Closely related to the problem of truth in art is the one of meaning. We have seen the kind of truth that occurs in art is not the demonstrable and verifiable kind of truth that occurs in science and logic. Evidently the kind of meaning that a work of art conveys is not of the conventional kind. In everyday life, in scientific and logical works we generally analyze statements and events and our reactions towards them, by saying what they "mean" to us. The question arises, can a work of art be analyzed similarly? Can the meaning of a poem, for instance, be given to us in the same way as the meaning of a geometrical theorem, that is through a process of logical deduction? If this be not so, what is the sense in which we are entitled to infer meaning from works of art? In what way do such works communicate their sense to us, indeed if they do communicate at all?

Let us first see the various senses in which the term "meaning" is used. In logical and causal deductions meaning is inferred objectively from the stipulated premises as when we say, "Dark clouds mean rain" or that "If ten times two is twenty, it means twenty times two is forty". In the case of emotional attitudes
meaning is derived in terms of a general feeling of significance, as when we say of a town to which we are attached due to childhood memories, "this town means a lot to me". There are several such meanings of meaning. Ogden and Richards in their *Meaning of Meaning*, list sixteen of them.¹ John Hospers gives some of the main senses in which this term is used in his work *Meaning and Truth in the Arts*.² But as he points out, while in most such cases it becomes fairly clear as to what is meant when the term "meaning" is used, confusion arises when we try to analyze in a similar manner our responses to a work of art and ask, "what does this piece of music mean?", in the same way, as we would ask "what does this mathematical equation mean?", or "what does his behaviour mean?". In the case of scientific statements the sense is clearly factual and logical. What the statement means, is inferred from the objectively presented facts either through a process of physical verification or logical deduction. But in the case of an artistic work, such as poetry, music or sculpture, the meaning is not so evident, for as we have seen it is closely connected with feeling which is unanalyzable.

²Ibid., p. 74.
John Hospers aptly questions the justification of applying the term "meaning" at all, to works of art. He poses the problem lucidly in the following way: "It is possible to have intense and valuable experiences in response to works of art, without attempting to make claims for them or to characterize the works to which they are responses. As a rule, however, this is just what we try to do; and here endless confusion begins. We ask, "what is the meaning of this piece of music?" Without stopping to ask ourselves, what it is that we are asking, precisely what sense of "meaning", is being used here, or what it means for a work of art to have meaning".  

The problem of meaning in art (mainly poetry and music and drama) is discussed extensively in treatises on Indian poetics. The group of thinkers already referred to as the dhvani theorists, represented chiefly by Ānandavardhana, the predecessor of Abhinavagupta, is the first to point out the inherent contradiction in the position and to state that there is no proper sense in


4. We know of three important dhvani theorists — (1) Dhvanikara (8th century), his commentator, (2) Ānandavardhana, and his commentator, (3) Abhinavagupta. The first two are responsible for the famous Dhvanīloka.
which we can say that poetry "means" anything. At best it only suggests or evokes. To this suggestive meaning they give the ambigious and somewhat elusive name dhvani, which means literally the resonance or reverberation that seems to cling to a work even after the performance or recital is over. It is like an aura or powerful fragrance which pervades the atmosphere entirely with its presence. 5

According to this theory dhvani, or poetic meaning is characteristically different in kind from logical meaning; while poetry uses the medium of language, which is also the medium used in science, logic and daily discourse, its sense is not derived from the words in the same manner. At a definite moment poetic meaning

5Dhvani means 'suggestive sense', or 'resonant sense', which arises from the unity of word and sense. Dhvani is compared by some writers to the grace and charm of a woman while the words in their literal sense, to her body (Dhvanalokalocana. I, 4-5, I, 4). We may compare with this concept A.C. Bradley's notion of poetry as a unity of sound and sense; the latter he called 'resonant meaning', as it is suggested and yet it is not anything apart from the poem itself (Oxford Lectures on Poetry, Macmillan, London, 1909, pp. 13-15, 26) Santayana also gives a similar idea when he talks about the fused associations which cling in the form of a suggestion to the art work (Sense of Beauty, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936, pp. 145-146).

