CONCLUSION

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*Sahṛdaya*-s were given an esteemed position in Sanskrit literature and poetics. Poetic texts gave instructions to poets to compose *kāvyā*-s that pleased the *sahṛdaya*-s. The poets too yearned for the *sahṛdaya*’s appreciation of *kāvyā*-s. Thus *sahṛdaya*’s aesthetic experience was the pivot around which the whole Sanskrit poetic texts revolved, especially after the age of Ānandavardhana. But some scholars observed that Sanskrit poetic texts acted mainly as prescriptions for the poets and they were not for the *sahṛdaya*-s. In spite of the existence of such observations about Sanskrit poetics, this thesis has tried to assimilate the views found in Sanskrit poetic texts on the *sahṛdaya*-s and their role in the reading process.

Though the concept of an ideal spectator is imminent throughout *Nāṭyaśāstra*, only the *Siddhivyāñjakādhyāya* tries to bring out the traits of *sahṛdaya*-s. After *Nāṭyaśāstra*, there seems to be no serious discussion on *sahṛdaya* and his aesthetic experience till the age of Ānandavardhana. Ānandavardhana recognized/ identified a class of readers who could relish the essence of literature as *sahṛdaya*-s. He differentiated *sahṛdayatva* from mere knowledge of *śāstra*-s. Thus Ānandavardhana highlighted the relevance of *sahṛdaya* in the literary world. But he did not show how *sahṛdaya* played a part in the comprehension of *vyañgyārtha/rasāsvāda*. Ānandavardhana conceived the notion of *vyañjanā*, the verbal power, which conveyed meanings that could be understood by the *sahṛdaya*-s alone. But he did not
venture into explaining the process through which *sahṛdaya* grasped the suggested meaning of literary works.

Ānandavardhana’s views were rejected by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka refuted the verbal power of *vyañjanā*. But the most remarkable move made by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka was his success in placing the *sahṛdaya* as the locus of *rasa*. His introduction of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* proved to be a milestone in the Indian approach to *sahṛdaya*’s aesthetic experience. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s aesthetic theory also gave new philosophical dimensions to Indian aesthetics. Rhetoricians who came later like Rājaśekhara, Bhoja etc. envisaged capable connoisseurs who relished the essence of literature.

Abhinavagupta’s works were successful in cementing the frameworks of *dhvani*, *rasa* and *sahṛdaya’s* aesthetic experience. He blended the views of Ānandavardhana and Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka. He accepted Ānandavardhana’s views of *vyañjanā* and also incorporated the major views of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka on *rasāsvāda*. He gave a new dimension to *vyañjanā* as a verbal power. Abhinavagupta added that *vyañjanā* could be complete only with the assistance of *sahṛdaya’s* genius and imagination. Other rhetoricians like Kuntaka, Mahimabhaṭṭa, Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha, Jagannātha Paṇḍita etc. recognized the existence of *sahṛdaya*-s who understood the nuances of literary language and relished aesthetic delight.

In this concluding chapter, an attempt is made to comparatively analyse the basic notions of *sahṛdaya* and his interactions with the text with the western notions of the reader. Before venturing into the comparative
analysis, the notions of sahṛdaya and the Western reader are summarized below:

**Sahṛdaya and the western reader:**

In Sanskrit poetics, the word *sahṛdaya* stands for taste, flair and aesthetic sensibility. Most of the rhetoricians envisaged ideal readers who relished *rasa* and possessed a heart akin to the poet. The rhetoricians were neither concerned about the social and cultural background of the actual readers nor about their idiosyncrasies. But they were aware of the fact that the aesthetic sensibility, genius and taste of each *sahṛdaya* differed. Thus the aesthetic experience of each *sahṛdaya* too was considered to be distinct from one another. The following points provide a glance of the general concepts of Sanskrit rhetoricians on the *sahṛdaya* and the reading process:

1. *Sahṛdaya* has the ability to enjoy *rasa*. He possesses the *vāsanā* required for the relishing of *rasa*.

2. *Sahṛdaya* possesses *pratibhā* and imaginative power.

3. *Sahṛdayatva* is not wholly an inborn trait, but it is cultivated by the individual through acquaintance with literature and experiences of life.

4. He has a temperament akin to the poet and he understands what the author wishes to convey/ the implicit meaning conveyed through the text.

