Chapter 5

The Implications of Dhvani in Hopkins

The origin of the dhvani school is related to ancient Indian linguistic theories. Kanti Chandra Pandey clearly points out that the theory originated in connection with Sphoṭa -vāda (1: 281). S. K. De observes that a clear formulation of the theory of dhvani is found in the verses of Dhvanikāra, who must have lived close to the age of Ānandavardhana (2: 139). The very first verse of Dhvanyāloka states that the theory that dhvani is the essence of poetry was traditionally maintained by earlier thinkers (De 2: 137). Dhvanikāra is one such writer in whose memorial verses the first clear formulation of the theory of dhvani is found. It is also believed that Dhvanikāra derived the essence of this theory from the works of early grammarians and their semi-philosophical speculations on speech (De 2: 142). Ānandavardhana demonstrates that the system of dhvani is built on the system of grammarians who were the earliest theorists to apply the term dhvani to the spoken letter that reveals the sphoṭa (142). As De observes, Abhinava explains that “the theory was stated in unbroken tradition by previous thinkers, without it being discussed in particular books” (2: 141).

The sphoṭavāda was meant to explain how the uttered sound manifests sense in a language. “Sphoṭa” literally means “bursting out” or the releasing of energy when something is broken. The grammarians’ view
was that the individual sounds in a word are not competent to convey meaning. The sound manifests “an external imperceptible element” *sphoṭa*, which really conveys the idea that strikes the mind of the listener. The seeds of the modern discovery of the difference between signifier and signified can be found in this. The resonance that manifests *sphoṭa* is termed *dhvani*. The *dhvani* theory of poetics is analogous to this theory of *sphoṭa* as it postulates the different constituent elements of a poetic composition, which when taken together, reveal a deeper meaning, unexpressed by any of the individual parts — a meaning that flashes upon the *sahṛdaya* instantaneously (Vijayavardhana, 101).

One of the earliest references to the suggestive power of language is found in the *Bālakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyana*. The poet Valmīki’s reaction to the killing of a pair of *krauṇca* birds makes him utter the following: “Hunter, may you never get any peace. You have killed one of the pair of Krauṇcas in the state of infatuation with love” (qtd. in Pandey 1: 261). The grief and anger experienced by the poet are not directly expressed, but suggested.

Before the *dhvani* theory was established, only three powers of language were accepted. Pandey (1: 268) gives the following division:

1. *Abhidhāśakti* or the power of the word to arouse a conventional image of an object in the mind of the hearer.
2. *Tātparyaśakti* or the power of the individual words of a sentence to arouse individual images completely cut off from one another.

3. *Lakṣaṇaśakti* or the secondary power of words, the often cited *Gangāyām ghoṣah* (Hamlet on the Ganges). In reality, a hamlet cannot stand on the current of water. However, the meaning implied is that the hamlet is situated on the bank of the Ganges and that it is cool and holy.

The development of the fourth power of language is found in *dhvani* theory (Pandey 1: 267-270). The fourth power of language or *dhvani* can be illustrated by the following story of a pair of lovers who select a garden near the river Godavari for their secret meeting. The woman arrives a bit early and finds a religious minded man gathering flowers for worship. She knows that he is afraid of a dog that is roaming about in the place. With the intention of driving the person away, the woman makes a very suggestive statement:

> O religious minded man! You can now roam freely over this place. For, the dog, of whom (sic) you were so afraid, has been killed to-day by the proud lion, who, as you know very well, lives in the impervious thicket on the bank of Godavari. (qtd. in Pandey 1: 270)

This statement, which seems positive, is actually a negative one conveying the message to the religious person that there is risk to his life because of
the presence of the lion and it is better to leave the place as soon as possible. This example is a clear illustration of the suggestive power of words. The literal meaning is positive, that there is no fear of the dog, but the suggested meaning is negative and is favourable to the woman.

The history of dhvani covers a period of three hundred years, from the first half of the eighth century to the middle of eleventh century (Pandey 1: 265). The fourth power of language, which was called dhvani by grammarians and alankārikas, existed in oral tradition long before it was clearly formulated by Ānandavardhana. The full development of the theory can however be found in Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana and Locana of Abhinavagupta. Ānandavardhana developed the theory in full detail refuting and explaining all possible objections of its opponents. He also speaks about many linguistic functions of poetry. The first is abhidha (śabdavyāpara) or denotative meaning. The second is gunavṛitti or lakṣaṇa, the secondary meaning used in poetry. According to him, serious poetry uses also the third function of language namely, suggestion (vyanjanā) (Masson 1: 15).

