CHAPTER 5
MAHIMABHATTA’S OBSERVATIONS ON THE READING PROCESS

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After the age of Abhinavagupta, it was seen that most of the Sanskrit rhetoricians seemed to adhere to the stream of thought introduced by Ānandavardhana and developed by Abhinavagupta. But there were quite a few rhetoricians who voiced their dissent from the path of dhvani. Mahimabhaṭṭa was one among them. He treated the concepts of the function of words, the process of reading and aesthetic enjoyment with a distinct approach. Mahimabhaṭṭa had his own original ideas on the concept of a reader and the reading process. Besides these topics, he made some fresh observations on linguistic discourse. He would perhaps be one of the few Sanskrit rhetoricians who has analyzed the nuances of both ordinary and literary language. His theory of poetic inference deserves special mention among theories on the reading process. Thus he laid down an independent path for himself in Sanskrit poetics. In order to understand Mahimabhaṭṭa’s ideas on the reader and the process of reading, it is essential to be aware of his general views on the nature of language.

5.1. Nature of language

Mahimabhaṭṭa viewed all linguistic discourses as inferential in
According to him, *abhidhā* was the only power possessed by words. Thus the words have the power to denote the primary meaning only. Meanings other than the primary meaning are perceived through inference. Thus he refuted other powers of words like *lakṣaṇa*, *vyāñjana* and *tātparya*.

According to Mahimabhaṭṭa, language is persuasive in nature. It either persuades a person to do an action or forbids him from doing it. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that all the linguistic discourses are inferential and certain logic or *sādhyasādhanabhāva* forms the base of the inference. For instance, when a person extends his hand to touch a vessel, another would say that the vessel is hot. The person would immediately withdraw his hand. Here the speaker does not explicitly ask the person not to touch the vessel. But when the person understands that the vessel is hot, he withdraws his hand. This action is based on an inference made by the listener. The inference is made with the help of the knowledge that he has gained from the world that touching hot objects can burn your hands. The person has thus perceived the invariable relation between touching a hot object and getting burnt. Hence he withdraws his hands. Thus all the interactions using language are based on inferences which in turn are based on *sādhyasādhanabhāva* or a logic which is invariable. This is true not only of the ordinary language, but also of the literary language. As far as literary language is concerned, the scope of

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1. Dr. T. Ganapathi Sastri (Ed.), *Vyaktiviveka* with Ruṣyaṇa’s commentary, p.3.

    *sarva eva hi śābdo vyavahāraḥ sādhyasādhanabhāva garbhatayā prāyeṇānumānārūpo bhuyugantavyaḥ*, (Further references to *Vyaktiviveka* refer to the same text.)
inference is wider as everything is not directly stated in literature. It is often impossible to know the intention of the speaker/author of a literary text, thus the readers have to use other means to infer the unexpressed meanings of the text.

Mahimabhaṭṭa says that each sentence consists of a *vidheya* and *uddeśa* which roughly corresponds to the modern concept of predicate and subject respectively. This division is found in various classical languages of the world. For instance, in Latin, the concept of rheme and theme stands for a similar idea. The predicate stands as the principal element and the subject is subordinate to it. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that *vidheya* is an element which needs to be established ie; sādhya (probandum). The *uddeśa* is an established fact which stands to substantiate the *vidheya*. It becomes the sādhana (proban). Thus *vidheya* is the principal element which has to be established with the help of the *uddeśa* (also known as anuvādy) which is subordinate. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that all sentences can be analysed in this manner. The case is no different in literature too. *Uddeśa* stands as the base on which the poet presents the *vidheya*. Mahimabhaṭṭa very strongly insists that the element of *vidheya* should be stated only after stating the *uddeśa*.

The *vidheya* and *uddeśa* may be directly expressed in a sentence. In some cases, the *vidheya* would be a well-known fact which does not require

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2. *anuvādyamanuktvaiva na vidheyamudīrayet/
   na hyalabdhaśpadam kincid kutracit pratitiṣṭhati//
   vidheyoddeśbhāvo 'yaṃ rūpyarūpakatātmakaḥ/
   na ca tatra vidheyoktiruddesāt pūrvamīṣyate//
substantiation. But in places where it is a fact that is not established (not well-known), then the *uddeśa* helps in establishing it. The invariable relation of *vidheya* and *uddeśa* (*sādhyasādhanabhāva*) is understood with the help of certain means of knowledge known as *pramāṇa*-s. Thus the listeners/readers who have perceived the relation between *sādhyā* and *sādhana* through the *pramāṇa*-s are easily able to understand the *vidheya*. Sometimes the *vidheya* will not be directly expressed and it has to be inferred by the perceiver. The perceiver should possess certain prior knowledge in order to infer the unexpressed *vidheya*. Mahimabhaṭṭa gives a detailed account of the means through which the perceiver acquires the knowledge required for inference.3

Mahimabhaṭṭa applied the concept of inference of meanings not only to day-to-day linguistic interactions, but also to the realm of literary language. He does not necessarily differentiate between ordinary language and literary language. He applies the concept of inference to all linguistic discourses. He considered inference to be an integral part of the reading process. He called the process of inference involved in the reading of literature as poetic inference or *kāvyānumiti*. The relevance of Mahimabhaṭṭa’s theory of poetic inference is clearly understood only when it is examined in the light of modern theories on inference involved in the reading process.

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3 *Vyaktiviveka*, pp.7-8.
5.2. Modern theories on inference during the reading process

The role of inference in the process of reading has been a major area of research in modern linguistics, cognitive psychology as well as educational psychology. Several studies have been published in this regard. Gail Mckoon, R. Ratcliff etc. are some of the scholars who have widely contributed to this field. The following quote reveals the importance given to inference in the studies on reading comprehension:

Research in the area of reading comprehension has made enormous progress during the last thirty or more years...Because reading comprehension is so complex, even today there are no models of the comprehension process, instead, models are designed to address various sub-components of the complete comprehension process. Perhaps one of the most important processes necessary for successful comprehension during reading is that of inferencing. Over the last twenty five years, research on inference generation during reading has advanced to the point that it has become a relatively “mature” area.4

Inference in reading comprehension is studied from different viewpoints namely cognitive psychology, neuroscience, psycholinguistics, educational psychology etc. A very general definition of inference given in the field of pragmatics is that inference is the connection created between what is said and what is meant.5 There have been studies on inference generation that occurs at a very basic word level as well as at the higher level of literary

5 Vide The Study of Language by George Yule.
interpretation. These studies also recognize the thin line that separates the two aspects of a text, ie; what a text says explicitly and what is inferable from the text. Some inferences may be necessary ones ie, inference of the referent from an anaphora or inference of causal relations between sentences. Some inferences may be elaborative ie; they would help in predicting upcoming events or add extra information to the narrative. Scholars have tried to classify the kinds of inference made during the reading process:

In this concern, it has been proposed that such a range of textual inferences fall into four categories. The first one is lexical inference. This sort of inference is required to solve problems of lexical ambiguity or nominal reference (anaphoric reference). The second one includes inferences of space and time. For understanding a narrative text, readers have to be able of anchoring the events and episodes described in some spatio-temporal framework. The third kind corresponds to extrapolative inferences. Readers have to extrapolate often beyond two events to find some link between them. Readers must infer the sequence of intervening events linking two sentences (events). In doing so, they extrapolate beyond what is literally given in the text. Finally, there are evaluative inferences. This type of inferences arises because the meaning of an event depends on the context in which is presented, and readers have to determine this frequently to understand what the text is about.6

Thus it is widely recognized that reading is a complex process that involves various inferences by the readers. These inferences may be closely bound to the language of the text ie, syntax, grammar of the text etc., or it may involve

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making connections between sentences or portions of the text. It may also be a construction done by the reader which is largely independent of the text. The studies thus reveal that reader’s knowledge has an important role in the process of inference.

There have been two major streams of thought in the field of inference. They are Minimalist and Constructionist views. They can be summarized as:

According to the minimalist hypothesis, for each kind of inference, encoding should depend on the availability of the information necessary to support inference processes. If supporting information is not quickly available, then an inference should not be constructed (unless necessary for local coherence). According to the constructionist hypothesis, the encoding of inferences should not depend completely on the availability of supporting information; instead encoding should depend on whether an inference is required for a lifelike description of the event described by the text.  

Minimalist view says that inference occurs during the reading process based on two strategies. They are the inferences which are made based on readily available information and those which are necessary for maintaining local coherence. They are automatic in nature. But Constructionist view says that inference during reading involves elaborate inferences where the reader uses information from his long-term memory. He makes inferences which are quite independent of the linguistic aspects of the text. Debates on the kinds of

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inference made during reading are still going on and numerous experiments are being conducted to explore this field in detail.

Modern researches focus on the following aspects of inference in reading process:

I. What kind of inferences is made during the reading process and what is the actual process involved in inference?

II. When are inferences made and does it require additional processing time?

III. Is the process of inference a passive and automatic process or is it strategically constructed by the reader?

IV. How does the process of memory retrieval occur as reader moves from one word to another?

V. How do the words and sentences act as cues that access the readers’ knowledge and memory to generate inference?

In the light of the above focal points found in the theories of inference developed over the recent years, it would be worthwhile to compare them with the views of Mahimabhaṭṭa.