5. He is not satisfied by the external beauty of literary works and he goes deeper to relish the implicit meanings.
6. *Rasa* comes into existence only when it is relished by the *sahādaya*. It comes into being in the *sahādaya*’s consciousness.

7. The imaginations (hearts) of the poet and *sahādaya* fuse together in a de-contextualised and de-historicised universal plane.

8. The readers are controlled by the text. The *sahādaya* reads with the help of the cues left by the poet.

In the Western world, the reader-oriented criticism was not a single stream of thought, but a multitude of opinions and thoughts. All of them addressed some central questions. They sketched different kinds of readers like implied reader, ideal reader, model reader, super reader etc. All these notions portray a generalized ideal reader different from the actual readers. These ideal readers are seen to be under the silent control of the text as they are guided by the codes and conventions of the text itself. Though there is no uniform concept of a reader, some of the ideas found on the reader and his role in the reading process are:

1. Reader-response critics ousted the notion of auctorial intention.

2. Reader-response theories put forth the view that the readers made meanings out of the text.

3. The works themselves postulate a particular kind of readers ie, the works have particular kind of readers inscribed in them.

4. Readers internalize the codes and conventions of the text to understand it.
5. Text comes into existence in reader’s consciousness. The readers concretise the texts with the help of their imagination and experience.

6. They seem to implicitly accept the existence of textual control on the readers.

Though there are a lot of differences between the concept of sahṛdaya and the western concept of reader, both the streams of thought accepted and lauded the imaginative power and genius of the readers/ sahṛdaya. As mentioned earlier, the word sahṛdaya includes in it various attributes. It should also be remembered that the word refers to the reader and the reading process contextually only. The sahṛdaya is considered almost equal to the poet. Thus the word sahṛdaya has much more dimensions attached to it than the Western reader.

**The poet and the reader:**

In Western poetics, any one of the three factors ie; the poet, the text and the reader is seen to dominate the literary theory in different periods of literary history. In the recent years, the readers grabbed the limelight ousting the dominance of the authors. The concept of the author and the independent existence of text were dismissed with the spread of phenomenological thought and the emergence of the reader. Thinkers like Roland Barthes remarked that the birth of the reader brought about the death of the author. Thus there was always a tussle between the author, text and reader for dominance in the Western literary world. This dominance fluctuated between
the author, the text and the reader. In the modern age, it is the reader who is dominating the Western literary theory ousting the author and the text.

Unlike the Western poetics, there was no tussle between the sahṛdaya and the poet for dominance in Sanskrit poetics. Sanskrit rhetoricians viewed both the poets and the sahṛdaya on the same pedestal. A reader who understands the heart of the poet becomes a sahṛdaya. The poet and the sahṛdaya are considered to be akin to each other with similar temperament. There was no tug of war between the author and the reader in determining the meaning of a literary work. Thus the author and the sahṛdaya did not compete for dominance in Sanskrit poetics. In the plane of aesthetic experience, both of them were considered to be in perfect harmony.

Pratyabhijñā philosophy, phenomenological thought and the rise of the reader:

The prominence of the sahṛdaya in Sanskrit poetics as well as the reader in Western poetics were nourished by adequate philosophical thinking. Emergence and establishment of Phenomenology led to a major change in Western poetics. Phenomenological thoughts emphasized that literary texts did not have independent existence and they came into existence only in the reader’s consciousness. Phenomenological criticism tried to focus on the pure unchanging essence of a literary work. This essence is derived through the process of phenomenological reduction which brackets off all the assumptions about the object in the world. Phenomenological thought does not bother about the real or illusory nature of objects, instead it focuses on the
experience of the object in the consciousness. Thus phenomenological thinkers focused on the experience of the literary text in the reader’s consciousness.

All the above concepts of Phenomenological thinking seem to run parallel to the thoughts on rasāsvāda and Pratyabhijñā philosophy. In Sanskrit poetics, the prominence of the reader was recognized from an early age itself. But the growth and development of Pratyabhijñā philosophy in Kashmir had a huge impact on the deeper analysis of the process of reader’s interaction with the text and his aesthetic experience. Even though it was Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka who initially shifted the locus of aesthetic experience to the sahṛdaya, his ideas were developed by Abhinavagupta with the help of Pratyabhijñā philosophy. There have been numerous studies which brought out the influence of Pratyabhijñā philosophy on Sanskrit poetics.¹