Dhvanyāloka is written in both prose and verse like the majority of Sanskrit scientific classics. The prose portion is called vṛtti and the poetry section is called kārikā. It is written in four chapters called udyotas or “Flashes.” The first chapter deals with the objections that could be raised against dhvani theory. In the second chapter, we can find sub-divisions of
the theory. The concepts such as *guna*, *rīti* and *alankāra* are discussed in
detail. The third chapter deals with the process of composition and some of
the sub-divisions that are not discussed in the previous chapters. The
fourth chapter discusses in detail *pratibhā* or poetic imagination, which
brings forth innumerable compositions on a single subject. The
classification of the subject into four chapters is not exclusively done.
Very often, we can find interpenetrations of the discussions of the topics.

According to Ānandavardhana, the difference between explicate and
implicate meanings is a predominant theme of Indian philosophy and
poetics. As Krishnamoorthy says,

> It was commonly held by all that words denote primarily a
> conventional meaning and secondarily an implied one. The
> former type of sense, the one that is direct, primary and
> conventional, they called Abhideya as opposed to the latter of
> (sic) secondary signification (Laksya) (*Dhvanyāloka and Its
> Critics* 101).

According to Krishnamoorthy, Ānandavardhana has given supreme
importance to the suggested sense: “any great poet is enough to prove that
it exists and that it strikes us in a singularly delightful manner” (102). The
beauty of suggested sense is not identical with the beauty of its
components, but something over and above it. “This unique phenomenon
can be likened to the bewitching beauty in lovely women pervading their
whole physical frame and yet exceeding the symmetry of harmony of their various limbs” (Krishnamoorthy, Dhvanyāloka and Its Critics 102).

Ānandavardhana makes a distinction between alankāra and dhvani. Though there are certain elements of suggestion in some forms of alankāra, it is not highlighted as the most essential quality. To illustrate this Ānandavardhana remarks:

The twilight (heroin’s face) with twinkling stars (shining pupils) was illumined (kissed) by the moon (the hero) glowing red (overcome by emotion) so suddenly (with such love) that the entire mass of darkness (black garment) disappearing in the east (slipping even in front) due to illumination (love) was not at all noticed. (DL 21)

Ānandavardhana has already elevated rasa as the soul of poetry. He bases his theory of dhvani also on rasa. Among the different kinds of suggestion tested by him, vastu (idea), and rasa (figures of speech) are given utmost importance (Krishnamoorthy, Dhvanyāloka and Its Critics 103). Krishnamoorthy further observes, “amidst all the mass of Ānandavardhana’s scattered speculations, we are still able to recognize a running thread, it is entirely due to his steady and systematic appraisal of Rasa as the highest goal in poetry” (153). Ānandavardhana often examines the suggestive power from the point of view of the sahṛdaya. Other than metrical beauty and word meaning, the sahṛdaya derives an intrinsic
pleasure from poetry (Krishnamoorthy, *Dhvanyāloka and Its Critics* 208). According to Ānandavardhana, a mere dictionary meaning will not enable one to enjoy the beauty of a poem. A true enjoyer is the one who can feel with the poet. Though Abhinavagupta is considered as a commentator of Ānandavardhana, according to Krishnamoorthy, “he is much more than a mere commentator explaining the difficulties of text; he is an original thinker, representing the whole theory in fuller and more comprehensive form” (*Dhvanyāloka and Its Critics* 217).

According to Abhinavagupta, *rasa* is created in *sahṛdaya* and the bliss experienced in *rasa* enjoyment is of a transcendental nature. “Though the individual self is none other than the omnipotent God, so long as there is no recognition of this, there is no bliss. The poet’s function also is said to be of the same category” (Krishnamoorthy, *Dhvanyāloka and Its Critics* 224).

