CHAPTER 6
READING A TEXT: CASE STUDY OF MEGHADUTA

CHAPTER SIX

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The discussions in the previous chapters indicate that reading is an interactive process where the reader plays an active role. The reading process is seen to vary according to the imagination, genius and knowledge of the readers. Thus the experience of reading a text is unique to each reader. But there are some common features found in the reading process. Previous chapters showed that Sanskrit poetic texts shed light on the reader’s involvement in the relishing of literary works. Besides the poetic texts, commentaries on literary works also help in understanding reader’s interactions with the text. They help in analyzing the following aspects of the reading process:

• How do the readers interact with the text?
• What questions do the readers pose to the text?
• What linguistic elements do the readers focus upon?
• How do the individuality and knowledge of the readers influence their interaction with the text?
• How does the knowledge about the author influence the process of reading?
• Are there wide differences among the meanings comprehended by the readers?
These are some of the aspects that ought to be analyzed in the reading of a particular text. In this chapter, the reading of *Meghadūta* is taken as an example. Kālidāsa’s *Meghadūta* is a widely popular lyric poem on which numerous commentaries were written. Each commentary offers insight into the nature of commentator’s interaction with the text. Four commentaries of *Meghadūta*, namely *Pradīpa* of Dakṣināvartanātha, *Vidyullatā* of Pūrṇasarasvatī, *Sumanoramanī* of Payyūr Paramēśvara and *Saṃjīvanī* of Mallinātha are taken here for analysis. They were written during the 14th and 15th centuries A.D. Thus they were composed after the composition of the major Sanskrit poetics texts.

### 6.1. Common features

All the commentaries possess some common features, but they have their own peculiarities. After explaining the common features found in these commentaries, an attempt will be made to point out a general theory of reading a text (taking *Meghadūta* as the case of reference). The following is an account of the general features found in the selected commentaries on *Meghadūta*.

#### 6.1.1. Aesthetic reading

Reader-response critics have classified reading into two types: efferent reading and aesthetic reading. Efferent reading refers to reading for information, while aesthetic reading focuses on the emotional aspect of reading and it refers to reading for pleasure. The reader-oriented critics
believed that normally the reading of literary works falls into the category of aesthetic reading. In order to relish a literary work, a reader’s approach would be aesthetic. It was discussed earlier that Sanskrit rhetoricians gave importance to the aesthetic experience of reading. They stressed on the aspect of relishing the sentiment/ rasa in literature. As far as Sanskrit commentators are considered, they too offer an aesthetic reading rather than picking out the facts described in the text. Purṇārasvaṁ in his commentary says that the reader receives information about holy places, techniques of lovemaking and various other matters from the text. But he mentions that the most important purpose is surely the relishing of rasa which stands close to the enjoyment of eternal bliss. It seems that very few commentators have taken pains to explain their experience of the rasa suggested by the literary work. Purṇārasvaṁ is one among them. He gives prominence to the enjoyment of rasa in his commentaries. He gives brilliant descriptions of the aesthetic beauty of the verses. He also points out the linguistic elements that help in suggesting rasa. The commentary on the Meghadūta verse II.4 shows this

1 Purṇārasvaṁ enumerates the prayojana acquired by the readers by reading Meghadūta. He says:

ucyate; atra tāvan mṛdulasaralacetām vyutpādyānām akleṣenaiva 
viṣiṣṭaśabdārthḥvyutpattīḥ, tataddesavīśeṣayavahārāvedānaṁ, 
punyatīrthadevāyatanādisamkīrtanena duratikṣayaḥ, kīrtiralaghīyasi, 
rājādivallabhatāyā draviṇasāṃpatṛīḥ kāmasūrādividyāsu gītādikālāsu ca 
kausālam, saṁbhogavipralambhārūpaśṛngārasāgaraṣaṃhāratvam 
pativrataḥdharmaśaripuṣṭāṇā manahdhyāñ anahṛdaya iti sadasi satkrīṭaḥ 
mandīkṛtaparabrahmānandasaṁdoṣhāsvāda ityādīni parahṣataḥ prayojanaṁ.