According to Pratyabhijñā philosophy, the individual consciousness is considered to be a manifestation of the Universal Consciousness, Śiva. Their difference ceases to exist once individual consciousness realizes its true identity. This stage of realization is characterized by ānanda or eternal bliss. The state of the reader at the helm of aesthetic experience is compared to this stage. As there is no difference between the individual consciousness and the Universal Consciousness at this stage, the sahṛdaya and the universalized author who creates the poetic world too become one. Thus when analysed

¹ Scholars like P.V. Kane, Dr. K.C. Pandey etc. have brought out insightful articles in this regard.
from the point of view of Pratyabhijñā philosophy, the sahṛdaya and the author cannot be differentiated at the peak of aesthetic rapture. In the plane of aesthetic experience, the terms sahṛdaya and the author do not point to any particular individual. But they represent a universalized reader and universalized author devoid of all individual elements. During this stage, elements of individuality disappear and the experience of bliss becomes important. Here, the rasāsvāda which is considered to be the ultimate poetic meaning is an experience of the sahṛdaya. This experience is devoid of all assumptions related to space and time. Thus this theory of rasāsvāda too talks about an unchanging essence which is free from the aspects of space and time experienced by the sahṛdaya’s consciousness.

Thus Pratyabhijñā philosophy and phenomenological thought seem to emphasize on a sahṛdaya’s/reader’s consciousness which brackets off all the worldly elements to savour the universal essence. Sanskrit rhetoricians call this universal essence as rasa and the phenomenological critics consider it as the embodiment of author’s consciousness. In both ways, the consciousness of the reader and the author merge in the sphere of aesthetic experience shedding its individual elements as well as the elements of space and time. Thus it can be seen that both these philosophies helped in giving a new dimension to the reader’s/ sahṛdaya’s experience in the literary world.

**Reading of the text- Some observations:**

Some of the recent studies on reading have noticed four aspects of the reading process. They are summarized as the rule of notice, rule of
signification, rule of configuration and rule of coherence. The rule of notice points to the stage where the reader notices the hints left by the author in the text. The rule of signification is to understand the significance of symbols in the texts. The third rule of configuration means to grasp the gradual development of the text. The fourth rule of coherence is to understand the text as a whole. It can be seen that these aspects were brought out by the Sanskrit poets too in a concrete manner. Rhetoricians like Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Kuntaka, and Mahimabhaṭṭa have stressed on the need to identify the symbols/ suggestive elements/clues left by the author in the text. Identification of (noticing) these elements can only help in guiding the reader during the process of reading. Once this identification is done, the second rule indicates understanding the significance of these elements. Modern studies describe signification as the reader’s movement from what appears to be said to what is really said, ie from a literal to more distant and more mediated level. This appears to be too similar to Ānandavardhana’s concept of dhvani. He too mentions that sahṛḍaya-s are vācyārthavimukhātmā ie, they are not interested in the literal meaning. They move from the primary meaning to the suggested meaning in the process of reading. Western definition of the activity of signification seems to be similar to the concept of dhvani. The third rule of configuration has been dealt with by Ānandavardhana, and Kuntaka. They have analysed the effect of the gradual development of the text on the sahṛḍaya-s. They have discussed how the drawbacks in the development of the text would distract the sahṛḍaya and hamper his reading experience. The last rule of coherence is again a major
topic of discussion taken up by Ānandavardhana and Kuntaka. Most of the modern scholars mention the lack of attempts by Sanskrit rhetoricians to analyse literary texts as a whole. Though this observation is true to a certain extent, Ānandavardhana and Kuntaka have done excellent analyses of the literary texts as a whole. Thus it can be seen that all these aspects of reading process now discussed by the thinkers were discussed by the Sanskrit rhetoricians in their poetic treatises.

Unlike the Western rhetoricians, Sanskrit rhetoricians attributed powers to language. Most of the Indian streams of thought accepted the powers of śabda. They had difference of opinions only on the kinds of powers possessed by the śabda. According to all Sanskrit philosophers and rhetoricians, śabda had the power to convey primary meaning. Excluding some philosophers and rhetoricians, most of the Sanskrit philosophers and rhetoricians regarded metaphoric meaning also to be conveyed by the power of śabda. Thinkers like Ānandavardhana mentioned that śabda, especially those in literature had another power (vyañjanā) which conveyed a meaning different from the primary and metaphoric meanings. All these observations put forth a view that it was through the power of śabda that the meanings were conveyed. This would raise a question as to what role then the perceiver has in the understanding of the meaning. All thinkers had the common opinion that the perceiver needed to have some prior knowledge and experience to comprehend the meanings conveyed by the śabda-s. The śabda, through its power, does not convey meanings to all perceivers alike. Meanings were conveyed according to the attributes of the perceivers. This
points to the fact that the powers of śabda conveyed meanings only when they were perceived by competent listeners. Rhetoricians like Ānandavardhana believed that the meaning conveyed through vyañjanā, the power of śabda, could only be grasped by the sahṛdaya-s. This power of śabda becomes complete only with the help of sahṛdaya. All these observations suggest that the process of reading cannot be a one way process where a text pours its meaning into the readers; instead it becomes an interactive process where both the text and the readers have a role to play.