Abhinavagupta makes a distinction between the ordinary and the poetical uses of language. In the ordinary use of language, meaning is limited by conventional needs of communication. In such situations, one cannot perceive two different meanings at the same time; when contrasting meanings emerge, they may be discarded for the practical purpose of communication. However, this is different in the case of poetical use. As Abhinavagupta says,

The case of the poetical word is however different. Here, indeed,
the aesthetical expression, etc., once perceived, tends to become itself an object of aesthetic experience and one has therefore no ulterior application of convention. (Gnoli, Introduction xxxiii)

He adds that in aesthetic experience what happens is, instead, the birth of the aesthetic tasting of the artistic expression:

Such an experience, just as a flower born of magic, has, as its essence, solely the present, it is correlated (sic) neither with what came before nor with what comes after. This experience is therefore different both from the ordinary experience and from the religious one (Gnoli, Introduction xxxiii-xxxiv).

It is to be noted that in the dhvani theory of Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta the multiplicity of meanings or resonance is admissible only in poetic utterance. In the ordinary use of language, that tendency remains restricted. “Therefore, what reason can one adduce for the fact that, on hearing the phrase: ‘He who desires Heaven, must offer the fire-sacrifice’, one does not perceive the meaning, ‘he must eat dog-flesh?’” (Gnoli, Introduction xxxiii). In poetic expressions, language is released from its restrictions of conventional meaning. As Gnoli says, “the words, in poetry, must therefore have an additional power, that of suggestion, and for this very reason the transition from the conventional meaning to the poetic one is unnoticeable” (Introduction, xxxii). Gnoli further remarks that Abhinavagupta was indebted to Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika and
Bhartṛhari for his discussion of the practical purpose of language (Introduction xxxii).

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that it is the suggestive power of language that enables a poet to produce the aesthetic experience that can lead to higher consciousness in the *rasa* experience. However, Abhinavagupta by maintaining the distinction between the aesthetic experience and the mystical experience paves the path to move from one state of consciousness to the other, through *dhvani* and *rasa*. According to Masson and Patwardhan, “Abhinavagupta is the first writer in India to deal with issues of religion in terms of literary criticism” (1: 7).

It is often observed that the aesthetic consciousness is capable of developing into religious or mystical consciousness. As Gnoli observes,

Religious experience . . . marks the complete disappearance of all polarity, the lysis of all dialexis in the dissolving fire of God: Sun, Moon, day and night, good and evil are consumed in the ardent flame of consciousness. The knots of “I” and “mine” are, in it, completely undone. The yogin remains, as it were, isolated in the compact solitude of his consciousness, far beyond any form of discursive thought. (Gnoli, Introduction xxxix-xl)

Bhaṭṭanāyaka too discusses the relationship between the aesthetic and the mystical experiences. But Abhinavagupta did not fail to show the boundary
line separating the mystical consciousness from the aesthetic consciousness.

The potential of the suggestive power of poetry to develop aesthetic as well as religious consciousness opens up the possibility of comparing Abhinavagupta’s aesthetic theory with the poetry of Hopkins. The evolution of aesthetic experience into religious consciousness through the suggestive power of language is the distinctive quality of the theological aesthetics of Hopkins’s poetry. Critics often point out the suggestive quality of Hopkins’s poetry. “The Windhover,” one of the greatest poems of Hopkins, has numerous interpretations illustrating its suggestive quality. William Empson in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* analyses the range of meanings implied in the word “Buckle” (260). According to him, “The Windhover” is an “evident example of the use of poetry to convey an indecision, and its reverberation in the mind” (260).

The suggestive quality of the poem “The Windhover” is very evident from the opening lines: “I CAUGHT this morning morning’s minion, king-/dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in/his riding …” (Poems 69). The term “I” suggests various interpretative possibilities. Obviously, it is the grammatical “I.” However, it can also include the empirical “I,” the personality of the poet, the subjective self, the theological and religious dimensions of the self, the ego of the poet, and so on. The word “caught” that follows “I” is also highly suggestive.
Michael Sprinker points out that “Caught a glimpse of” seems an obvious reading, but the sense of “capture” lingers in the background. The meaning of the word “caught” varies and finds many alternative meanings as further lines of the poem are read and contemplated upon. It can imply that Hopkins “caught” the action and not the bird and it can also imply the kestrel’s flight catching the attention of the poet (6). Sprinker observes:

