This a well-known commentary on the tenth Skanda of the Bhāgavata. The author is Kokkunnathu Śivayogi.

Āmoda

Āmoda commentary of Aṣṭamūrtti Bhaṭṭatiri on Kādambarī of Bhaṭṭabāṇa is a work of remarkable merit. It is a voluminous work in metrical form.

Sumanīrāmanī

This is an elaborate and comprehensive commentary on the Mēghadūta of Kālidāsa often drifting into sastraic discussions and criticising the view of Pūrṇasarasvatī given in Vidyullatā. Certain beautiful explanations found in the Sumanīrāmanī can seldom be seen in other commentaries.

There are two recensions of the text of the commentary. The longer is considered to be an elaboration of the shorter re-
cension. The author of the commentary is Parameśvara I (Ṛṣiputra) who was a member of the renowned family of Payyur which is considered to be the seat of the Mīmāṃsā Philosophy in Kerala for several generations.

**Padārthacintana**

The title of the commentary, Padārthacintana itself suggests its nature. It successfully discovers the new ideas and senses hidden in the Yudhiṣṭhiravijaya. The commentary is unique as it dives deep into the suggested sense of the verses. The commentator is Rāghava vārīer, a great scholar and thinker of 15th century.

**Pravēšika**

This is one of the best commentaries on Raghuvamśa and Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa. Pravēšika contains rich and varied interpretations, hidden meanings and emotions. The men of literary taste of Kerala attach much importance to this commentary owing to its merits. Arunagirināṭhā alias Aṇṇāmalai (AD 14-15C), believed to be a Dravidā who lived in Kerala is the author.
Śabdārthadīpikā

Śabdārthadīpikā also known as Traisargikavyākhyā is a unique commentary on the first three cantos of Kirātārjunīya of Bhāravi. The discussion of political science contained in it attracted the ruling class.

New meanings given to the words, logical explanation of the ideas of the poet and the style of presentation help the readers much in understanding and appreciating the poem. The commentary was written by Citrabhānu Nampūthiri. Ullur S. Paramesvara Iyer attributes the authorship of Karṇāṁṛta a work on astrology to Citrabhānu Nampūthiri.

Vipaṇcikā

This commentary on the Kṛṣṇagīti of Mānavēda written by Citrabhānu is a standard work, a product of mature and independent thought. Some identities the author of Vipaṇcikā with Citrabhānu Nampūthiri who wrote Śabdārthadīpikā.

Padārthadīpikā

This is a commentary on Raghuvamaśa of Kālidāsa. The work is interesting from the point of view of aesthetic and replete
with elaborate explanations on the suggested sense and difficult problems. The author of this commentary is Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita. He has also written a commentary Vivaraṇa on the Kumārasambhava.

Bālapāṭhyā

Bālapāṭhyā, a popular commentary on Rāghavīya is a work with considerable merit. Rānapāṇivāda one of the greatest scholar poets that Kerala has even produced is the author of the original work and its commentary. He has to his credit several commentaries, namely Viśṇupriya on Viśṇuvilāsa, the Vilāsini on the Śrīkṛṣṇavilāsa of Sukumāra, the Vivaraṇa on the Dhātukāvyā of Melpattur Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and commentary on the Prākṛtapaṇkāśā of Vararuci. A commentary on Lilāsuka’s Gōvindaśabhaśeṇa is also attributed to his authorship.

Hlādinī

Hlādinī is an outstanding commentary on the Kṛṣṇagīti of Mānavēda. The work is remarkable for lucidity of expression. The author Anantnārāyaṇaśāstri is a great scholar and thinker of the 19th century.
Vilāsini

The Vilāsini commentary on Śukasandēśa of Lakṣmīdāsa authored by Mānaveda is an excellent work rich in literary qualities. It brings out the deep and subtle ideas of the poet in an elegant manner. He has also written a commentary on the Rāmāyaṇa Campū of Bhoja. He is to Bhoja what Mallinātha is to Kālidāsa.

Prēyasī

Another note-worthy commentary which is very popular in Kerala is the Prēyasī of Kaikulaṅgara Rāma Vārier on Kumārasambhava. Commentary for the first three chapters alone is available. He has also written a commentary called हṛḍ्यa on his own stōtrakāvyās (Vāgānaridalahari).