2 nīvībandhocchvasitasāthilaṁ yatra bimbādhaṁāṇīṁ...hrīṁmūḍāṇīṁ bhavatī 
viphalapraṇāṁ cūrṇamūṣṭīṁ.
skill of Pūrṇasarasvatī. The verse describes the love-making between the men and women of Alaka. The expert hands of the men quickly untie the knot of the women’s dress. Women, who are innocent and unaware of the ways of love-making try to obstruct the light emanating from the precious jewels embedded on the walls. Their attempt to put off this light by throwing colour powders goes in vain. Pūrṇasarasvatī explains this verse by bringing out the suggestive beauty of the words used in the verse.³ For instance, the suggestive beauty of words like biṁbādharāṇām, anibhṛta-kareśu, ratnapradīpān etc. are brought out by him. He also points out that the verse beautifully brings out the innocence of the women. This refers to the aesthetic reading of the work. In Vidyullatā, Pūrṇasarasvatī once makes a discussion on rasadoṣa which is not seen in other commentaries. In the following verse of Uttaramegha,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tāmāyuṣman mama ca vacanād ātmanāscopakartuṁ} \\
\text{brūyā evaṁ tava sahacaro rāmagirīśramasthaḥ/} \\
\text{avyāpannāḥ kuśalam abale! pṛcchati tvāṁ viyuktāṁ} \\
\text{pūrvāśāsyāṁ sulabhavipadāṁ prāṇināṁ etad eva/}
\end{align*}
\]

Pūrṇasarasvatī comments on the rasa suggested by the verse:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{atra śṛṅgāraprasaṅgai śāntarasavibhāvasyopādāna pratikūlam iti} \\
\text{rasadoṣo nāśaṅkanīyaḥ nāyakavacanātvā bhāvāt} \\
\text{nāyikājīvita-dārsana-bhuyadayam uti-dārydayasya meghasya tadāśvāsana} \\
\text{eva tātparyāḥ. na cātra sulabhavipatvamātraṁ pratipāditam api tu}
\end{align*}
\]

³ Dr. N.P. Unni (Ed.), Meghasandeśa of Kālidāsa, pp.126-128.
vividhabhoganiñnatayā kuśalam evāśasyaṃ prakāśitam iti na nirvedaprastāvaḥ.⁴

Here Pūrṇasarasvatī says that the readers should not be misled by the depiction of Yakṣa as residing in the hermit and as one who is frequently befriended by disasters. The readers may feel them to be the ālambanavibhāva of śāntarasa and may consider it to be hampering the sentiment of love portrayed in the poem. But Pūrṇasarasvatī assures the readers that these descriptions do not hamper the enjoyment of śṛṅgārarasa. The words just seek to bring relief to the forlorn lover of the Yakṣa. This is one of the rarest instances where the commentator talks about the possibility of rasadoṣa in a verse.

There are only a few instances where the poetic concepts are seen to be applied in the appreciation of a verse. Commentators are seen to quote from dharmaśāstra texts and works of grammar, śakunaśāstra, Āyurveda etc. But direct quotations from the poetics texts are very few. The definitions of figures of speech, metres, different type of heroines etc. are mainly pointed out in the commentaries. Pūrṇasarasvatī mentions the figure of speech in most of the verses. Thus his commentary presents an aesthetic reading of Meghadūta. Readers do not read literature to gather information, instead they enjoy the emotional aspect of the work. The prominence given to the element of rasa indicates the Sanskrit rhetoricians’ stress on aesthetic reading.

⁴ ibid, p. 176.
6.1.2. Interpretive communities based on philosophical inclinations/scholarship of the reader

Readers are influenced by their philosophical inclination during the process of comprehending literature. Such philosophical leanings influence the meanings grasped by the readers. In the introductory verse, Pūrṇasarasvatī explains the word *kaścit* by splitting it into two. He says that *kaḥ* denotes *parabrahma* and *cit* refers to *jīva*. Pūrṇasarasvatī is believed to have been an ascetic. Thus his philosophical inclination has influenced his reading of the word *kaścit*. This reading is rejected by *Sumanoramanāti* commentary. This shows that readers’ comprehension of the words in a literary work is surely influenced by their philosophical background. *Sumanoramanāti* commentary explains some verses with the tools of other philosophies. For instance, in the verse-

\[
dhūmajyotisalamarutāṃ sannipātaḥ kva meghaḥ
dsandeśārthāḥ kva paṭukaraṇaḥ prāṇibhiḥ prāpaṇīyāḥ//
ityautsukyād aparigaṇayan guhyakastaṃ yayāce
kāmārtā hi praṇayakṛpaṇāścetaṇācetaneṣu//
\]

Payyūr Paramēśvara, the commentator, mentions that the first two *pāda*-s of the verse show the absence of *sādhyasādhanabhāva* between nature of the cloud and its ability to act as a messenger. The cloud cannot become a messenger as it is just a non-living thing made up of smoke, water, air etc. The commentator says that the Yakṣa does not at all take this

\[5\] ibid, p.5.
sādhyasādhanabhāva into consideration while asking the cloud to be his messenger. Thus different commentators are seen to approach the verses with the help of different philosophies. Their philosophical inclinations seem to shape their interpretation. Thus the difference in philosophical inclinations of the readers divides them into different interpretive communities.

