Anandavardhana on Literary Suggestion

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Abstract: This essay cuts across philosophical aesthetics, Indian philosophies, and the philosophy of language. We will begin by setting out a theory of literary and poetic meaning that has roots in 9th-century CE medieval Kashmir in the work of Anandavardhana. And then we will critically assess this view for intellectual and philosophical insights, if any. Next — and as this essay is inter-disciplinary in nature and scope — we will examine some of the claims Sanskritists, literary critics, philosophers, and others have made about Anandavardhana. We conclude with some very brief and quick remarks about aesthetic sensibility.

Keywords: Anandavardhana; suggestion (*dhvani*); Indian aesthetics.

1. Introduction

This essay cuts across philosophical aesthetics, Indian philosophies, and the philosophy of language. We will begin by setting out a theory of literary and poetic meaning that has roots in 9th-century CE medieval Kashmir in the work of Anandavardhana, whose name we will hereafter abbreviate as "Ananda." And then we will assess this view for intellectual and philosophical insights, if any. Why should we read and discuss Ananda? The simple answer is that Ananda is easily amongst the greatest of the Indian thinkers writing about poetry, literature, drama, etcetera. Among other things, he makes a brilliant attempt to establish suggestion or suggested meaning (*dhvani)* as a third mode of linguistic meaning beyond the literal and the denotative, on the one hand, and the figurative (including metonymy, metaphor, and the like), on the other hand. To read and assess Ananda's work may be insightful for us, even though we live more than a millennium after him and in a different geographical setting.

Two quick remarks about methodology to note before proceeding further. First, in what follows, we will set aside many commentators on Ananda. Instead, we will focus primarily on Ananda's text *Dhvanyaloka*, a title sometimes translated from the Sanskrit as "Light on Suggestion." Yes, of course, commentaries can shed a lot of light on ancient and medieval texts, particularly if these texts are dense, obscure, and far removed from our context and times. Nevertheless, one can sometimes also get bogged down in differences between commentators and miss the forest for the trees. And, regrettably, some try to fill in the gaps in a thinker's views by looking at *later* commentators rather than studying the writer's own text and context (including earlier thinkers). An example here is how some try to figure out Ananda's views on the relation between aesthetic emotions or moods or flavours (*rasa*) and ordinary emotions (*bhava*) by seeking out the later commentator Abhinavagupta, hereafter "Abhinava" (cf. Ingalls et al. 16 ff). Accordingly, as the very title of this essay indicates, our focus will primarily be on Ananda rather than Abhinava. Though we will refer to the latter, for the most part we will try to set Abhinava aside even though it is admittedly not always easy to disentangle Ananda from Abhinava. Why try set Abhinava aside? For one, he may have given a religious twist to Ananda's claims, a point we will return to later. For another, it is one thing to read Ananda *himself*, another to read him through the lens of Abhinava's commentary; just as it is one thing to read

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the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804 CE) and quite another to read Kant *via* later German thinkers.

Second, any subject-matter can be approached from a variety of perspectives, particularly from different disciplines. Of course, one should be a pluralist and value and respect these various viewpoints and what they bring to bear. There is nevertheless a difference between, say, philologists such as Sanskritists on the one hand who are concerned with words, their meanings, their etymological roots and such, and, on the other hand, a different kind of thinker who is concerned more with the *ideas* in a view that one might try to assess, develop, etcetera. Consider here, by way of a partial analogy, the difference between classicists focused on translating Aristotle's works, on the one hand, and philosophers such as David Armstrong and Jonathan Schaffer, on the other hand, who try to develop ideas in Aristotle's metaphysics in ways that are plausible, defensible, and contemporary. Accordingly, we urge the reader to be a pluralist and bear in mind that literary critics, Sanskritists, philosophers, and others can all make valuable even if different contributions to our subject-matter, the claims of Ananda.

2. Explaining Anandavardhana

With these preliminary remarks behind us and for the benefit of at least some readers, let us now briefly outline some of Ananda's main claims below. Note, though, that our summary of Ananda's long, dense, and forbiddingly difficult text is very rough and not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive; and if reading our short sketch of Ananda seems like a slog, we believe that those who persevere will learn.

Ananda brings Bharata's ideas about aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) from drama to literature, so we have criteria of literary excellence; as Sheldon Pollock memorably puts it, the *rasa* theory jumps from the stage to the page. Responding to earlier thinkers such as Bhamaha and Dandin, among others, Ananda claims it is neither denotation nor figures of speech (*alamkara*) but rather literary suggestion (*dhvani*) that is the soul of poetry. The suggested meaning, which delights the hearts of the sensitive (*sahridaya*), must be predominant, and it is like the reverberation of a bell. The aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) in a work give life to the work and they must be relished by delicate minds for the work to realise its purpose; just like the many juices or flavours or spices in a feast or a banquet must be savoured for the meal to be a success (Compare Chakrabarti 7). For Ananda, poetic beauties are broadly mind-dependent in that they only shine forth when appreciated by connoisseurs and consist in being perceived; just as lotuses only open their petals in sunlight. The qualities of a work reside in it but exist only to produce aesthetic emotions (*rasa*), which must be relished. Aesthetic bliss and joy is the chief goal of poetry, and so Ananda gives us a value-maximising view of the goals of poetry.