Language may pose some difficulties for the reader in the comprehension of meaning. The concept of lakṣaṇā points towards the psychical resistance faced by the reader while interacting with the text. All Indian philosophies discuss lakṣaṇā as a power of śabda. But Sanskrit rhetoricians try to find out the purpose (prayojana) of this linguistic usage which leads to psychical resistance and bring out the effect produced by the metaphoric usage on the readers. The observations of Sanskrit rhetoricians show that the difficulties faced by the sahṛdaya-s make them explore other meanings related to the conventional meaning. The literal difficulty during the process of reading opens up semantic possibilities before the sahṛdaya. The sahṛdaya uses his knowledge and genius to explore this semantic possibility. Thus metaphorical usages facilitate sahṛdaya’s creative involvement in the reading process. These aspects involved in the cognition of metaphors are now being discussed in the West.

Most of the rhetoricians emphasized the relevance of context in
determining the meaning during the reading process. Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta as well as Mahimabhaṭṭa have shown how different contexts generate different meanings from same words/ sentences. They also have demonstrated the possibilities of reading the same verse in different ways. In the recent years, influence of context in the generation of meaning has been studied deeply.

Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta mention about the sahṛdaya’s attempt to link the past events with the present during the reading process. Certain meanings are comprehended only when they are analyzed in the light of past events. Ānandavardhana’s analysis of Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa shows how the sahṛdaya-s figure out the theme of a text. He says that Vālmīki and Vyāsa incorporated certain key elements in the text and moulded the texts in such a way that it may evoke particular emotions in the readers. Vyāsa has put in some key sentences at the beginning, middle and end of Mahābhārata which guide the readers to grasp the theme of the epic.

Thus Ānandavardhana’s analysis indicates the fact that the authors inscribe in the text certain key elements which help the readers understand the theme of the whole text. This shows how sahṛdaya-s unite a text semantically by connecting the key elements of the text. This semantic unification helps the sahṛdaya-s relish the essence of the literary text.

The reading process- A comparative analysis:

Modern streams of thought like narratology, psychology etc. investigate the nature of reading. They try to study the process involved in
the reading and comprehension of a literary narrative by the readers. They try to understand how readers keep track of and connect the events and characters in the text, how do they figure out the theme of the text and how do the linguistic elements of the text influence the readers.

In recent years, the focus on reader’s psychology during the process of reading has led to many studies on the cognitive aspect of the reception of the text. It tries to understand what goes on in the mind of the reader when he/she picks up and peruses a book. Sanskrit poetics also concentrate on the cognitive aspect of the reader’s reception of a literary work. The concepts of rasa, vyañjanā, anumāna etc. show the way rhetoricians tried to analyze the mind of the reader while reading. It is at this point that an enquiry into the sahṛdaya’s role in the reading process becomes necessary.

**Freedom of readers in interpreting the texts:**

Reader-oriented criticism brought out the role of readers in making meanings out of the text. Phenomenological critics said that the text came into existence only when it was read. The readers concretized or realized the text by filling the gaps of the text using their imagination and experience. The psycho-analytical critics mentioned that the readers recreated the texts using their own identity theme. According to them, readers discovered their own self through the process of reading. Stanley Fish stated that the process of reading itself was the process of generating meanings. All these views seem to render an upper hand to the readers over the text and its author. The whole literary world seemed to vanish without the readers. It indicated that the
author’s creations were brought to life by the readers. In spite of the freedom seen to be given to the readers, the notion of authorial intention did not vanish completely. All the above views silently seemed to accept the existence of some control of the text on the readers. A modern critic remarks about the control of the text on the reader:

"Literary texts differ from those which formulate a concrete meaning or truth. . . . The meaning is conditioned by the text itself, but only in a form that allows the reader himself to bring it out" (p. 43, my emphasis)

Readers who either identified the codes of the text or comprehended the authorial intention were considered to be the ideal readers. The readers’ interactions with the text are controlled by the text itself. This meant that the readers were not completely free to interpret the texts as they wish to. The text itself guided the readers to grasp the meaning intended to be conveyed. This has raised some pertinent issues which ponder over the extent of freedom enjoyed by the reader in the interpretation of literary texts.