6.1.3. Curiosities in the reader’s mind

The process of reading arouses several questions in the minds of most of the readers. Pūrṇasarasvatī’s commentary proceeds in such a manner that it raises such questions and tries to find answers to them in the explanation of the verses. His commentary seems to quench the curiosities that rise in an ordinary reader during the process of reading the poem. While reading Meghadūta, the reader may first have a doubt on the ability of the cloud to act as a messenger. They may wonder why the Yakṣa is making the cloud as his messenger. Pūrṇasarasvatī considers the verse dhūmajyotissalilamarutāṃ sannipātataḥ... (I.5) as an answer to this question which rises in the reader’s mind. He says:

hārayiśyanityanena meghaṃ dautyayogyam parikalpya taddāvajane pravṛttata ityayuktam. tatra kim asāvunmattaḥ yad acetane cetana ivāceṣṭataḥ tad idam anupapannam ityāśaṅkya pariharati kaviḥ dhūmahjyotih silamarutāṃ ityādi.

This shows that each line/verse of a literary work gives rise to many thoughts as well as questions in the readers’ minds. The readers try to seek
answers to these questions/curiosities from the text itself. The answers may be explicitly given or they may be suggested. They try to find the answers to those questions in order to make their readings meaningful and enjoyable.

6.1.4. Attempt to validate imagination with logic

Readers try to substantiate the imaginative descriptions and meanings with the help of śāstra-s, life experiences, beliefs, traditions and ways of the world. Commentators are also seen to substantiate the meaning of the verses using ideas from the dharmaśāstra-s and other śāstra texts. This reminds one of the concepts of sādhyasādhanaśabhaṅga and pramāṇa-s in literature put forth by Mahimabhatṭa. Commentators are seen to explain the sādhyasādhanaśabhaṅga found in the verse using evidences from the world around, the śātra-s and from one’s own life. Thus there seems to be an attempt to validate the contents of the verse (establish śāstrasādhanasūtra) using the tenets of various śātra-s or from the principles of the world in the process of reading. At one juncture, the Yakṣa says that the cloud would not delay his task as real friends, entrusted with a task, never slow down.6 This point is substantiated through a verse from Mahābhārata,

\[
\text{suhṛdarthanḥ pratiśrutya yaśca paścād akurvatām/}
\text{tena pāpena lipyeyaḥ yadyahaḥ nāgame punah}//
\]

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6 ibid, p.75.

dṛṣṭe sūrye punarapi bhavān vāhayedhvaśeṇaṃ
mandāyante na khalu suhṛdāmbhyupetārthakṛtyāḥ
Commentators are seen to give new dimensions to the description of nature with the help of śakunaśāstra. For instance, there is a description of cātaka birds as singing sweetly on the left side of the cloud as he goes off to Alaka. The commentators say that the description of the birds on the left side has significance based on śakunaśāstra. Varāhamihira’s Yogayātra says:

\[
\text{cucundari śukarikā śivā ca śyāmāgalīpiṅgalikānyapuṣṭāḥ/}
\]
\[
vāmāḥ prāsastā guhagoliṅśca puṁsajñītā ye ca patatriṇaśca/}^{8}
\]

Thus this description lends the hope of a successful journey for the cloud.

Yakṣa says that rājahāṃsa-s would accompany them to Alaka. Commentators try to explain the significance of this accompaniment by quoting the Smṛti:

\[
\text{nabhasi drāghīyāsī nirjane gaganādhvani ekākino gamanam ayuktam}
\]
\[
\text{iti bhāvaḥ, eko na gacched adhvānam iti smṛteḥ.}
\]

Similarly Yakṣa asks the cloud to stay for some time on the mountain which bears the footsteps of Rāma. Pūrṇasarasvatī explains the logic behind this description. He says: ciradṛṣṭasya bhavato jhaṭīti yātrāprasaṅgastena nānumodyeta atastam anunayapūrvam anukūlayeti bhāvaḥ.\(^9\) As the cloud is

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\(^{7}\) ibid, p. 76.

\(^{8}\) ibid, p.29.

\(^{9}\) ibid, p.32.
meeting the mountain after a long time, the mountain would appreciate if he makes a quick return. So cloud has to stay longer to make him happy. Here the meaning of the verse is brought using a simple logic familiar in the world.

