

## SAHRUDAYA – A RESONANT HEART

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**Abstract:** The paper explains the concept of ‘Sahrudaya’ by drawing on the principles of Kashmir Shaivism and Rasa-Dhwani. The discussion does away with some of the misconceptions regarding ‘Sahrudaya’. Rasika, Buddha and Vibuddha are some of the words used in lieu of Sahrudaya. A person, who is sensitive to as well as critical of what is received, challenges the creative mind, extends the experience and completes it. The act of aesthetic appreciation is not passive, but an active one, with the ‘Sahrudaya’ completing the range of possibilities suggested in the text. The importance given to audience/ reader is sought to be extended to all arts, in fact to all creative work including scientific discoveries, an idea elaborated by S. Chandrashekar in his work Truth and Beauty. The paper also briefly touches on the notions of Pratibha and Siddhi, the talent or gift of a creative mind.

**Keywords:** Shaivism, Rasa-Dhwani, Pratibha, Siddhi, Shaastras, Prajna, construction of speech, work of art, individual self, creative mind, creative process, mental energy

Brahma the Creator creates the world on the principles of *karma* and *niyati* <sup>1</sup>. Saraswati, the wife of Brahma creates the other world of words. The world of Saraswati can and does explain the phenomenal world created by Brahma, but Her world is to be known through itself, i.e., the word. The concept of creation and the knowledge of the same are an essential part of any philosophical system. After *Vakyapadeeya*, the study of language acquired a new philosophical status, which also influenced the study of poetics or the creative force and creative process. It is only from the time of *Dhvanyaloka* and the commentaries thereon that philosophical enquiry has become focused on the creative process and the epistemology of art. While the two *Meemamsa shaastras* and all six *darshanas* accepted ‘*shabda*’ as a valid means of knowledge (*pramana*), the knowledge of the *shabda* itself and an enquiry into it became important for grammarians like Bhartrhari. There was the concept of *shabda brahma* as mentioned in *Maitrayani Upanishad* (vi-22). According to Bhavabhuti, the poet is the knower of *shabda brahma*. Kalidasa speaks of parents as a

united entity, like the word and its meaning, who must be saluted to know the word and meaning.

The speaker has an idea to express, which he does through words, and when it is heard/read by another, it creates an idea or a mental image in that person. This means that the word-meaning process is in the reverse order in the listener/reader as compared to the speaker. There is a whole lot of past in the speaker that goes to form the speech and a whole lot of future that is created in the listener. Both the past in the speaker and the future in the listener are *samskaras* or impressions. It can be represented thus:

*Samskaras* – Idea (*Artha*) – words (spoken) — words (heard) – Idea – *Samskara*

As far as the functional aspects are concerned, as explained by the *Meemamsakas*, this leads to an action in the listener as a response to the word. Alternatively, as explained by Vedanta, a statement can just lead to a knowledge that ‘*this is it*’. In both the schools, mental energy in one is converted into mental energy in the other, and thus the function of the language is served. There are three *shastras* viz, *Pada*, *Vaakya* and *Pramana* referring to *Vyakarana*, *Meemamsa* and *Nyaya* which are pressed into service for the study of language. Kuntaka in his *Vakrokti Jivita* says that *Saahitya*, that is, literary sense is a fourth dimension of this study. The only difference is that in *Sahityashashtra*, *shabdārtha jnana* is not only a means but also an end, a thing to be experienced and enjoyed. To continue the analogy of the parents, not only the word and the meaning are closely connected, the poet and the reader or the artist and the connoisseur too are intimately related.

What is said of *shabda* and *artha* is equally applicable to all art forms where *shabda* would stand for form and *artha* for the content. The poetics relating to the spoken word is applicable to all performing arts, where the artist and the connoisseur are in immediate contact, and that relating to the written word is applicable to all plastic arts where there is no immediate contact between the two. In fact, the entire process of the creation of art and the experience of art was first studied in the context of *natya* or theatre. In all art-related *shastra*, art is seen as something to be known or understood as well as to be experienced. While understanding art depends on other *shastras*, experiencing it is a contemplative act. In this, the experience is good to be chewed. It evokes a feeling, mixed with a series of other feelings and develops into an emotion, which one can identify within oneself but not as of oneself alone. The artist expects the connoisseur to be a conundrum in whom there is the confluence of experiencing, understanding and criticising all at once.