The poetic theories do not give the sahṛdaya-s complete freedom to manipulate the meaning of the text. Rhetoricians like Ānandavardhana mentions about the capacity of the literary language to generate different meanings. They advocated the view that same sentences can generate different meanings in different contexts. They also demonstrated the different meanings generated by same sentence when perceived by different listeners. But in most cases, these rhetoricians arrive at a particular suggested meaning.

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2 Susan R Suleiman & Inge Crosman, The Reader in the Texts, p. 25.
in a particular context. Sanskrit rhetoricians do not advocate the multiplicity of suggested meanings according to the whims and fancies of the readers. Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha and Jagannātha Paṇḍita too shed light on the ability of the literary language to generate multiple meanings. They also pointed out that the genius of the sahṛdaya-s played an important role in grasping the suggested meanings. But all of them hinted towards the existence of a suggested meaning conveyed by the author through the text. Jagannātha Paṇḍita says that the words in a verse like niśśeṣacyutacandanaṁ stanataṭam...have the capacity to suggest different meanings to different listeners. The suggestive power of the words opens up such unending possibilities. But among these suggested meanings, there is one suggested meaning which the author/speaker actually wishes to convey. This intended suggested meaning would be grasped by an efficient listener. When Abhinavagupta talks about different suggested meanings grasped by different listeners, he clearly indicates the existence of particular suggested meaning grasped by a particular listener. Thus the dhvani theorists showed the production of multiple meanings from the verses according to the context, nature of speaker, listener etc. Mahimabhaṭṭa also accepts this view. But sahṛdaya-s were not at complete liberty to manipulate the text as they wished to.

It can be seen that there are no indications in the poetic texts which advocate the freedom to interpret texts as per the fancies of the reader. But

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3 Rasagaṅgādhara, pp. 51-65.
the examination of commentaries of literary texts presents a different picture. The notions found in poetic texts did not restrict the Sanskrit commentators on kāvya-s. The commentators actively manipulate the meaning of the text using their genius, imagination and knowledge. They explore the purpose of the kāvya, the necessity of verses, the rasa of the verses etc. They are seen to make changes in the textual readings whenever there seems to be an impropriety in the meaning. Commentators put forth varied interpretations of the same verse. But all of them try to seek the poet’s intention conveyed through the literary text. They try to establish that they are unveiling the poetic intention revealed through the text. But Sanskrit commentaries on kāvya-s are seen to open up a world where sahṛdaya-s are seen to freely interact with the text.

In the West, reader-oriented critics ousted the concept of authorial intention. But Sanskrit rhetoricians are seen to accept the existence of authorial intention. But the author’s identity was never a criterion in the analysis and enjoyment of literary works in Sanskrit poetics. This resembles an age of literature mentioned by Michel Foucault in his essay What is an author? He says:

There was a time when the texts that we today call 'literary' (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status.⁴

⁴ David Lodge, Modern Criticism and Theory, pp.178-179.
Sanskrit literary works circulated without any question about the identity of the author. The meaning conveyed through the work was important.

Sanskrit rhetoricians demonstrate the controls exercised by the text over the sahṛdaya-s. The keen analyses of verses by Mahimabhaṭṭa所示 that readers were influenced by the syntactical elements of the verse. Mahimabhaṭṭa’s attempts revealed how sahṛdaya-s parsed the text into meaningful units with the help of syntax. Thus Sanskrit rhetoricians obviously upheld the existence of authorial intention and pointed out the control of textual elements on the sahṛdaya-s. But they gave the sahṛdaya-s a place equal to that of the poets as sahṛdaya-s are endowed with both genius and imagination to relish the authorial intention.

**Aesthetic experience and the state of the reader:**

As mentioned above, the text comes into existence in the reader’s consciousness according to Phenomenological critics. But two questions seem to trouble the phenomenological critics. Susan R Suleiman points them out as:

“Two such questions, central to any phenomenological approach to reading, are (1) the nature of the relationship between a text and an individual realization of it, especially as concerns "idiosyncratic" realizations; and (2) the status of the reading subject.”