While commenting on the following lines, all the commentators are seen to explain it with reference to *Āyurveda*:

\[
\text{antaḥsāraṇaḥ ghana! tulayituḥ nānilaśakṣyati tvāṁ}
\]

\[
\text{riktaḥ sarvo bhavati hi laghu pūrṇatā gauravāya.}
\]

*Pradīpa* commentary says:

\[
\text{riktaḥ, anena kṛśaśca kṛtavamanasuddhiśca vivakṣītaḥ. pūrṇatā, anena toyapānena peyādikrameṇa cāpyāyanam. ayaṁ atra samādhiḥ-}
\]

\[
\text{kṛtavamanasuddhiḥ puruṣaḥ śeṣadōsopasaṇārthaṁ}
\]

\[
\text{tiktakaśāyavāsitaṁ laghujalaṁ pibati. paścād balavato’sya vāyurapi}
\]

\[
\text{na kupyatīti. atra vāhaṭaḥ:}
\]

\[
\text{kaśāyāścāhimāstasya viśuddhau śleṣmaṇo hitāḥ/}
\]

\[
\text{kimu tiktāḥ kaśāyā vā ye nisargāt kaphāvahāḥ/ iti.}
\]

\[
\text{kharanāde’pi-}
\]

\[
\text{kṛtaśuddheḥ kramāt pītapeyādeḥ pathyabhojinaḥ/}
\]

\[
\text{vātādībhirma bādhā syād indriyair iva yoginaḥ/}^{10}
\]

A person who has cleansed himself through *vamana*, further removes his impurities by drinking a *kaśāya*. This enhances the person’s strength. This practice followed in *Āyurveda* is used to explain the above verse. The cloud

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\(^{10}\) ibid, 47.
who drinks the medicinal water becomes strong and even the wind cannot
deter him from his way. The same idea is found in the other two
commentaries. All these examples show that the readers use their knowledge
of śāstra-s, experience of the world etc. to validate the ideas expressed in the
literary work. This helps in unraveling new dimensions in the aesthetic
reading of the literary work.

6.1.5. Thoughts on the poetic intention

Readers think about the message conveyed through the entire poem.
Commentary on the first verse of Meghadūta tries to figure out the tātparya
conveyed through the work. Pūrṇasarasvatī says that the poem conveys the
message that uncontrolled desires ruin one’s life. Thus such limitless desires
should be relinquished. Yakṣa was blinded by his uncontrolled desire for his
wife which put him in trouble. Pūrṇasarasvatī mentions:

\[
\begin{align*}
    kim ca sakhe, sūkṣmekṣikādīpikayā nirūpya  \\
    kāvyahṛdayagahvaragopitam upahvare  \\
    sakalapumarthasādhanasamartham upadeṣaratnam. yathā-  \\
    mahātmano ’pi yakṣasya  \\
    mahilāsaṅgataraṅgītaṅgarasapārantantryadoṣasya  \\
    svādhikārapramādaḥ, tena svāmikopaḥ, tasmācchāpolambhaḥ, tataḥ  \\
    svamahimabhramśaḥ,
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{ibid, pp. 47-48.}\]
The *Sumanorama* commentary reiterates the point:

\[
tataśca kāmetikartavyatāpara evaisa granthāḥ. tasmād yuktam uktam atisaktiṁ kāmināṁ atyantaheyyāṁ pratipādayitum iti.\]

Commentators like Mallinātha, Dakṣināvartanātha etc. do not mention about such an intention. Thus commentators are seen to guess the message that is conveyed by the whole poem. This is portrayed as the poet’s intention that is depicted through the poem. Readers try to guess the meaning/ tātparya suggested by the entire text. Keen analysis of various elements of the text helps the readers to grasp the message conveyed by the text. But this message need not be the same to all readers.

### 6.1.6. Thoughts about the source of inspiration behind the poem’s composition

Commentators think about the element which acted as the source of inspiration for the poet to compose the poem. If the poets have not explicitly stated any such source of inspiration, the readers may make guesses on that aspect. Commentators of *Meghadūta* too think about the factor that influenced Kālidāsa to compose the lyric. Some of them mention that the

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12 *ibid*, p.4.
13 *ibid*, p.7.
14 Modern critics like Kuttikrishna Marar reject this poetic intention put forth by Pūrṇasarasvatī.
poet was inspired by the episode of Rāmāyaṇa where Hanūmān takes Rāma’s message to Sītā. Dakṣiṇāvartanātha and Mallinātha present this view. They say:

\[
iha \text{ khalu kavi} \text{ḥ sītāḥ prati hanūmatā hāritaṃ sandeśaṃ hrdayena samudvahan tatsthanīyanāyakādyutpādanena sandeśaṃ karoti kaścid iti.}^{15}
\]

\[
sītāḥ prati rāmasya hanūmatsandeśaṃ manasi nīdhāya meghasandeśaṃ kaviḥ kṛtvānityāhuh.\]^{16}