Even the greatest of the artists expects the audience to respond and, preferably, to respond favorably. The response to a performance is immediate and is indicated by applause etc. as enumerated in the *Natyasastra*. The success of a performance is *siddhi*. The *rasa siddhi* is of two kinds – *daivee* and *manushee*. The audience are called *prekshaka* and they are expected to be good-natured, calm, dharmic and honourable, clean, level-headed and well-informed about the art. They should be able to follow the rhythm, know about the costumes etc. be well-versed in language, especially the local language, know about acting and, more than anything else, understand the subtlest (also subtleties of) *rasa* and *bhava*. It is an added advantage if they know about *shabda* and *chanda* and are proficient in different *shastras*. They must also have their senses intact and have a deep and abiding love for art. Finally, they must have the ability to guess and construct (what is suggested), and ignore (unwanted presentations).

Apart from the regular and invited audience, there were also *praasshnikas* drawn from learned people, from harems, different professionals and *sevaka*. This was the *parishat* to whom the ‘sutradhara’ and the poets appealed, in classical Sanskrit drama. For example, the *sutradhara* of *Shakuntalam* says that a poet may or may not have success in his own time. So a poet like Bhavabhuti writes :

My efforts are not directed towards those who slight my efforts; one who is of the same nature as myself shall certainly arise, for time is boundless and the earth is not barren. [Prologue, *Malati Madhava*].

There could be *vighnas* or *ghaatas* or obstacles that hinder the performance. The very first performance of *Malati Madhava*, for instance, was obstructed by the demons who were disturbed to find the victory of gods over demons portrayed in the play. The *vighnaas* might come from unknown forces (gods), from oneself or from opponents. Without going into its details, let us discuss *siddhis*. The *maanushee siddhi* is expressed by a smile, a laugh, a word like *saadhu* or *kashtam* or by applause. This is *vaaksatva*. Alternately, there can be thrill, horripilation, standing ovation, expression of appreciation by raising hands, nodding, or gesturing with fingers. This is *angasamudbhava*.

Subtler than this is the *daivee siddhi* which entails an exuberance of *sattva* or the spirit with a surge of emotions, without sounds, without disturbance, without applause. In other words, in the *daivee siddhi*, the audience is simply spellbound. This kind of *siddhi* or *rasasiddhi* is the hallmark of an aesthetic experience. The performer feels the energy throb, and the

experience brings delight to both the performer and the audience. Any art should evoke a similar kind of experience.

As for art criticism, it has two parts, one regarding the details of the form and the other, those of the content. What is meant by content is not just the plot but the experience of a given artform as a whole. While knowledge and skill termed '*nipunataa*' are an important aspect which the learned may value, their real value lies in converting the *nipunataa* into an art experience that brings a *samskara* which is distinct from knowledge or that which is usually known. This is '*shakti*' otherwise called '*pratibhaa*'. Bhavabhuti says in the Prologue to *Malati Madhava* that when one speaks of *samaana dharma*, one does not refer to the scholarship and knowledge of form, though these factors are taken into account in criticism. The *samaana dharma* essentially refers to the capacity to feel in a similar measure with the artist, which makes one a '*sahrudaya*' literally meaning 'one who is connected to the heart' or 'one who shares the heart'. 'Heart' here, of course, refers to the 'seat of emotions' and 'focus of feelings'. *Sahrudaya* is a similarly tuned heart that resonates first with the artist and then with the co-audience, like a well-tuned *veena* resonating in synchrony with another equally well-tuned *veena*.

