

**ON THE CONCEPTS OF KĀVYA, SĀHITYA AND SAHRDAYA
IN SANSKRIT LITERARY CRITICISM**

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PRATAP BANDYOPADHYAY

The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, West Bengal, Republic of India.

The literary art is known as *kāvya* or *sāhitya* in Sanskrit literary criticism (Alaṃkāraśāstra). The former is more widely used for the art. In certain contexts the term *sāhitya* has a wider connotation so as to include other forms of writing than the literary one (cf. ‘literature’ in English, as opposed to ‘poetry’). The term *kāvya* connotes the creation of the poet (*kavi*, derived from the root *ku* ‘to make sound’) who creates with sounds. It bears a reference to the view that literature is simply words charged with meaning. The term *sāhitya*, on the other hand, connotes the combination or union (*sāhitya* <*sa*-*dhā* ‘to combine or unite’) of words and their meanings. This bears a reference to the view that both words and their meanings, with equal importance, form the art. A second reference of the word is to the union of the writer with his connoisseur for whom the former creates. A third reference may be suggested : a union of the writer with his society he belongs to, and this brings in the age-old question of the social responsibility of the writer or the didactic role of literature.

The connoisseur stands in the receiving end. In Sanskrit literary criticism he has been called *sahrdaya* – one having a heart (*hṛdaya*) equal (*sa* <*sa*-*māna*) to that of the writer and the characters the latter creates. He relishes the aesthetic taste (*rasa*) of the art. There is another person in the field – the critic (*ālaṃkārika*) who goes steps further and analyses the art. Whereas the critic is the connoisseur as well, otherwise he cannot receive the art, the latter may not be a critic in that sense of the term. It is unfortunate that in the Alaṃkāraśāstra no separate identities of the connoisseur (*sahrdaya*) and the critic (*ālaṃkārika*) have been admitted. Creation and criticism are poles apart. Appreciation or relish of the taste of art comes close to creation. If the latter is the result of *kārayitrī pratibhā* (creative talent) the former is that of *bhāvayitrī pratibhā* (appreciative talent) - the two types of mental faculty as noted by Rājaśekhara. The former makes the latter complete and fruitful. The critic comes at the post-enjoyment stage. It is interesting to note that at least one commentator of Alaṃkāraśāstra, Bhīmasena Dīkṣita, could grasp the truth when he pointed out that the semblance of aesthetic taste (*rasābhāsa*) based on the concept of impropriety (*anaucitya*) transpires after the stage of aesthetic enjoyment is over and is, hence, a non-entity aesthetically.