But commentators like Pūrṇārasarsvatī do not agree with the above view on the source of inspiration behind the composition of the poem. Pūrṇārasarsvatī says:

\[
kaver yakṣavṛttānte sītāvṛttāntasamādhirastīti kecit, tanna saḥṛdayahṛdayasaṃvādāya prayojanābhāvāt kavinaiva janakatanayāśnāna- iti raghupatipadaḥ iti cātyantatatāsthatayā pratipāditatvāt upari ca ityākhyāte pavanatanayaṃ maithilīvonmukhī sā ityatra upamānatayā pratipādayiṣayamāṇātvāt upameyasyārthasya atyantabhedaḥ kaṇṭhokta iti.\]^{17}

The readers seem to ponder and guess the element which acted as the source of inspiration for the poet to compose the work.

\[\text{15 } \text{ibid, p.1.}\]
\[\text{16 } \text{M.R. Kale (Ed.), The Meghadūta of Kalidasa, p.3.}\]
\[\text{17 } \text{N.P. Unni (Ed.), op.cit, p. 4.}\]
6.1.7. Seeking reflections of poet’s life (incidents/ persons in the poet’s life) in the literary work

Readers try to find out reflections of the poet’s life while explaining the meanings of the verses. The following lines are explained by some commentaries with reference to the life of Kālidāsa:

\[\text{shānād asmād sarasaniculād utpatodaṁmukha kham} \]
\[\text{diṁnāgāṁṇāṇṭ pathi pariharan sthūlahastāvalepāṇ} \]

Dakṣiṇāvartanātha says that the word refers to the poet Nicula, a contemporary of Kālidāsa, who praised and enjoyed the beauty of Kālidāsa’s works and that he would save them from the contempt of scholars like Diṅnāga. This refers to some story which suggests Kālidāsa’s works were criticized by scholars like Diṅnāga.\(^{18}\) But these references have not been proved historically as their dates are not correctly determined. Other commentators like Pūrṇasarasvati and Payyūr Parameśvara do not mention about this reference. All the commentators agree upon the fact that Kālidāsa was very much influenced by Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa. Dakṣiṇāvartanātha and Mallinātha think that the poet composed Meghadūta being inspired by the episode of Hanūmān acting as Rāma’s messenger to Sītā. Pūrṇasarasvatī, at another instance, remarks about the influence of Rāmāyaṇa on a particular verse:

\(^{18}\) N.P. Unni (Ed.), op.cit, p. 36. Also refer M.R. Kale (Ed.), op.cit, pp.32-34.
Readers thus try to find connections between the meaning conveyed and the events/people in the poet’s life. As far as Sanskrit poets are concerned, knowledge about their lives is very meager. There would be numerous stories connected to their lives which have been handed down through generations. These stories may not have any historic authenticity. But readers try to seek reflections of such stories or other incidents in the works of the poet.

6.1.8. Quest into the purpose/necessity of each verse

Commentators try to explain the purpose/use of a verse while giving an introduction to the verses. They may feel that a particular verse does not serve any purpose in a particular context. Sometimes they try to establish the purpose served by the verse. In the Uttaramegha, the first four verses respectively describe the city of Alaka, the flowers that adorn the celestial women, the drinking of madhu by the yakṣa-s and their consequent mating with women. After describing the acts of women who are quite inexperienced in lovemaking, the following verse instructs the cloud, who could witness these acts, to escape through the window. The meaning of the verse does not seem to render continuity to the matter hitherto described. This incongruity is pointed out by Sumanoramanī commentary. It remarks:

19 Meghadūta II.16.
nanu ko’nena ślokena puravarṇanopayukto’ṛthaḥ kathyate. na tāvac
citravatvaṃ sacitrā ityuktatvāt, nāpi tuṅgatvaṃ,
abhrāṃlīhāgrakathanāt na ca dhūpagavākṣasadbhāvaḥ
tasyojjayinyāṃ manuṣyālayeyupakṛtatvāt ato
meghajananvṛttāntakathanamātram anarthakam etat.

But the commentator then tries to bring out the purpose of the verse. He says that after describing the city and people of Alaka, the poet explains that the cloud could become a witness to all these as it could enter and leave places with ease.  

20 This shows that commentators raised critical questions on the sequence of the verses/ events in the literary work and they questioned the necessity of verses which seemed to be out of the context. Readers are vigilant on the logic of the sequence of the verses in the text. Such discussions often help in finding out the interpolations in the text.