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The word *sahrudaya* was first used by Ananda Vardhana, and was explained by Abhinava Gupta. Since then, it has been used by many but the origin of *sahrudaya* refers to its context, along with some related terms such as *pratibhaa* and *vimarshaa* in the Tantra philosophy, especially the Kashmiri Shaiva. Abhinava Gupta, the author of *Locana* on Ananda Vardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*, has also written an exhaustive commentary on *Natyasastra*. Apart from this, he has written more than thirty works including some *stotras* and they all deal with *tantras*. *Tantraloka* is his magnum opus that synchronises many *Tantras*. The conceptual framework of explaining the art experience starts from there. Unlike other so-called classical *darshanas*, it is in the *Tantra* that the concept of beauty and art experience becomes important. The *Purva Meemamsa* had explained the ritual effect as *apoorva* and *adrshita*, i.e. rare and invisible. *Tantra* explains the rituals as *apoorva anubhava*, an experience not found before, through a construct that is new.

Both the world outside and the artist's world of words are constructs from an idea, but the poet's world of words is superior, for it does not simply follow the world but helps transcend the visible world. Both the world and words reveal only one fourth and the rest

is hidden. The construction of speech and that of the world have the same basis and follow the same method. While the world seems to pose the *Shiva* aspect, word represents more of the *Shakti* aspect. The poetic speech should sublimate [*upasarjana*], and the conventional sense should lead to a subtle sense, a higher meaning. This happens because of the participation of the *sahrudaya*. This is the main thesis of *Dhvanyaloka*. Abhinava Gupta ends each chapter with a stanza dedicated to one stage in the construction of speech namely *paraa*, *pashyanti*, *madhyamaa* and *vaikhari*. The world itself is a reflection in three stages and words reflect or, more precisely, refract them back to the original or pure forms. The five principles, four stages of evolution and three levels of creation are telescopic in nature; one is an extension of the other. It may be briefly shown thus:

Creation or Construct – *Shuddha* and *Mayiya*; *Mayiya* - *Samashti* and *Vyashti*

***Shuddha***

|

***Shiva = Chit* [Consciousness]**

|

+*Shakti* = *Spada*      Speech as *Paraa*

|

*Icchaa* (Intention) *Sadaashiva*      { Concepts of I and this }

*Pashyantee*

|

Jnana (Knowledge cum      {identifying as This is me }

experience) *Ishvara*

*Madhyamaa*

|

Kriya (action) *Shuddhavidya*      { I do this } *Vaikhari*

or *sadvidaa*

***Maayeeya Kanchuka***

*Maayaa*



### **The Individual creation**

*Niyati (Laws) – Purusha + Prakruti*

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*Buddhi (repository of Samskaras) – Ahamkara – Manas*

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*Jnanendriya (Sattva guna) Karmendriya (Rajas)      Tanmatras*

/

*PanchamahaabhutaaH (gross material world)*

*Shakti, maya* and *prakrti* are the three powers reflecting one another and all are essentially the same. *Shakti* has two important aspects – *prakaasha* (revealing) and *vimarsha* (critiquing). *Maya* limits and projects. *Prakrti* reveals and hides. *Shuddhavidya, vidya* and *buddhi* are similarly related.

The communication through speech is in the order of:

### **Speaker**

*Buddhi (Samskara)=Prajna - Ahamkara – Manas-Vaak (Karma) Indriya- Words(speech)*

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### Listener

Words (heard)- *Shravana (Jnana) Indriya- Manas- Ahamkara- Buddhi*  
(*samskara*)=*Prajna*

*Prajna* is the sum total of memory, immediate cognition and projection for the future (*smrti*, *buddhi*, and *mati*). By this, one is able to cognize and recognise, which is also the ability of intelligent guessing both positive and negative (*ooha* and *apoha*, spoken as prerequisite of a good audience).