His other commentaries are the Arthaprakāśika on Vāmadēvastava and Bālapriya on Amarakōśa. The commentator brought to light a number of Sanskrit Kavyas with Malayalam commentaries on them.

Bhaktirasāyanavyākhyā

This commentary on the Bhaktirasāyana of Madhusūdana sarasvati is a remarkable piece in commentary literature. It en-
ables the readers to go deep into Mahabharata and appreciate it.

Dāmodaran Nampūtiri of Polpākkara popularly known as Vedāntatilaka is the author of the work.

**Arthaśāstravyākhyā**

Arthaśāstravyākhyā is a unique work of T. Ganapatīśāstri. The edition of Arthaśāstra with his own commentary won him honorary Ph.D from Tubingen University (posthumously) and Mahāmahopāddhyāya by the British Government.

Other commentaries of T. Garapatiśāstri are:

Aparṇāṣṭavavyākhyā,

Āṅgalasāmrājyaṭippanī,

Bhāsanāṭakavyākhyā

Viśākhavijayaṭippanī

Śākuntalapāramyavyākhyā

**Āṅgalasāmrājavyākhyā**

Āṅgalasāmrājavyākhyā is an important contribution of Rāmavarma Kuṇjuṇi Rāja of Cirālayam to Sanskrit commentorial literature. His other commentaries are Nāradabhaktisūtravyākyā, Rugmiṃiharaṇavyākhyā and
Saṅgrahārthaprakāśini on his own Rāmīyastōtramālā.

Tīkāprasūnaṁjali

Tīkāprasūnaṁjali is an excellent commentary by Māntīṭṭa Kuñcu Nampūtiri on his own Gaṅgātaraṅgini and Viśvānāthaśṭaka. Considering the author’s scholarship in Nyāyaśāstra, he has been honored with the title, Paṇḍhitarāja and Tārṅkikatilaka?

Bālabōdhini

This is one of the best commentaries on the Nārāyaṇīya of Melpūthūr. The work is intended for the students of Sanskrit. The author Koṇattu Kṛṣṇa Vārīer (AD 19-20C) has commented only up to the 88th daśakāś and seven verses of the next daśaka. The remaining portion was completed by his relative, Kṛṣṇa Vārīer. He has also written a commentary on the Subadrāharaṇa of Melpūtūr.

Bhaktapriya

This is an elegant commentary on the Santānagopālacampu of Āsvatī Tirunāl Rāmāvarma of Travancore written by Govindan Nampūtirippad of Taranaṇallūr. ĀŚaucacintāmaṇīvyākyā and a
commentary on his own Saṅgamēśastōtra are his other works in the field.

**Prahlādacaritavyākhyā**

This is an excellent commentary written by D. Damodara Piśāroti who was Professor of Govt. Sanskrit College, Tripunithura. Sugalārthamālavyākhyā and a commentary on Sītāvicāralahari are his other works in the field.

**III. DRAMATIC LITERATURE**

Many commentators on Sanskrit dramas consider the original works as literary pieces. But there are some others which treat them as theatrical pieces. Thus commentaries on dramas can be grouped under two heads - literary commentaries and theatrical studies. The latter can again be classified into stage manuals and theatre criticism.

i. **Literary commentaries**

Literary criticism enables the reader to appreciate the dramatic text. Here drama is viewed as a literary product to be read and relished. Most of the commentaries on dramatic works belong to this category.
Āścaryacūḍāmaṇī

Vivṛti by an unknown author is a famous commentary on the Āścaryacūḍāmaṇī of Śakt bhadra. The commentator discusses problems of different types - literary, aesthetic and rhetorical. The commentary reveals that its author possessed all qualities required for a good commentator.

Tapatiśaṃvaraṇa

The only commentary now available on Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa is the Vivaraṇa written by Śivarāma who has made outstanding contribution to Sanskrit commentorial literature. The commentaries Vicāratilaka on Subhadrādhanañjaya and Vimarśini on Nāgānanda have also been written by him. These works were useful to the cākyārs in their performance of Kūṭiyāṭṭaṃ.