Knowing the nature of suggestion (*dhvani*) delights sensitive readers (*sahridaya*). Ananda's work accordingly has two aims: (1) to establish literary suggestion, define it, and show it as unique and new; and (2) to examine other relevant notions such as aesthetic emotions (*rasa*), and show their relation to suggestion, which synthesises and includes earlier principles. As Abhinava puts it, the nature of suggestion is revealed so as to put aesthetic rapture (*camatkara*) on a firm footing.

Suggestion is not the same thing as secondary usage; for there can be suggestion without secondary usage, and there can be secondary usage without suggestion. As well, suggestion is not the same thing as the parts of a literary work. And suggestion is uniquely beautiful, as its beauty cannot be achieved by non-suggestive expressions. The suggested sense also has to be primary, and if it is subordinated it instead becomes a mere figure of speech such as a simile or a metaphor, for example. Figures of speech, metaphors, and other ornaments should in any case be subordinated to aesthetic emotions (*rasa)*. In contrast to suggestion, aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) are not verbal but are rather *felt* as the sensitive reader or spectator feels joy at the satisfaction of their desires.

Let us now consider some examples, which will illustrate the main divisions of a typology of literary suggestion, based on the process of suggestion, that Ananda gives us (Ingalls et al. 14 ff). Note,

though, that our brief discussion below of Ananda's classification is neither exhaustive nor meant to be so (even though Abhinava identifies thirty-five different kinds of suggestion proper and it has even been claimed the real number of combinations may be innumerable, a point we will not linger over). Here is our first example (Ingalls et al. 98):

> Mother-in-law sleeps here, I there;
> look, traveler, while it is light.
> For at night when you cannot see,
> you must not fall into my bed.

In this example, the intended suggestion is the very opposite of the prohibition that is directly denoted, to wit, the woman speaking is suggestively inviting the traveler to sleep with her quietly after dark when her mother-in-law is asleep. This is the first category (*avivaksitavacya*) of suggestion, where the literal, denoted sense is unintended. And this category in turn has two sub-categories, the first of which (*atyantatiraskrita*) is where the literal, denoted sense is entirely set aside as in the example above; and the second of which (*arthantarasankramita*) is where the literal, denoted sense is not totally set aside but rather moves to a different sense, as when the expression "the spears enter the city" is used to talk about the spearmen so as to imagine a more injurious force breaking in than what the literal statement would express (Ingalls et al. 15).

The second category (*vivaksitanyaparavacya*) of suggestion is one where the literal sense is intended but only as subordinated to a second, suggested meaning. This category too is subdivided into two subcategories, depending on if we are consciously aware of the passage from the literal to the second meaning. The first subcategory (*alaksyakrama*) is where the second meaning is produced immediately, without apparent sequence, and together with the primary meaning. Here the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) is apprehended at the same time as the literal meaning, and when the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) predominates, that is the soul of suggestion. The second subcategory (*anuranarupa*) is very important, and is like the reverberation of a bell. Here, we are not consciously aware of the passage from the literal to the second meaning, and the suggested, second meaning can be produced either by words or by their meanings. Ananda, incidentally, never tells us how aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) are related to ordinary, real-life emotions (*bhava*), though this was a topic of much debate in his times and later, and has also been an important topic in Western and other debates in philosophical aesthetics.

Here is another example, a wonderful one and arguably Ananda's best example of suggestion (Ingalls et al. 83):

> Go your rounds freely, gentle monk;
> the little dog is gone.
> Just today from the thickets by the [river]
> came a fearsome lion and killed him.

In this example, which we will return to again below, there are three semantic operations at work. The first is denotation (*abhidha*), which depends on convention, that in turn is tied to the general. The second (per Abhinava, following Jayanta Bhatta) is sentential sense (*tatparya*), where the word senses are particularised and connected to each other. And the third is suggestion (*dhvani*). Here, the young woman uttering these words to the monk has a rendezvous with her beloved in the grove by the river, where (much to the woman's chagrin) the monk has been wandering as the dog has scared him away from the woman's house. Though the timid monk is invited to revisit the house as the dog is dead, the suggestion is that he will no longer go by the river when he hears about the lion, thus leaving the grove to the woman and her beloved with the privacy she seems to want. Ananda maintains, per Abhinava, that this example does not involve secondary usage or metonymy (*laksana*), which requires a blocking of the primary sense and the perception of an inconsistency, neither of which obtains here. Instead, we have here the distinct operation of suggestion (*dhvani*), helped by the listener's imagination which has been prepared by the preceding semantic operations of denotation

and sentential sense. Suggestion overshadows these operations and is the soul of poetry. In this example, there is both literal meaning (in the invitation to revisit the woman's house) and suggestion (in the prohibition to go by the river). And we might add on behalf of Ananda that in this example there is no such thing as figurative meaning (such as metaphor, metonymy, and the like). For our part, we believe this example establishes Ananda's central and distinctive claim that suggested meaning is often a third kind of meaning beyond the literal and the figurative; and suggested meaning can often be found in literature and poetry.