5.3. Mahimabhaṭṭa’s concept of inference

Mahimabhaṭṭa, after revealing the inferential nature of language, has shown the role of inference in reading and comprehending literature. The
process of reading is not a simple one-sided process where the text unveils all the meanings to the reader automatically. Recent studies have recognized the complex nature of the reading process. The complex nature of this seemingly easy process of reading is noted by a scholar in the following way:

Skilled reading is complex. It requires the coordination of a range of skills and rapid access to text-relevant knowledge. Words must be decoded and their meanings retrieved, the individual sentences need to be parsed and understood, the information in the text needs to be integrated across sentences, and inferences need to be made to fill in any gaps in the text. Thus, a number of different skills and abilities — inference making, comprehension monitoring, and understanding of text structure in particular — have been shown to be linked to children's reading comprehension, both within and across time.  

Besides understanding the word and sentence meanings, the readers ought to make inferences in order to establish connection between various parts of the text, fill in the gaps found in the text and also go beyond the literal meaning of the text.

Mahimabhaṭṭa also considered inference as an essential element in the process of reading. As mentioned earlier Mahimabhaṭṭa considers all the meanings other than the primary meaning as inferred. In the case of literature, the readers infer meanings using the cues from the text as well as with the help of their own knowledge. He defines poetic inference or kāvyānumiti as

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the process where a primary meaning or an inferred meaning gives rise to another meaning based on some sort of relation between the two.\(^9\)

Mahimabhaṭṭa also says that the meanings presented by the poets are more charming than the ordinary ones. He adds that these poetic meanings achieve greater beauty when they are inferential in nature. The inference of \(bhāva\)-s like \(sōka\), \(bhaya\) from literature renders a pleasure to the \(sahādaya\)-s unlike their experience in the real world. Mahimabhaṭṭa also differentiates between poetic inference and the inference propounded by the \(Naiyāyika\)-s.\(^10\)

The inference presented by the \(Nyāya\) philosophy is mundane and unpleasant, while poetic inference is pleasing to the readers. Moreover, the inference of the \(Naiyāyika\)-s contains a five-step process to arrive at the inferred meaning. But poetic inference does not follow such rigid procedures. The \(sahādaya\)-s are capable of getting at the inferred meanings without the help of these procedures. Ruuyaka precisely mentions this notion as:

\[
na ca kāvye kadācid dṛṣṭāntasya prayogo dṛṣṭyate. tat katham
atrānumānasamarthanam ucyate. kāvyānumānaḥ
tarkānumānavilakṣaṇaṃ kāvyasya camatkārasāratvāt.
nyāyamukhenāpi camatkåra eva viśrānteḥ. tarkānumānaḥ tu
karkaśanyāyarūpatayā pravr̥ttāṃ tarkasya karkaśatāṃ udvahati. kāvye
\]

\(^9\) \(vācyastadaṇumīto vā yatārtha’rthāntaram prakāśayati/\)
\(sambandhataḥ kutaścit sā kāvyānumitiḥityuktā//\)

\(^10\) \(Vyaktiviveka, p.12\)
Mahimaṣṭṭha demonstrates the process of poetic inference in detail in the third vimarśa of Vyaktiviveka. Mahimaṣṭṭha quotes the examples of dhvani or suggestion given by Ānandavardhana in order to show that dhvani (suggestion) comes under poetic inference. Mahimaṣṭṭha’s analysis of the following example would show the way he approaches the process of reading poetry:

bhama dhammio viśaddho so suṇao ajja mārio deṇa/
golāṇaiacacakaḍaṅgaṃvṛsiṇā dariśiheṇa//

Ānandavardhana quotes this Prakrit verse as an example of vastudhvani where the primary meaning is an indication to roam about on the banks of river Godavari, while the suggested sense prohibits wandering on the river bank. Here the suggested meaning is just the opposite of the primary meaning. The nature of the speaker, context etc. help in conveying this suggested meaning to the readers. Abhinavagupta has given a detailed commentary of this verse in Dhvanyālokocana. But Mahimaṣṭṭha disagrees with their view.

Mahimaṣṭṭha says that the listener understands the prohibition intended by the speaker through the process of inference. The words in the

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11 ibid, p.11.
12 bhrama dhārmikavisrābdhaḥ sa śunako’dya māritastena/ godānadīkacchakharavāsinā drptasimhena//
verse just convey the primary meaning which instructs to roam around on the banks. As mentioned earlier, Mahimabhaṭṭa first identifies the speaker, the listener as well as the context of the verse. The speaker of the verse is a lady who wishes to spend time with her lover in the serene banks of Godavari. She tries to prevent the arrival of a monk who comes to the river bank filled with creepers to pluck flowers and thus disturbs her union with her lover. Through this verse, the speaker conveys the news of the killing of the dog which used to frighten the monk. She informs that the dog was killed by a ferocious lion living on the river bank and thus he can roam about on the river bank without fear.

Mahimabhaṭṭa first identifies the sādhana and the sādhya at the level of primary meaning. The killing of the dog is the sādhana which substantiates the order (vidhi) to roam about freely on the river banks. Mahimabhaṭṭa compares this relation to that of the smoke and the fire. But Mahimabhaṭṭa says that a capable listener/reader notices the use of nić suffix (mārīṭaḥ) in the sādhana which helps him grasp the presence of the lion (who is the prayojaka of the action indicated by the use of nić suffix) on the banks. A sensible perceiver who grasps this idea immediately understands the contradictory relation between the existence of lion and the instruction to wander. Here the nature of the sādhana and the sādhya is that of bādhaka and bādhya. It is quite obvious from the world that the presence of lion and fearless wandering cannot happen simultaneously. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that the perceiver grasps this contradictory relation through the lokapramāṇa (ie; from the world) and infers the intention of the speaker that he should not
wander on the river bank. The following processes can be observed in the reading of the verse by Mahimabhaṭṭa:

a. Identification of the speaker, listener and the context.

b. Understanding the primary meaning and identification of the sādhana and the sādhyā at the level of primary meaning.

c. Identification of the cue in the sādhana that helps the intelligent perceiver grasp the unexpressed sādhana (Here the linguistic element of ṇic makes the reader think about the presence of lion on the banks).

d. Recognition of the nature of relationship between the presence of lion perceived from the primary level and the sādhyā found at the primary level. (Here the reader thinks about the relation between the presence of lion and the instruction to wander. The reader grasps the contradictory relation between the two.)

e. The contradictory relationship grasped from the world leads to the inference of the unexpressed sādhyā which is just the opposite of the literal meaning.

Mahimabhaṭṭa seems to follow the traditional process of inference in the interpretation of this verse. In the above example, two sets of inferences are made; one at the primary level and the latter at the unexpressed level. They seem to be an extended process of inference seen in the example of inferring fire from smoke.
Mahimabhaṭṭa talks about the inferred meanings in verses which may consist of a sentence or sentences, but he believes that there is no process of inference involved in the comprehension of the meaning of a word. It is because a word does not contain in it elements of probans and probandum required for inference. He says that inference is possible from the level of sentence only because the sentences contain uddeśa (subject) and vidheya (predicate) which act as the probans and probandum. Modern researches identify the inferences at word and sentence level. The inferences that a reader makes based on the explicit textual information include connections between an anaphora and its referent, propositions that are not farther apart than one or two sentences etc. These are simple inferences made using easily available information. Mahimabhaṭṭa talks about these elements in the sentences from a linguistic point of view while dealing with literary blemishes. He talks about the faulty use of linguistic elements like pronouns, compound words etc which hampers the delightful experience of reading. But Mahimabhaṭṭa does not consider their reading and comprehension as processes of inference. It is because these processes do not fit into the traditional framework of inference followed by Mahimabhaṭṭa. He treats them as elements of syntax which influence the reader in the reading process.

Mahimabhaṭṭa does not take up the process of inference involved in the reading of an entire text. He does not explain what probans and probandum can be adopted to make inferences as far as a whole text is considered. The traditional framework of inference which he applies to the analysis of individual verses cannot be applied to an entire text. He does not
demonstrate how the procedures of inference that he follows can be applied to the interpretation of an entire text. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa’s notion of inference as a part of reading process gets restricted to the reading of individual verses which contain one or two sentences. He takes into account factors like textual context, nature of speaker and listener to make inferences. But Mahimabhaṭṭa is not seen to make any comment regarding elaborate inferences which are independent of the text.

Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to stick on to the procedures of inference propounded in Indian philosophies\(^3\) while interpreting the verses. He first identifies the sādhana in the verse as well as the dharmi or adhikaraṇa of the sādhana. Then with the help of the logic or invariable concomitance grasped through any of the pramāṇa-s, he infers the sādhyā from the sādhana. Mahimabhaṭṭa applies the concept of hetvābhāsa (faulty causes of inferences) while interpreting some verses\(^4\) in order to substantiate the invalidity of the sādhana seen in those verses. Invalid sādhana leads to the inference of invalid sādhyā ie; an invalid cause leads to the inference of an invalid effect. Wherever the cause appears to be faulty, Mahimabhaṭṭa shuns the possibility of inference in those verses. Thus he disproves the existence of suggested meanings in numerous verses taken as illustrations by

\(^3\) Scholars opine that Mahimabhaṭṭa’s inference is influenced by Buddhist logic which elaborately deals with the process of inference. As far as Nyāya philosophy is concerned, it elaborately deals with the five-fold procedures of inference. They consider inference as a means of true knowledge.

\(^4\) Vyaktiviveka, pp.115,116,120 etc.
Anandavardhana because those meanings cannot be substantiated through the process of inference put forth by him.

Wherever Mahimabhaṭṭa finds difficulty in placing the reading of a verse into the prescribed framework of inference, he rejects the verse as not having an inferred meaning. Such rigid process of inference may suit philosophical purposes, but it is not always applicable to literature. Mahimabhaṭṭa’s attempt to bring in rigid steps of inference into the reading process often betrays the experience of the readers. The folds of literature often deviate and go deeper than the relations set up by logic and rationale. It is this deviation which renders charm to literature.