Vivaraṇa was published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series in 1911 with the original text of the drama. The commentary exposes the deep suggestive import contained in the drama. It is replete with quotations from Nāṭyaśāstra and other established works on dramaturgy.

Subhadrādhanañjaya

Vicāratilaka is accepted to be one of the greatest commen-
taries produced in Kerala. It was published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series in 1912 along with the text of subhadrâdhanañjaya. The work brings out the rich ideas inherent in the play.

Nâgânanda of Srî Harsha

Vimarśini on Nâgânanda is undoubtedly a work of remarkable intrinsic merit. The dramaturgical and rhetorical discussion contained in the work are educative and informative. From a verse at the concluding portion it can be assumed that the author was called Râma, his profession was reading of Râmâyana and also he was a devotee of Lord Śiva.

Mâlatîmâdhava of Bhavabhûti

Rasamañjarî, one of the best commentaries on the drama, is comprehensive and exhaustive. It is valuable for a proper appreciation of the play, its poetry and its suggestions; Pûrṇasarasvatî (AD 14C) is the author of the work.

Yet another commentary available on Mâlatîmâdhava is a āṭipanâti by Abhirâma.

Anargharâghava of Murari

Anargharâghavavyâkhyâ by Nârâyaṇa (AD 15C) is an excellent commentary which helps the reader to understand and
appreciate the drama. The commentator offers explanations of Murari’s lines and words and proceeds to make the poet’s ideas quite clear. The work successfully brings out the deeper senses of the drama.

Another important commentary on Anargharāghava is the Vikramīya of Mānavikrama, (AD 15C) the great Zamorin of Kozhikkod. It is a work of superior order and a valuable guide to appreciate the play.

Pūrṇasarasvatī and Abhirāma have written tīkās on the drama. They are helpful for a proper appreciation of the play.

Viddhasālabhaṇijika of Rājaśekhara

Mārgadarśini on the above nātika is an outstanding commentary by Vāsudevan Nampūrāti of Mukkola (AD 15C). The commentary is short but valuable for men of literary taste. The authorship of Karpūramaṇjariṭkā is attributed to Vāsudeva.

Mālavikāgnimitra

The subtle charm of Mālavikāgnimitra can be enjoyed only through the Gunṭottara commentary (also known as Śrīkaṇḍhīya) by Śrīkaṇḍha vāriyar of Desamangalam. The effort he has made
to enable the readers to appreciate the play of Kālidāsa is highly admirable. He was a great admirer of Kālidāsa and that was why he chose to comment on his three dramas.

**Tripuradahana**

Arthaprabhāsika commentary by Vaṭṭaśīri Nīlakanṭha Nampūtiri, an erudite scholar and commentator is a unique work. He has also written a commentary called Tattvaprabhāsika on the Saurīkathodāya of Vāsudeva

**Abhijñānaśākuntāla**

Dīnmatadārśana, a commentary on the Abhijñānaśākuntāla of Kālidāsa must be reckoned as a remarkable piece in commentorial literature. Nothing is known about the time and nativity of the author Abhirāma. Vadakkumkur opines that he was a contemporary of Melputūr and assigns him to AD 1575-1675. It is believed that he was a Keralite scholar since his work is unknown outside Kerala. He has also written tiṇpaṅīs on Mahāvīracarita, Uttararāmacarita, Mālatīmādhava, Vikramorvaśīya and Bālāramāyaṇa. A commentary on Anargharāghava is also attributed to him.
Another important commentary on Śākuntalā is Sārārthadīpika which is a joined venture by the two great scholars Rāma Varma Parīkṣit Tampurān and Sahādayatilakan Rāma Piṣāroṭi.

The philosophical interpretations given to the drama by the commentators add charm to the commentary and make it a different one. The commentary gives the message that attainment of the ultimate self is possible only when there are ethical excellences. It reveals what has been left untold by Kālidāsa.

Anvayabodhini is also an important commentary on Śākuntalā. Commentary only on the first three Acts are available. The name of the author is unknown. Scholars opine that he was a Keralite and belong to the Kūṭāllur family. The commentary is replete with quotations, beautiful descriptions, discussions on Alaṅkāra, Nyāya, Vyākaraṇa, rasa, bhāva and dhvani. It avoids irrelevant discussions in the presentation of ideas logically well-knit. On account of its merits, the commentary enjoys a position equal to Dīnāmātradarśana and Sārārthadīpikā.

