CHAPTER 2
READER IN SANSKRIT POETICS

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The reader-response theories that developed in the western world in the twentieth century highlighted the role of the reader in the reading of literature. These theories put forth various concepts of an ideal reader who had an active role in the reading process. But the question of the dual poles of subjectivity and universality involved in the experience of reading remains without precise answers in the western world. At this juncture, it would be relevant to look into the concept of the reader and his role in the process of reading in Sanskrit poetics.

2.1. Reader in Sanskrit literature

Sanskrit poets had always recognized the importance of readers’ acceptance of literary works. They wanted their works to be read and appreciated by sensible readers who were denoted by the term sahṛdaya. The Vedic hymns too indicated the fact that words reveal their true meaning only to an eligible person. Thus it was widely recognized that the ability to understand and appreciate literature was not a common one. All readers did not become sahṛdaya-s. Great poets like Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti etc.

\[\text{uṣṭa\ tvaḥ\ paśyanna\ dādaṛśa\ vācamuta\ tvāḥ\ śṛṇyanna\ śṛṇotyenām/}
\text{uto\ tvasmāi\ tanvaṁ\ visasre\ jāyena\ patya\ uṣatī\ suvāsāḥ}/\ (Ṛgveda\ X-71-2)\]
considered the appreciation of their works by men of taste as the ultimate reward. Kālidāsa says:

\[
\text{āparitośād viduśām na sādhu manye prayogavijñānam/}
\text{balavadapi śīkṣitānām ātmanyapratyayaṃ cetaḥ} // ^2
\]

He also believes that sensible readers/spectators would recognize and accept a good work even if it is written by a new author:

\[
\text{purāṇam ity eva na sādhu sarvam}
\text{na cāpi kāvyam navam ity avadyam/}
\text{santaḥ parīkṣyānyatarad bhajante}
\text{mūḍhaḥ parapratyayeyabuddhiḥ} // ^3
\]

Bhavabhūti, the famous dramatist, presents the hope of finding a reader/spectator who is capable of understanding what the poet intends to say through his works. He expects the existence of a reader whose mind/ tastes are similar to that of the poet. He mentions:

\[
\text{ye nāma kecid iha naḥ prathayantyavajñām}
\text{jānanti te kimapi tān prati naiṣa yatnaḥ/}
\text{upatsyate’sti mama ko’pi samānadharmā}
\text{kālo hyayaṃ niravadhir vipulā ca prthvī} // ^4
\]

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^2 Abhijñānaśākuntalam 1.2.
^3 Rewaprasad Dwivedi (Ed.), Kālidāsagranthāvalī, p.259.
There are other poets who regard the efforts of a reader to be greater than that of the poet as he is the one who understands the worth and beauty of poets’ creations. The following verse projects this idea:

\[
\text{Iśnaṁ vastuni yena sūkṣmasubhagaṁ tattvaṁ girā kṛṣyate}
\]
\[
nirmātuṁ prabhavenmanoharam idaṁ vācaiva yo vā bahiḥ/
\]
\[
vande dvāvapi tāvahaṁ kavivarau vandetarāṁ taṁ punar-
\]
\[
\text{yo vijñātapariśramo’ynam anayor bhārāvatārakṣamaḥ} /5
\]

Not only the poets and the dramatists, the actors too relied upon the reactions of the spectators to assess the success of their drama. In Damodara Gupta’s \text{Kuṭṭanīmata}, there is a description of the staging of the first act of \text{Ratnāvalī} before Samarabhaṭa, the king of Kāśi. During the conversation between the king and the leader of the troupe, the leader remarks about the spectators’ reactions. He says that the spectators praise the efficient acting of the troupe and they forget the difference between the characters and the actors. The spectators react by saying ‘good, good’ etc. Thus he requests the king to see their performance of at least a single act without which their efforts would become futile.6 All these show that the reactions of the spectators were considered as a major way to assess the accomplishment of a dramatic performance. The words of the troupe’s leader show that the efforts of an actor become futile without the acceptance and appreciation of the drama by the spectators. Thus the men of taste adorned a prestigious place in the minds

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5 Vakroktijīvita, 2.107.

6 M.P. Sankunni Nair, Nātyamaṇḍapam, pp. 179-180.
of the poets as they were the ultimate judges of the merits of their works. Keeping in mind these remarks made on the reader/spectator by the poets in their compositions, it is necessary to consider the view of the Sanskrit rhetoricians on the role of the readers in the understanding and appreciation of literary works.

2.2. Reader in Sanskrit poetic texts

In the Sanskrit poetics texts, men of taste who had the ability to identify and relish the essence of art was known as sahṛdaya. The word sahṛdaya is often substituted by its nearly equivalent ones like sumedhas, sacetas, rasika, bhāvaka etc. The word does not particularly refer to the reader of literary works. Krishna Rayan makes an important observation regarding the use of the term sahṛdaya. He says:

> Because the concept of rasa originated in dramaturgy and was only later extended to literary theory, the Sanskrit-equivalents of the word “reader”, such as sahṛdaya, rasika and bhāvaka, have much wider application and none of them refer specifically to the activity of reading. They denote taste, flair, penchant, sensibility, perceptiveness and so forth in respect of any of the arts, but in literary theory they refer contextually to the reader.\(^7\)

A.K. Warder briefly sketches the image of the reader presupposed by the rhetoricians. He says:

> He [critic] naturally presupposes, or rather observes in others and doubtless in himself, the ‘connoisseur’ sahṛdaya, or one

\(^7\) Krishna S. Arjunwadkar, *The Lamp and the Jar- Essays by Krishna Rayan*, p.49.
capable of aesthetic appreciation rasika. This is the member of the audience at the theatre, the listener, the reader envisaged by the critic as reacting to a kāvya, being delighted, especially with reference to the rasa but also appreciating the implied meanings or delighting in figurative language or in clarity and balance of style.8

Thus such a concept of a man of taste who relishes a literary work or a drama was inherent in all the texts of Sanskrit poetics.

Nāṭyaśāstra, the oldest extant treatise on dramaturgy (the text includes various topics which were later discussed by the rhetoricians) contains references to the concept of sahṛdaya or sacetas or sumedhas. The text discusses the qualities of a sensible spectator who enjoys the dramas and relishes the main sentiment present in them. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra, named Siddhivyañjakādhyāya (as the title suggests), Bharata has tried to assess the accomplishment or success of a drama from the reactions of the spectators by introducing the concept of siddhi. Siddhi is one of the thirteen principle elements of nāṭya mentioned by Bharata.9 Abhinavagupta defines siddhi as sādhyaprayojanasampattiḥ.10 It means the attainment of the purpose of nāṭya. This concept of siddhi can be viewed from two aspects, i.e.; from the viewpoint of the spectator as well as from that of the actors or the drama. Spectator’s siddhi or accomplishment of his

9 rasabhāvāhyabhinayā dharmīvṛttipravṛttayah/
siddhiḥ svarāstathātodyaṃ gānaṃ raṅgaśca saṅgrahaḥ//
10 Parasanath Dwivedi (Ed.), Nāṭyaśāstra with Abhinavabhāratī and Manorama Commentary (Vol IV) p. 543.
smitāpahāsinīḥ hāsaḥ sādhvahō kaśṭameva ca/prabadhanādā ca tathā
siddhijñeyātha vāñmayī(27.4)
purpose of watching a play happens only when he enjoys aesthetic delight from it. In the case of actors or the dramatist, *siddhi* rests on the spectator’s acceptance and enjoyment of the drama.  

