PREFACE

Reader plays an important role in the world of literature. Readers keep literature alive and fresh. The nature of reader’s interactions with the text has always been an enigma to the lovers of literature. In the West, the literary critics did not give much attention to the readers in most ages. The recent years witnessed the emergence of a new stream of criticism where the reader is the centre of attention. This change led to serious studies on the reader and the reading process. But the process of reading still contains areas yet to be studied in detail.

Sanskrit poetics is generally considered to be reader-oriented. Sanskrit poets and critics recognized the relevance of sahṛdaya-s and they were concerned about the sahṛdaya’s experience of literature. The concept of sahṛdaya has more dimensions attached to it than the western concept of reader. This thesis tries to analyse the notions about the sahṛdaya and the reading process found in Sanskrit poetics in the light of modern reader-oriented theories. It attempts to chalk out the observations found in Sanskrit poetic texts on the nature of sahṛdaya’s interactions with the text and his comprehension of literary meaning. The present thesis attempts to analyse these observations in a comparative light.

In addition to introduction and conclusion, the thesis contains six chapters. The introduction contains statement of the problem, description of previous studies and presentation of scope of the study. The first chapter
traces the notion of the reader in Western poetics historically from the ancient period to the modern reader-oriented theories. The second chapter presents the concept of sahṛdaya in Sanskrit poetics. It also tries to define the reading process in the context of Sanskrit poetics. The next three chapters study the views of Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Mahimabhaṭṭa respectively on the sahṛdaya and the reading process. The sixth chapter takes up the case study of four commentaries on Meghadūta. It tries to figure out the common features of these commentaries and then analyze the manner in which the commentators have read the text. The thesis ends with a conclusion which tries to comparatively analyse the topic from the point of view of both Western and Sanskrit poetics.

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