Ananda believes that the literal meaning is subordinated as the suggested meaning (*dhvani*) is revealed. However, there are cases (such as s*amasokti*) where the literal meaning is more important than the suggested meaning, as in the following example (Ingalls et al. 137):

> The reddening moon has so seized the face of night
> with her trembling stars,
> that all her cloak of darkness in the east
> falls thus unnoticed by her in the confusion.

Here moonrise is the main topic as conveyed literally, while the lover and his beloved are suggested as secondary. And there are cases (such as *aksepa*) where the literal sense charms and predominates over the suggested sense, as in the example below (Ingalls et al. 141):

> The sunset is flushed with red, the day goes ever before,
> Ah, such is the way of fate that never the two shall meet.

In general, Ananda is careful to distinguish suggested sense (*dhvani*) from figures of speech, similes, metaphors, and such. We have figures of speech where the suggested sense does not predominate but merely accompanies the literal sense; nor do we have suggested sense where this appears only faintly. Suggested sense obtains only where the words and literal sense are subordinated to the suggestion, directed towards it, and are not fused with it.

Turning now to aesthetic emotions (*rasa*), Ananda saw these as heightened basic emotions. When the poet is in this heightened state, she can write the suggestive poetry that will transfer this affective state to listeners (or readers). Also, Ananda claims that aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) cannot be directly expressed but are rather to be suggested, as this is the way to enlist the hearer's (or reader's) sympathy, which in turn is needed to apprehend these aesthetic emotions (*rasa*). And this holds not just for plays, as earlier thinkers such as Bharata claimed, but also for both poetry and prose. Ananda holds that aesthetic emotions (*rasa)* are the goal of poetry, and suggestion as the main sense of a passage (*dhvani*) is the means and the soul of poetry.

Additionally, Ananda claims literary works must have the characteristic of appropriateness or propriety (*aucitya*). The plot, characters, etcetera must be appropriate to the aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) in a play so as to produce the intended aesthetic emotions (*rasa*). For example, Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala* is about true love and depicts King Dushyanta as noble. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate to depict Dushyanta as loving and then leaving Shakuntala cruelly. And so Kalidasa gets around this problem by inventing the story of the ring of recognition that the hapless Shakuntala accidentally loses, thus causing temporary forgetfulness in Dushyanta until he realises his mistake after the ring is found much later.

The components of plots are to be used in a way that accords with the aesthetic emotion (*rasa)* the playwright intends the play to exhibit. Thus, Ananda condemns the play *Venisamhara*, where Duryodhana displays lust in the second act even though the play is filled with preparations for war. Here, as Ananda (and Abhinava) would have it, it would be appropriate to have Duryodhana show a desire for war and revenge rather than sex, given the overall aesthetic emotion (*rasa)* of the play. The textures (*racana*) of plays too should, depending on considerations of genre, exhibit appropriateness (*aucitya*) to the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*). Apt textures are beautiful, whereas inappropriate ones are tasteless and spoil the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) as in the (hypothetical) case where a passage deals

with a king who is a mere human but also describes him leaping across the seven seas in a god-like way that stretches credulity.

Furthermore, Ananda tells us the poet should eliminate from the story any pattern that goes against its *rasa.* The poet has no need to carry out a mere chronicle of events as historians do; here, Ananda's claims are reminiscent of Aristotle's contrast between historians and philosophers in his *Poetics*. Also, Ananda maintains plays and poetry instruct us via pleasure. Ananda, following Bharata, also claims (much like Aristotle's remarks on plots in *Poetics)* that plots have five stages — beginning, development, centre, "the struggle," and conclusion — designed to reveal the aesthetic emotion (*rasa)*. Moreover, the figures of speech used should conform with the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*). And where there are many suggestive factors (such as particular case endings, particular personal endings, particular relationships, etcetera), the combination of these leads to great beauty.