Bharata has tried to describe the various reactions of the spectators which suggest the *siddhi* (accomplishment of the ultimate purpose) of the drama in this chapter. Bharata has classified *siddhi* into two—*mānuṣī* and *daivī*. These two kinds of *siddhi* explained by Bharata actually reveal two kinds of enjoyment by the spectators which show their acceptance of the drama. Various vocal, physical and mental reactions of the spectators manifest the *mānuṣī*siddhi of the play. These reactions include smile, laughter, utterance of exclamations like *sādhu*, *aho kaśṭam*, huge applause, horripilations, raising of fingers, presenting clothes to actors etc.  

*Daivī*siddhi is manifested by that state of enjoyment where the spectators have been fully absorbed into the sentiment of the play. Here the spectators watch the play without any noise or disturbance and the hall would be packed with audience.

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11 The *siddhi* of the actors results in the *siddhi* of the drama. Abhinavagupta mentions the etymology of *nāṭaka* as ‘*nāṭakotra naṭaḥ naṭatīti*.’ Parasanath Dwivedi (Ed.), *Loc.cit.*

12 *smitāpahāsinī* hāsā *sādhvaho kaśṭameva ca/prabadhanādā ca tathā *sidhirīneyātha vāṁmayī// (27.4)  
*pulakaiṣca saromāṇcairaḥ* *yutthā* *naistathaiva ca/ celadānāṅgulīkṣepaiḥ śarīrī *siddhirīgyate//= (27.5)  
*yā bhāvātiśayopetā satvayuktā tathaiva ca/sā prekśakaistu karttavyā daivī *siddhiḥ prayogataḥ//= (27.16)  
*na śabdo yatra na kṣobho na cotpātadarsanam/ sampūrnatā ca raṅgasya daivī *siddhistu sā smṛtā//= (27.17)
While describing the spectators’ reactions, Bharata has enumerated the qualities of an ideal spectator.\textsuperscript{14} He says:

\begin{verbatim}
avyagrairindriyaiḥ śuddha ūhāpohaviśīradāḥ/
tyaktadoṣonurāgī ca sa nāṭye prekṣakāḥ smṛtāḥ//(27.54)
\end{verbatim}

An ideal spectator is one whose senses are fully focused on the drama without any distractions and one who can comprehend the pros and cons of the drama. He is free of any faults (who has avoided faults) and who are interested in the pleasures of the world. When one’s mind and senses are disturbed by some personal or some other troubles, proper enjoyment of the drama does not take place. This is included as one of the rasavighna-s (factors that hamper the enjoyment of rasa) mentioned by Abhinavagupta.\textsuperscript{15} The words tyaktadoṣāḥ and anurāgī are interpreted in different ways by different commentators.\textsuperscript{16} Another quality mentioned by Bharata is:

\begin{verbatim}
ye tuṣṭau tuṣṭimāyānti śoke śokaṃ vrajanti ca/

dainye dīnativamāyānti te nāṭye prekṣakāḥ smṛtāḥ // (27.42)
\end{verbatim}

True spectator is one who becomes happy himself when the characters are happy and who experiences sorrow when the characters are in sorrow.

\textsuperscript{14} The chapter also deals with various other topics like the obstacles while staging a play, rewards given to actors, qualities of prāśnika-s etc.

\textsuperscript{15} Abhinavagupta mentions rasavighna-s like svaparagatadesakālavieṣaḥ and nijasukhādigvivasībhāvah. Vedabandhu, Abhinavaguptante Rasasidhāntam, p 90.

This actually refers to the concept of *hrdayasatvāda* where the spectator sheds his personal feelings and he experiences the emotions in the play which transcends all boundaries of space and time. This ability of the spectator to completely identify with the drama is recognized by Bharata as the quality of an ideal spectator. Bharata himself admits that it is difficult to find all these qualities in a single spectator.\(^\text{17}\)

Bharata also points out the fact that the taste of each spectator differs. The tastes of spectators like a child, a young woman, an old man etc. are simply different. Young men may be interested in love themes, old men in *purāṇa*-s, heroic men in stories which have valour as its main sentiment, a child would prefer something which generates wonder or laughter.\(^\text{18}\) Thus Bharata recognizes the difference in the tastes of the spectators. But it is a fact that in spite of the different tastes, all men equally enjoy *nāṭya* as remarked by Kālidāsa —

*nāṭyaṁ bhinnarucer janasya bahudhāpyekaṇṭ samārādhanam*

The capacity of the spectators to enjoy the drama is also different. Thus the spectators are classified as *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama*.\(^\text{19}\) From

\(^{17}\) *na caivete gūṇāḥ samyak sarvasmin prekṣake*  
*smṛtāḥ/viśuṇeyasyāprameyatvātsamkārṇāṇāḥ ca parśadi/(27.55)*

\(^{18}\) *tuṣyanti taruṇāḥ kāme vidagdhāḥ samayānvite/artheṣvarthaparāścaiva mokṣo*  
*cātha virāgiṇaṁ/ (27.58)*

\(^{19}\) *nānāśīlāḥ prakṛtayāḥ śīle nāṭyaṁ vinirmitam/ uttamādhammadhyānāṁ*  
*vṛddhabāliśayopiśātām// (27.57).*
this it is clear that Bharata has included all categories of people like children, youth, women, old men, sages etc. under the title *prekṣaka*-s.\textsuperscript{20} Bharata calls the critics or judges who assess the performance of a drama as *prāśnika*-s. These critics are experts in various fields like music, dance, acting etc.\textsuperscript{21} They analyze the merits and demerits of the drama.

*Nāṭyaśāstra* mentions that *nāṭya* was created for all sections of people in the society. Only a minor section of the society had the privilege to learn the *śāstra*-s and read and enjoy literature. *Nāṭya* was meant for the people who constituted the other majority. It was always considered that enjoying dramas required less genius on the part of the spectators. The reading and relishing of *śravyakāvya*-s demanded greater imagination and aesthetic sensibility.

Besides *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Sanskrit poetics texts that are available now, were written after the sixth and seventh centuries of the common era. These texts contain prescriptions for the poets to produce perfect literary works. They analyzed elements like figures of speech, *guṇa*-s, *rāti*-s etc. These texts helped in shaping the expectations of the reader. Even when these texts implicitly accept the existence of a scholarly and sensible reader, they did not

\textsuperscript{20} It is interesting to note that K.G.Paulose in his book titled, ‘*Kūṭiyāṭṭaṁ-Abhinayattinṭe Tuṭarccayum Vaḷarccayum*’, has distinguished spectators into two- ‘*nānaloka*’ and ‘*prekṣaka*’. *Nānaloka* refers to the ordinary spectators who are impressed by the outer elements of acting, but *prekṣaka*-s are those who are experts in various *śāstra*-s and are interested in the minute details of acting. Bharata has included all categories of audience under the term ‘*prekṣaka*’ and the experts as ‘*prāśnika*’-s.