6.1.9. Recognition and recollection of suggestive words and similar ideas from other texts

Commentators bring to mind similar ideas found in other literary works. Thus they are seen to quote verses from other literary works which express similar ideas. The commentators of Meghadūta have quoted verses from Rāmāyaṇa, Raghuvaṃśa, Kumārasambhava, Kirātārjunīya, Śiśupālavadha, Harṣacarita etc. Yakṣa says that the lovers who are separated from their beloveds experience grief at the sight of the cloud as they long for their beloveds’ embrace. The beloveds embrace their lovers as they fear the

20 N.P. Unni (Ed.), op. cit, p.130.
thunder and lightning produced by the cloud. Sumanoranātī commentary quotes a similar idea expressed in Raghuvamśa to explain this notion. In Raghuvamśa, Rāma remembers Śītā who had embraced him, being frightened by the roaring of the clouds in the forest. It can also be seen that besides the similar ideas found in other texts read by the reader, use of certain words in particular situations found in other texts etc. are recollected by the readers. In the verse I.35, Pṛṣarasvatī explains the word āmokṣyanti by pointing out its usage in other works like Raghuvamśa. Thus some kind of comparison or linking is done by them. As Ānandavardhana had mentioned, the readers recognize and recollect the suggestive words which they have earlier encountered in a work. The commentaries offer such discussion of recognition and recollection of suggestive words. Readers thus recollect similar notions found in other texts that they have read. They bring into the text former experiences/ impressions gained during reading other texts. This may open up new perspectives for the reader to explore the text.

6.1.10. Generation of impressions/ images in the readers’ minds

The descriptions in the literary works generate certain imageries in the reader. Pṛṣarasvatī is seen to explain many verses with the help of various imageries. For instance, the beginning of the cloud’s journey is described

21 tasya sthitvā kathamapi puraḥ… meghāloke bhavati sukhinopyanyathāvṛtticetaḥ
kaṇṭhāśleṣāparaṇayini jane kim punar duṣrasaṃsthe/
yathotkām rāghuvamśe-
pūrvvānhūtāṃ smaratā ca rātrau kampottaraṇaḥ bhūru tavopagūḍham/
guhāvisāriṇyaṭvāhitāṇi mayā kathaṇcid ghanagarjītāni//

22 N.P. Unni (Ed.), op.cit, p.70.
through the verse *mandaṇ mandaṇ nudati pavanaścānukūlo yathā tvam...* Here Pūrṇasarasvatī links it to the idea of a prince who gets farewell before his journey. He says:

\[
\begin{align*}
ataca vidagdhamantrivṛddhābhicoditasya & \text{ snidhacetasā} \\
pratiśhamānasya guṇavato mahīpater bhaviṣyad \\
anavadyarājakanyāratnasamprāptikasya \\
sampatsyamānasisādhayiṣṭakārya-sidhheśca samādhir anusandsheyaḥ.
\end{align*}
\]

Pūrṇasarasvatī is seen to substantiate his explanations with various images. The verse II. 6 says that the water oozing from the *candrakānta* stones helps in removing the weariness of the women who lie tired after lovemaking. Pūrṇasarasvatī presents the image of sprinkling water on *Mālatī* flowers which have lost their freshness due to the touch of the hands. It can be seen that these imageries help to bring home the meaning of the verses. It shows that the verses generate certain images in the readers’ minds. These images may be different to each reader, but they help in the greater enjoyment of the verses.

### 6.1.11. Deciding the correct reading using *sahṛdaya’s* appreciative faculty

Unlike the printed texts available today, the texts were passed around in the form of manuscripts. The texts were written in the manuscripts manually.

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24 ibid, p. 27.
25 *atra karatalasparśakleṣitānāṁ mālatīmālikānāṁ jalaśīkarāvasekenāśvāsayiturmālikasya samādhiranusandsheyaḥ.*
This created errors in the text and thus lot of corruptions used to creep into them. Thus same texts had different readings in different manuscripts. The selection of the most suitable reading was left to the aesthetic sensibility of the readers. Commentators try to decide the correct reading of a verse. They also discuss the grammatical correctness of the words. In the third verse of *Meghadūta*, the commentators discuss which among the readings *ketakādhānahetoḥ* and *kautukādhānahetoḥ* is correct. Dakṣiṇāvartanātha says:

\[
\text{ketakādhānahetor iti pāṭhe ketakānāṃ garbhādhānahetor ityarthaḥ kila bhavet. idam atyantaśāghyaviśeṣaṇaṃ na syād iti bodhavyam.}
\]

\[
kautukādhānahetor iti viśeṣaṇāṃ manorathasthitaṃ meghasvāgatādikāryaṃ vismṛtya sa paravaśo babhūvetyarthasya kāraṇatvenoktam. \]