The *prajna* which is ever new and opens one's eyes to new ideas is *pratibhaa* (*prajnaa navanavonmeshashaalinee pratibhaa mataa* (Abhinava quoting Bhattatauta). [Dandin calls this *shakti* in *Kavyadarsha*]. Rajashekhar clarifies further that *pratibha* is of two kinds – *karayitri pratibha* in creative artist and *bhavayitri pratibha* in the connoisseur. While the poet's *karayitri* is constructing something new, *bhavayitri* is able to receive by recognising this. Even if the poet makes some mistakes, the *pratibha* prompts the connoisseur to understand what is meant, as a mother understands the indistinct speech of the child. It is this very ambiguity in art that makes one reach out for a meaning other than the conventional one. This unconventional meaning is *dhvani*, which explains the magic of language as 'the ineffable'. No amount of explanation can equal the experience of art. The *dhvani artha* is the one that forms the common ground for the artist and the connoisseur. *Rasa* and *Bhava* – the emotions and feelings - can only be communicated through the process of *dhvani*. The mere word *sringara* cannot evoke love. Various actions and reactions in an interesting depiction lead to an impression which is called *rasa* and *bhava*. This is the resonance that lingers even after the first cognition of a work of art. The epistemology of this is discussed at length in the *shastras*. Here, one needs to understand that it is not like direct perception, nor is it an inference. It is a simulation of experience.

The process of artistic cognition or more correctly the recognition, is again explained by the philosophical framework of *Abhijnana* [or *Pratyabhijnana* as Kashmir Shaivism calls it]. The best poetic explanation of this is found in *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* of Kalidasa. On listening to the music of Hamsapadika, the hero Dushyanta exclaims in Act V- 2: 'On seeing the beautiful and listening to the melodious, even a happy creature is disturbed.' That is because, the spirit remembers what is not known before, the friendships

(*sauhrudaani* can also mean good-heartedness) linger on in the feelings through other lives (*janmaantara* is not only different lives of one but also lives of different creatures).

To remember what is not known is an illogical proposition. So is it important in understanding the feelings? In the logical sequence, what is felt by oneself can be remembered. In matters of feelings and emotions, what is not directly experienced by oneself is not known but remembered. This means that what is happening is a matter of recognition. In recognition or *abhijnana* there is both cognition and memory and there is the sense 'this is it' or 'he is that' [*soyam*]. For this to happen, the artist presents himself as 'I am that' [*soham*]. In both the artist and the connoisseur, the experience has to be liberated from the individual self. This is the process of *saadhaaraneekarana*. It is not that in *saadhaaraneekarana* the plot or the form itself is generalised, for it can never happen in matters of feelings; it is in the presentation and grasping that the *saadhaaraneekarana* takes place.

This is best explained in the case of an actor presenting a character and the audience responding to the portrayal. In ritualistic theatre, an actor totally gives up the *aham* (self/self identity) and the audience see only the *saH* (the god or the spirit invoked). A popular actor presents himself (*aham*) through different characters (*saH*) as most of our matinee idols do. Here, the audience worship the actor himself. A good actor consciously presents *saH* without losing his *aham*. Now, the audience praise the actor as also experiencing the emotions presented. Thus, a conscious sublimation of *aham* leads to experience, though primarily derived from senses to transcend, to be the experience of all or the experience plausible in all. The experience of this at the *maayeeya* level, on further contemplation, also leads to the *shuddha* or pure level where the experience is liberated from both the agent and the object. While in the creation of the world, there is a reflection of the world from inside out, in artistic creation there is a reflection back to the pure form and pure experience.

The *anubhaava* (emotional reaction to a situation termed as acting) itself leads to a *vibhaava* (a situation); the *vyabhichaari bhaavas* (surroundings that lead to some or the other feelings) make sense only because they are in continuous flow from one to another and are always dependent on others. Emotions are emotions only because they can be shared. The experiences rooted in one's senses are only triggers to that. In a work of art, the *rasa* arising from *vibhaava anubhaava vyabhichaaree samyoga* is shared not only with whom we know but also with those whom we do not know and those who do not know us. What is communicated is not merely the physical and cultural details of pleasure, pain etc.,



but also that intensity of emotion *rasa-bhava* which touches the heart of the unknown. The *shakti* or *pratibha* of the artist is in that kind of a *samyoga* or composition which facilitates an emotional feeling beyond one's own limitations. This is how some art from Timbuktu would be known in Tokyo, a *Noh* play received in New York. However the art does not reach out automatically. Like the efforts of the artist, the abilities of the connoisseur are equally important. The sensibilities of those who transmute the art are also important and they too need be *sahrudayas*.