Ananda also outlines six factors that obstruct aesthetic emotion (*rasa*): taking into a work factors that belong to an obstructive *rasa;* greatly describing something alien*;* breaking off the *rasa* too suddenly; revealing it too suddenly; flashing it on repeatedly; and impropriety of style. The proper goal of poets, Ananda claims, is suggestion in the form of *rasa* (aesthetic emotion), *bhava* (ordinary emotion), and the like. Moreover, two *rasas* can be related as predominant and subordinate when they are not mutually obstructive (such as the heroic and the erotic, or the erotic and the comic, or the cruel and the erotic, or the heroic and the marvellous, or the heroic and the cruel, or the cruel and the tragic, or the erotic and the marvellous). It is doubtful, though, if such a relation can be achieved between mutually exclusive *rasas* (such as the erotic and the loathsome, or the heroic and the fearsome).

Responding to Mimamsa objectors, Ananda rightly distinguishes suggested meaning from expressed meaning and, relatedly, he also distinguishes denoting from suggesting. The sounds of a song, for example, may suggest aesthetic emotions (*rasas*) but they do not denote these. Similarly, the purity of a village may be suggested by the phrase "a village on the Ganges," even though the word "Ganges" only denotes the river, which is associated with purity. The expressed meaning, Ananda claims, is a means to the suggested meaning.

Ananda tells us that suggested poetry (*dhvani*) is where the suggested sense dominates over the expressed sense, which is denoted. While denotation is based only on words, suggestion is based on both words and meaning, which can both act as suggesters. The suggested meaning must differ from the expressed meaning; think here of our example above of the young woman telling the monk about the lion coming from the grove and killing the scary dog, "Go your rounds freely, gentle monk…" While suggestion is connected to the direct meaning of words, it is not grasped solely via knowing linguistic conventions (such as dictionary meanings). Moreover, suggestion can depend on denotation or on secondary (or metaphorical) usage though it is different from both; it can also be in sounds (as for example in song), including outside sounds. While suggested meaning is a source of beauty, secondary usage need not be. And suggestion is not word-bound but rather is contextual. Furthermore, speakers wish to convey suggested elements in poetically suggested sentences, though truth and falsity do not apply to poetic suggestion. Additionally, suggestion can appear in many ways (such as with association, fusion, figures of speech, etcetera). And contra Buddhist thinkers, Ananda claims that suggestion *(dhvani*) is not ineffable.

Without aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) or ordinary emotions (*bhava*) as its final meaning, Ananda claims there is no real poetry (Ingalls et al. 636 ff); instead, what we have in such cases is a mere imitation of poetry that has the appearance of a picture (*citra*). The final goal of mature, beautiful poetry, Ananda claims, is aesthetic emotions (*rasa*). But these aesthetic emotions must be intended. Also, poetry requires imagination (*pratibha*). Beauty flashes forth, claims Ananda, and causes sudden delight (*camatkriti*) in sensitive readers (*sahridaya*).

3. Assessing Anandavardhana

Ananda is often rightly hailed as easily amongst the greatest of the Indian thinkers writing about poetry, literature, drama, etcetera. True as that is, we should nevertheless critically assess Ananda's

claims rather than simply have the "largely unqualified adulation" for Ananda that many have which Lawrence McCrea (2008: 2) rightly rejects; though we have already indicated earlier that we believe, with reference to the example above of the young woman telling the monk to go his rounds freely, that Ananda succeeds in establishing suggested meaning.

To begin with, does suggestion apply to all poetry, as Ananda seems to be claiming when he holds that suggestion is the soul of poetry? To be fair to Ananda, it must be remembered that his claims were made more than a millennium before our time (with its modern poetry and such), and in a cultural milieu where the poetry he knows is Indian poetry before him. Still, one can ask two questions that should be asked of *any* philosophical aesthetic generalisation or theory or definition, whether Indian or Western or of some other provenance. First, are these claims too narrow? And second, are these claims too broad?

To take the second question first, it might seem at first blush that Ananda's claims are too broad. For there might be suggestion, hints, implied meaning, and the like in non-poetic discourse, for example in some plays or else in ordinary conversation. But we should not call these poetry just for that reason. To be fair to Ananda, though, he distinguishes between different kinds of suggested meaning. Among others, these include (i) the everyday or workaday variety (*vastudhvani*) which involves the suggestion of things or facts, takes the place of literal expression, and may or may not use figures of speech such as similes; and (ii) the poetic kind (*rasadhvani*). So perhaps Ananda's view cannot justifiably be said to be too broad. (Note, by the way, that the Sanskrit terms used here are Abhinava's, and that the meaning of the polysemous Sanskrit word *vastu* that is pertinent here is "any really existing thing, object, etc.")

Turning to the first question now, it might seem initially that Ananda's claims are too narrow. For there could be poetry, whether Indian or not, that does not exhibit suggestion. To take a Western example, Philip Larkin's poem *Places, Loved Ones* does not have much by way of suggestion or implicit or secondary meaning and yet it certainly still is poetry; whether it is good or bad poetry is a separate, later, *evaluative* question that has no bearing on the prior, *classificatory* question of whether it is poetry at all in the first place. However, Ananda grants there can be poetry without suggestion (cf. McCrea 2008: 232–44). Indeed, he distinguishes between three kinds of poetry: (i) poetry where suggested meaning is predominant (*dhvanikavya*); (ii) poetry where suggested meaning is subordinate (*gunibhutavyangyakavya*); and (iii) poetry without suggested meaning (*citrakavya*). Ananda does not dismiss the second and third of these categories of poetry. In fact, he claims that poetry without suggestion (*citrakavya*) is part of poetic literature, and is beautiful only due to its sounds and expressed meaning. So, once again, Ananda is very careful, and his view cannot justifiably be said to be too narrow.