5.4. Role of the reader in the process of inference

Mahimabhaṭṭa’s theory of poetic inference portrays the concept of a reader who possesses some prior knowledge required for inference. The readers make inferences from the literary work based on their knowledge and experience. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to envisage a class of readers who are capable of making inferences during reading and relish the inferred meanings. The following are some of the notable observations of Mahimabhaṭṭa on the reader.

5.4.1. Pramāṇa-s and the knowledgeable reader

As pointed out earlier, the process of inference requires the reader to have certain knowledge which helps him in inference generation. Modern scholars have recognized this fact as seen in the following quote:
It is plain that, along the course of reading a text, world knowledge is often required in order to establish coherent links between sentences. Therefore, the content grasped from a text turns out to be strongly dependent upon the reader’s additional knowledge that allows a coherent interpretation of the text as a whole.\textsuperscript{15}

It describes the role of readers’ knowledge in inference generation. But it does not probe the means through which the readers acquire the knowledge needed for inference.

According to Indian philosophies like \textit{Nyāya}, inferential knowledge is always preceded by directly acquired knowledge.\textsuperscript{16} First a person acquires certain knowledge through direct perception. At a later instance he recollects this knowledge to make inferences. \textit{Nyāya} philosophy expounds the process of inference in detail. It explains the process using the famous example of inferring fire on a mountain from the smoke seen on the mountain. This inference is made on the basis of the invariable concomitance between fire and smoke that was grasped earlier from the kitchen. There are various ways through which individuals gain the knowledge that helps them in making inferences. These means are applicable not only to day-to-day linguistic discourses, but also to literary discourse.

Mahimabhaṭṭa introduces three \textit{pramāṇa}-s or valid means of knowledge through which people grasp the \textit{sādhyasādhanabhāva} or logic
needed for inference. The three pramāṇa-s are namely loka (world), veda (the scriptures and the śāstra-s) and adhyātma (personal experience). People grasp the logic and the invariable concomitance through these pramāṇa-s. When compared to the ordinary world, the scope of inference is much wider in literature as it abounds with unexpressed meanings. Thus the reader’s inference plays a major role in unveiling the unexpressed meanings in literature. Mahimabhaṭṭa gives numerous examples where such inference is made by the readers to understand the meaning of the verse.¹⁷

The concept of pramāṇa-s sheds light on the fact that mere knowledge of language is not sufficient in the comprehension of a text. The reader has to possess the knowledge of the world to make inferences. Mahimabhaṭṭa calls it loka pramāṇa. The knowledge gained through scriptures also help the readers to make inferences. Mahimabhaṭṭa talks about the knowledge gained from the epics, purāṇa-s, dharmaśāstra-s etc. which is termed as śāstrapramāṇa. Besides this, the knowledge acquired through personal experiences also assists the reader in the process of inference while reading a text. This is known as adhyātmapramāṇa. Ancient philosophers had discussed about the pramāṇa-s as means for the attainment of true knowledge.

Mahimabhaṭṭa shows the use of pramāṇa-s in attaining knowledge that would help the reader to comprehend a literary work, but it must not always be ‘true knowledge’ in the case of literature. Such knowledge would

¹⁷ Vyaktiviveka, pp. 7-8.
enhance the appreciative faculty of the reader or in other words, it would increase the ‘sahṛdayatva’ of the reader. Some observations made by Mallinātha in his commentary of Kumārasambhava would help in understanding this concept better. In the first canto of Kumārasambhava, Kālidāsa mentions about Maināka, the son of Himavān, in just one verse. Kālidāsa does not mention about him anywhere else in the work. When a sahṛdaya begins to think about the logic of mentioning about Maināka in a single verse alone, the knowledge about the references made in the Dharmaśāstra-s comes to his help. Mallinātha explains this in his commentary-

\[
pitā na jñāyate yasya bhrātā yadi na vidyate/
\]
\[
nopayacchet tu tāṃ kanyāṃ dharmalopabhayāt sudhīḥ\//
\]

It says that one should not marry a girl who does not know her father or does not have a brother. This reference is found in the Dharmaśāstra-s. Sahṛdaya who has the knowledge of this notion is easily able to infer the intention of the author in describing Maināka. The description helps in presenting Pārvatī as the most suitable bride for Śiva. In such poetic instances, the sahṛdaya is able to infer deeper aspects of the verses as he is equipped with the knowledge from the śāstra-s. This shows that it is not only the poet who needs to have such knowledge, but the reader should also possess worldly knowledge, knowledge of the texts and personal experiences to relish the essence of literature. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to be aware of the importance of the knowledge that equips the reader to make inferences in
order to comprehend the essence of the text. The cues from the text along with the reader’s knowledge result in inference.

### 5.4.2. The reader- pratiṣṭitparamārthavidaḥ sahṛdayāḥ

Mahimabhaṭṭa considers literature and theatre to be the means through which people of lower intellectual capacity (sukumāramatayāḥ) attain the ability to distinguish between the right and wrong in life. People of higher degree of intellect study the sāstra-s and attain the capacity to understand what is to be done and what is not to be done. Unlike the people of higher intellectual powers, the readers with lower intellectual capacity acquire this knowledge from literature through a process which gives them immense pleasure. Mahimabhaṭṭa thus considers pratiṣṭi to be an important element of literature. He says: *pratiṣṭimātrparamārthaḥ ca kāvyādi. tāvataiva vineyaśu vidhiṇiśedhavypattisiddheḥ taduktaṁ.*

Reading literature thus renders a delightful experience to the readers and through this experience they gain the knowledge of the right and the wrong. Mahimabhaṭṭa instructs the poets to compose literary works which do not hamper the pratiṣṭi or delightful experience rendered by literature. Mere following of rules in composing literary works may mar the experience of reading these texts. The rules are in turn made to ensure that the texts do not contain elements that obstruct the aesthetic experience of the readers.

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18 ibid, p.20.
19 ibid, p.14.
20 ibid. p. 78. kintu pratītirha pradhānamiti saivaṁusartavyā na lakṣaṇamātram tasya tadarthatvādityuktam.
Mahimabhaṭṭa envisaged sahṛdaya as a reader who understands the nuances of the pratiṣṭi or the delightful experience of reading texts. He says that the differences in the minute aspects of the text like the use of compound words, adjectives, pronouns etc. generate different pratiṣṭi. Sahṛdaya-s are those readers who are able to understand the variations in the pratiṣṭi generated by the text. They relish the delightful experience provided by literature. But Mahimabhaṭṭa also recognizes the existence of other ordinary readers who are unable to understand the differences in the pratiṣṭi rendered by different texts. He says that the ordinary readers are not able to recognize the difference in the delight produced by the beauty of the minute aspects of literary texts. He makes this clear when he comments upon the charm brought about by the appropriate use of compounds. He comments:

\[\text{phalabhedastv anayor nirvivāda eva. ekasya hi sakalajagadgamyah} \]
\[\text{śābdikaikviśayaḥ padārthasambandhamātram. aparasya punah} \]
\[\text{katipayasahṛdayasaṃvedanīyaḥ san kavīnāṁ eva gocaro} \]
\[\text{vākyārthacamatkārātiśaya iti.}^{21}\]

Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa calls sahṛdaya-s as pratiṣṭiparamārthavidaḥ sahṛdayāḥ.\(^{22}\) Mahimabhaṭṭa explains the blemish of tautology (paunaruktya) on the basis of the concept of pratiṣṭi. He says that the repetitions which hamper the pratiṣṭi or the experience of the reader are considered as literary blemishes. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to relate all the central ideas to the concept of pratiṣṭi generated by the text and relished by the sahṛdaya.

\(^{21}\) ibid, pp. 43-44.
\(^{22}\) ibid, p. 64.
Mahimabhaṭṭa considers factors like knowledge of context, speaker etc. to assist the inference of unexpressed meanings. Thus he calls sahṛdaya-s as prakaraṇavakṛtsvarūpajñāḥ\(^{23}\) ie; those who are aware of the context and the nature of speaker. It is this knowledge which aids the readers in making inferences in the reading process.

Similar to Ānandavardhana, Mahimabhaṭṭa also views sahṛdaya to be different from those who are well versed in grammar and those who are taken off by the charm of primary meaning. Instead he considers sahṛdaya-s to be those who relish rasa and understand the essence of aesthetic experience. He reveals this while referring to sahṛdaya-s as pratītiśvārasvādaśavidaḥ\(^{24}\).

Mahimabhaṭṭa also supports Ānandavardhana’s view that the meaning which is implicitly expressed is more appealing to the readers than the one which is directly stated. But Ānandavardhana considers the unexpressed meaning to be conveyed by the suggestive power of words, while Mahimabhaṭṭa thinks it to be inferred by the readers. Mahimabhaṭṭa also glorifies the position of sahṛdaya-s in the world of literature as the expert who evaluates the value of a literary work just as a gemologist who checks the value of a gem\(^{25}\). Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa presents sahṛdaya as a capable reader who understands the difference in the aesthetic experience evoked by minute aspects of the texts and relishes the rasa which is unseen in any other

\(^{23}\) ibid, p.27.
\(^{24}\) ibid, p. 137.
\(^{25}\) ibid, p. 134. sa caivam vidheṣu śūktiratneṣu kalaṅkāyamāna manāg api na kāvyamāṇikyavaikaṭikānāṁ sacetasāṁ manāmsyāvarjayitumalam iti.
worldly experience. Moreover he accepts that all readers do not have this ability and the knowledge of grammar and śāstra-s do not make an ordinary reader a sahrdaya.