One may hear of the concepts of individual experience and community experience in art. The view that a community communicates its experience through its art forms ignores the ability of others who do not belong to the community to communicate and thereby dubs the experience communicated by an artist/artists not belonging to that community as inauthentic. In ritualistic theatre, a community congregates before and interacts with a performer, recognises the spirit beyond the individual, but presses the spirit to solve individual problems and sometimes, those of the community as well. Hardly does one find a simulation of the emotions of that spirit. It is only in non-ritualistic art that the audience go beyond their individual self. It is here that *saadhaaraneekarana* becomes possible. The *saadhaaraneekarana* ability is the core of a *sahrudaya*. If a great artist is one who can express beyond one's community [even while depicting the community experience], a *sahrudaya* is one who can simulate an experience without caring for authenticity. If the community of demons felt offended by the first stage production of the gods, the onus was both on the gods and on the demons. Not all art can be equally great. There are works of art that cater to the community, to a nation or a section, and the *sahrudayas* are restricted. As said in *Natyasastra*, there are fundamental dispositions of the audience because of which they choose a kind of artwork or a particular piece of art. Once the choice is made, they become *sahrudayas* to it. The problem of authentic expression seems to be a hangover of realism. The beauty in real objects and experiences is just as important as the one derived from a fancied world. A *sahrudaya* is one equally open to both these kinds of art. To conclude with the salutation of Kuntaka:

Some poets draw the beauty subtly hidden in things; some others create the fancifully beautiful by their words. I salute them both. But I salute him more who being aware of their labor, unburdens them by understanding them (II- 107).

## GLOSSARY

*Adrshta*

Unseen

*Aham* self / self-identity

*Ahamkara* The sense of 'I' [Aham is I]

*Angasamudbhava* Responses which include thrill, horripiulation, a standing ovation, raising hands or showing fingers or nodding the head

*Anubhaava* Emotional reaction to a situation

*Anubhava* Experience

*Apoha* Negative speculation

*Apoorva* Rare

*Artha* Meaning. One of the four goals of life accrding to Hindu philosophy.

*Bindu* A drop/ A dot

*Buddhi* repository of *Samskaras*

*Buddhi* Thinking mind; that part of the self that causes discretion, decision and motivation. Presence of mind is also called buddhi

*Chandas* Metre/Vedas which are necessarily metrical

*Chit* Conscious spirit/ Consciousness

*Daivi* Divine

*Darshanas* The Shad-Darsanas or the six schools of Hindu philosophy are, nyaya, vaisheshika , sankhya, yoga, purva mimamsa, and uttara mimamsa or vedanta. Drawing from the Vedas, they attempt to explain the nature of tranacendental and individual self, emanation and extinction.

*Dhvani* Suggested meaning / resonance

*Hamsa padika* Name of one of the wives of Dushyanta who sings a song in the play *Shakuntalam*.

<i>Ichha</i>	Intention
<i>Indriya</i>	Organs; this is of two kinds - Jnana (sense) and Karma (motor)
<i>Jnana</i>	Knowledge
<i>Jnanendriya</i>	Sense organs - eye, ears, olfactory, taste, tactual
<i>Kala</i>	Particle / Digit/ Time
<i>Karma</i>	Action. Result of action of the previous births, latent in the soul
<i>Karmendriya</i>	Motor organs - speech, hands, feet, excretory, sex
<i>Kashtam</i>	Pity/Difficult
<i>Kriya</i>	Action / Movement

*Madhyamaa* *Madhyama* corresponds to *Swapna* or the dreaming state, representing mental consciousness.