Cf. Mrcchakatika, III, 5: "To tell the truth, although the song is ended, I seem to hear it as I walk".
breaks off markedly from the conventional symbolism of words and reveals a completely new sense. The distinct feature of this view is that dhvani does not form an extension of language in its ordinary usage, nor is it just another one of its functions, but its presentation in a unique and hitherto unperceived manner. Poetic meaning is not the meaning given by words in their logical or emotive sense, but in their conversion into something new. This sense which emerges has no precise or inferrable correlation with the words of the poem.

Dhvani cannot be explained either in terms of metaphor, simile or any other figure of speech. Excellent poetry has been written without the use of a single metaphor. And equally good poetry has been written with an abundant use of it. The ornamentation of language alone does not necessarily create poetry, nor is it the outcome of style, versification or any syntactical rules. What then, is dhvani? The answer to this question is intimately linked with the analysis of words and their meanings. Ordinarily when we state the meaning of a word or phrase, we are stating what the word refers to, what it has by convention come to stand for. Words are conventional symbols, referring to something beyond themselves. The syntactical use of words in sentences is also a matter of convention and often meanings change with the relationship and
placement of words within the sentence. According to the theory of meaning formulated by the Indian theorists, words in poetry do not have this kind of relationship to their meanings, but a very special one.

The theory is briefly as follows:

Poetry is the natural unity (sāhitya) of word (sabda) and sense (artha) whereby the two fulfil one another in a special relationship. This is an intimate and necessary association which signifies a kind of mutual adjustment whereby ordinary words take on an extraordinary sense.

In poetry words are employed in a manner, whereby more than their conventional meanings are revealed. The Sanskrit term artha refers to this comprehensive and intimate relationship which the simple terms "meaning" or "sense" cannot indicate. Artha implies a kind of natural and inherent relationship. It is properly speaking the inexchangeable and necessary meaning of sabda and not any arbitrary connection. The term sāhitya which came later to be used for literature, implies this special union between words and their sense. Sāhitya

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6Sāhitya is the Sanskrit word for literature, meaning union, compatibility, contact, balance etc. The Sāhitya is of word and sense, the two are compared by Kuntaka (10th century A.D.) to two close friends, one having powers and virtues equal to the other.
is not only a togetherness but an inseparability as well. Consequently the term which meant originally a simple union came to signify a very special kind of relationship as can exist only in poetry. This is an organic unity; Kālidāsa illustrates it metaphorically by comparing poetic words to that image of Siva which is known as the Ardhanārīśvara that is, a god who is half-male (Śiva) and half-female (Pārvatī).

Other poetic thinkers have compared this relationship to the compatible understanding that exists between two good friends (maitrī) or to the perfect repose found by the body when in bed (śayya). But what precisely is this inherent and natural relationship between words and meaning whereby ordinary phrases (which are the media of poetry) are converted suddenly into poetic phrases. To pose the question in the words of the Indian theorists, what is the special quality (viśesha), which gives to words in their conventional and literal usage an extraordinary sense, whereby they become poetic? This question demands a further analysis.

74th century A.D., poet and dramatist.

Ardhanārīśvara is the form of Śiva which is half-male and half-female.

Cf. note 6 above. Śayya means literally 'bed'.

Cf. note 6 above. Sayya means literally 'bed'.

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The Indian theorists recognize three logical functions of language: (1) Abidhā, which through denotation gives the conventional meanings of words; (2) Tātparya, which is the meaning which the word acquires within the contextual relationship of the sentence; and (3) Lakshana, which is implied meaning. Often a statement if taken literally gives contradictory meanings, in which case the meaning even though it is not directly stated can be implied from the words. For instance, if we say "a house on the river Ganges", it is clearly implied that the house, is on the bank of the river and not situated on the current of water. These three functions, however, are insufficient to give poetic meaning, which depends upon another indirect function of language, namely its power to manifest a suggested sense.

This point needs clarification. In scientific works and for the purpose of everyday communication language is used in its logical function. That is the words are employed for the sake of the meanings they directly refer to, the meanings they gain within the contextual relationship of the sentence and the meaning implied thereby. Words in any language however, are not purely symbolic, inasmuch as the meanings which accrue to them in the course of time are not only those which

have been given to them logically, through denotation and connotation, but also those which have gathered around them associatively. Such words are predominantly affective, and arouse, apart from logical meanings, a host of emotions and imagery. Poetry uses words predominantly in this affective way. Meanings in poetry are not given directly, through a literal translation of the words, but rather indirectly through their suggestive power. The essence of poetry lies in the effect it evokes, the imagery and feeling it gives rise to, and not in the factual accuracy of its statements. In this respect it is totally contrasted to science, wherein the function of language is purely statement of fact.