But the other commentators like Pūrṇasarasvatī and Payyūr Parameśvara do not mention about the reading *kautukādhānahetoḥ* and accepts *ketakādhānahetoḥ*. But Mallinātha follows Dakṣiṇāvartanātha’s views. Thus the freedom to choose readings according to the logic of the commentator is evident from the commentaries on this verse. The difference in the readings adopted by the commentaries show that readers thought about the propriety of the words. They sometimes accepted amendments in the text which gave the verses more beautiful meaning. The difference of opinion

26 N.P. Unni (Ed.), *op.cit*, p. 11
27 N.P. Unni (Ed.), *op.cit*, pp.11-12.
regarding the readings ketakādhanahetoh and kautukādhanahetoh indicate this aspect. The commentaries chose the reading that they thought to be more appropriate in the context. Readers may introduce divisions in the text. The present texts of Sanskrit literary works were critically edited by checking numerous manuscripts. The texts were transmitted and preserved both by an oral tradition and through manuscripts. It is often the readers/commentators who introduce divisions in the texts. In the Meghadūta texts that are available in print today are divided into two parts- the Pūrvaśeṣa and the Uttarameṣa. It needs to be checked whether this division was actually brought out by the poet or was it a later addition. Pūrṇasarasvatī explicitly divides the poem into parts. He says:

\[ iti śrīpūrṇasarasvatīviracitayā vidyullatākhyayā vyākhyayā samete mahākaviśrīkāṭāḥ sakṣe meghasandeśe prathamāśvāsaḥ samāptaḥ. \]

Thus readers had the freedom to decide suitable readings without hampering the nature of the text. This shows the freedom enjoyed by the readers in the construction of meaning.

6.1.12. Different meanings for the same words in the verses

Readers are seen to accept different meanings for the same words in the same verses. Each reader accepts a particular meaning using a particular logic. In the verse: nīpaṇḍṛṣṭvā haritakapiṇḍam kesarair ardharūḍhāḥ…, the commentators discuss about the meaning of the word sāraṅga. The word has multiple meanings like deer, elephant and cātaka bird. Pradīpa commentary
accepts deer as its meaning in this verse. Pūrṇasarasvatī says that the verse can be explained by taking all the three meanings of the word.  

Sumanoramanāṇī commentary says that elephant would be the correct meaning of the word in the present verse. Thus the commentators had disagreements over the meanings of certain words as well as verses and they substantiate their opinions with some logic. This shows that different readers comprehend the meaning of words in different ways.

6.1.13. Comprehension of the inner meaning of the verse

Commentators try to explain the meanings suggested by the verses. For instance, Pūrṇasarasvatī mentions the figure of speech, rasa and vastu suggested by the following verse:

\[ \text{vakraḥ panthāstava bhavatu ca prasthitasyottarāśāṃ} \\
\text{saudhotsaṅgapaśayavimukho mā ca bhūrujājinyāḥ/} \\
\text{vidyuddāmasphuritacaitistatra paurāṅganānāṇ} \\
\text{lolāpāṅgair yadi na ramase locanair vañcitosi//} \]

Here the commentator explains:

\[ \text{atra aramaṇe vañcanoktes tatrātyoṣītāṃ viśiṣṭaguruṣapratipattyā} \\
\text{vyatireko laṅkāraḥ nirupamarūpaveṣavilāsasaṃpat-prakāśanena} \]

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29 sāraṅgaśabdenātra cātakamadhukarahariṇāstraoyo’pyarthās triṣu vākyeṣu kramāttantreṇocyante.
Commentators are seen to bring out the beauty or the meaning suggested by various elements of the verse. Elements like adjectives, phrases, certain words etc. are analyzed to explain the beauty rendered by them. They try to understand the meaning conveyed through the verse with the help of these linguistic elements. In one of the verses, the Yakṣa describes the cloud as one who fulfilled the desires of the needy. Commentators remark that the poet substantiates this nature of the cloud by addressing it as a payoda in the verse. Pūrṇasarasvatī says:

\[
\text{na tu tava kaścit pratinidhir iti bhāvaḥ. śaraṇamasi rakṣitā bhavasi, na punaḥ kriyase rājapuruśādivat paraniyogenotkocraghaṇādinā veti vyajyate...tātaśca svabhāvata eva paropakārāparastvam iti pratiyāyate. tat yasmāt yato 'ham api priyāvirahagharmasantaṁpaṭāḥ. payoda, pāṇīyam prāṇināḥ prāṇāḥ viśvameva ca tanmayam iti stutasya payaso nanu dātā tvam atāḥ sarvasya prāṇada iti bhāvaḥ.}
\]

As the giver of water, the cloud gives life to all. Thus he is obviously apt to fulfill the desires of the needy. In verses like bhartur mitraṁ priyam avidhave!..., dīrghākurvan paṭu madakalam kūjitaṁ sārasāṇāṁ...etc., Pūrṇasarasvatī explains the verse in detail. \(^{32}\) He takes up each word and

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\(^{30}\) N.P. Unni (Ed.), op.cit, p.48.