Strictly speaking, the poem is not about a bird at all, nor even about the transcriptions of a perceptual experience, though interpretations must begin with the elements and relationships posited by the poem as if it were about a physical bird and the sighting of its flight by the poet. (6)

As he further adds, in “The Windhover” the true subject is not the flight of the kestrel but the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ (6). Hopkins goes on to describe the various movements of the bird in the air and then, in the sestet of the sonnet, comes the arresting word “Buckle”:

My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, — the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!
Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

(Poems 69)
The word “Buckle” suggests the intensity of earthly desire in the poet or the qualities of freedom and beauty that the flight of the bird represents. We cannot think of another word than “Buckle” to suggest the intensity of pressure involved in surrendering the earthly glory. W. H. Gardner gives three possible meanings that can be equally applied to the word “Buckle”:

This presumably imperative (but possibly indicative) vb. is the main crux of the poem. Which of three possible meanings did the poet intend? Each one has been regarded, by some commentators, as exclusively or primarily opposite: (1) the arch ‘prepare for action,’ ‘come to grips,’ ‘engage the enemy,’ (2) ‘clasp, enclose, fasten together’ as under one discipline; (3) the more common meaning ‘bend, crumple up, collapse’ under weight or strain. (Poems, Notes 268)

The interpretation of “Buckle” given by Paul L. Mariani is also impressive:

And yet for all of Christ’s “Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume,” the speaker is drawn to that final sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is in his giving of his life for his people, in the V-shaped collapse of his out-pinned arms, when his body buckled under its own weight, it is then that a fire (the unleashed graces of Redemption for billions of souls) “a billion/Times told
lovelier, more dangerous” broke from this valiant knight, God’s minion, His dauphin, this chevalier. (112)

The suggestive quality of the word is carried forward by the word “AND” which immediately follows it. Hopkins has used capital letters for this conjunction, and the word is the door opening to transcendence, the ultimate aim of his art. The word “AND” suggests also the effect of the surrender through “buckling.” It is the self-surrender that leads to greater glory, similar to the one found in the life of Jesus Christ.

The first editor of Hopkins’s poetry, Robert Bridges, was one of the earliest critics who perceived the linguistic richness and suggestive power of his poetry. At the same time, he was also aware that this quality could deter readers from his poetry as it could make the poems extremely obscure. His remark about “The Wreck” that “the poem stands logically as well as chronologically in the front of his book, like a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance” reveals his insight into the suggestive quality of his friend’s poetry (PGM 106). Hopkins was also aware of this fact as he writes about the poem:

Granted that it (the *Wreck of the Deutschland*) needs study and is obscure, for indeed I was not over-desirous that the meaning of all should be quite clear, at least unmistakable, you might, without the effort that to make it all out would seem to have required, have nevertheless read it so that lines and stanzas
should be left in the memory and superficial impressions
deepened, and have liked some without exhausting all. I am sure
I have read and enjoyed pages of poetry that way. Why,
sometimes one enjoys and admires the very line one cannot
understand, as for instance ‘If it were done when ’tis done’ sqq.,
which is all obscure and disputed, though how fine it is
everybody sees and nobody disputes. And so of many more
passages in Shakspere (sic) and others. (LB 50)

F. R. Leavis was one of the earliest critics who noticed the linguistic
richness of the poetry of Hopkins. As he remarks in his book New
Bearings in English Poetry, “The way in which Hopkins uses the English
language (that is the primary order of consideration; ‘consciousness of the
universe’ is an unprofitable abstraction apart from it) contrasts him with
Milton and associates him with Shakespeare” (125).

Hillis Miller highlights the suggestive power of Hopkins’s poetry in
his essay, “The Univocal Chiming.” He speaks about the harmonious
multiplicity of meanings in Hopkins’s poetry about the world of infinite
multiplicity. Hopkins relies on the linguistic energy of the words selected
for his poems. Words harmonise not only with the things that they signify,
but also with the multiplicity of similar words in sound and meaning
(Miller 93). To Hopkins, the multiplicity of similar sounding words and
the multiplicity of meanings they generate are linked to the multiplicity of things in the world:

Glory be to God for dappled things—

For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;

(Poems 69)

Analysing the poem “Pied Beauty,” Miller says that “there is an elaborate pattern of alliteration, assonance, and rhyme which creates a canon of sound repeating in another form the meaning of the poem” (102-103). A remarkable feature of the multiplicity in the individual objects as well as their meanings reflected in poetry is that they all flow back to God, the unity from which all multiplicity is generated. According to Miller, “God is the most wonderful example of piedness, for in him the most radically different things, diversity and unity, are reconciled and made one” (103). It is the suggestive quality of a poem that opens up the possibility of multiple interpretations that lead to aesthetic enjoyment.

