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Literary Criticism: European and Indian Traditions

Edited by
C. D. NARASIMHAIAH

THE DEPARTMENT OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH IN ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE

TO

THE MEMORY OF TWO GREAT CRITICS

OF ART AND LITERATURE

DR ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

AND

PROFESSOR M. HIRIYANNA

PREFACE

The papers printed in this volume were first read at a Seminar on Literary Criticism: European and Indian Traditions organised by the Department of Post-graduate Studies and Research in English, University of Mysore, in June 1965. The standard of papers and the discussions which followed them evoked high praise in discerning circles throughout the country. Dr Mulk Raj Anand, himself a participant, nevertheless permitted himself to remark at a point of all-round satisfaction during the discussions: 'Here in this room we witness the birth of New Criticism in India'.

Let us hope his words are prophetic and that this effort of ours will at least mark the beginning of such a criticism—a criticism practised by the best Indian scholars with informed intelligence, and sensitive awareness not merely of the Indian literary scene but of the best that has been thought and said in the rest of the world. They will not forget, in particular, to weave the threads of their own past into the texture of the present so as to impart to it the primeval strength of this ancient land and make a meaningful pattern—meaningful, that is, to the present. For without an interest in the living present it will be mere obscurantism. Perhaps the English language itself, despite its Indian oddities, can be a kind of safeguard against it. But in any case the sensibility, though essentially Indian, is operative in a modern dynamic world-context.

It is precisely this ideal that is constantly before the contributors to this volume. Taken together they may be considered as representing the highest Indian critical intelligence, brought up largely on English and American literatures, but responsive to the immemorial past of India. The terms 'European' and 'Indian' may sound pretentious for, barring one Sanskritist, one Tamil writer and two European classical scholars the participants ordinarily confine themselves to English and American practices though almost all of them know some Sanskrit (some more, some less) and are keenly alive to European critical modes and their impact on literature and criticism elsewhere.

the two traditions in question.

That the best men in a discipline could come together a all in a vast country like ours and hold discussions for a whol week and more with undiminished vigour and enthusiasm o a seemingly unproductive matter like literary criticism is it self a tribute to the scholars, but more, if one may say so i our present national context, to the official agencies that mad such a meeting possible. I cannot be too grateful for th encouragement I have received from Dr K. L. Shrimali, th Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University who is quietly pledge to fostering 'the idea of a university'. The University Grant Commission has made a handsome grant for the Seminar an the publication of papers, and what is more, by the manner i which the grant has been made, instilled a new confidence an hope among University men.

I must record my thanks to many others: Mr K. F Ramachandran, the Registrar of the University; my colleague H. H. Anniah Gowda, M. Rama Rao and Vimala Rao; th Research Scholars, Meena Belliappa, Krishnamoorthy Aitha B. G. Varma and E. J. Ekambaram; and the Post-graduat students—all of whom made the Seminar something t remember. I must make particular mention of E. J. Ekambaran and M. Tarinayya who have read the proofs of this volume an prepared the Index; and Mr K. A. Korula of the Wesley Pres on whose patience I have made maddening demands. M grateful thanks are due to Mr David McCutchion and th Editor of *Quest* for permission to include in the Appendix t this volume a report originally published in *Quest* No. 4 I think it represents the general consensus of opinion abou the Seminar and gives at a glance some rough idea of th papers and discussions.

I am painfully aware of many editorial shortcomings, but can only plead that that is the fate of a collection edited b one working under (time-consuming, though inconsequentia pressures and impatient of delay—by no means a scholarl virtue. But these, I am well aware, are only excuses!

C.D.N.

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LITERARY CRITICISM: EUROPEAN AND INDIAN TRADITIONS

INTRODUCTION

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH

OURS is said to be an Age of Criticism but it is not uncommon even today for fairly cultivated people to run down Criticism as 'a literary chit-chat which makes the reputations of poets boom and crash in an imaginary stock-exchange' and accuse critics of being 'bookworms that bore through the pages of precious volumes'. It is obvious this describes the abuse of criticism. And who can say of any good thing that it is never abused by bad men? It is interesting to know that in the Indian tradition the poet and the critic were looked upon as the two eyes of the Muse of Poetry. Some went so far as to claim that a good critic was rarer than a good poet. That does not mean Criticism was a luxury trade. Far from being a luxury trade it was, if one may say so, the breath of our nostrils. When T. S. Eliot says Criticism is as inevitable as breathing he may very well be basing his claim on a practice that had permeated the ancient Indian intellectual ethos. Indeed, history doesn't know of any literature, ancient or modern, which has given such a central place to the critic (*Sahrdaya*) as the Sanskrit literature. And yet only lone voices like Leavis's have been heard in this progressive age of ours asserting literary criticism as central to the very idea of a university education if it should aim at breaking the dogmatism and prejudice of youngmen by putting them in touch with the best that has been thought and said in the world. It is common knowledge that a vast majority even of highly educated university men betray themselves in their responses to men and situations—responses which are sometimes crude, sometimes sentimental and often second-hand. They read a poem or a novel; look at a painting or a sculpture; watch a play or a film; listen to music or speech and ejaculate approval or disapproval in emphatic terms without being able to analyse the