Wolfgang Iser says that the actual self of the reader recedes into background and his virtual self interacts with the text. He takes a phenomenological

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approach to Reception theory and he “decontextualizes and dehistoricizes text and reader.”

But psychoanalytic critics say that the readers recreate the texts using their own fantasies. Edward Bullough put forth the concept of psychical distance as a pre-requisite to enjoy aesthetic objects. He says that both over-distance and under-distance hinder the proper enjoyment of literary works. Approaching the literary works in a too personal or impersonal manner does not make the reader relish the literary works.

The questions on the state of the reading subject and his individuality are answered/ encountered rather philosophically by Sanskrit rhetoricians. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka is seen to present the most relevant theory in this regard. As observed in earlier chapters, he made the initial move which placed the reader as the locus of rasa. The concept of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa introduced by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka provides answers to some of the questions pertaining to the above discussion. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka makes it clear that aesthetic enjoyment does not take place when the readers approach aesthetic objects too personally or indifferently. The emotions that are portrayed and evoked assume universality. Aesthetic enjoyment takes place only when the reader and the characters of the work rise to a universalized plane where the elements of time, space and individual concerns disappear. This shows the state of the reader during the process of reading and aesthetic enjoyment. Later rhetoricians like Abhinavagupta, Mammaṭa etc. accepted the concept of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa.

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6 Yumi Kinoshita, Reception Theory, Department of Art, University of California, Santa Barbara November 2004, p. 2.
Jagannātha Paṇḍita presented a different view of the aesthetic enjoyment which was termed as *navyamata*. It says that the readers identify themselves with the characters through imagination or *bhāvanā* which is considered as a defect (*doṣa*). This defect presents imagined replicas of characters and their emotions in the place of their real counterparts. Just as a person perceives silver in the nacre, a person identifies the imaginary characters and emotions with his own. The silver perceived by the individual belongs to the category of *anirvacanīya* (neither *sat* nor *asat*). The aesthetic experience is also indefinable and the reader delights in the experience. Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy shows the points of similarity and differences between the *navyamata* and the other interpretations:

The *Navyas* agree with the older aestheticians that the poetic art has a unique power which may be regarded as suggestion (*vyāñjanā*) and this evokes a mood of aesthetic contemplation (*bhāvanā*) in the reader. What they cannot accept is that the emotion enjoyed by the reader is purely subjective or psychological.⁷

Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy summarises the *navyamata* as:

In short, aesthetic experience is no more than an illusory individual experience though it comes into being as a result of a unique nature of the mind known as imagination.⁸

Here Jagannātha Paṇḍita is seen to present a theory of aesthetic enjoyment on the basis of *Advaitavedānta* philosophy.

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⁷ Dr.K. Krishnamoorthy, *Studies in Indian Aesthetics and Criticism*, p.209.
All the above views have tried to sketch the state of the reader during the process of aesthetic enjoyment. The readers’ interaction with the text was never considered to be a personal affair by Sanskrit rhetoricians. In the process of interaction with the text, the readers rose above their individual planes to a higher universal plane. Sanskrit rhetoricians believed that the imagination, pratibhā, experiences, vāsanā etc. helped the readers in this ascent to the higher universal plane of aesthetic enjoyment. The individual elements of the reader, the aspects of space and time etc. do not have any role in this plane. Thus the reader’s interaction with the text occurs on a depersonalized level. If the reader fails to leave his individual plane, then he would not be able to enjoy aesthetic delight. The emotional element of literature is thus important to the sahṛdaya. This aspect is a less explored topic in Western literary criticism.

**Importance of the concept of rasa in the reading process:**

It can be seen that rasa dominated the Indian aesthetic theories. This is true in the case of the concept of sahṛaya and his aesthetic experience. Sahṛdaya’s interactions with the text are analyzed in the light of his rasāsvāda. The analysis of his interactions tries to reveal his path to savour rasa. This seems to have restricted the exploration of other possibilities of interactions with the text. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s introduction of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa and Abhinavagupta’s acceptance of the theory seems to have shut down other dimensions of reading and aesthetic enjoyment and restricted the experience of reading to the concept of rasa. Sanskrit rhetoricians like Abhinavagupta
viewed the process of reading and aesthetic enjoyment to be subjective in nature, but the aesthetic experience itself was considered to be universal in nature. The *sahṛdaya* loses his individuality in the realm of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. This loss of individuality of the *sahṛdaya* actually closes all other elements that may influence the actual readers in the world. The question of what amount of individuality is retained by him that influence his reading process was not looked into by the rhetoricians. Jagannātha Paṇḍita made a slight move away from this thought structure. But the whole world of Sanskrit poetics revolved around the pivot of *rasa*. All other concepts were moulded according to *rasa*.