\textsuperscript{21} Parasanath Dwivedi (Ed.), *op.cit.*, 27.50-53.
shed any attention on the role of the reader in the process of reading the literary works. The concept of *rasa* which later became the focal point of Sanskrit poetics was not treated with prominence in these texts. They considered *rasa* to be a figure of speech. The concept of *rasa* and the reader’s experience of reading literature were not connected by them. The early commentators of Bharata’s *rasasūtra* like Bhāṭṭa Lollaṭa (800-840 A.D.) and Śaṅkuka (Second half of ninth century)\(^{22}\) too did not consider *rasa* to be an element relished by the reader/spectator, instead they considered *rasa* to dwell in the character and the actor respectively.

Ānandavardhana changed the course of Sanskrit poetics by revamping the basic notions of poetics accepted by earlier rhetoricians. He emphasized the importance of *rasa* in literature and pointed out the existence of implicit meanings in literature. Ānandavardhana envisaged a class of sensible readers who were capable of relishing the implicit meanings suggested by literary texts. He stressed on the ability of readers to relish *rasa*. This led the rhetoricians to ponder upon the process through which readers relished the literary works. Thus the period after Ānandavardhana saw a shift of focus on the text to its reception by the readers.

The rhetoricians of the post-*dhvani* period focused on the process of reception of literary works by the readers. Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka presented some original ideas which made the *sahṛdaya*-s the locus of *rasa*. His concepts of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* and *bhoga* made the reader the stratum where *rasa* was

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\(^{22}\) Dates are taken from P.V. Kane’s *History of Sanskrit Poetics*. 
savoured. Rhetoricians like Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, Rājaśekhara, Dhanañjaya, Abhinavagupta, Mahimabhaṭṭa etc. focused on the *saḥṛdaya*.

2.3. Qualities of a *saḥṛdaya*

There was a wide recognition that all readers did not have equal sensibility to enjoy literature. The quality of the reader determined the depth to which the text was relished. The implicit meanings of the text were grasped only by a *saḥṛdaya* and not by an ordinary reader. The rhetoricians thus envisaged a class of readers who possessed certain qualities. Some of the qualities envisaged by them are as follows:

2.3.1. Ability to relish *rasa*

Sanskrit rhetoricians widely recognized the existence of *saḥṛdaya*-s who had adequate aesthetic sensibility to appreciate literature. As mentioned earlier, Bharata envisaged spectators to identify with the characters in the play and relish the sentiment portrayed in it. It was Ānandavardhana who said that the essence of literature was not relished by all readers alike, instead only the *saḥṛdaya*-s had the ability to do so. He also mentioned that this aesthetic sensibility was not the knowledge of language and grammar, instead it was the capacity to relish *rasa*. He thus equated *saḥṛdayatva* with *rasajñātā*. 23 Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka was the rhetorician who first conceived *saḥṛdaya* to be the locus of *rasa*. Earlier interpreters of the *rasa* theory believed *rasa* to belong to the character or the actor. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s theory brought about a

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23 Acarya Jagannath Pathak (Ed.), *Dhvanyāloka*, p.394.
monumental shift that changed the course of Sanskrit poetics. Abhinavagupta quotes a line attributed to Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka where he portrays the reader with ability to relish rasa as the readers of literature. It says:

\[
kāvye rasayitā sarvo na boddhā na niyogabhāk^{24}\]

Unlike the readers of the epics and the Veda-s, the readers of kāvyas are interested in the relishing of rasa.\(^{25}\) Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka also mentions that only a reader who is possessed by rasa (rasāveśa) can understand the implicit meanings of verses. Abhinavagupta paraphrases this view as a pūrvapakṣa while explaining the suggested meaning of the verse Bhama Dhamma.. Here Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (tenth century A.D.) seems to say that only the reader who has relished the bhayanakarasa is able to understand the prohibition suggested by the verse.\(^{26}\)

The rhetoricians who came after Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka accepted the view that the seat of rasa was the reader. Sahṛdaya was also known as rasika or bhāvaka. Later rhetoricians like Rājaśekhara, Kuntaka, Abhinavagupta, Mahimabhaṭṭa, Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha, Jagannātha Paṇḍita etc. held sahṛdaya to be the seat where rasa was relished. Dhanaṇjaya very clearly

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\(^{24}\) ibid, p.40.
\(^{25}\) Different commentators have interpreted this line differently. Kaumudī commentary on Locana says: rasayitā rasacarvaṇaśīlaḥ sarva eva kāvye’dhikriyata iti śeṣaḥ. na boddhā janaḥ itihāsādviva, na niyogabhāk niyojyaḥ vedādviva; tena rasacarvaṇāyā adhikārasauppādakatvaṃ svakaṇṭhato vadatā āsyāḥ prādhānyena Īvānātvasamuktam eva bhavati. The word rasayitā contains the suffix tṛṇ which renders it the meaning rasacarvaṇaśīlaḥ. (tāchīlye tṛṇ)

\(^{26}\) Dhvanyāloka, pp.67-70
ments that it is the spectator/reader who relishes rasa and not the poet or the actor. He presents this point thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rasa} & \text{ sa eva svādyatvād rasikasyaīva vartanāt/} \\
nānukāryasya vṛttatvāt kāvyasyātatpatravatah/ \\
draśṭuḥ pratītip rūḏerṣyārāgadveṣaprasaṅgataḥ/ \\
laukikasya svaramaṇīsaṃyuktasyaīva darśanāt//
\end{align*}
\]

In the period after Abhinavagupta, the ability to relish rasa was closely linked to the concept of vāsanā. Abhinavagupta considered vāsanā to exist in all people. He says that sthāyībhaṇa-s like rati exist as vāsanā-s in the individuals. It is the existence of these vāsanā-s which enables sahṛdaya-s to relish rasa. Abhinavagupta says:

\[
\begin{align*}
yasyāṁ vastusatāṁ kāvyārpirānāṁ ca deśakālapramātrādīnāṁ \\
niyamahetūnāṁ anyonyapratibandhabalād atyantam aparasāṅe sa eva \\
sādhāraṇībhaṇaḥ sutarāṁ puṣyatī. ata eva sarvasāṃjikānāṁ \\
ekaghanatayaiva pratipattiḥ sutarāṁ rasaparipōṣaṇa. sarveṣāṁ \\
anādivāsanācitrīkṛtacetānāṁ vāsanāsaṃvādāt.\footnote{Daśarūpakā 4.38-39.}
\end{align*}
\]

Abhinavagupta also talks about the puṇya gained from the previous lives as a factor that helps in aesthetic enjoyment.\footnote{Acarya Madhusudan Sastri (Ed.), ṇāṭyaśāstra (Vol I), p.655.} Ruyyaka asserts the fact that the nature of rasa should be analysed based on the experience of the sahṛdaya-s.\footnote{Acarya Madhusudan Sastri (Ed.), op.cit., p. 676. tena ye kāvyābhyaśaprāktanapuṇyādihetubalādhibhiḥ sahṛdayāḥ.}
because *rasa* is relished by them.\(^{30}\) In the *Saṅketa* commentary on *Kāvyaprakāśa*, he mentions about the vāsanā-s present in the sahaḍayā-s:

\[
\begin{align*}
tathedāṃ vāsanāvabhāsa eva rasacarvayitṛtvam. sā cānādikālā vāsanā\[3pt
\text{sthāyibhūtaiva vibhāvādivaśād rasatvam āpadyate},\ldots
\end{align*}
\]