Regarding the elliptical speech forms of Hopkins’s poetry, F. R. Leavis in his pioneering study, New Bearings in English Poetry, remarks that Hopkins had “positive uses for ambiguity, and he presumed to expect from the reader prolonged and repeated intellectual effort” (122). One of
the poems Leavis takes up for analysis is the “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo.” He remarks that the refined quality of Hopkins’s poetry using the potentiality of English to echo the sound of words and their reverberating meanings is evident in this poem. The very title of the poem “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo” reminds us of the dhvani theory of Indian poetics. As Leavis further remarks, “melody, harmony and counter point, the devices frequently used by Hopkins in his poetry are not the only greatness of the poem, these devices are used for expressing complexities of feeling and the movement of consciousness” (129).

“How to keep—is there any any, is there none such, nowhere

Known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace,

Latch or catch or key to keep

Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from vanishing away? (Poems 91)

Paul L. Mariani indicates the echoing back of sound and sense in his commentary on this poem:

Another poetic effect is the internal chiming and sliding of one word into a cognate which also sounds similar. In the opening
there is the play on “none . . . nowhere known” and the verbal sliding of “bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce, látch or catch or key to keep,” and we are back to the beginning with “keep.”

(189-90)

Multiple echoes of sound and sense, deviant and multiple meanings are not a burden of Hopkins’s poetry as many of his early readers misunderstood. As in Indian poetics, it is an enrichment of poetry. Hopkins made use of this in a remarkable way in his poetry, which has been increasingly highlighted by critics ever since F. R. Leavis’s pioneering study *New Bearings in English Poetry* was published. C. N. Srinath in his essay “Vakrokti in the Poetry of Hopkins with Reference to *The Windhover*” comments on the “The Leaden Echo” thus:

> The agony of the poet in keeping beauty from vanishing away is not just the expression of *Srīnāgaṃhava* of a *Saundaryopaasaka* (sic) but an implicit knowledge of the ephemerality of life in the mature outlook of the poet which leads him to enlightenment, *Jnāna*. (104)

According to Hopkins, God gives rise to or originates language in human beings. Sprinker remarks that according to this theory of Hopkins, God imparts knowledge of creation to man by endowing him with the language (or a language capacity) that reflects the things in the
world. This Adamic language is original, in the etymological sense of the word, which means “to arise like the sun of the East. (53)
Hopkins has expressed his insight about the multiplicity of meaning of words on many occasions: “And here consider that in religion more than in language a thing may have not one origin, it may be at the meeting point of many influences. Even words (as they say is shewn in Murray of allow) are sometimes two words rolled into one, approximated till they blend their meanings” (FL 266).

Like Sprinker, Samanta also observes the tension in Hopkins between the logocentric order and the desire to go into the world of ever-increasing multiplicity:

However, the ‘underthought’ or the subtext of the poem militates against the poet’s blatant attempt to impose a logocentric order, suppressing his Other which he must confront and try to transgress if possible. This otherness of discourse manifests itself in his frequent questions, doubts and fears, which are directed against the Logos. (113)

The tension in Hopkins between the “dapple” of existence and its implications is clearly brought out by Leavis: “His heart ‘rounds’ him, i.e. whispers (as in the ballads), and ‘rounds upon him’ with, the thought that he has sacrificed the ‘dapple’ of existence for the stark dichotomy of right and wrong” (137). According to Leavis, “the inner friction expressed in
the equivocal burden of *The Windhover* comes out more explicitly in *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, which, if it represents a less difficult undertaking, is more indubitably a complete success” (135). As critics often do not give adequate importance to this poem, a prominent section is quoted below:

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EARNEST, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous,

. . . stupendous

Evening strains to be time’s vast, womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.

Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height

Waste; her earliest stars, earlstars, stárs principal, overbend us,

Fire-féaturing heaven. For earth her being has unbound; her dapple is at end, as-

tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; self in self steepéd and páshed—quíte

Disremembering, dismémbering áll now. Heart, you round me right

With: Óur evening is over us; óur night whélms, whélms, ánd will end us. (*Poems* 97-98)
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The poem “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves” touchingly brings out the movement from the luxurious multiplicity of being to the agony, despair, and the darkness:

Heart, you round

me right

With: Our evening is over us, our night whêlms, whêlms,

and will end us. (Poems 97)

Hopkins’s poems, being pre-eminently suggestive, give wide scope for interpretation using the poetic theories of Abhinavagupta and Ānandavardhana. The multiplicity of interpretations that has emerged for all the major poems of Hopkins especially “The Windhover” and “The Wreck” amply illustrates this. The suggested meanings in his poems can be found at many levels such as words, verses as well as the entire poem. The whole configuration of suggested meanings produces the gestalt which Hopkins calls “inscape.” The corresponding response of the sahrdaya is called “instress,” which is a rhyming relationship between the poem, the poet and the reader. The following verses illustrate this very well:

I am soft sift

In an hourglass—at the wall

Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,

And it crowds and it combs to the fall; (Poems 52)

Physically it is not possible for the speaking voice to get inside an
hourglass to be soft sifted like sand. But his mind or inner being could be soft sifted like sand in an hourglass. Therefore, the poet while speaking about the motion of the sand inside the hourglass is actually telling us about an inner experience. When he proceeds with all the subtle movements and dynamics of the sand particles, he is actually describing the subtle movements and dynamics of the mind, something that cannot be easily described, but only suggested.

When we examine the following verse from one of Hopkins’s poems, “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day” (Poems 101), it strikes us that on waking up one sees the light of day, not darkness. However, the poet experiences something just the opposite. By the word “wake” he means, falling asleep and experiencing darkness, the darkness of black hours of inner agony. Upon waking one experiences daylight, but he experiences the night. The word “night” is suppressed for artistic effect and the term “dark” is used in its place. Night-day, light-darkness, and waking-falling asleep are reversed; and one thing is said to stand for the opposite. Hopkins was very much aware of this obscurity in his poems, but he never attempted to avoid it. According to Raymond V. Schoder,

He protests that the trouble lies not in his words but in reader’s unawareness of their meaning. He is ready to explain terms when asked, and even proposed writing brief prose ‘arguments’ for each poem, or at least the harder ones. As he says of his poem 49,
Rodriguez, “The sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being intelligible.” Even so, obscurity is not wholly evil: “. . . that is the main thing, to be correct; if I am that, that is the great point gained.” (195)

According Masson and Patwardhan, serious poetry uses the suggestive power of words to arouse poetic meaning (vyanjana) (1: 15). Abhinavagupta goes beyond the suggestive power of poetry. Referring to the often-quoted gangāyām ghoṣah, Locana says that though this line is suggestive, it does not produce beauty. Unless the suggestive power leads to beauty, there is no true poetry. As Masson and Patwardhan put it, “The key word here is cārutvapratīti for which Abhinava adds the fine expression: viśrāntisthāna, that which affords the reader aesthetic repose” (1: 16). This takes us to the most important question in Indian poetics: where does true poetry get its true appreciator? The answer is in rasavāda. Abhinavagupta in Locana makes the purpose of poetry still more explicit: “the perception of beauty will be the soul of poetry” (qtd. in Masson and Patwardhan 1: 16).

According to Abhinavagupta, the suggestive power of meaning leads us to the perception of beauty and its ultimate source. If not, it will recoil on itself and its dynamism will come to rest on literal meaning. As Masson and Patwardhan say, “Abhinava means that suggestion, if given its proper scope, would carry us deeper into a poem, but if hampered by other
considerations, it is emasculated and merely performs an intellectual
function” (17). The denotative meaning is completed by the unfixed
(aniyata).