\(^{31}\) ibid, p. 20.

\(^{32}\) ibid, pp. 64, 172-173.
describes the meanings suggested by them. Thus commentators are seen to look into the significance of each word used by the poet. They try to figure out how each word adds beauty to the meaning of the verse. The readers are keen to absorb the beauty of all the minute elements of the work and they use these cues to relish the meaning suggested by the verse/ work. Thus it can be seen that reading of a text does not end with the comprehension of the primary meanings of the words in the text. The readers always look for other meanings suggested by the words and enjoy how these meanings add beauty to the whole work.

6.2. Analysis

Among the commentaries on Meghadūta, the commentary by Pūrṇasarasvatī deserves special mention as it presents a beautiful appreciation of the poem. Commentators like Mallinātha focus more on the lexical and grammatical aspects and are seen to explain the suggested meaning very briefly. But Pūrṇasarasvatī explains the verses just as a sahṛdaya enjoys the verse. He unravels the intricacies of the verse very beautifully with the help of various illustrations taken from his imagination.

The difference in the reading of the text by different commentators shows the existence of different interpretive communities. The readers read and interpret texts with the help of their knowledge of the world, śāstra-s, life experiences etc. The difference in their philosophical inclinations also creates differences in the reading process. Readers with different philosophical inclinations seem to fall into different interpretive communities. Their
approach and tools of reading vary from one another. Thus the approach of Pūrṇasarasvatī becomes different from that of Mallinātha or Payyūr Parameśvara. When the former finds traces of Vedāntic thoughts in the poem, the others reject them.

The differences in the focus of the readers on the intricacies of the verses lead to variations in the reading of the text. The readers keenly follow the use of words in the verses. They reject those readings which do not suit the context or they accept readings which render better meanings. They may also amend the words in the literary work taking into consideration the propriety of meaning. Their thoughts penetrate into the purpose served by each word in the verse. Commentaries establish the fact that reading never ends with the comprehension of primary meanings, instead the words stand as indicators to the deeper meanings lying implicit in the text.

It seems that imagination without any propriety or logic is not accepted by the readers. Thus there is an attempt by the commentators to authenticate or substantiate the descriptions in the verse with the help of either the facts of the world or through the śāstra-s. This shows that the readers try to seek elements that would validate or add deeper meaning to the descriptions in the verses. The readers are satisfied only when each word of the verse adds some additional meaning/ beauty to the poem.

The process of reading sets forth different events in the readers’ minds. The words or the descriptions of the literary work create several impressions on the readers’ minds. The readers may visualize imageries
which have a *bimbapratibimbabhāva* with the textual descriptions. They link the ideas found in the text with similar notions found in other texts which they have read/ are familiar with. They recollect the use of particular words which have acted as agents of suggestions in other literary works.

Reading gives rise to certain curiosities in the readers’ mind. The readers pose several questions to the text and seek answers from the text itself. This also makes them think about the purpose of each word used by the poet. When the text fails to quench the curiosities of the reader, he gets dissatisfied with the work. The work normally has implicit or explicit indicators that help in finding answers to the readers’ questions. An aesthetic transaction thus goes on between the reader and the text during the process of reading. It is only when the aspects of emotion, imagination and logic combine together in an appropriate proportion that the process of reading becomes enjoyable. The knowledge of different śāstra-s make the readers unravel varied dimensions of the text. Thus the knowledge, experience and imagination of the readers make the process of reading as well as comprehension of meaning different to each reader.

It is seen that the readers use their imagination and knowledge to interpret and relish literature. But they seem to keep themselves within the ambit of the poet’s intention. They respect the intention (*vivakṣā*) of the poets and they may make guesses on the poetic intention. These conjectures may or may not be correct. This was clearly seen in the commentaries. The readers wish to present meanings that do not surpass the poet’s intention. It
seems that each reader thinks that he grasps the crux of the text by understanding what the poet wishes to convey through the literary work. Once the readers are aware of some events of the poet’s life, the readers try to find reflections of those events in the literary works composed by him. It is thus obvious that the influence of the poet is not an element to be easily disposed of.