It is the vāsanā-s like *rati* that is latent in the sahaḍayā which transforms into *rasa*. This concept is adopted by most of the later rhetoricians. Viśvanātha, the author of *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, mentions a view where a reader/spectator without vāsanā is not able to relish *rasa* and he is compared to the wooden pillars and stone walls of the stage. He quotes the following verse attributed to Dharmadatta:

\[
\begin{align*}
savāsanānāṃ sabhyānāṃ rasyāsvādānaṃ bhavet/\[3pt
nirvāsanāstu raṅgāntaḥ kāśṭhakudṛśmasannibbhāḥ//\[32\]
\end{align*}
\]

The verse thus indicates that the readers who possess vāsanā can only relish *rasa*. Viśvanātha echoes this fact. He says:

\[
na jāyate tadāsvādo vinā ratyādivāsanām
\]

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\(^{30}\) Ruyyaka presents a similar idea in his commentary on *Vyaktiviveka*: …yataḥ sahaḍayānāmeva carvayitṛtvāccarvapāṇuprāpatvācca rasasya tadgatameva rasasvarūpaṃ nirūpaṅīyam. (Ruyyaka’s commentary on *Vyaktiviveka*, p.10)

\(^{31}\) Viśvanātha attributes the authorship of the verse to Dharmadatta.

\(^{32}\) Ruyyaka’s commentary on *Vyaktiviveka*: …yataḥ sthāyīyeva rasībhavedītī munivacanaprāmāṇyāt sthāyino rasatve nīrasānāṃ ca rasacarvānābhāve sadbhāvivāsanātmakaratyādisthāyībhāvānāṃ carvānaṅkagocarānāṃ rasatvamityāsmaṅkīno rāddhāntaḥ.
Viśvanātha mentions that this vāsanā is of two types: one which exists in the present life and the other which is present in the previous lives. Both are essential for a reader to enjoy rasa. The scholars of śāstra-s like Mīmāṃsā are not able to relish rasa as they lack vāsanā in the present life. People who seem to be interested in the pleasures of this world are unable to relish rasa due to the lack of vāsanā in previous lives. Rhetoricians like Mammaṭa, Jagannātha Paṇḍita talk about the existence of vāsanā in the sahṛdaya which helps them relish rasa. Thus the presence of vāsanā-s both in this life as well as in the previous ones came to be considered as a pre-requisite in the relishing of rasa. The reader with vāsanā-s alone had the sensibility to relish rasa.

In this context, it would be appropriate to take a look at Bhoja’s conception of rasika. He does not use the word sahṛdaya in his text Śṛṅgāraprakāśa. He uses the word rasika to indicate not only the reader/spectator, but also everyone who has rasa. Bhoja’s concept of rasa is rather different from that of the other rhetoricians. He conceives rasa as ahaṃkāra or an Ego present in the individual which makes a man cultured. Dr. V. Raghavan observes:

The word Rasika did not simply mean the man...of an enjoyer of poetry and drama but was applied by Bhoja to man who goes to make up the grace that distinguishes his behaviour in society from that of another who is called Nīrása...Bhoja means by Rāsikya the full bloom of one’s emotional nature as emanating

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33 Acarya Krishnamohan Sastri (Ed.), Sāhityadarpaṇa with Lākṣmī commentary, pp.93-94.
from Ahaṃkāra. As such, it produces the power to get into other’s moods, the power of sympathy.\textsuperscript{34}

Bhoja says:

\textit{ātmasthitam guṇaviśeṣam ahaṅkṛtaśya śṛṅgāram āhur iha jīvatmatmayoneḥ/}

\textit{tasyātmarakti/saktirasāṇīyatayā rasatvaṃ yuktasya yena rasiko’yam iti pravādaḥ/}

\textit{ābhāvanodayam ananyadhiyā janena yo bhāvyate manasi bhāvanayā sa bhāvaḥ/}

\textit{yo bhāvanāpatham atītya vivarttamāṇaḥ sāhamkṛte hṛdi param svadate raso’sau/}\textsuperscript{35}

When the period after Anandavardhana saw attempts to place sahṛdaya as the locus of rasa, Bhoja seems to be uninfluenced by these developments. He applies the term rasika to the readers/ spectators, poets, actors and the characters. All those who possess the ahaṃkāra which makes him cultured is a rasika. Bhoja considers this ahaṃkāra (also known as abhimāna and śṛṅgāra) as the one and only rasa. It imparts pleasure to all experiences. Here we find a different concept of rasa and rasika. The poet, characters, actors, the readers are all treated alike and Bhoja sheds his attention to the cultured individuals. Bhoja does not confine the meaning of rasika to the reader.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Dr. V. Raghavan, \textit{Śṛṅgāraprakāśa}, Introduction pp. 454-455.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Śṛṅgāraprakāśa} 1.3, 10.

\textsuperscript{36} Vide Dr. V. Raghavan’s explanation of Bhoja’s idea of rasa in the introduction to the critical edition of \textit{Śṛṅgāraprakāśa}. 
This shows a view distinct from the theories of *rasa* that developed during the time of Bhoja.

### 2.3.2. Genius of a *sahṛdaya*

Sanskrit rhetoricians had thought about the genius possessed by a *sahṛdaya* which made him different from an ordinary reader. Among the Sanskrit rhetoricians, Rājaśekhara explicitly elaborates on the genius of a *sahṛdaya*. He refers to the *sahṛdaya* as *bhāvaka*. As mentioned earlier, Ānandavardhana had already stated that the genius possessed by those who knew the *śāstra*-s was not adequate to relish the beauty of literature. Ruyyaka also says that a *sahṛdaya* alone is able to comprehend the hidden poetic meaning and other readers fail to do so because they lack *pratibhā*. He says:

\[ kāvyārtho gopyamānatvena pratipattṛmātrasyāpratibhātaḥ sahṛdayasyaiva bhāsate. \]

This indicates that a certain kind of *pratibhā* makes the *sahṛdaya* different from ordinary perceivers of literature.

Rājaśekhara considers *pratibhā* (genius) to be of two types- *kārayitrī* *pratibhā* and *bhāvayitrī* *pratibhā*. The first type of genius is found in the poets. It helps the poets to compose poetry. The second one is the appreciative genius found in the readers. Thus Rājaśekhara accepts that it is not only the poet who possesses *pratibhā*, but also the reader. He points out

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37 Dr. T. Ganapathi Sastri (Ed.), *Vyaktiviveka*, p.11.
the fact that people who possess both types of genius are quite rare in this world. He remarks:

\[
\text{kaścid vācaṃ racayitum alaṃ śrotum evāparastāṇḥ}
\]
\[
kalyāṇī te matir ubhayathā vismayaṃ nastanoti/
\]
\[
nahyekasminnatiśayavatāṇī sannipāto guṇāṇām
ekah sūte kanakam upalastaparīkṣākśamo’nyah}\

Mammaṭa says that all readers do not perceive the meanings suggested by the work using the hints given by the poet. The readers with pratibhā alone are able to understand the suggested meaning using the hints in the text. He says:

\[
vaktṛbodhavyakākūnāṃ vākyavācyānyasanniddheḥ/
\]
\[
prastāvadeśakālādervaiśṣṭyāt pratibhājuśāṁ//
\]
\[
yo’rthasyānyāṛthadhīheturyāpāro vyaktireva sā/
\]

Thus he recognizes pratibhā in the readers which helps them relish the essence of literature. Sanskrit poetics normally considered the poet and the sahṛdaya to be equal in stature, but it has accepted the fact that the appreciative and creative faculties were different from each other. Writing poetry was one thing and appreciating it was another.