It is interesting to note that the seeds of poststructural theories of
interpretation of poetry can be found in the theory of aniyata of
Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. They explain that the nature of
suggestion, though not niyata, is yet not arbitrary. Abhinavagupta
introduces the pūrvapakṣa as follows:

Since it is not fixed, one can imagine it to be anything one likes,
for it has no real nature. This means that it is not proper to
examine something which has no real existence. (aniyatadvād
yathāruci kalpyeta pāramārthikam ṛūpaṁ nāstīti, na cāvastunāḥ
parīksopapadyata iti bhāvah). (qtd. in Masson and Patwardhan,
2: 19 note)

We can see in this theory the foreshadowing of the deconstructive
strategy without its extreme tendency of nihilism. The meaning is neither
fixed nor arbitrary if aniyata can lead to a response from the perceiver or
reader towards cārutvapraṭīti, dhvani and rasāsvāda. Though rasa is the
goal of poetry, it is not something limited or configurable by the pattern of
words in a poem. As Masson and Patwardhan say, Abhinavagupta often
insists that rasa is not something “certain” (niyata) (1: 7). The same word
is used of the sahṛdaya who is not “bound” by time and space in an
aesthetic experience. Rasa experience takes the sahṛdaya out of the limitations of logic and grammar into the experience of limitless enjoyment and ānanda, the indescribable union of ātman and Brahman, suspending the experience of time and space.

In short, the quality of rasasvāda depends not only on the quality of a poem or drama but also on the aesthetic and spiritual response of the reader or spectator. As Hopkins says, the form and pattern of words or natural objects would remain only “scapes,” without the right perceiver. They become “inscape” and “instress” in the perception and response of the perceiver or reader.

“Inscape” and “instress” are the key terms in understanding not only Hopkins’s mind and philosophy but also his theological aesthetics. He often mentioned his interest in creating “inscape” in his poems, and wanted the reader’s response in the form of “instress.” In the “Wreck” he says, “Since, tho’ he is under the world’s splendour and wonder, / His mystery must be instressed, stressed.” (Poems 53). In his Journal entry of 29 June 1868, Hopkins speaks about “the instress of loveliness.” As he developed his theory of “inscape” and “instress,” they became central to his poetry and spiritual vision. He identifies “inscape” with being and beauty without which reality becomes meaningless: “All the world is full of inscape” (JP 230). In March 1871, he noted in his Journal: “Unless you refresh the mind from time to time you cannot always remember or believe how deep
the inscape in things is” (JP 205). On 15 Feb 1879, he wrote to Bridges, “inscape is what I above all aim at in poetry” (LB 66). The perception of “inscape” leads a sahṛdaya to a response of “instress.” The emotional response implied in “instress” is related to the perception of beauty in “inscape.”

The relationship between the aesthetic and the religious experience that is very crucial in the poetry of Hopkins also occupied the attention of Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta. As Gnoli says:

Abhinava, while accepting, on the one hand, the solution put forward by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, did not fail, on the other, to show up clearly the boundary lines which separate the state of mystical consciousness from that of aesthetic consciousness. Religious experience, he argued, marks the complete disappearance of all polarity, the lysis of all dialexis in the dissolving fire of God.

(Introduction xxxix)

In aesthetic experience, life with its diversity and individuality has its place, although with a certain degree of detachment. However, in the religious experience that has mystical character, there is complete surrender of the observing subject to the object of worship, Parameśvara. In suitable situations, aesthetic movement can transform itself into a religious experience by transcending the limitations of the ego. Gnoli observes:
In the very moment that thought (vimrsa, samviti, etc.) which, in reality, is nothing but subject, becomes the object of thought (i.e., when it is taught, meditated upon, etc.), it transforms itself into the image of Ego (aham), Self (ātman), Consciousness (samvid), God (Īśvara, Paraṁśvara, Śiva), etc.” (Introduction xl).

In the religious or mystical moment, God who remains immanent and consubstantial with the thought that thinks of him becomes as if transcendent to it and separate from it (Gnoli, Introduction xl). So in the religious experience, the need for the transcendent God appears beyond the self-sufficiency of aesthetic experience. This is very evident in the development of rasa theory in Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and others. It is to be remarked that the very same movement is seen in the religious aesthetics of Hopkins. The enjoyment of beauty produces conflict in him until he finds a way to reconcile his concern for the beauty of individuality with the eternal beauty of God through the surrendering of individuality.