The words in poetry actually have a double function. As conventional symbols, they convey direct meanings. But within the structure of the poem words also function suggestively. Indirectly, they give rise to images, feelings, affective tones, and associations. When all these are merged together, they combine to give rise to a unique kind of meaning, which is not given by the individual words in their normal usage. This indirect meaning is what the Indian aestheticians call dhvani in order to distinguish it from the ordinary and direct

meanings of words. Dhvani taken as extraordinary meaning, however, does not totally forgo the symbolic use of words. The vivid imagery of poetic language depends primarily upon a complete understanding of words, first in their symbolic and then in their suggestive functions.

As John Hospers suggests, the difference between poetry and the language of science is not "that the one uses the referential function of language and the other not (or less), for both use it to the full. But the language of exact science, theoretically at least, consists of nothing but this referential or symbolic usage, while the language of poetry consists of something more. Whether a given piece of writing is poetry or prose is 'a matter of degree'; the more nearly it approaches the purely referential use of language, the more nearly it approximates the state of pure prose."

A precise understanding of the symbolic meaning of words is the first essential for the understanding and appreciation of poetry. The words must be known clearly up to their finest shade of meaning and not simply

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12S.K. De, Sanskrit Poetries as a Study of Aesthetic, University of California, 1963, p. 8, 86.
Also S.K. De, Sanskrit Poetics, II, p. 185.

13Hospers, op. cit., p. 126.
grasped vaguely or obscurely. The difference between
poetry and prose as already pointed out, however lies
in the fact that poetry gives rise further to a different
kind of meaning. This poetic meaning emerges when the
referential use of words are understood but submerged
into the background. Their understanding therefore is
essential but only as a prerequisite. It is when the
symbolic meanings do not intrude upon the mind, but
slip unobtrusively into the unconscious, that the
suggestive sense is aroused. In poetry, the final
effect of words is predominantly a suggestive one.

The suggestiveness however arises not because
of the obscurity with which the words are endowed, but
on account of the extra meaning which accrues to them
when the intellectual meaning is subordinated due to
other factors such as those given by sound, image,
emotive and associative values. It is not the aim of
the poet to make language shadowy and vague, but rather
to enrich it with these additional meanings. "The
referential meanings of words... constitute one factor
in poetic effects; we must know them before we can
appreciate them as poetry. But there are other factors
as well."14 In modern times different writers emphasize
different effects. Richards, for instance, lays greater

14 Ibid., p. 127.
emphasis on emotive meaning and considers it to be the essence of poetic language. The Indian aestheticians of the alamkāra and riti school of thought emphasize the use of metaphor and simile in poetry which is the image-evoking power of language.

Dhvani however, is that evocation which combining all the factors presents a wholly new sense, a sense, not given by any single element, referential, emotive or imagery, but by all of them together. This sense is unified and all pervading. It rises like an organic entity over and above the separate elements of the poem, usurping the entire field of consciousness.

In reply to the question raised in the beginning of this chapter as to what is the nature of aesthetic meaning, we may now state that in poetry the meaning (if at all we use this term) lies in the suggestive power evoked by the combined effect of the words, and emerges as the result of word juxtaposition, arranged to convey

15 Ibid., p. 127.

16 The nature of the dhvani is expressed by Anandavardhana in the following way (Dh. A., 14) 'In the words of the great poets a new element is to be perceived, different from any other, which transcends all the separately perceptible parts, like that which a woman is called beauty' (Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience.... p. 59 note).
direct effects through rhythm, vowel-quality etc., This effect must be total and undisrupted. In science the meanings are derived by an analytical process of the literal statement of words used as symbols for meanings lying beyond them. In poetry the sense is immediately and directly presented; it appears to rise, wholly and suddenly from the words without any direct connection with the literal statements.