5.5. Types of inferences made by the reader

Modern studies on inference try to decipher the nature and pace of inferences that occur during the reading process. Mahimabhaṭṭa applies the process of inference that is expounded in the śāstra-s to the reading of literature too. The readers grasp the invariable relation between the sādhyā and the sādhana through the pramāpa-s. They infer the sādhyā from the sādhana. Mahimabhaṭṭa is not seen to categorize the different types of inferences made during the process of reading. Instead, he classifies the types of meanings derived through inference.

Mahimabhaṭṭa says that three types of meanings are inferred by the readers: vastu (fact), alaṅkāra (figure of speech) and rasa (sentiment). A fact, a figure of speech or a sentiment is inferred by the reader. Among them, the first two can also be found at the literal level ie; they may be directly denoted by words. But the last one ie; rasa can never be denoted and can only be inferred. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that if a number of facts (vastu) are inferred by the reader, it does not create any charm for the reader. Numerous facts create disgust for the readers. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa does not consider prahelikā-s (riddles) as poetry. He also says that when two or more meanings are inferred by the readers, then the meanings that are inferred before the ultimate inferred meaning should preferably be a figure of speech or a transient
emotion. Then only the readers will be delighted. This is clearly seen in the reading of the verse from Kumārasambhava where śṛṅgārarasa is inferred from the transient emotion of shyness. This was quite appealing to the readers.

Mahimabhaṭṭa considers the relishing of rasa as a process of inference. According to him, the readers infer the sthāyibhāva-s like rati from the vibhāva-s, anubhāva-s and vyabhicāribhāva-s and the inferred sthāyibhāva relished by the readers is known as rasa. The vibhāva-s, anubhāva-s and vyabhicāribhāva-s are presented by the poet before the readers. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that the vibhāva-s, anubhāva-s etc. are different from the probans that exist in the real world. They are fictitious in nature. Mahimabhaṭṭa also says that inferred meaning is more delightful than the directly stated meaning. Similarly the experience of inferring rasa from vibhāva-s is more delightful than their experience in real life.

Mahimabhaṭṭa’s views on the realization of rasa seem to be similar to that of Śaṅkuka. Mahimabhaṭṭa considers aesthetic experience to be a process of inference where the readers relish the inferred sthāyibhāva which is known as rasa. He says that the readers find the inferred sthāyibhāva to be more delightful than the emotions experienced in real life. He also adds that the fictitious nature of the vibhāva-s does not diminish the value of the aesthetic experience. It is this delightful experience that attracts people to literature.

According to Mahimabhaṭṭa, rasa is the ultimate poetic meaning and any

\[26 \text{ evaṁ vādini devarṣau pārśve pitur adhomukhi/} \\
\text{īlākamalapatrāṇi gaṇayāmāsa pārvatī(kevalam)//} \]
composition without *rasa* does not come under the realm of literature. Thus among the meanings inferred by the readers, it is the *rasa* which reigns supreme and embodies literature.

5.6. **Factors that influence the reader in the process of reading**

Besides the abilities of the reader, there are several other factors in the text which influence the reader in making inferences during reading.

5.6.1. **Misunderstandings due to grammatical peculiarities**

Mahimabhaṭṭa makes an interesting observation about the misunderstandings that occur during the reading process. The readers may make invalid inferences due to certain grammatical ambiguities found in the verses. Mahimabhaṭṭa indicates this aspect of the reading process by pointing towards the misunderstandings generated in the reader due to the grammatical ambiguity caused by the use of *ktvā* suffix and the use of verbal nouns in the verses.

In Sanskrit, when two or more actions are performed by the same subject one after another, the suffixes *ktvā* or *lyap* are used along with the verb denoting the previous action. For instance, in the sentence *rāmaḥ snātvā vrajati*, the subject Rāma performs two actions *snāna* and *vraja*. *Snāna* is performed before *vraja*, thus the suffix *ktvā* is added to the verb *snā*. But in literature, actions may not be directly denoted by verbs, instead they may be

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27 ‘*samānakatṛkayoh pūrvakāle*’ is the *sūtra* which indicates the conditions in which these suffixes are joined with the verbs.
presented indirectly. The actions (verbs) in the verses are sometimes found to be used as adjectives of the subject (with the help of *ac* suffix), subordinate to object etc. This creates ambiguities among the readers regarding the subject as well as the order of occurrence of these actions. Mahimabhaṭṭa quotes a *kārikā* which points to these ambiguities created in the reader’s mind due to certain grammatical peculiarities:

\[
\text{karturupādhitayoktā kṛdvācyatayā gatānyagunatāḥ vā} /
\]

\[
ktvo bhinnakartṛkatvabhamāya bhavati kriyāvacāśca tayoḥ//
\]

A verb which is used in the sentence as the adjective of the subject or a verb which becomes subordinate to other elements like object, another verb etc. and the total absence of the verb as well as the subject in the verse generate doubts in the mind of the readers on the subject of the actions and the order of occurrence of these actions. Mahimabhaṭṭa quotes Sanskrit verses to illustrate such misconceptions generated in the reader regarding the subject of the multiple actions. Mahimabhaṭṭa demonstrates this ambiguity through some examples:

\[
śiśarakālamapāsya guṇo’sya naḥ ka iva śītaharasya kuçoṣmaṇaḥ/
\]

\[
iti dhiyāstaruṣaḥ parirebhire ghanamato namato’nmatān priyāḥ//
\]

(What is the use of the warmth of breasts which wipes away the cold after the removal of winter? Having thought like this, the lovers embraced the heavy and bowed breasts of their beloved.)
Here the first two pāda-s contain three actions ie, the removal of śīṣira, the abduction of cold as well as the attainment of some fruit (guṇah sampadyate). The last action is not indicated explicitly by a verb. The second action ie, abduction of cold (śītaharaṇakriyā) is also not used in the verse in the form of a verb. Instead it is used as a noun by adding the kṛt suffix ac (śītahara). kṛt suffixes are used to denote the subject (kartrartha).²⁸ Here the verb which is presented as a noun using ac suffix (śītahara) is used as an adjective of the subject kucoṣma. Thus the first action ie, the removal of śīṣira (apāsana) is the precedent of the action of abduction of cold (śītaharaṇakriyā). The subject (doer) of both these actions is the kucoṣma. But it can be seen that many commentators of this verse have perceived the meaning of the verse in a different way.²⁹ They have confused the subject of these actions to be different. They have failed to notice the action found hidden inside the adjective śītahara as it is obscured by the ac suffix. The readers get a wrong notion that the action of apāsana is the immediate precedent of the third action (sampadyate) which is implicitly expressed. But actually, it is the action of removal of cold which immediately occurs after the action of apāsana. But the readers fail to perceive this fact. Among two or more actions that are performed one after another by the same subject, when one of the latter actions are presented as nouns using kṛt suffix, the readers are often not able to recognize the verb hidden in the noun. When the latter

²⁸ kartari kṛt (3.4.67)
²⁹ Mallinātha says that the action of apāsana occurs before the suggested action of guṇasampādana. Here he does not consider the verb latent in the word kucoṣmanaḥ.
action is not expressed directly in the verse, it leads to misconceptions among the readers.

Mahimabhaṭṭa gives more examples to show such misconceptions that happen in the reading process. Another example given by him is:

\[
\text{nanu sarva eva samaveksya kamapi guṇameti pūjyatām/}
\text{sarvaguṇavirahitasya hareḥ paripūjayā kurunarendra ko guṇah//}
\]

(Anything becomes an object of worship only if it is viewed to be of any benefit or having any quality. The speaker asks Duryodhana the purpose or benefit of worshipping Hari who is bereft of any quality.)

In the verse, the first two pāda-s contain three actions, namely samaveksā (observing), pūjā (worshipping) and eti (attaining). The subject (doer) of these actions has not been directly expressed in the verse. But the subject can easily be inferred as loka or the people of the world. The action samaveksā occurs prior to the action pūjā. But the latter action of worshipping (pūjā) is not used as a verb in the verse. Instead it is used as a noun (by adding the suffixes yat and ta). It also serves as the object (karma) of the final action eti. The second action of pūjā is thus used as a noun which is subordinate to the final verb eti. Hence the readers fail to understand that the action samaveksā occurs prior to the action pūjā. They do not grasp the actions which are performed by the subject which is denoted by lyap suffix. Such grammatical peculiarities are thus seen to result in misunderstandings.

Mahimabhaṭṭa quotes these examples to substantiate his theory that
verb is the *pravṛttinimitta* of all nouns. He considers actions or verbs to be the *pravṛttinimitta* of all nouns.\(^{30}\) For instance, *ghaṭanakriyā* is the *pravṛttinimitta* of the noun *ghaṭa*. He says that if the readers understand the primary meaning of the word *śītahara* to be *śītaharaṅkriyā* ie; the action of abduction of cold, then the misconceptions regarding the meaning of the verse will be cleared. Similarly in the second example, if the action of *pujā* is taken as the meaning of the word *pujyātā* in the verse, there would be no scope for any misconception. Thus according to Mahimabhaṭṭa, actions or *kriyā* should be regarded as the *pravṛttinimitta* of all words (ie; the meaning denoted by the word). Here he shows how minute linguistic elements produce misconceptions in the minds of the readers.