<i>Manas</i>	Focal point of sense experience; what is generally called the ‘mind’
<i>Manushee</i>	Human
<i>Mati</i>	Intellect
<i>Maya</i>	Illusion / misconception
<i>Mayiya</i>	Those in the grip of maya, and hence in a binary world
<i>Meemamsa</i>	See meemamsaka

*Meemamsakas* *Meemamsa* means critical enquiry. *Meemaamsakas* are those who reflect on the essential principles of life and frame philosophical theories on the nature of dharmas, based on a reading of the Vedas. Those who studied the first (ritualistic) part of vedas are called *Poorva Meemamsakas* as against is *Uttara Meemamsakas* who concentrated on vedanta .

*Naada* Sound

*Niyati* Law

*Nyaya* One school of *darshanas* that depends mainly on logic.

*Ooha* Positive speculation

*Pada* Word fit to be used in a sentence

*Panchamahaabhutaah* gross material world of five elements

*Para* According to the Vedas, there are four stages of speech - *Para*, *Pashyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari*. They correspond to four states of consciousness. *Para* corresponds to *Turiya* or the transcendental state, representing transcendental consciousness.

*Pashyanti Pashyanti* corresponds to *Sushupti* or the dreamless state, representing intellectual consciousness.

*Prajna* the sum of memory, immediate cognition and projection for future. The thought process that follows three fold time with the sense of past present and future.

*Prajnaa navanavonmeshashaalinee pratibhaa mataa*  
the *Prajna* which opens eyes to things new is thought to be *pratibhaa*

*Prakaasha* Revelation

*Prakruti* Objective world that is prone to change; it includes the psychological

*Pramana* A valid means of knowledge

*Pratibha* Intuition / inspiration

*Pratibhaa* Keen intellect

*Prekshaka* Audience

*Purusha* The spirit / The embodied one

<i>Raaga</i>	Melody / Passion / A tune
<i>Rasa-Bhara</i>	By the force of Rasa
<i>Saadhaaraneekarana</i>	universalisation
<i>Saahitya</i>	Literature
<i>Sadhu</i>	Holy person
<i>Sahrdaya Hrdaya</i>	is heart; one with a heart responding to the arts is called <i>sahrdaya</i>
<i>Samashti</i>	Whole / Encompassing all / Macro
<i>Samskaras</i>	Rites of passage in a person's life. In the theory of karma, samskaras are the nature and character of a person perfected over a lifetime.
<i>Satva</i>	The spirit / Mind
<i>Shabda</i>	Sound; in the <i>Shastras</i> it is that definite sound which has sense
<i>Shravana</i>	Listening
<i>Shringara</i>	The rasa of love
<i>Shuddha</i>	Pure; not in the grip of maya or illusion
<i>Siddhi</i>	Achievement
<i>Smrti</i>	Memory
<i>Soham</i>	I am that
<i>Soyam</i>	this is it / he is that
<i>Spanda</i>	Throb / Vibration
<i>Swara</i>	A note / Vowel

*Tanmatras* unique properties of elements – form, color, taste, smell, tactual, sound

*Upasarjana* Subordinating

*Vaak* Speech

*Vaaksatva* Mind expressed through words

*Vaakya* Sentence

*Vaikhari Vaikhari* corresponds to *Jagrut* or the wakeful state, representing physical consciousness.

*Vakyapadeeya* A 5th C work on the philosophy of language by Bhartrihari; with the way words (*pada*) and sentences (*vakya*) make sense.

*Vibhaava* Situation

*Vibhaava anubhaava vyabhicharee samyoga*

A good combination of *vibhaava anubhaava* and *vyabhichari bhavas*

*Vidya* Knowledge / Learning

*Vighnas / ghaatas* Obstacles in the performance or in way to success

*Vimarsha* Critique

*Vimarshaa* Ability to assess critically

*Vyabhichari bhaavas* Transient emotions

*Vyakarana* Grammar

*Vyashti* Partial / Individual / Micro

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