2.3.3. Sahṛdaya-s as the ultimate end of the poetic effort

The poets and the dramatists were always keen to win the appreciation of the sahṛdaya-s. Rājaśekhara says that the efforts of the poet find success only in the hands of the bhāvaka. He considers the bhāvaka-s to be the fruit of the
celestial tree of poetic creation. He also says that readers are like a friend, guide, master and disciple for the poets. It is the readers who spread a literary work across different places. Rājaśekhara differentiates between literary works that remain merely as books and those which get imprinted in the readers’ minds. He says:

\[ santi \textit{pustakavinyastāḥ kāvyabandhā grhe grhe/} \\
\textit{dvitrāstu bhāvakamanaḥ śilāpaṭṭanikūṭāḥ/} \]

This reminds one about the view of Roland Barthes who differentiated between a work and a text. A work is a book that remains on the shelf without being read, while a text is one which undergoes reconstructions through the active involvement of the readers.

Rājaśekhara presents a verse about a poet who has stopped writing poetry as there are no worthy readers to appreciate the poetic effort. Thus both the poets and the rhetoricians were aware of the fact that literary creations achieved success only when their essence was enjoyed by sensible readers. A literary work comes into being when it is read by the readers. It becomes dead once it is abandoned by the readers.

38 Dr. Ganga Sagar Rai (Ed.), Kāvyamāṇḍīsa, p. 29.  
39 ibid, p. 32.  
40 Roland Barthes, The Rustle of Language, pp. 56-64.  
41 Dr. Ganga Sagar Rai (Ed.), Op. Cit., p. 31
2.3.4. Sahṛdaya-s as the judges of poetic beauty

Sahṛdaya-s were envisaged as readers who had the sensibility to identify the literature which is charming. Anandavardhana says that it is the sahṛdaya who decided whether the suggested meaning is more beautiful than the primary meaning. Kuntaka also envisages the sahṛdaya-s as the readers who understand the charm caused by the use of different artistic turns of speech. He often does not explain the charm induced by various types of artistic uses by saying that they are well understood by the sahṛdaya-s. After presenting two verses, Kuntaka says that the difference between the charm of the verses is understood by the sahṛdaya-s:

\[ \text{etayor antaraṃ sahṛdayasaṃvedyam iti tair eva vicāraṇīyam}^{42} \]

Mahimabhaṭṭa portrays sahṛdaya-s as the experts who understands the quality of kāvyā-s which are like precious gemstones. He remarks:

\[ \text{sa caivaṇvidheṣu śūktiratneṣu kaḷaṅkāyamāno manāg api na kāvyamāṇikyavaikaṭikānāṃ sacetasāṃ manāṃsyāvarjayitum alam iti.}^{43} \]

Mahimabhaṭṭa clearly states that those who understand the essence of poetry evaluate the charm of literary works. He also says that differences in the experience of reading generated by minute linguistic differences are perceived only by sahṛdaya-s. He calls sahṛdaya-s as pratītiparamārthavidaḥ.

\[ \text{cārutvācarutvanīscaye ce kāvyatattvavidāḥ pramāṇam.}^{44} \]

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42 Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy (Ed.), Vakroktijīvita of Kuntaka, p.9  
43 Dr. T. Ganapathi Sastri (Ed.), op. cit, p.43.  
44 cārutvācarutvanīscaye ce kāvyatattvavidāḥ pramāṇam.
Readers who are not sahṛdaya-s are indifferent to the fine distinctions in the charm of literary works. He says:

\[
\ldots ubhayatratā pāṭhaviparyāsāt prakramabhedadoṣadvaye pariḥte satyanayoḥ pratiiyor yādṛśam aucityānaucityam vāvīrbhavati tatpratītiparamārthavidāḥ sahṛdayā eva vivektum alam iti ta eva praṣṭavyāḥ. nānye.\]

All rhetoricians echo the fact that the charm of literature is experienced by sahṛdaya-s alone and their experience validates the beauty of literature. Viśvanātha says: sacetasāṃ anubhavaḥ pramāṇaṃ tatra kevalam. Thus it is the sahṛdaya-s who ultimately relish and evaluate the charm of literature. These are some of the common notions about sahṛdaya-s held by Sanskrit rhetoricians. Besides putting forth these common features, the rhetoricians also acknowledged the differences in the nature and aesthetic sensibility of the readers.

2.4. Types of readers

It was an accepted fact that each reader was different. The aesthetic sensibility of the readers differs. Rhetoricians were aware of the difference in the tastes of the readers. Ānandavardhana mentions that some readers are attracted by the verbal beauty of the literary works, while some others go beyond the surface level of literature. Abhinavagupta uses the word kāṣṭhāprāptasahṛdayāḥ to indicate the class of sahṛdaya-s who have reached

\[45\] Dr. T. Ganapathi Sastri (Ed.), op.cit, p.64.
the zenith of their aesthetic sensibility. Rājaśekhara enlists four kinds of readers. They are:

- **Arocakin**: This type of readers is not easy to please. They do not like any type of literature. No literary work genuinely interests them.

- **Satṛṇābhyavahārin**: This kind of readers does not have the capacity to distinguish between good and bad poetry. They read and accept all literature. Most of the readers belong to this category.

- **Matsarin**: They do not find beauty in any of the works and remain shy of appreciating good literature.

- **Tattvābhineśin**: They are the rarest type of readers. They understand the essence of literature and are interested in good literature. But one among a thousand readers belongs to this category.

Rājaśekhara also accepts the differences in the readings of different readers and wonders at it. He says that some readers identify the merits of a text, whereas some others pull out the demerits. Rājaśekhara cites the following verse which lists the qualities of a bhāvaka and says that such readers are quite rare:

\[
\text{śabdānāṃ vivinakti gumphanavidhīn āmodate süktibhiḥ} \\
\text{sāndraṃ leḍhi rasāṁṣtaṃ vicinute tātparyamudrāṃ ca yaḥ/} \\
\text{puḥyaiḥ saṅghaṭate vivektīvirahāḍ antarmukhaṃ tāmyatāṃ} \\
\text{keśām eva kadācid eva sudhiyām kāvyasramajñō janaḥ//}
\]

\[46\] Dr. Ganga Sagar Rai (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p.30.
An ideal reader enjoys the external beauty as well as the inner essence of the poem. He relishes the nectar of *rasa*. He thus recognizes and appreciates the creative effort of the poet. This clearly suggests that poetry would cease to exist if there are no readers to relish literary works. Literature exists as long as there are enough readers who understand its essence. Thus both the ancient poets and the rhetoricians were sure that it was the sensible readers who kept literature alive.