The dhvani theory throws light on the interpretative possibilities of the written word. In spite of using logocentric techniques of alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, and sprung rhythm, Hopkins was an experimenter who exploited the potentiality of language for resonance or suggestion. However, he was skeptical about his poetic innovations that led to obscurity. Even Robert Bridges, his closest friend, could not
comprehend the radically varied use of language in his poetry. Michael Sprinker claims that Hopkins’s theory of poetry has affinities with the deconstructive theory of Derrida. He finds that Hopkins’s poetry realizes a theory of writing similar to the Derridian theory of the text:

Though I shall finally argue that Hopkins’s poetry realizes a theory of writing not unlike the Derridian theory of the text, the drama of his poetic career was sustained by his continual and simultaneous attraction and resistance to precisely such a theory.

(72)

He further argues that Hopkins was in conflict regarding his attraction and resistance to a theory of language in some way similar to the one developed by Derrida later. This is the reason why in order to remove the difficulties in the interpretations of his poems, he often recommended reading them aloud. He wrote to Bridges about the poem “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves”:

Of this long sonnet above all remember what applied to all my verse, that it is, as a living art should be, made for performance and that its performance is not reading with the eye but loud, leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical) recitation, with long rests, long dwells on the rhyme and other marked syllables, and so on. This sonnet shd (sic) be almost sung. (LB 246)
Without theorizing much, Hopkins offers the scope for deconstructive reading of his poetry. However, the deconstructive reading of his poems has restrictions, as the interpretations often tend to move to the transcendental signified. The use of deconstructive strategy in the interpretation of his poetry is limited by the transcendental signified of his religious faith. According to Sprinker, certain congruence between Hopkins’s poetic practice and Derridian theory will emerge, though only through the unmasking of Hopkins’s apparent and persistent logocentrism (72).

The Indian concept of *dhvani* and Hopkinsian practice of poetry offer scope for deconstructive reading, in spite of their apparent logocentrism. Nevertheless, the deconstructive strategy has only limited application in *dhvani* theory as well as Hopkins’s poetic practice. The aim of attaining beauty does not allow the *dhvani* theory and Hopkins’s poetry to go to the full extent of deconstruction. At the same time, the deconstructive tendencies of Hopkins’s poetry do not accommodate logocentrism completely. Hopkins’s own ambivalent attitude to logocentrism is evident in his poems. As Sprinker says, the attraction and resistance to logocentrism is registered in the poems themselves, but it also appears in his comments upon the special difficulties presented to the reader by the poems (72). Though Hopkins’s poems have always
stimulated large number of interpretations, sometimes even contradictory, they do not accommodate the full utilization of deconstructive strategy.

Further study is needed to find out whether this attraction and rejection of logocentrism has anything to do with the conflict of priest and poet in Hopkins. The conscious rejection of beauty by the priest is similar to the apparent attraction to logocentrism. A parallel movement is seen in the unconscious attraction to beauty and the hidden tendency to outgrow logocentrism.

In an obscure passage in the *Sermons and Devotional Writings* Hopkins speaks about the centrality of the self. The self is presented as the centre of reference with concentric circles around it. The innermost circle, which can be called the centre, is its own, but the rest of the concentric circles though belonging to it are outside it. But as he continues the discussion, unknowingly a deconstruction of the self takes place:

For, to speak generally whatever can with truth be called a self . . . such as individuals and persons must be, it is not a mere centre or point of reference for consciousness or action attributed to it, everything else, all that it is conscious of or acts on being its object only and outside it. Part of this world of objects, this object-world, is also part of the very self in question, as in man’s case his own body, which each man not only feels in and acts with but also feels and acts on. If the centre of reference spoken
of has concentric circles round it, one of these, the inmost, say, is its own, is of it, the rest are to it only. Within a certain bounding line all will be self, outside of it nothing: with it self begins from one side and ends from the other . . . . A self then will consist of a centre and a surrounding area of circumference, of a point of reference and a belonging field, that latter set out, as surveyors, etc. say, from the former; of two elements, which we may call the inset and the out setting or the display. (SD 127)

The alienation of the innermost circle from the rest of the circle is reflected in the personality and poetry of Hopkins. Though he manifested the same fascination for the finite self and the Ultimate Being as the Indian thinkers, it did not enable him to solve the darkness of suffering and the aridity of alienation. If he had obtained the opportunity and time to study Indian thinking more, he would have looked forward to the promise of spiritual showers from the East as T. S. Eliot did in “The Wasteland.”