We must also ask, in addition, if literary suggestion (*dhvani*) is more important than aesthetic emotions (*rasa*). And here it might seem that suggestion gets its charm or delightfulness *precisely* in virtue of aesthetic emotions, which would thus seem to be more important than suggestion (Compare Chari 117–8; 131). It is only aesthetic emotions that will grab the hearer or reader, even if suggestion may be a means to these, perhaps a necessary means. It would seem then that if anything has the claim to be the essence or soul of poetry, it is aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) more than suggestion (as Abhinava also seems to think). Not all suggestion leads to aesthetic emotions or to beauty, for that matter. Moreover, another issue for Ananda is that he never tells us what aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) are or how we experience them.

Let us turn next to Ananda's ambiguous claim that when the poet is in the heightened state, she can write the suggestive poetry that will transfer this affective state to sensitive listeners or readers (*sahridaya*). Here we must ask if by "transfer" is meant actual arousal or evocation of said affective state, or merely calling that affective state to mind. If Ananda means the former, then that claim seems too strong. For poetry, literature in general, and the arts, can merely summon *ideas* of affective states in sympathetic readers, listeners, and viewers, without necessarily evoking these states. As an example, consider poetry that exhibits or is associated with the aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) of erotic love (*sringara*). While it is possible some readers and listeners might be aroused to the relevant affective

(and physical) states in this case, there are no doubt many other receivers who merely *think* of erotic love without feeling this affective state while (or even after) they read or hear the poetry. This is true not just of Sanskrit or Indian poetry, by the way, but rather all poetry including Western poetry. Now it is often claimed by later Indian thinkers (such as Abhinava, and possibly Bhatta Nayaka) that the sensitive reader (*sahridaya*) feels the generalised, distilled *essences* of affective states that are delinked from the specifics of place and time. Even so, the ambiguity just discussed remains (and we suspect it applies to claims made often over two millennia or more of Indian aesthetics). For once again we must ask if this is an actual arousal of said affective state, or instead that affective state merely being called to mind. Incidentally, we are not aware that anyone before us has raised our concern about this ambiguity in Ananda; and we suspect that the very notion of "the generalised, distilled essences of affective states" needs further clarification.

Consider next Ananda's claim that the components of plots are to be used in a way that accords with the aesthetic emotion (*rasa)* the playwright intends the play to exhibit. Here, as many have done before, we must first question appeals to the author's intentions, for even the best of intentions can often fail both in real life and in art; and also as literary and artistic works can have aspects and nuances of meaning that are unintended. As for Ananda's criticisms of Bhatta Narayana's play *Venisamhara*, where Duryodhana displays lust in the second act even though the play is filled with preparations for war (Ingalls et al. 437–42), we must ask *why* must it *always* be the case for every poem, play, etcetera that only *one* aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) must be dominant or overriding, as Ananda and many Indian thinkers seem to hold (though we grant that having one single, overriding *rasa* can give a certain unity and coherence to literary works)? We value variety and pluralism in life, so why not also in art and literature, including when it comes to aesthetic emotions (*rasa*), suggestion (*dhvani*), and the like? Indeed, two (or more) *rasas* being *equally dominant* and perhaps complementary might lead to novel and exciting experimental work in poetry, drama, and the other arts. Contrasts and indeed a tug-of-war or a push-and-pull between different aesthetic emotions (*rasas*) in a work can also enhance a work's aesthetic and artistic value and make it more interesting, whether in the East or the West or somewhere else. And so we must reject the dogma of aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) monism, the dogma of *rasa* monism, the idea that one *rasa* must always be dominant (with other *rasas* being in service to it) as Ananda and many other thinkers in Indian aesthetics seem to hold. Now some of our interlocutors have said that at verse 3.26 (Ingalls et al. 518), Ananda allows for a *rasa* (aesthetic emotion) to be subordinate to another abiding one. But then, given this concession, one might wonder if Ananda is *inconsistent* when he criticises the play *Venisamhara,* for erotic love (*sringara*) could be subordinate to the main rasa, heroism (*vira rasa*), of this play (and erotic love could also merely be an isolated albeit contrasting episode in the play). Our interlocutors have also suggested that Ananda and other Indian thinkers are arguing not so much for one *rasa* for each poetic work but rather for a *hierarchical* plurality of *rasas*. We respond that we should question such a hierarchy for, as we have said above, two (or more) *rasas* being equally dominant and perhaps complementary might lead to novel and exciting experimental work in poetry, drama, and the other arts.