5.6.2. Syntax and the reading process

Syntax has actually played only a minor role in the modern studies on text comprehension and discourse analysis. But now studies are being conducted to explore the connection between syntax and the process of language comprehension. Thus syntax should also be taken into consideration as far as the reading of literary works is concerned. Walter Kinstch, a linguist, says,

> Syntax plays a role in that it directs the reader how to parse a text into meaning units (propositions)...Grammar tells the reader where to look for what in a text.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) *kecit punareṣāṁ kriyaivekā pravṛttinimittamiti kriyāśābatatvameva sarveṣāṁ nāmapadāṇāṁ mupagacchanti.*

Modern studies have proved that the syntactic position of words have an effect on the reading process. They have revealed that more prominent syntactic position gives more accessibility in short-term memory.

Mahimabhaṭṭa touches upon certain aspects of the effect of syntax on the reading process while dealing with poetic blemishes. He points out five poetic blemishes and enumerates them with numerous examples. In these elaborations, Mahimabhaṭṭa makes many minute observations on syntax, sentence structure and language comprehension. These observations reveal certain aspects of the reading process. Mahimabhaṭṭa tries to analyse the effect of syntax on the semantic aspects of a verse. He talks about placing semantically prominent elements in a syntactically prominent position. The failure of poets to place semantically relevant elements in syntactically important positions leads to the poetic blemish known as *vidheyāvimarśa*. Mahimabhaṭṭa tries to show how the variations in the syntactical position of words in a verse lead to differences in the meanings perceived by the readers from the verse.

Wherever the poet intends to show a specific attribute (adjective/qualifier) of a thing (noun) described, the adjective and the noun should not be merged into a single compound word. Syntactically the adjective construes with the noun and hence it is considered subordinate to the noun. But from the semantic point of view, it is the adjective which is principal because the poet wishes to highlight the specific attribute of the object. If they are merged into a compound, then the semantic importance of the adjective will diminish.
and the feature that is to be highlighted will lose its prominence. The readers would also not be able to grasp the importance of the adjective and they will not perceive the beauty of the adjective used by the poet. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that such a difference in the perception of meaning is recognized by sahṛdaya-s alone. It will not be noticed by ordinary readers. Mahimabhaṭṭa demonstrates this through the following example:

\[ \text{deṣaḥ so’yamarātiśoṇitajalai...rāmeṇa kṛtam tadeva...krodhanaḥ} \]

Here the use of \( rāmeṇa kṛtam \) as separate words helps in giving stress on the notion of the deed done by Rāma. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa says:

\[ \text{tad idam atra tātparyam yat kathaṅcid api pradhānatayā vivakṣitam na tanniyametareṇa saha samāsam arhatītī.}^{33} \]

If something prominent is to be presented to the readers, they should not be merged into a compound with other elements as it will lose its intended prominence.

Subordination of a principal element is seen not only in the case of qualifier—noun relations, but also instances where an excluder (paryudāsa) is used in the place of a complete negation (prasajyapratīṣṭedha). Here also the readers are unable to perceive the essence of the verse. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that places where complete negation is the principal element; use of naṅ compound to indicate this negation will destroy its prominence. Thus in such

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32 yatrotkarṣo ‘pakaṇṣo vā viśeṣasya viśeṣaṇāt/
tadeva vā vidheyam syāt samāsastatra neṣyate//
33 Vyaktiviveka, p.52.
cases, nañ compound should be avoided. If it is used as a compound, then the readers would perceive a totally different meaning. Mahimabhaṭṭa explains this point through the following example:

\[
\text{sarambhakarikīṭameghaśakaloḍdeśena sīṃhasya yaḥ}
\]

\[
sarvasyaiva sa jātimātraniyato hevākuleśāḥ kila/
\]

\[
ityāśādviradakṣayāṁbudaghaṭābandhe’pyasaṁrabdhavān
\]

\[
yo’sau kutra camatkṛteratiśayaṁ yātvambikākesarī//
\]

Mahimabhaṭṭa points out that the nañ compound found in the word asamrabdhavān is inappropriate in the context. The verse actually intends to project the complete negation of anger of Goddess Pārvatī’s lion. But instead of indicating complete negation, the use of nañ compound as excluder gives a completely different meaning to the readers. The readers comprehend the meaning to be ‘one who is not angry’ instead of ‘he is not angry’. Avoiding the nañ compound in the verse would have helped the readers in perceiving the negation of the action of anger as the prominent element of the verse.\(^{34}\) It can thus be seen that use of a compound has deviated the readers from the

\[^{34}\text{In the above verse, nañ compound is used as paryudāsa. This is improper in the context because prohibition (niṣedha) is intended to be the principal element of the verse. The nañ compound used in the verse hides the prominence of the prohibition (niṣedha) of the action saṃrabdha as nañ is connected to the subject. The verse mainly intends to focus on the prohibition (niṣedha) of anger (saṃraṃbha) than on the subject (kartā) who is not angry. Thus the essence of the verse i.e, the greatness of ambikākesarī is lost due to the nañ compound. The nañ ought to have been used as prasijyapratiṣedha for the reader to grasp the essence of the verse.}\]
main focus of the verse. If complete negation of action is intended to be the principal element, then Mahimabhaṭṭa says that nañ compound should be avoided. Otherwise it can be used in compound. Thus the difference in the meanings perceived by the reader is caused by the difference in the employment of compounds.

Avoiding the use of compounds where they are necessary often leads to confusions in meaning. Mahimabhaṭṭa illustrates the pitfalls in avoiding compounds at necessary places such as:

Eg:  

\[ \text{nunu sādhukṛtam prajāṣrjā śaśikānteśu mano na kurvatā/} \\
\text{na hi cetanam avāpyate virameyurjalitena kevalam//} \]

and

\[ \text{grhītam yenāsiḥ parībhavabhayānnoicitam api/} \]

Here nañ is not used in a compound. Thus the reader can construe nañ with either kurvatā or sādhukṛtam in the prose order. When nañ is construed with sādhukṛtam (ie; prajāṣrjā śaśikānteśu manah kurvatā na sādhukṛtam), the meaning of the verse would change.

In the second example, the reader can link nañ to either grhītam or ucitam. But construing it with grhītam (yena parībhava bhayāt ucitamapi na grhītam āsiḥ) would result in inappropriate (undesirable) meanings. Here the use of compounds would have helped in avoiding such ambiguities. This shows that the syntactic position of nañ has an effect on the comprehension of the prominent element in the sentence.
The readers notice the employment and the absence of compounds in the verses and comprehend meanings accordingly. A sāḥṛdaya will be able to understand the different shades of meaning created by different compounds. Thus the syntactic position of words has their effect on the comprehension of prominence of elements in the sentence. The readers are seen to perceive meanings differently when words are placed in different positions. The use of compounds is seen to greatly influence the comprehension of meaning. The readers grasp the prominence of various elements in the verses by considering their syntactic position. This shows the influence of syntactic elements on the reader in the comprehension of meaning. Syntax acts as a tool that guides the reader what to look for in a text. Mahimabhaṭṭa’s opinions suggest that the meaning which the poet intends to convey and the meaning which the reader perceives from the text should be the same. Anomalies in the syntax often result in the reader perceiving a meaning unintended by the poet. Mahimabhaṭṭa thinks it to be the responsibility of the poet to construct verses in a particular syntactical manner which is capable of conveying meanings intended by him.

5.6.3. Inferring the referent from the anaphora: The case of yat-tad

Modern studies have recognized the inference of the anaphora and its referent as an important part of the necessary inference that takes place during the process of reading. Thus improper use of anaphora and its referent leads to ambiguities in the comprehension of literary texts.
Mahimabhaṭṭa points out the misunderstandings generated by the improper use of relative pronouns like *yad-tad* etc. The improper employment of *yad* and *tad* generates confusions in the readers’ mind. Normally the use of *yad* must be followed by *tad*. Sometimes their presence may be implied (*ārtha*) or they may be directly expressed by words (*śābda*). The element which is principal is indicated by *tad*. It is normally related to the main verb of the sentence. Well known notions (*prasiddha*), experienced objects (*anubhūta*) and the ideas just referred to (*prakrāntaviśaya*) become the subject of *yad*. Thus the clause containing *yad* is subordinate. Their improper use reduces the charm of poetry. Mahimabhaṭṭa sets out certain suggestions (observations) for the use of *yad-tad* in poetry. *Yad* and *tad* are sometimes found to be implicitly expressed. In such cases, the readers are able to infer them as *yad* would be referring to a well-known object or an experience or an object just referred to. Mahimabhaṭṭa illustrates these points with the several examples.

Mahimabhaṭṭa says that the anaphora used should correspond to its referent. If there is any mismatch in their usage, the readers find it difficult to comprehend the referent and this may lead to faulty readings. The semantic expectancy gets fulfilled only when the reader is able to understand the referent from the anaphora. Mahimabhaṭṭa quotes illustrations which show the way readers understand the referent from the anaphora. He does not consider the comprehension of referent from anaphora as inference.