### 2.5. The reader and the poet

Both the poet and the sensible reader were held in high esteem by the Sanskrit rhetoricians. Abhinavagupta portrays the poet and the *sahṛdaya* as the two aspects of the essence of poetry. In the discussions put forth by Rājaśekhara, he presents various ancient views which treat both the reader and the poet to be similar to each other. Prof. M. Hiriyanna remarks about a view in Sanskrit poetics which considers *sahṛdaya* to be equivalent to the poet. He says:

“A fit reader of poetry is known in Sanskrit as sa-hṛdaya which word will tell us all that we need know about him. The second element of this compound—hṛdaya means 'heart' and the first stands for samāna, i.e., 'same' or 'similar/ so that the whole word signifies 'one of similar heart.' That is, the poet and the reader of poetry are of the same temperament. Both possess what is known as the 'poetic heart'; and its possession is the most important qualification of the reader of poetry. This identity of temperament between the two is assumed throughout

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47 *apūrvaṁ yadvastu...sarvatvayāstattaṁ kavisahṛdayākhyayāṁ vijayate.*

48 *...kaḥ punar anayor bheda yat kavīr bhāvayati bhāvakaśca kaviḥ ityācāryāḥ.*
Sanskrit poetics and the process of appreciating poetry is looked upon as essentially the same as producing it. Hence we frequently find Sanskrit writers describe the poet and the reader of poetry by the same set of terms. There is perhaps nothing very novel in the kinship here noticed; the point is that it receives particular emphasis in Indian works. The identity of temperament between the two means no doubt a certain restriction of the circle of competent readers of poetry; but there seems to be a good deal of truth in the restriction, for there is no warrant for assuming that the aesthetic sense is universal.\textsuperscript{49}

But there were other rhetoricians who said that the poet and the reader were entirely different. It was mentioned earlier that the genius of the reader was considered to be different from that of the poet. Rājaśekhara quotes a verse which presents sahṛdaya as one who understands the efforts of the poet.\textsuperscript{50} The variety of opinions cited by Rājaśekhara show that there was a lively discussion in the literary circle regarding the nature of the poet as well as the reader.

Sanskrit rhetoricians mostly hold the view that there is an identity of temperament between the poet and the sahṛdaya. Bhaṭṭa Tauta remarks that the hero, the poet and the reader have similar experience.\textsuperscript{51} In spite of the difference in the nature of genius of the poet and the reader, both of them have similar experience. Thus the reader is able to identify with the mind of the poet. Bhavabhūti’s words in Malatīmādhava\textsuperscript{52} also presents a poet’s

\textsuperscript{49} M. Hiriyanna, \textit{Art Experience}, p.18.
\textsuperscript{50} kāvyāśramajñō janaḥ
\textsuperscript{51} yaduktam asmad upādhyāyabhaṭṭatautena- nāyakasya kaveḥ śrotuḥ samāno 'nubhavaḥ iti. Dhvanyāloka, p.93.
\textsuperscript{52} R.G. Bhandarkar (Ed.), \textit{loc.cit.}
search for a reader who possesses a heart similar to him. It reveals the mind of a poet who wants to find a reader who understands what the poet intends to convey. All these indicate that a reader who understood the poetic intention was considered to be *sahṛdaya*.

In Sanskrit literary criticism, works were normally treated and analyzed as independent entities free from the influence of other factors like the socio-cultural background, author’s personality etc. This corresponds to the approach of the New Critics who too considered literary works to be independent and self-sufficient entities. Sanskrit rhetoricians are never seen to relish literary works taking the life and credentials of the poet as a criterion of understanding a literary work. The author’s identity or life never interfered in the relishing of literary works. But the idea of poetic intention survived in Sanskrit poetics. Thus the freedom of *sahṛdaya* seems to extend up to the relishing of poetic intention. Even the advocates of *dhvani* theory believed in the existence of poetic intention. Thus it seems that the *sahṛdaya*-s did not completely have the power to reproduce literary texts free from the clutches of authorial intention. Sensible readers were not readers who understood the texts according to their whims and fancies, but they were people who could understand and relish the poet’s heart and his intentions.

### 2.6. Readership in ancient India

Hans Robert Juass, a phenomenological critic says that reading is a process where the expectations of the reader fuse with the expectations of the text. The readers’ expectations are seen to change with time. Thus the
reception of a text in one period of history would be different from its reception in a different period. When the approach of Sanskrit rhetoricians towards the process of reading is considered, then it is necessary to take a look at the kind of readers they had in mind. The type of readers and their expectations during that age would surely be different from the readers of the present day. A study says:

When one thinks of a remote past, one is tempted to constitute its cultural space and time to see how readers responded to poetry.\textsuperscript{53}

Sanskrit rhetoricians seem to envisage a class of cultured readers of literature. Reading and appreciating literary works demanded certain level of aesthetic sensibility which was different from śāstra-ic scholarship. There are accounts of poets reading out their creations before the scholarly gatherings.\textsuperscript{54} The people in these gatherings evaluated the merits and demerits of the work. The royal courts became a prominent place where poetry was presented and appreciated. The different views regarding the essence of literature suggest that there were readers who focused on the beauty of figures of speech, guṇa-s, rīti-s etc., while there were others who stressed on the beauty of the implicit meanings of the text. The scholars who mostly constituted the class of readers appreciated the poetry which adhered to certain norms. Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy points to the existence of a class of scholarly readers for

\textsuperscript{53} C.K. Sheshadri, \textit{Ancient Indian Literature: An Anthology}, p.20.

\textsuperscript{54} Mañkha’s Śīkaṇṭhacarita, Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s Harṣacarita etc. have accounts of such scholarly gatherings.
Sanskrit literary works. Another critic also points out the elitist nature of *sahṛdaya*:

The concept of the reader in Sanskrit poetics is as elitist as in present-day theories: the *sahṛdaya* is a person of innate and/or acquired responsiveness to the text, very much like the “competent” reader, the “adept” reader or the “informed” reader in Structuralist and Post-Structuralist theory.56

This shows that not all readers belonged to the category of *sahṛdaya*. Another study points out the possible causes of the limited readership of Sanskrit literary works in ancient India. It says:

Logically, theories of poetry should lead to Literary Criticism. The evolution of Literary Criticism from Poetics was possible in the west; it did not happen here. And the question is, why? Some of the reasons for this are cultural, some literary. The first is a literary context which did not embrace a large number of readers as it does today. The question of the creation of taste or a critical awareness in reading can manifest only in a literary situation which includes a large readership. It is only natural that in a social structure which preserves an environment in which works are composed in a 'language of the gods' like Sanskrit and the majority are forbidden to learn that 'language of the gods', the number of those who could write poetry and of sahrdayas who read the compositions was exceedingly limited. When we consider the intellectual level and the background of erudition required of a poet to compose in Sanskrit, it seems the understanding of his poetry also required considerable erudition ...

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55 Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy, *Essays in Sanskrit Literary Criticism*, pp.2-3. R.S. Pathak too observes that readers of Sanskrit works in ancient India were elitist in nature.

56 Krishna S. Arjunwadker (Ed.), *op.cit*, p.6.
writing posed problems, even those who could read could not come by books as easily as they do today. ... Thus the difficulty in the writing and spreading of literary works in manuscript form as well as the high erudition and taste required for enjoying them limited the number of readers.