Ananda also seems to be tying suggested meaning to the intentions of the speaker (or writer), when he claims the speaker wishes to convey suggested elements. But here, while it is true that suggestion typically is intended, intentions might be neither necessary nor sufficient for suggestion. For it is possible suggested meaning could be unintended in some cases, and the intention to suggest might fail in some other cases. Likewise, Ananda seems to be tying aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) too closely to the poet's intentions. For it is possible aesthetic emotions could be unintended and lie "in" the work-audience interaction, just as a banquet or a feast may have flavours not intended by the chef.

Finally, there are places where we might wonder if Ananda simply means metaphor or some kind of secondary meaning (such as metonymy, irony, etcetera) rather than suggestion, even though the overt talk is of a specific kind of literary suggestion (Compare Chari 104–5). This might be true, for example, in the case of the subcategory (*arthantarasankramita*) where the literal, denoted sense is not totally set aside but rather moves to something else, as when "the spears enter the city" is used to mean

the spearmen so as to imagine a more injurious force breaking in than what the literal statement would express (Ingalls et al. 15). Here, one might wonder if the word "spears" is figurative if not elliptical for spearmen, or at least as involving metonymy rather than suggestion in Ananda's sense. Now some readers might object to this example. Even if they are right about *this* specific example for reasons we will not delve into, our larger point remains, to wit, that despite his overt talk of suggestion, it is possible Ananda may sometimes only have metaphor or some kind of secondary meaning in mind.

4. Other Views

We now turn to some other interpretations of Ananda, and assess them for what they are worth. Note that we cannot do a comprehensive literature survey here, which is not our aim anyway. Instead, we hope that what follows contextualises our discussion and places it in relation to *some* of the relevant scholarly literature. For the most part, our focus will be on recent discussions of Ananda rather than on medieval commentators. And as this essay is inter-disciplinary in nature and scope, we will discuss below the views of Sanskritists, literary critics, philosophers, and others instead of restricting ourselves merely to *one* of these groups (as is not uncommon in these discussions).

To begin with, we have come across claims made by our layperson (rather than scholarly) contemporaries, inherited perhaps from those who came before them, that what Ananda means by suggestion (*dhvani*) has to be grasped or intuited *mystically*. Such a view really needs to be addressed, and we say three things by way of rebuttal. First, poetic or literary suggestion can be grasped via a special *aesthetic* or artistic intuition or sensibility or perception (compare McCrea 2008: 112–14) that sensitive readers (*sahridaya*) have, as indeed perhaps hinted at by Ananda himself at verse 1.7 (Ingalls et al. 122–3) when he says that suggestion is not mere grammatical knowledge nor literal meaning but is understood only by those who know the nature of poetic meaning; just as producing musical notes is beyond those who know the definitions of music but are not good singers. What is needed to cultivate or develop this aesthetic sensibility, *inter alia*, is a lot of practice and experience over time, as the great Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711 – 1776 CE) for example outlines in his justly celebrated discussion of ideal or true critics in his classic essay "Of the Standard of Taste." Though Hume is writing in 1757 CE, his insights can easily be generalised to extend across both East and West (and beyond), both before his time and later. To Hume's claims, we might add that, among other things, the imagination is also needed, on the part of the hearer or reader to grasp suggestion as well as on the part of the writer or creator as far as creating literary suggestion in a text or a poem is concerned. Second, consider the atheist, materialist Carvaka or Lokayata non-Hindu or heterodox school of Indian philosophy that originated in ancient India around the 6th-century BCE, about fifteen hundred years before Ananda who dates to the 9th-century CE. There is no reason in principle why a Carvaka (or for that matter a Jain or a Buddhist or a Muslim or a Christian or any non-Hindu) could not be a sensitive reader (*sahridya)* or a connoisseur (*rasika*). There is no reason why a Carvaka could not grasp poetic or literary suggestion and experience aesthetic bliss or delight in many of Ananda's examples above even though the Carvaka school explicitly rejects mysticism, spirituality, and religion. If you only have time for one case, go back again to the example above of the young woman telling the monk to go his rounds freely. Third and perhaps most importantly, for better or worse, we live at a time when many of these ancient and medieval texts are being digitised and so we can access them in ways that go beyond the good old hard copy. If possible, look at a digitised copy of Bharata's *Natyasastra* and a digitised copy of Ananda's *Dhvanyaloka*. Do a word search in these texts for words such as "Brahman," "Atman," "Purusha," "samadhi," "moksha," and so on. It is highly unlikely you will find very many (if indeed any) occurrences of such words associated with Hindu religious and mystical experiences in these two foundational ancient and medieval texts of Indian aesthetics. And this leads us to suspect that the writings and thoughts of earlier Indian playwrights, actors, poets, and other artists were simply given a (Kashmir Saivism and Advaita