For most critics in the West, the act of reading is always about discovering the author’s intention. The reader-response critics ousted the notion of authorial intention, but they still think that the author inscribes strategies in the text that guide the readers. But in Sanskrit poetics, the ultimate end of the reading process is *rasāsvāda*. In the realm of *rasāsvāda*, the experience of the *sahṛdaya* and the author does not have any difference. In the sphere of *rasāsvāda*, both the *sahṛdaya* and the author are in perfect harmony.

More than the comprehension of implicit facts latent in the literary texts, Sanskrit rhetoricians focused on the sentimental aspect of the process of reading. They take a psychological and philosophical approach to explain the reading experience. The reader's interaction with the linguistic dimensions of the text is considered to be the primary level of the reading
process. In the context of Sanskrit poetics, rhetoricians acknowledge that *rasa* is the ultimate meaning of the literary texts and this *rasa* is none other than the *sahṛdaya’s* experience. Thus Sanskrit rhetoricians too consider the *sahṛdaya’s* aesthetic experience as the ultimate meaning of the text. But in Western literary criticism, the process of reading is analysed rather from a linguistic point of view. When Stanley Fish remarks that the reader’s experience of the text itself is the meaning of the text, he does not refer to any emotional experience of the reader, but he refers to the reader’s movement from one sentence to the next while reading a literary text. Though both the western and Sanskrit poetics’ view refer to the reader’s experience, each one stands for different aspects. But both the streams recognize that it is the readers’ experience that completes the meaning of the text.

When the concept of reader and the reading process are analysed, the cultural and social background behind the development of these concepts need to be analysed. As it was pointed out at the outset, reading is a cognitive process that involves deriving or constructing meanings from symbols and this cognitive process is influenced by the social and cultural milieu that shaped the views of the readers. In the Western world, the reader-oriented theories mainly focus on the readers’ experience of reading a printed text. But in Sanskrit poetics, it is difficult to draw a line between the process of reading a literary work or enjoying a drama. As pointed out earlier, *sahṛdaya* is not merely a reader, it has more dimensions attached to it. Sanskrit rhetoricians do not separately analyze the aesthetic experience involved in
enjoying a *dpśyakāvya* and a *śravyakāvya*. After the initial process of identifying/imagining the *vibhāva*-s, *anubhāva*-s etc., the remaining processes are identical. Thus in the plane of aesthetic enjoyment, both experiences are considered to be similar.

Both Sanskrit poetics and reader-response theories of the West accepted the fact that the literary world came into existence only when literary works were read and relished by the readers. Literature would become mere paper filled with ink marks if they were not read by the readers. Thus both of them agree that readers give life to literature. The readers are not passive consumers of the meaning projected out from the texts, instead meaning is generated by the readers when they interact with the text. Thus readers are active participants in the literary world. Thus literary works were lifeless objects until the readers brought them to life and savoured the essence of literature. Both these streams envisaged ideal readers who understood the essence of the literary texts.

In Sanskrit poetics, the real author and the implied author were not given much importance. It was the meaning implicit in the text that mattered. But in the West, the real as well as the implied author was seriously considered by the Western theorists. In Sanskrit poetics, the element of *rasa* and its experience overshadowed and moulded all other aspects of poetics. Thus rhetoricians often did not discuss about the attempts of the *sahṛdaya* in analyzing the text and constructing meanings. The case was different in the West as there was no concept like *rasa* that towered above all others.
Western poetics always witnessed tussle between the author, text and reader for dominance in the world of literature, but in Sanskrit literature, the process of reading which opened the aesthetic world took away the personal identities of the *sahṛdaya* as well as the author. A state of bliss pervaded this aesthetic world. In modern literary criticism, it is true that the readers as well as theorists are trying to free the readers from all sorts of textual controls. But this would remain to be a fantasy. Certain controls never vanish completely. They leave behind their traces. As far as reading is an interactive process, it would happen only when the author, the text and reader actively get involved in it. Such live interactions can only keep literature alive.