35 Mahimabhaṭṭa says that when *yad* is not used, then it leads to *avācyavacanadoṣa* and when *tad* is not used, it leads to *vidheyāvimarśadoṣa*. 
5.6.4. The order of words in a sentence (sentence construction)

Sanskrit, being an inflexional language, does not necessarily follow a prescribed/rigid word sequence in sentences. The sentence रामेना रावणाह हाताḥ can be rewritten as रावणाह रामेना हाताḥ or हाताḥ रामेना रावणाह. The inflexions in the subject, object etc. themselves show the relation between the words. Thus there is no rigid rule on the sequence of words in a sentence. Literature, especially versified poetry, does not strictly follow the subject-object-verb pattern of sentence construction. Deviations from the normal word order often lend beauty to the literary works. But this does not guarantee the poets the right to arrange the words in any sequence they want. Changes in word sequence do not make the sentences grammatically incorrect. But the words in a sentence should follow some logical sequence or else it would lead to difficulties in the comprehension of sentence meaning. न्यायसिद्धांतमूक्तवालि refers to this while explaining the notion of एसत्ति. एसत्ति or proximity of words in place and time is one of the causes leading to the cognition of sentence meanings. Mere proximity of words is not enough for comprehension of meaning. The example, गिरिभूक्तम वानिमान देवदत्तेन, does not give rise to meaning in the mind of the listeners as the words are placed in an illogical manner. Even though the words can be construed as गिरिर वानिमान देवदत्तेन भूक्तम, one is not able to grasp the meaning instantly due to the illogical word order. Thus in काव्या-s too, illogical word sequence leads to difficulty in the comprehension of meaning. V.S. Apte remarks,
Thus grammatically speaking, there is no order as such that need be much attended to. A sentence like kathamapi tatyāja vane sītāṃ lakṣmaṇaḥ kāṭharaṅgarbhāṃ may look very awkward, but it is not grammatically incorrect. But if there is no grammatical order, there is a sort of logical sequence of ideas, which must follow one another in a particular code. 36

The lack of logical sequence of words in a sentence is considered to be a blemish by Sanskrit rhetoricians. They call it kramabhaṅga or kramabhedadosa. The impropriety in the sequence of words often hampers the beauty of a verse. This is considered as vākyadosa or blemish pertaining to sentence. Mahimabhaṭṭa also includes this among his five poetic blemishes.

Mahimabhaṭṭa very keenly analyses the nature of sentence construction and its effect on the comprehension of meaning. He says that the order of words in a sentence do have an effect on the process of reading and the comprehension of meaning. Thus there exist certain norms regarding the sequence of words in verse. Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to make minute observations on the way the verses lose its focal meaning due to the impropriety in sentence construction. Mahimabhaṭṭa sheds his attention on the use of pronouns, adjectives etc. and indicates their improper use by poets. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa connects the process of reading to the pattern of the sentence, its syntax etc. He initiates this discussion by illustrating the misplacement of a pronoun in a verse.

\[ \text{tīrthe tadiye gajasetubandhāt pratīpāgāmuttarato’sya gaṅgām/} \]

The placement of words at different places without any logical or aesthetic sense is not virtuous for a literary work. The use of pronoun *tadīye* before having mentioned the subject *Gaṅgā* in the first example and the placement of *ayam* after *sannaddha* which is an adjective of *dṛptaniśācara* in the other verse generate unintended meanings.\(^{37}\) Mahimabhaṭṭa finds fault with the placement of the pronoun *tadīye* as it is mentioned before its subject *Gaṅgā*. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that an anaphora/pronoun always refers to an already mentioned entity. Thus it always denotes something that has just been fed into memory. But here the anaphora has been used before stating the referent.\(^{38}\) Thus it is not appropriate as readers will not be able to understand the meaning denoted by the pronoun because they do not have the referent in their memory. But Mahimabhaṭṭa finds this fault just by analyzing this verse secluding it from the context it occurs. The verse occurs in the sixteenth canto of Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa*. The verse prior to the present one describes about Vindhya mountains and the pronoun *tadīye* is used to

\(^{37}\) *Vyaktiviveka*, p. 67.

\(^{38}\) *parāmrśyamanuktaiva parāmarśo’syā yastadā/
sa doṣo vakṣyamāṇārtha saṁvittāvakṣamo hi saḥ*//
indicate the Vindhya mountains. The commentators of the poem like Mallinātha have taken the meaning of tadīye to be of the Vindhya. But Mahimabhaṭṭa seems to concentrate just on the individual verse without considering the previous verses. In the second example, *ayam* is the pronoun that qualifies the noun *navajaladhara*. But the pronoun is placed in between *dṛptaniśācara* (noun) and its adjective (*sannadha*). Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa says that this misplacement leads to misunderstandings.

Even though words which are far from one another can have *anvaya* with each other, Mahimabhaṭṭa reiterates that such a forceful *anvaya* may not be appropriate in all situations. There is certain significance in the arrangement of the words in verse as it influences the process of reading and comprehension. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that words like *iva*, *ittham*, *iti* etc. should be used at particular places alone. In the first example, subject, object and verb are connected by the reader to form the prose-order. But the placement of some compounds like *iva*, *iti* etc. at improper places often lead to misunderstanding in the readers’ mind. For instance, *iva* has to be placed after the *upamāna* and not after *samānadharma*. Otherwise it would not convey the intended idea. 39

Mahimabhaṭṭa engages in a discussion on the sequence of words in a sentence/verse and the variations in the comprehension of meaning while explaining the following verse:

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39 *Vyaktiviveka*, p.68.
The usage *jāmātā haristava gṛhiṇī gaṅgā* fails to convey the intended meaning. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that *harir jāmātā gaṅgā gṛhiṇī* would have made a better reading and it would convey the intended meaning. Here this particular order of words would have given more focus on the importance of Hari and Gaṅgā.\(^{40}\) Here Mahimabhaṭṭa mentions about the importance of word order in the comprehension of meaning where qualifiers and nouns are involved. He says:

\[
yatra svasaundaryādeva tayoranyonyāpekṣo vidhyanuvādabhāvaḥ
tatra hi yathāśrutapadārthasambandhanibandhano ‘rthapratītikrama iti

tatraiva padārthapaurvāparyaniyamo’ vagantavyaḥ.\(^{41}\)
\]

When the qualifier and the qualified support each other through their charm, their *vidhyanuvādabhāvaḥ* or the predicate-subject relationship is grasped with the help of the order of words. In the above example, the modification in the word order suggested by Mahimabhaṭṭa would help the reader to grasp the prominent element highlighted by the verse. In the present word order

\(^{40}\) *atha harir jāmātā gaṅgā gṛhiṇī ‘it yeyavam viparyayena sambandhaḥ kariṣyate
tasya puruṣādhitvāt. tathā ca na yathoktadośavakāśaḥ iti. satyam. kintu na sarvaviṣaya ‘yam sambandhasya puruṣādhitvopagamaḥ. tasya hi viśeṣapaviśeṣyabhāva eva viṣayo’ vagantavyaḥ. yatra svasaundaryādeva
tayoranyonyāpekṣo vidhyanuvādabhāvaḥ tatra hi yathāśrutārthasambandhanibandhano ‘rthapratītikrama iti tatraiva padārthapaurvāparyaniyamo’ vagantavyaḥ."

\(^{41}\) *Vyaktiviveka, p.97.*
found in the verse, the reader fails to understand the prominent element and they fail to identify the charm of the verse.

Mahimabhaṭṭa gives another example:

\[ tava kaṇṭhasṛjasīktā karavāralatā dviśāṁ/ \]
\[ prasūte samarāraṇye yaśaḥ kusumasampadam// \]

Here the words \textit{dviśām} and \textit{tava} should have exchanged their positions for a better understanding of the verse. In the present word sequence, it may generate misunderstandings. Poets should avoid such compositions where such slight changes in word order would generate undesirable meanings.

All these observations of Mahimabhaṭṭa show that the order of words has a role in the generation of meaning. The readers comprehend meaning according to the order in which they read the words. Thus there are certain rules on the order of employment of words in a verse. But Mahimabhaṭṭa raises a doubt (\textit{pūrvaśaṇā}) wherein he says that if a sentence is considered as an indivisible linguistic unit and the meaning of sentence is comprehended as a single whole, then the blemish of \textit{kramabheda} does not arise.\footnote{\textit{Vyaktiviveka}, p. 67.} It is only when the sentence is analysed at the level of words that this blemish holds water. But Mahimabhaṭṭa’s acceptance of this blemish points to the fact that the sequence of words does have an influence over the reading process. The readers comprehend the connected word meanings as they read the words of a verse. The sequence in which the meaning of words is grasped do have an
influence on the overall sentence meaning grasped by the reader. It seems that Mahimabhaṭṭa follows a view which is close to the *anvītābhidhāna* theory of the Prābhākaras.

Mahimabhaṭṭa refutes the view of *Mīmāṃsā* that words, however distant they may be, connect with each other semantically. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that this view is not correct and that this view is held by people who are unaware of the problems and minute variations in the comprehension of meanings. He says that impropriety in the order of words generate misunderstandings in the comprehension of meaning. He demonstrates this point through various illustrations. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that lack of *anvaya* would compel the readers to speculate meanings and this would hinder aesthetic enjoyment.

Recent experiments have also proved the fact that words do have an influence over the reading process. There have been studies on the word level reading of literary works. A study points to this fact as:

> During text reading- at the moment a word is encountered-processing is occupied at the local text level by reading this single word and configuring it into syntactic structures and meaning relations that are active in working memory. Although in the long run, both syntactic and propositional information may fade, such information is prominent temporarily within a resource-limited processing system...But comprehension proceeds not only sentence by sentence but also word by word.\(^\text{43}\)

The connection between encountering a word and the entire reading process is studied under the topic Word to Text Integration (WTI). WTI is considered to be a recurring process in the comprehension of language. Each word is fit into a particular syntactic structure ie; phrase, clause, sentence etc. As one reads a text, the reader tries to place each word that he encounters into the mental structure framed by him in memory. This recurring process is explained as:

Such a process must occur on virtually every word as it is encountered. However, in its more typical sense within text comprehension, WTI is the fitting of a word into a meaning representation that has been constructed, based on the reading of the text to that point.\footnote{ibid., p.4.}

Thus word to word reading occurs in the process of reading. Thus the sequence of words has a prominent role in the reading process. Mahimabhaṭṭa too emphasizes the relevance of the sequence of words in the reading process. Dissymmetry in the order of words creates difficulty in the reading process.