Vedanta inspired) *religious* twist by Abhinava and other medieval and later thinkers, priests, etcetera, influenced by the all-encompassing devotionalism (*bhakti*) prevalent around the 11th century CE, Abhinava's time, and later (Compare McCrea 2008: 16–17). It is also noteworthy that the idea of a *rasa* of peace (*santarasa*) is not to be found in Bharata, even though Ananda admits it, and Abhinava and others later give it a religious twist and tie it to salvation or release (*moksha*); and while Bharata and Ananda think the erotic (*sringara*) is the most important *rasa*, Abhinava accords this status to the *rasa* of peace (*santarasa*). Indeed, Abhinava suggests that the enjoyment or gustation of aesthetic emotions (*rasa*) and beauty eclipses worldly joys, making aesthetic pleasure super-normal (*alaukika*) and like the bliss of realising one's identity with Brahman. But contra Abhinava, aesthetic pleasure (whether of artefacts such as art and literature, or of beauty in nature) can be totally *secular* and can eclipse everyday joys *without* necessarily being transcendent or religious or other-worldly or super-normal; and aesthetic pleasure can also be unique. This can be cross-culturally true both in the East and the West, and beyond; as Arindam Chakrabarti (9) argues, it would be "silly" to suggest that claims about aesthetic emotions (*rasa*), suggestion (*dhvani*), and the like are archaic or apply only to Sanskrit poetry of a specific kind.

A recent commentator, the Sanskritist Lawrence McCrea (2018: 25–26; 27; 29; 30; 34; 37) has argued in a perceptive and persuasive essay that a long-lasting tension prevailed in Sanskrit poetics between grammarians, Mimamsa hermeneutists, Nyaya logicians, and others who, on the one hand, wished to explain all poetic and expressive language in semantic terms (such as denotation, figures of speech, and the like); and those who, on the other hand, believed with Ananda (and possibly also Mammata and Jagannatha) that poetic expression is special and *somehow* inexplicable (italics added for emphasis). Here, we submit that Ananda was right to argue against the former camp; and he was also right to claim suggestion is not inferred via inductive (or deductive) reasoning. But, turning now to the latter camp, *if* — and please note the hypothetical "if," italics added for emphasis — the "special and inexplicable" starts sliding into the mystical, then we face the three kinds of concerns outlined in the preceding paragraph. Moreover, the "somehow" really cries out for more elucidation, which Ananda sadly does not provide us beyond the hint at verse 1.7 (Ingalls et al. 122–3) mentioned briefly in the preceding paragraph, and here we submit more light can be shed on this matter by appealing to the aesthetic sensibility discussed briefly above. Those who have the right kind of cultivated aesthetic sensibility, we submit, grasp literary or poetic suggestion (*dhvani*) in a flash as they intuit it, though this is not to say that they are infallible for they may on occasion fail to grasp the suggestion until later or until it is pointed out to them. As Edwin Gerow (314) puts it, the suggestion involved in irony, jokes, puns, etcetera, for example, is not mysterious but can instead be spelled out to those who do not get it right away. Now some of our interlocutors have suggested that Ananda was claiming that poetry was different enough from other types of speech that it required its own, *sui generis* analytical theory. Even so, we respond that Ananda needs to say *more* about this analytical theory; and here our brief remarks about aesthetic sensibility might help. As McCrea (2008: 213–14) puts it, Ananda's argument to establish the existence of suggested meaning (*dhvani*) proceeds by elimination, but he does not explain *how* suggestion works.

In an earlier well-argued and meticulously researched book, McCrea (2008: 17–18; 24–26; 118–23) claims that formalist theorists before Ananda missed suggested meaning (*dhvani*) in many earlier poetic works because they focussed instead on directly expressed meaning. McCrea holds that for Ananda, the formal elements of poetry (such as figures of speech, etcetera) are not particularistic but rather are part of a hierarchically ordered and functionally unified whole. The single, overriding goal for Ananda, McCrea argues, is typically the communication of a single, dominant aesthetic emotion (*rasa*). McCrea suggests Ananda imports this unifunctional, hierarchical model of textual organisation and coherence from Mimamsa thinkers (Vedic hermeneutists) who believe Vedic and other religious texts must have a single, ultimate goal, a *telos*, that must be subserved by other elements. We respond here, first, that contra Ananda we should challenge this hierarchy, what we have earlier called the dogma of *rasa* monism. *Why* must there *always* be *one* and only one dominant

aesthetic emotion (*rasa*)? As we have said before, two (or more) *equally dominant* aesthetic emotions (*rasas*) could lead to novel, exciting, and experimental work in poetry, drama, and the other arts. Second, contra Ananda, why assume that religious texts and literary works are *analogous* in this respect of unifocality? *Even if* Mimamsa thinkers are right that religious texts must have a single, ultimate goal that must be subserved by other elements — a claim that might be questioned on separate grounds anyway — this need not hold for literature, poetry, drama, and the like. Instead of unifocality, a bifocal or multifocal model could have *some* (aesthetic) value for literary works, at least sometimes.