Another point which needs consideration is the extent to which emotive meanings contribute to the total aesthetic effect. We have seen that words in poetry are used predominantly for the effects they evoke rather than as simple referents. And the evocation of mood, feeling, attitude, belief, is an important if not the most important part of poetic meaning. The emotive function of language is distinguished by the fact that it has no reference to truth or falsity. "Provided that the attitude or feeling is evoked the most important function of such language is fulfilled, and any symbolic

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17 Satya Dev Chaudhary, *Essays on Indian Poetics*, Delhi, 1965, p. 21. Mammata (11-12th Century A.D.) in his *Kavya Prakasa* discusses the different meanings that can accrue to a sentence, and that which makes it a poetic sentence.

function that the words may have is instrumental only and subsidiary to the emotive function." Now it is true, poetry aims largely upon evoking emotional effects through the affective use of words, rather then upon giving truth or falsity, this fact however must not lead us to the conclusion that poetic language is nothing but emotive.

In the first place, it is not the function of poetry to arouse the raw emotions and personal reactions which take place in everyday life. The poetic emotion is impersonal and universalized.

This fact is fully realized by the Indian aestheticians when they define dhvani in terms of an objective power (vyānāra) which appears to belong to the words of the poem itself, and not personally to the spectator.

Those modern theorists like Richards, who support the emotive theory of poetry do so on the obvious ground¶ that since poetry does not aim to give us logical or physical truth, its function is only to evoke emotional reactions, and to foster certain attitudes and beliefs.

19 Ibid., pp. 149-151.
The fallacy of such a position lies in inferring that because poetic meaning is not logical and symbolic, it is therefore emotive. The point he seems to have overlooked is the fact that poetic language is not that which is either symbolic or emotive, but it is a combination of both factors and their consequent subordination to the total effect. Richards makes the mistake of regarding all evocation as poetic and of identifying the emotive and the evocative. Both his premises are wrong. Evocation as John Hospers points out is not necessarily always emotive but can be of other kinds as well, and all evocation is by no means poetic. For instance, the sight of a tiger evokes terror and the memory of one's beloved evokes longing. Neither of these evocations are aesthetic and as private feelings, have no place in the work of art. Professor James stresses this point when he says: "It is misleading even in regard to intensely personal poetry to speak of poetry as using language 'emotively'. Poetry is never concerned primarily to awaken 'emotion' and 'attitude'; its concern is to convey an imaginative idea of among other things, emotions.... This contemplative excitement is impersonal, as impersonal as that which may accompany intellectual

20 Hospers, op. cit., p. 129.

21 Ibid.
Hospers and James succeed admirably in isolating the issue, by emphasizing its negative aspect. They indicate clearly what aesthetic meaning is not. The term dhvani however indicates positively as to what aesthetic meaning is.

It might be added here, that the term "suggestion", which has been used to translate the term dhvani is not really adequate to indicate its true nature. "Suggestion" implies a measure of subjectivity and indicates a sense of obscurity, which is alien to the kind of suggestion that occurs in poetry. Here, suggestion is rather in the nature of an audio-visual effect or illusion, which is not a private phenomena, but an impersonal and objective one. It presupposes however the power of visualization with which the spectator is endowed, and which is aroused by the stimulus provided by the external media of words.

The kind of suggestion that is meant by the term dhvani has some similarity to the concept of "illusion" or "semblance" with which Susanne Langer explains the nature of the total effect created by the art work as a whole. 23 Like the dhvani theorists, she too emphasizes

22Ibid., p. 129.

the marked moment wherein the work of art seems to break away from its physical surroundings and materials and begins to exist as a complete entity on its own. All the separate elements of which the work is composed, merge inexplicably into an organic whole. This conversion of the parts into a unified whole, succeeds in presenting the work in a realm of its own and imbibes it with a unique aura and fragrance. Aptly, she says, the work is abstracted from its mundane surroundings. Its main quality as a work of art lies in its "otherness" from reality, which quality has been variously described as "strangeness", "semblance", "illusion" "transparency", "autonomy" or "self-sufficiency".  

What is the created in a work of art? Susanne Langer concludes, "it is an image created for the first time out of things that are not imaginal, but quite realistic, canvas and paints or carbon or ink." In the case of poetry it is out of words and phrases.