5.6.5. Placement of words that serve as quotation marks

Mahimabhaṭṭa also mentions about the proper placement of words like iti, ittham etc. in a sentence because such words served as marks of quotations. In earlier times, quotation marks were not used while writing Sanskrit. Words such as iti served the purpose of quotation marks. Mahimabhaṭṭa thus says that these words should not be placed in the middle of the clause which is

\footnote{ibid., p.4.}
presented as a quotation/statement. Even though the words can be later construed in sequence by the reader, the words like *iti, ittham* etc. should be placed only after the sentence which is to be presented as a quotation. He says:

\[
\text{uktisvarūpāvacchedaphalo yatretiṛṣyate/}
\]
\[
\text{na tatra tasmātpāk kiṃcidukteranayat padaṃ vadet/}
\]
\[
\text{upādhībhāvāt svām śaktīṃ sa pūrvarādadhāti hi/}
\]
\[
\text{na ca svarūpāvacchedaḥ padasyaṇyasya sanādhiḥ/}
\]
\[
\text{iti naivetareśām apyavyayānām gatiḥ samā/}
\]
\[
\text{jñeyettham evamādīnāṃ tajjātiyārthayoginām/}^{45}
\]

Words like *iti* demarcate the portion of the sentence placed before it as an independent unit. Thus insertion of other words into it creates difficulties in comprehending its meaning. Hence the placement of words like *iti, ittham* etc. is quite relevant from the semantic point of view. Immediacy in meaning alone does not convey appropriate meanings. Immediacy in statement too has a role in the comprehension of meaning. In this context, Mahimabhaṭṭa refutes the law of immediacy (*ānantaryaniyama*) accepted by *Mīmāṃsā* philosophy. He says:

\[
yathāānantaryaniyamasteśām arthaucitīvaśāt/
\]
\[
\text{anyatāstariḥ tatkāryasiddheḥ syurapārthakāḥ/}
\]
\[
kaiścideva hi keṣāṅcid dūrasthairapi saṃgatiḥ/
\]
\[
\text{na jātu sarvaiḥ sarveśāṃ ityatadabhidhāsyate/}^{46}
\]

^{45} Vyaktiviveka, pp. 68-69.
A study precisely briefs Mahimabhaṭṭa’s idea on this concept. It says:

Immediacy in meaning does not always depend upon immediacy in a statement. Mahima refers to this aspect of ānantaryaniyama (law of immediacy), which has been quoted by Ruyyaka as follows:

\[\text{yasya yenābhisambandho dūrasthenāpi tena saḥ/}
\]

\[\text{arthato hyasyamāśānām (hyasyamānānām) ānantaryamakāraṇam} //\]

…Mahima simply dismisses the point with the self-righteous observation that this law of immediacy of meaning does not operate in cases of words like iti etc.\(^{47}\)

The words like *iti* acted as quotation marks and their placement in sentences did have certain semantic implications that influenced the reader in the process of meaning comprehension. Here Mahimabhaṭṭa shows that the immediacy in statement influences the comprehension of meaning.

5.6.6. Maintenance of contextual symmetry

Mahimabhaṭṭa says that maintenance of semantic and syntactic symmetry from the beginning to the end is an important aspect of literary works. Breach of contextual symmetry creates disturbances in the process of reading. This breach may occur due to lack of symmetry in the use of same verb, pronouns etc. as per the demands of the context. Any deviation from the

\(^{46}\) idem

\(^{47}\) Rabisankar Banerjee, *Analysis of Literary Faults Mahimabhaṭṭa as a Critic*, p. 34
symmetry demanded by the context leads to poetic blemish which Mahimabhaṭṭa calls as prakramabheda. He remarks:

\[
\text{sa hi yathā prakramekarasapraśyāśaḥ pratipattṛpratīterutkhāta iva}
\]

\[
\text{parīkhalanakhedātirasabhaṅgāya paryavasyatī.}^{48}
\]

The lack of symmetry acts as an utkhāta for the reader. Some poets use different words to denote the same idea which is expressed previously. This leads to breach of symmetry. Mahimabhaṭṭa clarifies that the repetition of words to avoid prakramabheda blemish will not lead to the blemish of śabdapaunaruktya. Recent studies on this matter also echo this view of Mahimabhaṭṭa. A study observes:

A well-known text does not use different words in a new sentence to express the same idea as in the previous sentence, as if avoiding repetition were the goal.\(^{49}\)

Thus using of different words to denote same ideas just for the sake of avoiding repetition is not at all approved. It is because the repeated words would be focusing on different aspects (vīṣaya) and they would be connected through uddeśapratinirdeśyabhaṅga. Thus maintenance of uniformity is thus necessary for the smooth flow of reading, otherwise the reader would be obstructed by the lack of uniformity.

5.6.7. Comprehension of puns or double entendre

Mahimabhaṭṭa considers that the denotative power of words end after

\(^{48}\) Vyaktiviveka, p. 58
\(^{49}\) Edward Brien, Anne. E. Cook & Robert P Lorch (Ed.), op.cit, p.7
denoting the primary meaning. In the case of śabdaśleṣa, the words convey a second meaning only if there is a cause for the word to convey a second meaning. Mahimabhaṭṭa classifies śleṣa into two- śabdaśleṣa and arthaśleṣa. The words do not convey a second meaning unless there should be some cause for the word to do so. The poets need to provide some sort of a hint to the readers to look for a second meaning indicated by the same word. If the poet does not provide any hint, then his attempt to bring about śabdaśleṣa would be in vain. Mahimabhaṭṭa says that puns work only when the poet creates enough ground for the word to convey another meaning.

Here it would be interesting to look at Mahimabhaṭṭa’s analysis of the following verse:

*dvayam gatam samprati śocanīyatām samāgamaprārthanayā kapālineḥ/*

kalā ca sā kāntimatī kalāvataḥ tvam asya lokasya ca netrakaumudi//

Mahimabhaṭṭa says that the word kapālineḥ in the verse cannot simultaneously denote both the dharmi (ie; Śiva) and the dharma (cause of contempt/ridicule- garhitatvam). It can denote only one meaning. If the readers have to get a sense of both the dharma and the dharmi, the poet has to either use a pronoun or use the word twice. Then each word would respectively indicate the dharma and the other the dharmi. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa points out vācyāvacana blemish in the verse. This analysis does not really appeal to the connoisseurs. Once the connoisseurs grasp the
sense of dharma from the word kapālinah, they think about the reason for both Pārvatī and the moon to reduce to a state of grief due to their request for union with the kapālin. Thus the reader would surely infer the cause for ridicule. Then the reader would understand the essence of the verse. But Mahimabhaṭṭa says that the readers will not infer the cause of ridicule unless there is another word that hints at the cause of ridicule.

In this way, Mahimabhaṭṭa puts forth the view that words do not denote a second meaning without any cause for it to do so. When poets intend to use double entendre using words, they have to provide proper ground for the words to convey a second meaning. The words, by nature, denote only one meaning with the help of context. The function of the word cannot be considered similar to the function of a lamp. A lit lamp lightens up other objects. The lamp is not aware of the objects that it illuminates. It does not share any connection with the illuminated objects. But the case is different with words. The words are bound to their meanings through conventions. The poet should lay down a cause/ a hint for the word to denote a second meaning. Mahimabhaṭṭa mentions this:

...śabdo hi pratipattṛparāmarśam antareṇa nārthāntare pratītim ādhātum alam, parāmarśaśca nirnibandhano na bhavitum arhati atiprasaṅgāt, nibandhanam cātra na kuṇcid upakalpata iti vyarthāḥ śliṣṭārthaśabdāvveṣaṇaprayāsāḥ kaveḥ.\(^\text{50}\)

\(^{50}\) Vyaktiviveka, p.89.
Thus even with the power of context, the words convey single meaning only. But Mahimabhaṭṭa seem to suggest that once the readers grasp the denoted meaning, they do not infer another meaning from the same word unless the verse has some other word or clue that serves as a cause that prompts him to understand the second meaning.

5.7. Analysis

Mahimabhaṭṭa presented a philosophy of language which had a tinge of freshness in it. His analysis of the reading process in the light of the theory of inference was a new attempt in Sanskrit poetics. Ānandavardhana, Kuntaka and Abhinavagupta had also analyzed the linguistic elements that lent beauty to the verses, but Mahimabhaṭṭa analysed the linguistic elements, pattern of sentence construction and their influence on the reading process in a more scientific and logical way. It was shown earlier that many modern studies have pointed out the role of inference made by the reader in the complex process of reading. This makes the study of Mahimabhaṭṭa’s theory of inference relevant in the present scenario.

Mahimabhaṭṭa’s concept of poetic inference is seen to be deeply rooted in the notion of inference propounded in Indian philosophies. Indian philosophical systems especially the Nyāya and Buddhist philosophies have developed the concept of inference as means of true knowledge. The steps involved in attaining true knowledge through inference were clearly laid down by them. Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen to place his idea of poetic inference within the traditional frameworks set by these philosophies. Even though this
gives Mahimabhaṭṭa’s theory a strong theoretical footing, its adaptation and application in the realm of literary interpretation are not without drawbacks.