There was surely a clear distinction between sensible readers with aesthetic taste and ordinary readers. Rājaśekhara’s descriptions about different types of readers reveal this distinction. Poets have commented upon the dearth of sensible readers who are capable of understanding the mind/intention of the poet. Thus the number of sensible readers was obviously a restricted one. Moreover the prescriptive poetic texts led to the formation of certain expectations among the readers. It helped in inculcating a particular taste in the readers.

As mentioned earlier, Sanskrit rhetoricians used the term sahṛdaya to refer not only to the reader, but also to the spectators who enjoyed the essence of dramas. Sanskrit rhetoricians are normally seen to analyse the experience of the both the reader and the spectator with the same criterion. Only some thinkers like Abhinavagupta pointed out the minute differences in the experience of the reader and the spectator. Though it was generally acknowledged that poetic creativity was best revealed in the composition of

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dramas; the relishing of dramatic performances demanded less aesthetic sensibility. Dramas were meant to be enjoyed by people of all classes. But in the case of śravyakāvya-s, readers were required to have more imagination as the readers themselves had to visualize the descriptions given by the poets.

Thus Sanskrit rhetoricians seem to encompass in the term sahṛdaya all those who had aesthetic sensibility, taste and genius to relish the essence of literary works, be it be orally rendered, written down or visually represented.

2.7. The reading process

Most of the contemporary theories concern themselves with the act of reading. They try to analyse how the readers go about making sense of the text. The activity of reading is not just confined to the reading of written texts. It can also refer to the reading of a painting, reading of a dance performance etc. As far as literary texts are concerned, they are primarily made up of numerous linguistic units. The reader comes into contact with these verbal structures and these structures evoke a response from the reader. Here the reading process refers to aesthetic reading. It tries to trace how a reader interacts with literary texts and comprehends their meanings.

As far as Indian knowledge systems are concerned, there were many theories and views which explained the processes of verbal comprehension. Indian philosophical systems like Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Vyākaraṇa etc. had their own theories of verbal comprehension. They tried to analyze the nature

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58 See sayings like nāṭakāntaṇ kavitvam, sandarbhēṣu daśarūpakaṇ śreyāḥ.
of knowledge perceived by an individual from a linguistic utterance. They also tried to figure out the main element in a sentence which led to the comprehension of its meaning. These śāstra-s were concerned about the process by which man comprehended the ordinary language of the everyday world. Thus there developed a branch of knowledge known as śābdabodha which dealt with the varied aspects of verbal comprehension.

Sanskrit poetics (alaṅkāraśāstra) was initially concerned about the nuances of poetic language which lent beauty to kāvya-s. The literary language was considered to be different from the ordinary language. The texts belonging to different śāstra-s brought out the difference between these two streams of language. Bhaṭṭa Tauta mentions about them as:

\[
dve vartmani girāṃ devyāḥ śāstraṃ ca kavikarma ca/
praṇopajñanāṃ tayorādyāṃ pratibhodbhavam antimam//
\]

Bhoja too comments upon this difference of language in poetry. He says:

\[
yadavakraṃ vacaśśāstre loke ca vaca eva tat/
vakraṃ yadarthavādādau tasya kāvyamiti smṛtiḥ//
\]

The process of comprehension of meaning was also considered to be different in the case of the language of poetry, which had multiple layers of meaning attached to it. Both the poetic as well as śāstra-ic texts express this opinion. Jagadīśa (17th century C.E.), in his book Śabdaśaktiprakāśikā, says:

\[
tathā ca tātparyāvacchedakatayaiva sarvatra vākyārthasiddheḥ
pratyakṣānumitibhyāḥ bhinnānubhavaḥ bhāvayannapi śabdo
\]
Thus language of poetry was always considered to be different from the ordinary as well as the scientific language. The poetic language seemed to indicate something beyond the primary meaning. Modern studies also point out this nature of literary text. Non-literary texts evoke responses through direct statement, while literary texts generate readers’ response through the suggestive power of its verbal structures.  

Sanskrit rhetoricians, especially from the age of Ānandavardhana, began to focus on the process of sahṛdaya’s comprehension of literary language. The theories of reading put forth by rhetoricians tried to tackle how readers understood the language of literature and how they relished the poetic meaning. Rasa came to be considered as the supreme poetic meaning which constituted the essence of literature. Thus theories of aesthetic experience or rasāsvāda occupy a prominent place in the theories on the reading process in Sanskrit poetics.

In the modern world, literary works are available either in print form or in some electronic formats. Normally reading refers to the process of interpreting mentally words or any written or printed symbols or things expressed by their own means. It may also refer to the process of reproducing

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59 Pandit Dhundiraj Sastri (Ed.), Șabdașaktiprakāśikā, pp.28-29.
60 Krishna S. Arjunwadker, op. cit, p.18.
mentally or vocally, while following the symbols with eyes or fingers. A glance at the western theories of reading indicates that they more or less deal with the process of comprehending meaning from written or printed text. For instance, I. A. Richards talks about the reader forming mental images related to the words during the process of reading.\textsuperscript{61} He also tells about the rhythm of the words that creates an impact upon the hearer. The Structuralist critics often analyses the reading process by tracing the way by which the readers move from one word to another or from one sentence to another. Thus the western rhetoricians visualize readers who read literary works which are represented by the linguistic symbols in either printed or written form.

Prior to a discussion on the concept of the reading process in Sanskrit poetics, it is necessary to understand the concept of reading in the ancient Indian context. In India, one can find a strong tradition of oral transmission of knowledge. Texts were transmitted orally from the Guru to the disciples. Literature was generally classified into \textit{śravyakāvya} (literature to be heard) and \textit{dṛśyakāvya} (literature to be seen) by the Sanskrit rhetoricians. This may perhaps create a notion that there was no practice of writing down the literary works, instead they were only orally transmitted. But this assumption is not true. Evidences of writing in India dates back to the age of Emperor Asoka when inscriptions were written on rocks across India. When it comes to the practice of writing down the literary works, there are casual references to writing in various literary works themselves. The works of Kālidāsa have

\textsuperscript{61} I.A. Richards, \textit{Principles of Literary Criticism}, pp. 102-103.
numerous references to writing. Bāṇabhaṭṭa mentions about pustakavācaka who read out the texts written in manuscripts. He sketches the picture of a pustakavācaka who reads out purāṇa-s to people. It also says that the pustakavācaka reads it out very rhythmically. Rājaśekhara (10th century C. E. literary critic) refers to literary works which remained in the form of manuscripts in the houses. He says that there are many such works written and kept in the houses, but only a few remain in the hearts of the readers. He also mentions pen, ink, Bhūrja, palm leaf, clean boards etc. as essential materials to be possessed by a poet. In Śrīkaṇṭhacarita, Maṅkha describes the recital of his poem before a scholarly gathering. He clearly describes about the work which is written in a manuscript (he uses the word pustaka) and read out to a group. The author of Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī says that when we refer to meaning from words, the words refer to both the written as well as words that are heard (words that are grasped through eyes or ears). Thus it can be found that writing had become prevalent in ancient India by the beginning of the Common Era.

