

# The Production of Philosophical Literature in South Asia During the Pre-colonial Period (15th to 18th centuries): The Case of the Nyāyasūtra Commentarial Tradition

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The *Nyāyasūtra*, compiled towards the end of the 4th century, is the fundamental text of the Nyāya (“Logic”) tradition in the classical period of Indian philosophy. A succession of commentaries has been preserved from this early period onwards. Through commenting on the increasingly antiquated basic text of the tradition, later philosophical authors developed their sophisticated metaphysical, epistemological and soteriological ideas, in lively controversy. When, in the 11th century, the advanced “old” Nyāya was decisively revolutionized in terms of logic and stringency of argumentation, terminology and style, and the “new” (navya) Nyāya inaugurated by Udayana, the *Nyāyasūtra* seems to have lost its attraction as a text to be commented upon, even indirectly.

Surprisingly, however, starting already in the 15th century, scholars turned again to the ancient *sūtra*-text and commented directly upon it. The paper will try to explore this phenomenon in its various aspects: who were these savants who cared about an archaic text far removed from their own level of philosophical sophistication; what and who induced them to write these commentaries; what was their intended readership; what was their attitude to the “old” commentaries; what consequences had the phenomenon for this older literature; what is the relationship of the commentaries to their other works; how were the commentaries received; and how and where did they circulate, etc?