

The Poetics of the Sublime in Sanskrit Ornate Epics

Thesis Summary

This study, presented in the form of seven thematically related articles, seeks to provide answers to the following questions: why do the authors of Sanskrit ornate epics (*mahākāvya*s) define their highest values through comparing them to the most spectacular elements of nature (mountains, oceans/seas, celestial bodies, etc.)? Why do they describe them so elaborately and what determines the specific form of these descriptions? What constitutes their uniqueness and which features do they share with other types of Sanskrit metanarrative texts? Finally, what creates their affective power? In order to provide the desired answers, I compare the poetics inherent to analyzed fragments of *mahākāvya* works with elements of the Western discourse of the sublime, as formulated in its classical and philosophical sources. I further place it against the background of other classes of Sanskrit metanarrative texts that share its interest in the "grand" elements of nature. The findings formulated based on these comparisons and contextualizations are eventually compared with the concepts of Sanskrit literary theory (*alaṃkāraśāstra*). My research focuses on Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s created up until the 8th century CE, the *Adipurāṇa* authored by Jinasena, a Sanskrit work from the 9th century CE representing a class of texts known as "Jain purāṇas", and treatises on Sanskrit literary theory (up until the 10th century CE). It additionally considers excerpts from Hindu *purāṇas* and *itihāsas*.

Key words:

the sublime – *mahākāvya* – *alaṃkāraśāstra* – *Adipurāṇa* – metanarrative