Even though the practice of writing down literary texts had become common by the tenth century; the tradition of oral transmission continued to remain strong even after the advent of writing. There are numerous

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63 Jagannath Pathak (Ed.), Harṣacarita, pp.145-146.
64 tasya saṁhaṭिकā saphakhaṭिकā samudrakaḥ salekhanīkamaśabhājānāni tādipatṛi pi bhūrjatvaco vā salohakaṇṭākāni tālalāni susammṛṣṭā bhittayaḥ satatasannihitāḥ syuḥ. Kāvyamīmāṃsā, p.111.
65 Śrīkaṇṭhacarita, 25. 142-145.
66 Sankar Ram Sastri (Ed.), Kārikāvalī muktāvalīsaḥitā, p.545.
references to the practice of reading out the literary texts before the kings or scholarly audience. Thus it can be assumed that the practice of writing in manuscripts and reading them aloud to a group of audience was quite common in ancient India. This was true in many places in the ancient period. The habit of reading silently was considered to be unusual in many places. In the 4th century A.D. Saint Augustine remarks about Saint Ambrose’s unusual habit of reading silently. Thus the practice of reading out the literary texts aloud was the common practice. In India too, the poets used to read out their new creations before the rulers in their royal courts and gathering of scholars. Royal courts consisted of men who were scholars in different streams of knowledge. Even when writing had become widely prevalent, the practice of orally transmitting the literary works orally to the people continued to exist in India. Hence Sanskrit rhetoricians are seen to classify काव्य-स as स्रव्यकाव्य and द्र्याकाव्य even after the passing of many centuries. This made the oral tradition of India different from that of other cultures. India’s literary history thus contradicts the following observation of Walter J Ong:

Literacy…consumes its own antecedents and unless it is carefully monitored, even destroys their memory.67

The priestly hymns of Greece were lost with the advent of literacy, but the oral tradition survived in India, in spite of the emergence of writing.

67 Walter J Ong, Orality and Literacy, p.15.
There have been many recent studies which try to analyse the difference between the readers’ expectations and his interactions with the text in both oral and written traditions. Walter J Ong states in his books:

> Readers whose norms and expectancies for formal discourse are governed by a residually oral mindset relate to a text quite differently from readers whose sense of style is radically textual.⁶⁸

It says that the expectations of readers in oral tradition seem to be different from that of the readers who are accustomed to textual tradition. The experience of silent reading would be different from that of listening to a work in a group.

Sanskrit rhetoricians are seen to deal with sahṛdaya’s interactions with both the śravyakāvyas and drṣṭyakāvyas on the same criterion. In ancient India, the concept of rasa embodied whole literature. A study says:

> If the poet applied all the norms, and was poetically correct, he gave the reader a particular rasa to savour, his aesthetic joy.⁶⁹

Thus whether the kāvyas was listened to or read or enacted on the stage, the important event was the relishing of rasa by the sahṛdaya.

When the enjoyment of dramas and poetry are taken into account, then Sanskrit rhetoricians mostly refer to the perception and enjoyment of both these genres of literature on the same plane. Most of the rhetoricians seem to overlook the difference in the ‘reading process’ involved in the

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⁶⁸ ibid, p.167.
⁶⁹ C.S. Sheshadri, op.cit, p.20.
comprehension and enjoyment of the two kinds of literature. Though there are some references to the differences in their enjoyment, most of the rhetoricians approach and analyse the relishing of both these genres in the same way. Abhinavagupta says that the reading and relishing of śravyakāvyas requires greater imaginative power in the readers. He makes some remarks in the differences in the enjoyment of dramas and poetry. He says:

\[
kāvye’pi ca lokaṇātyadharmisthānīyena
svabhāvoktivakroktiprakāradvayena
alaukikaprasannamadhurausvīśabdasamarpymāṇavibhāvādiyogādi
mayam eva rasavārtā. astu vātra nāṭyādvicitrarūpā pratītiḥ,
upāyavailakṣaṇyādīmayameva tāvadatra saraṃṣiḥ…pratītireva viśiṣṭā
rasanā. sā ca nāṭye laukikānumānapratītīrvilakṣaṇā; tāṃ ca
pramukhe upāyatayā sandadhānā. evaṃ kāvye
anyaśābdapratītīrvilakṣaṇā, tāṃ ca pramukhe
upāyatayāpekṣāmāṇā.\]

The process through which the sahṛdaya-s enjoy rasa (which is the ultimate poetic meaning) differ in both the drama and poetry. But the nature of experience of aesthetic delight is the same in both cases. It can be seen that there were discussions on the nature of poetic meaning and the way through which readers comprehended and relished this poetic meaning. Since rasa was considered to be the supreme poetic meaning, there were numerous discussions on the nature of relishing rasa. Besides these discussions on rasa

\[70 \textit{Dhvanyāloka}, pp.197-198.\]
experience, there were also references to the way through which the readers interacted with the texts. In the light of the modern literary scenario, it is really important to analyse the approach of Sanskrit rhetoricians to the reader’s interaction with the text.

2.8. The reading process: Approaches in Sanskrit poetics

In the present thesis, reading process is used to mainly refer to the process of interaction of the readers with the text. It includes the reader’s experience of the text and the process of generating meanings. The present thesis focuses on the views of Sanskrit rhetoricians on the reader’s participation in the reading process. It also tries to probe the reader’s role in the production of meanings from the text.

It was earlier mentioned that the reader was placed and revered on the same pedestal as the poet. Both the poets and rhetoricians were always conscious of the existence of sensible readers who kept literature alive. Sanskrit rhetoricians approached the role of the reader in the reading process in varied ways. Ānandavardhana postulated the verbal function of vyañjanā and the ability of the reader in understanding the implicit meanings manifested through the verbal power. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka introduced the concept of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa and the functions of bhāvanā and bhoga which made sahṛdaya the locus of rasa. Abhinavagupta gave shape to an independent approach which combined the main concepts propounded by Ānandavardhana and Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka. The Pratyabhijñā philosophy gave a strong background to Abhinavagupta to formulate his own aesthetic theory.
Mahimabhaṭṭa presented a different approach by proposing the theory of inference. It was a bold attempt to deviate from the established path of dhvani. Most of the later rhetoricians like Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha, Jagannātha etc. were followers of the dhvani theory. They added some of their original ideas on the reading process to the already existing ones. There was another stream of independent thinkers like Bhoja, Rājaśekhara, Kuntaka etc. who had their own vision of the concept of sahṛdaya and they presented some noteworthy ideas on the role of the reader in literature.

The succeeding chapters try to bring out the following aspects related to the reader and the reading process:

i. The concept of sahṛdaya and his place in the literary circle envisaged by the rhetoricians.

ii. The role of sahṛdaya in determining the meaning of the text.

iii. The nature of sahṛdaya’s interaction with the text.

iv. The freedom of interpretation enjoyed by the sahṛdaya and the concept of authorial intention.

v. The experience of reading and aesthetic enjoyment of the sahṛdaya.

These are some of the prominent aspects discussed in this thesis. Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Mahimabhaṭṭa are the three key figures who have dealt with these areas in detail. Their views have been collected and analysed in different chapters. The prominent views of other
rhetoricians regarding these topics have been added when required. The following chapter deals with the views of Ānandavardhana on the reader and the reading process which led to a phenomenal shift in the basic notions of Sanskrit poetic