Pūrṇasarasvatī has written a ṭīkā on Śākuntalā.
Uttararāmacarita

One of the best commentaries on Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti produced in Kerala is Bhāvārthadīpika written by Maṭham Nārāyaṇan Nampūtiri (AD 17C). The commentary enhances the emotional content of the drama and it brings out the hidden meanings of the play unseen by other commentators. Discussions on various sastras, dramaturgy, rhetorics have an educative value.

His other commentaries are the Diṁmātradarśinī on Bōdhāyanā's Bhagavadajjuka, Kṛṣṇārpaṇa on Dhātukāvyya of Melputtur and Tattvārthadhīpikā on the Rūpāvatāra of Dharmakīrti.

Pūrṇasarasvatī and Abhirāma have written tīkās on Uttararāmacarita. These tīkās offer valuable help for the appreciation of the play.

Mahiṣamaṅgalabhāṇa

Sārārthakalpavalli is a beautiful commentary on Mahiṣamaṅgalabhāṇa. The author is Nīlakaṇḍhaśārma of Punnaśśēri who has to his credit several commentaries:
His Raghuvamśaprabhāśaṇa, though a lecture is a brilliant commentary on the first six cantos of Raghavaṃśa.

**ii Theatrical studies**

A play comes into being only when it is performed on the stage. The traditional actors of Sanskrit dramas in Kerala were the cākyārs. They have prepared elaborate manuals regarding the presentation of the play. Such manuals are called āṭṭaprakārās and kramadīpikās.

Theatrical studies can be classified under two heads - stage manuals and theatre criticism.

**Stage Manuals**

The Kerala actors while adopting Sanskrit plays for presentation on Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage did not take the text as it was; instead they made considerable changes to suit their purpose. Many plays were restructured; some parts were eliminated; some oth-
ers were added. As a result of this process the original play lost much of its identity when it was presented on the stage.

The actors, thus, did not depend on the script of the dramatist; instead depended on the stage scripts handed over to them by tradition. These scripts are called stage manuals and actor manuals. They were prepared by senior artists with the help of scholars and handed down to their family as a household treasure. Each family kept them as a secret. They did not share it with other actors. Thus one and the same play got several stage plays with divergent modes of presentation. In fact the secret of survival of the performance tradition of Kerala actors is their regard for family traditions in acting which was preserved through the stage manuals.

The story of stage manuals begins with the composition of Vyañgyavyākhyā by a scholar in the court of King Kulaśekhara in the 11th c. AD. Kulaśekhara was a dramatist of high caliber. He wrote two dramas, Subhadrādhanañjaya and Tapatīsañvaraṇa in Sanskrit. He felt that the existing stage techniques were insufficient to convey what he felt in his heart. So he himself enacted
the role of each character and with the help of discerning friends
and skilled actors formulated a scheme for the presentation of his
dramas. One of the scholars in his court recorded the details as
demonstrated by him. They were named Dhanañjayadhvani and
Sañvarañadhvani. Later both came to be known under the com-
mon title Vyañgyavyākhyā. It is the first and perhaps the only
text of its kind not only in Sanskrit but in the whole history of
world theatre.

Details for the presentation of the first act is given in
full. Description of the initial part of the second act, i.e. till
the story of Śrīkṛṣṇa, is available now. The manuscript ends
abruptly. It is not known whether the script was prepared for
all the acts of Dhanañjaya.

The Sañvarañadhvani also starts similarly. The style
of acting of the first three acts has been described. The work
ends with the statement that there is no dhvani thereafter except
in the part where Menaka enters. The manual for this drama is
complete.

Thus Vyañgyavyākhyā comprises of the instruction for
the presentation of four full acts and a part of another act.
Contents of Vyaŋgyavyākhyā

The author repeatedly stresses that he had described three things in this manual,

i  the prāvēśika - entry of characters.

ii  the sthāyibhāva - permanent mood and

iii  Prayōgamārga - the mode of presentation.