In his excellent book, the literary critic V. K. Chari (108) claims that since for Ananda and other proponents of suggestion (*dhvani*) all suggested meaning is contextual, it follows all contextual meaning is suggested, which Chari claims leads to problems. But here we submit that the "is" involved here is that of class-membership rather than identity. That is, all suggested meaning is for Ananda a subset of the class of contextual meaning, but contra Chari not necessarily the other way round. Not all contextual meaning is suggested, in other words.

We turn next to an important though sadly often overlooked book, by the philosopher Rekha Jhanji. We leave it to the reader to figure out why Jhanji's book is often neglected: is it for example because she was a woman, or because she was not a Sanskritist, or because her fine Indian publisher is not as well-known in the West as some highly rated American and British publishers, or is there some other reason? At any rate, the late Rekha Jhanji (1–14) has argued that the artistic activity of Indian artists revolves around the senses, and uses the artist's imagination to engage with words, metric compositions, colours, lines, sounds, touch, smell, and so on. She claims that the joy of art in the Indian context essentially extols sensory experience, rather than the mystical or a moral framework, and derives chiefly from the senses and sensory qualities. Jhanji suggests that to see Indian art as sacred or spiritual is inadequate to understand and appreciate it. Looking at traditional Indian artists, she argues they have the same kind of preoccupations as artists elsewhere in the world; traditional Indian actors, for example, are trying to figure out how to convey affect through gestures, voice, costumes, movements, sets, etcetera, just like other actors in the world. When creating their works, she claims Indian artists are interested in sensory pleasure and how to transfigure their imaginations into coherent structures. For our part, we are deeply sympathetic to Jhanji's claims, which we aver apply to Ananda and his focus on words and their meanings, whether literal, figurative, or suggested. We would, however, like to register a minor disagreement with Jhanji, to wit, that it would seem to be *often inessential* or unnecessary rather than inadequate, as Jhanji holds, to see Indian art as sacred or spiritual. For later thinkers from roughly Abhinava onwards definitely see poetry, drama, and the other arts in such terms as they give Indian art and aesthetics a religious twist. In the case of these later writers, clearly one must contra Jhanji have a good grip on the sacred and the spiritual to get a good understanding and appreciation of their views, even if this does not hold for earlier thinkers such as Bharata and Ananda, who has been our focus here.

5. Aesthetic Sensibility

Before concluding this essay, it might seem we need to say more about the aesthetic sensibility we have already mentioned a few times in what has come before. Accordingly, we offer some very brief and quick thoughts on this matter below.

We go back to the aforementioned David Hume who gives us five marks or characteristics of true or ideal critics, who we take it have the kind of aesthetic sensibility we have in mind. First, these critics have delicate taste, which means they can observe all kinds of minute details in a work that are pertinent; and though Hume does not say this explicitly, it seems to be implicit in his discussion that such critics do not get bogged down in minutiae, missing the forest for the trees. Second, these critics have a lot of practice and experience, attending to literary works (and other artworks) on many different occasions and in different ways. Third, these critics have comparative skills, which involves being able to compare different kinds of artworks so as to know which are better and which

worse; those who cannot compare, Hume tells us, would falsely judge even the coarsest daubs of paint to be as beautiful as better works. Fourth, these critics are unprejudiced, which is to say they must have an open mind and must consider artworks without being unduly influenced by extraneous things; critics from a different culture and age, Hume suggests, must be objective. Fifth, and relatedly, these critics have good sense, which involves reason and acute understanding, and must check prejudice.

What else is needed for aesthetic sensibility, which we have claimed is needed to grasp literary and poetic suggestion (*dhvani*) in Ananda's examples above? Certainly, both the creator of suggestion as well as the receiver — the hearer or the reader — need the imagination. Of course, some people may be more imaginative than others, while some others might be on the road to enhancing their imagination.

Is aesthetic sensibility inherited or can it be acquired? Is it a matter of nature or nurture or both? We are inclined to suggest that some people may inherit through genes the *seeds* of a fine aesthetic sensibility, which must however be nurtured and cultivated for it to blossom rather than atrophy. Others, while not so well endowed genetically, may through practice and experience over a lot of time cultivate a fine aesthetic sensibility. In these respects, aesthetic sensibility may not be so different from the imagination.

6. Conclusion

Diversity is much needed and very welcome, both for its own sake and for the many benefits it brings. But diversity for its own sake is one thing, diversity with intellectual rigour quite another. In this essay, we hope to have accomplished something in line with the latter when it comes to Ananda's claims about literary and poetic suggestion (*dhvani*).

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