

## A Philologist's Love Song

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How I love your Sanskrit eyes  
and your chest, heaving  
tatsamas and tadbhavas  
and your eyelashes, standing guard

over Anandavardhana's bhavas  
and your lips, speaking to me  
of rasas uncataloged in the *Srngara Prakasha*.<sup>2</sup>  
I love your hair, cascading

like alifs falling asleep,  
the way your body curls me tight  
like qafs hung upside down  
or camels lined up to drink.

You are a folio spread  
to be read by my hands alone.  
Your palm-leaf body is creased.  
I decipher your script with ease.

I am your variorum.  
You are my critical edition.  
We are authoritative,  
though our secrets are unknown.

I spent my youth turning the pages  
of my separate life alone  
until you appeared at the end  
of the Great Hall.

I found you reciting

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<sup>2</sup> "Light on Love," a treatise on Sanskrit poetics by Indian king and theoretician Bhoja (d. 1055).

Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

You found me stumbling  
through Old Kannada.

Your lips whispered to me  
the counsel of the gods.

I stood up and saluted you  
my friend, my companion

through these calligraphies  
of foreign tongues. Let us read  
their incantations jointly.  
Let us await the dawn.

Our night is young and there are  
many scripts left to decipher,  
many definitions left to discover,  
many scrolls waiting for us to unfold.