Vyaŋgyavyākhyā can rightly be considered as the first stage manual for a Sanskrit drama. When Sanskrit drama evolved for presentation on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage the actors began to compose stage manuals on the pattern of Vyaŋgyavyākhyā.

These manuals are classified under two heads - āṭṭaprapakāra, mode of acting and kramadīpika, instruction to artists. The early stage manuals were in Sanskrit. At a later stage when Malayalam became popular on the stage, manuals came to be prepared in Malayalam. The actors followed these manuals which they kept as confidential.

Recently the manuals are available to the public. Details of some of the manuals published are given below.

Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi: (Malayalam) Nārāyana Piśāroṭi K.P.,

Āśokavanikāṇṭaṁ: Kuñjān Pillai Śūranād, Kerala University 1968

Mantrāṅkaṁ Nārāyaṇa Nambiār P.K., Kerala Sahitya Akademy 1980

Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi: The wondrous Crest-Jewel in performance by Jones Clifford Reis, Oxford University Press 1984

Bālivadhāṁ Venu G., Production of a play in Kūṭiyāṭṭaṁ, 1989.


Kalyāṇasaugandhika K.G. Paulose, Bhima in search of celestial flowers, 2000

Bhagavadvjuka (Malayalam) K.P. Nārāyana Piṣāroṭi, Sangeetha Nataka Akademy, 2001

Portions of the acting manuals of Abhiṣeka and Pratimā were serialized in the journal of Kerala Sangeeta Nataka Akademi. Recently Govt. of India have formulated a scheme to collect and preserve all the manuscripts of stage manuals.
Theatre criticism

Theatre criticism is a weak area when compared to the other fields. The connoisseurs on seeing the performance make their own judgements but rarely do they record it for the benefit of the public. The best specimen of theatre criticism in Sanskrit is the Naṭāṅkuśa of an anonymous author of the 15th century. It is a severe attack on some of the stage practices prevalent at that time. His objections are based on three grounds - i. The actors deviate from the canons of Nāṭyaśāstra. ii. Some aspects of the presentation are not morally sound. iii. The actors do not follow the text of the dramatist.

The author proclaims that he is the best friend of actors and that he holds nāṭya in great esteem. His objections are against the corrupt practices that have crept into the sacred art. Thus he has identified four defects in the presentation of a play in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. They are:

i. Addition of incidents left out by the poet,

ii. Omission of what the poet has described,

iii. Elaboration of things only hinted at,
iv. Contraction of things elaborated.

The criticism of Naṭāṅkuśa is strong and vehement. It virtually attacks the actors. But it cannot be rejected outright. There are many things the actors have to learn from Naṭāṅkuśa.

Naṭāṅkuśa did not have many followers.

Abhijñānaśākuntalācarca, a commentary on Śākuntalā of the 15th century also makes some criticism of the stage practices. No criticism is recorded thereafter in the field of theatre.
REFERENCE

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   इहान्यम्युखेनं च सवै व्याख्यायले मया।
   नामूलं लिख्यते किंचित्रान्यसितम्यन्ते॥

2. K. Rāmavarna Rāja, Teaching of Sanskrit, Sanskrit Education society Madras 1965 - P. 35

3. Kuñjuṇṇi Rāja K., The contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, University of Madras, 1980, Ch. 2 P. 47

4. Published from Ravivarma Granthāvali with the introduction of P.S. Anantanārāyaṇa Śāstrikal, Govt. Sanskrit College, Tripunithura.

5. Ibid

6. Published in Pūrṇatrayī (incomplete)

7. Rāja Rāja Varma Vaṭakkānkuṟ - Keralīya Sanskrita Sāhitya caritram - Srī Śaṅkaracārya University of Sanskrit,
8 Contribution of Parīkṣit Tarapūrāṇ to Sanskrit Literature

9 A Study on the Bhāvārthadīpika Commentary on the Uttarārāmacarita (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Ratnam C.N., Dept. of Sanskrit, University of Calicut. 1999 ch. 5 P. 135


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12 Naṭāṅkuśa-A Critique on Dramaturgy, edited by K.G.Paulose - Published by Govt. Sanskrit College Committee, Tripunithura, 1993