When viewed from modern perspective of minimalist and constructionist streams of inference, Mahimabhaṭṭa’s ideas seem to incline towards the constructionist stream of thought. Mahimabhaṭṭa is concerned about the inferences that readers make using the knowledge they have already attained. Mahimabhaṭṭa does not include the cognitive process behind the comprehension of the lexical elements like understanding the referent from the anaphora etc. under the concept of inference. The process through which readers comprehend such factors cannot be explained using the traditional steps of inference accepted by Mahimabhaṭṭa. He is seen to talk about inferences which involve making connections between the various events of the text, causal relations between the sentences etc. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa’s views incline towards a constructive theory of inference.

Mahimabhaṭṭa recognizes the fact that words cannot directly denote rasa. He says that rasa can only be inferred. He considers the process of realization of rasa as a process of inference. Mahimabhaṭṭa calls inference in literature as poetic inference because the inferred element is rasa. But Mahimabhaṭṭa does not explain how the inference of sthāyibhāva-s from the vibhāva-s results in the reader’s aesthetic experience. He agrees with Ānandavardhana regarding the prominence of rasa in literature. But he says that rasa is not suggested by words, but it is in fact inferred by the readers. He
concedes that the inferred *rasa* can even be metaphorically regarded as *vyāngya* or manifested in view of its aesthetic charm.

Mahimabhaṭṭa accepts in Toto the traditional concept of denotation or *abidhā* by which we make sense of language. He refutes all other powers of language. He says that the inferred meaning can be called as *vyāngya* in a metaphorical sense considering its aesthetic charm. He accepts the existence of meanings other than the denoted meanings. But he does not consider it as the power of word to generate these additional meanings. He also refuses to acknowledge any suggested meaning in *śabdaśaktimūladhvani* where the poet does not give any hint. Mahimabhaṭṭa feels that factors like context, speaker etc. act as probans which help in the inference of other meanings. Thus he attributes the existence of multiple meanings to the influence of elements like context, speaker etc. He explains this by demonstrating the varied meanings of the word *Rāma* in different contexts.\(^{51}\)

As mentioned earlier, Mahimabhaṭṭa adopts the steps of inference found in Buddhist philosophical enquiries to interpret literature.\(^{52}\) But such logic cannot always be applied to literature. For instance, in literature, a probans may not always lead to a single probandum. Multiple meanings may be inferred from the same probans. There are instances when certain meanings totally unrelated to the primary meaning are inferred by the

\(^{51}\) Vyaktiveveka,*p.* 29. *eka eva hi śabdaḥ sāmagrīvaicitryād vibhinnān arthān avagamayati.*

\(^{52}\) There have been studies which substantiate that the concept of inference put forth by Mahimabhaṭṭa has been influenced by Buddhist logic. Vide *Vyaktiveveka: A Critical Study* by Dr. C. Rajendran.
readers. Such fine distinctions in the process of reading cannot be explained with Mahimabhatṭa’s theory of inference. Even though Mahimabhatṭa conceives reading as a process of inference done by the reader, he sets out a fixed path for the reader to proceed to the inferred meaning.

Mahimabhatṭa sketches the notion of readers who are equipped with ample knowledge required to infer meanings from the verses. The readers are found to acquire this knowledge through certain pramāṇa-s or means of knowledge. Mahimabhatṭa also envisages the concept of a sahrdaya who understands the differences in the pratīti or experience generated by the minute aspects of a literary work. Pratīti is important in literature and sahrdaya is one who grasps the essence of this pratīti. Thus Mahimabhatṭa envisages a reader who is equipped with the knowledge to make inferences and has the aesthetic sensibility to relish the beauty rendered by even the minute aspects of the literary work. He relishes rasa which is the essence of any literary work. Even though the views of Mahimabhatṭa point to a process of making inferences that demands both knowledge and aesthetic sensibility, his application of inference in analyzing verses does not seem to offer much scope for the readers to employ their imagination in understanding and interpreting the verses. Mahimabhatṭa often fails to expand the boundaries of inference when it comes to inferring the poetic meanings. The fixed procedures of inference stand as restrictions that limit the readers’ opportunities to utilize their imagination and knowledge in interpreting literature. Their knowledge becomes a mere tool through which the readers
find out a sādhya from a sādhana. Applying the concept of hetvābhāsa-s (invalid probans which lead to invalid inferences) into the interpretation of verses makes the process of inference appear mundane. This attempt of Mahimabhaṭṭa appears to contradict his own view that it is futile to establish the authenticity of the things described in literature and the experience of the readers is the only truth found in literature.

As mentioned earlier, recent studies classify inferences during reading into two types: natural and deliberate. This classification enquires whether the reader makes inferences deliberately or is it an involuntary process that happens during the course of reading. Mahimabhaṭṭa considers the process of inference as a deliberate one done by a competent reader. He does not consider it to be a passive and automatic process. This is clear from his interpretations. But the reader has to follow a prescribed path to make inferences. The reader makes inference only when he voluntarily follows the prescribed path to derive at the inferred meanings.

Modern inference studies concentrate on the role of retrieval of long-term and short-term memory. Philosophies like Nyāya speak about the role of memory or smṛti in inference. Recollection of past experience or knowledge is considered to be an integral part of the process of inference. Mahimabhaṭṭa does not mention what type of memory is retrieved during the process of inference. Analyzing Mahimabhaṭṭa’s interpretation of verses, it seems that the readers retrieve the knowledge grasped earlier through the pramāṇa-s while reading. There are also references to the recollection of events that
happened before in the story in order to make inferences. Thus Mahimabhaṭṭa, keeping in tune with the philosophical tradition, considers memory retrieval to be an integral part and an indispensable pre-requisite of inference. Thus he does not deal with this element separately.

Mahimabhaṭṭa is mainly focused on the inference made by the reader at the sentence level. According to him, the *anuvāḍya* and the *vidheya* found in a sentence act as the probans and probandum required for inference. Since these elements are absent in a word, Mahimabhaṭṭa refutes inference at the word level. Even though Mahimabhaṭṭa refutes inference at word level, he is obviously concerned about the word-to-word reading of literary works. The observations made by Mahimabhaṭṭa show that readers keenly follow the order of words while reading. A logical order of words has a deep impact on process of reading. Impropriety in word order hampers the smooth comprehension of meaning. It may also generate undesirable meanings. He contests the *Mīmāṃsā* view that words need not be in close proximity for construing the words in a sentence. According to *Mīmāṃsā* philosophy, the words how far they may be from each other, construe with one another if they have semantic expectancy. They can be construed with each other to fulfill the semantic expectancy. But Mahimabhaṭṭa disagrees with it and says that law of immediacy cannot always supersede the logical order of words to be followed by the poet for easy understanding. Tedious construing of distant words would make the process of reading literature clumsy.

Mahimabhaṭṭa described about the role of syntax in the reading
process. Syntax stands as the set of cues which guide the reader to make inferences. The path of inference is laid with the help of these cues. He expounded the fact that semantically important elements should be placed in syntactically prominent places in the verses, otherwise the readers would not be able grasp the focus of the verses. He demonstrated that the peculiarities of grammar often lead to misconceptions in the reader as was seen in the use of suffixes like ktvā and their corresponding actions. The meaning of words perceived by the readers creates this misunderstanding. Mahimabhaṭṭa here tries to prove that if readers consider the meaning of nouns as verbs, they would be able to remove some of the misconceptions in the comprehension of the verses.

But it should be noted that Mahimabhaṭṭa focuses only on the reading of individual verses. He does not attempt to interpret an entire text or even an episode of a literary work. While analyzing the fault of kramabheda in the verse in the sixteenth canto of Raghuvamśa, Mahimabhaṭṭa does not take into view the context of the verse. He does not consider the matter described in the preceding verse. This neglect of the context leads to faulty interpretation of the anaphora and its referent. While he throws his attention on the close reading of individual verses, he fails to view the verses as a part of a complete text. Only the minute linguistic elements grab his attention, a

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53 tīrthe tadīye gajasetubandhāt pratīpagāmuttarato ’syagāṁ

Here Mahimabhaṭṭa takes the anaphora tadīye to mean Gaṅgā which appears only later in the verse. Thus he considers it to be a blemish. But when the verse is read in its context, the readers understand that the word tadīye refers to the Vindhyā mountains described in the verse just preceding the current verse.
wider horizon of the reading process is unfortunately absent from Mahimabhaṭṭa’s analysis.

As mentioned earlier, Mahimabhaṭṭa’s analysis of the inferential nature of language hangs around the interpretation of a sentence or a few sentences. His approach to literature fails to be comprehensive. He does not try to analyse a whole text based on his theory of inference. It was pointed out that modern studies speak about elaborative inferences made by the reader, but Mahimabhaṭṭa does not hint about any elaborate inferences which the reader makes while reading a literary work. Such inferences stand distinct from the inference from the minute linguistic elements and they have deeper impacts in the reading process. Mahimabhaṭṭa does not show how readers infer connections between various events of the literary work and how they make inferences regarding the upcoming events while reading literature. Even when he considers the relishing of *rasa* as a process of inference, he does not demonstrate how this process of inference helps in relishing the main *rasa* of an entire text. The relishing of the main *rasa* of a text involves various factors. The process through which these factors are used in the process of inference while reading an entire text is not explained by Mahimabhaṭṭa. Mahimabhaṭṭa tries to systematize the reading process by bringing it under the framework of inference. But the whole process of reading got confined to the inference of *sādhyā* from *sādhana*. Mahimabhaṭṭa’s approach presents only the role of inference in the close reading of the literary text. The experience of reading an entire literary text seems to be out of the realm of Mahimabhaṭṭa’s theory of poetic inference.