But, how can a tangible object, made out of real elements, become an image or illusory object? "It becomes an image when it presents itself purely to our vision i.e., as pure visual form instead of a locally and practically related object. If we receive it as a completely visual thing, we abstract its appearance from

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24 Ibid., p. 46.
25 Ibid.
its material existence. What we see in this way becomes simply a thing of vision — a form, an image. It detaches itself from its actual setting and acquires a different context."^26

Evidently, dhvani which according to the Indian theorists is the essence of aesthetic meaning, is such a perceptual image. Its extraordinary and unique character lies in the fact that its appearance is abstracted from its material existence, and detaching itself from its physical setting it begins to exist in a world apart.

We have said that aesthetic meaning is primarily suggestion or more precisely an evocation. This evocation is not necessarily of mood or feeling but can be of other things as well such as of images and even facts. The important point is that whatever is evoked, it is not that which forms a part of our everyday mental state, but is a state which is fundamentally unique. This does not imply that it is isolated from life but only that it is different.

The elements of everyday life are used, but as materials only. The aesthetic effect is essentially other than its components. In fact, it is that which

^Ibid., p. 47.
leads the mind away from its natural setting into a realm apart. The sense of this leading away is perfectly embodied in the Sanskrit term *vyāhāra*, which, it is stated, alone makes dhvani possible.

We have said that the poetic evocation is not necessarily of feeling alone but of other things as well. In time however the dhvani theorists began to lay far greater emphasis on feeling than on any other aspect. Earlier we noted that the rasa theorists considered only eight permanent (sthāyī) states of mind to be suitable for becoming the material of aesthetic experience. In time, the dhvani theorists were led to the same conclusion. For them as for the rasa theorists, the evocation of the basic mental state became the most important part of the aesthetic effect, the other factor such as the evocation of fact (vastu) and image (alāṅkāra) receding all but completely into the background. It is not surprising therefore that in time the concept of dhvani gradually merged into that of rasa, and aesthetic meaning became co-eval and co-terminous with the aesthetic experience.

Finally we come to the question of the relationship of the work of art and the perceptual image it creates. Is there any predictable correlation between the words used in the poem and the effect that it creates?
Mostly, as we have noted, the poet's concern is in the evocation of a general mood or feeling. Can this be done to any precise degree? John Hospers states:

"A skillful poet can evoke in a sensitive reader images and emotions of the greatest intensity and complexity by juxtaposing words of great evocative and associative power, and can evoke certain calculated effects more precisely than he could ever do if he tried it by using language descriptively. The words of the poem, to use T.S. Eliot's terminology, are the objective correlative for the evocata; they succeed in evoking in the reader just the precise image or state of feeling that the poet intended when he employed this particular combination of words."

But this kind of precision is not of the type that permits transference of the effect from one work to another in the same medium, or from one work to another in a different medium. Nor is it possible to lay down a general technique, whereby certain word combinations would always arouse specific images and feelings. For this reason poetry in one language cannot really be translated into another. Moreover,

\[27\text{Hospers, op. cit., p. 130.}\]
the art media as the objective correlative for the evocation, depends for its objectivity on the power of visualization and perceptive ability of the spectator. It also depends upon the spectator’s depth and extent of life experiences, his cultural background and understanding of the art media.

We have seen that the words in poetry do not have any conventional reference to things beyond them, their function is only to evoke certain images. The truth of these images does not lie in their correspondence to external objects but to their correspondence to the inner essence and law of things. Of this essence and law, the sensitive spectator is made aware of in the depth of his experience.

The truth of a work of art, is therefore not a truth which depends upon the demonstratibility of its objective statements or upon its one-to-one correspondence to external facts, but a truth which finds its correspondence to external facts, but a truth which finds its correspondence to the experiential life of the individual, as felt in the innermost depths of his being in its permanent and lasting qualities. 28 A point

28 Aesthetic experience presupposes a pre-constituted knowledge on the part of the spectator, of the psychic reactions etc., which are normally felt before a given situation. This knowledge is in part
which will be elaborated further. Having examined the nature of communication that takes place between the artist and spectator in the absence of any "meaning" as such, we must now see whether it is possible to lay down any standards of judgement for the work of art.

This will form the subject of the next chapter.