nature of their responses though one is aware that many that do talk of books and the arts in cultivated drawing rooms may only be echoing publishers' blurbs or, worse still, Sunday papers and slick periodicals. But that is what one means by second-hand living. With increasing urbanization, industrialism and consequent loss of corporate living even literacy and leisure will be dubious gifts as they have proved to be in the West where critics of the cultural scene predict, if things continue like this, 'a moronic, tele-eyed, lolly-sucking generation'. For what we read and how we spend our leisure is apt to affect our outlook and the quality of our living. It is the training of intelligence and sensibility that is acquired in college and university that will largely determine some of our later values. As Mr I. A. Richards has said 'An improvement in response is the only benefit, which anyone can receive, and the degradation, the lowering of response is the only calamity'. It is imperative that the improvement has to be sought by every conceivable means—by the study of one's own literature as well as others. As in other spheres of culture here too it would be a distinct advantage for us to know our own tradition, a comparable foreign tradition and a contrasting one.

We in India, indeed in all Asia and Africa, have for the past few centuries been trying with pathetic earnestness to catch up with other people's yesterdays. If we are not forging ahead and can only catch up with yesterdays it is time we caught up with our own yesterdays, as even that makes for continuity. Except in religion and philosophy where one would think we in India have a sound, solid core I am afraid it is difficult to refute Mr Naipaul's criticism of Indians as a nation of mimics (see *An Area of Darkness* by V. S. Naipaul: Andre Deutsch, London 1964)—then the Moghuls and the British, now the Americans and tomorrow perhaps the Russians. Is it because we don't care what happens to us in the externals of life so long as the inner core is sound and untouched? But the fact is creativity dried up almost a thousand years ago though there have been brief epochs of resurgence. And these epochs are strangely characterized by intense questioning and radical revaluations of earlier practices. Indeed, this questioning has been present in the Indian temperament throughout our history, from the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads to Buddha the Enlightened,

o was the first great rebel against meaningless rituals, to Sankara
l the other Acharyas in subsequent centuries until we come
the 19th century which is to me the most animating and
piring in modern Indian history. The currents—for there
re several—of fresh and true ideas the 19th century released
l the tremendous upsurge these currents caused in society,
:n and in our own time through Gandhi and Nehru among
ıers, belong to what Matthew Arnold would have called an
ɔch of Criticism though I submit, I wouldn't subscribe to
theory that epochs of Creation and Criticism alternate, for
ihould think they are one and the same. A tradition which
ɔduced such rebels as the Buddha and a succession of commen-
ors of the order of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and numerous
ıers in the 19th and 20th centuries, to be lacking in critical
ndards in literature ıs most ıntriguing and challenging. While
I said a long succession of thınkers helped to revitalize the
ndu relıgion and philosophy from time to time the arts and the
ences have for long past been woefully neglected. I would
e to think that responsıble crıticism might have made a tre-
ndous difference to our lıteratures and ıf it has not done so
nay be that we have merely degenerated ınto cataloguıng and
ssifying and wranglıng over grammatical subtelities allowing
: song to slip through the fingers. And yet it is a sign of vitality
the Indian tradition that even among grammarians the accepted
w was: *Yathottara Muninam Pramanyam*, later the sage,
:ater the authorıty. But this too became in course of time a
rt of the debrıs which has choked us for centuries.

Even so some theories and concepts of rare value have been
ɔwn to us by the loving care of the undaunted research worker.
ihall not presume to know them much less elucidate them but
:n as a layman I have been most impressed by certain unique
dian approaches to literature born of our essential philosophy
life and I find them most satisfying and answering to the com-
:x needs of a modern situation. Actually, I have been much
:rcised in my mind about it all from the time I came across
an undergraduate Arnold's reference to 'the Indian virtue of
tachment' as an important criterion of judgment in literature.
is he again that harped on the term 'disinterestedness' in criti-
m. Surprising that it shouldn't have registered a note of
:ognition in a people for whom *Nishkamakarma* is in theory

at least the central ideal guiding approach to life's actions. And earlier, that great critic, Coleridge, who had some notions of Indian philosophy and a deep knowledge of the transcendental philosophy of Kant dwelt at length on the shaping spirit of imagination which had its correspondence in *Navanavonmeshasalini pratibha,* which also failed to make the impact that Coleridge's 'imagination' did on the Indian student of literature. Mr I. A. Richards who came under the profound influence of Coleridge among others gave to the world his theory of Value. While his *Principles of Literary Criticism* is an epoch-making work, I am afraid his concept of psychological value sounds so jejune and hopelessly inadequate ('Anything', says Mr Richards, 'is valuable which will satisfy an appetency without involving the frustration of some equal or more important appetency') in comparison with the Indian concept of *Purusharthas*—of ends and means: *Artha* and *Kama* constitute instrumental values while *Dharma* and *Moksha* form intrinsic values though one would like to think the Indians accepted the first three as being made for the last one, Moksha, which is the *Parama purushartha,* guiding and controlling our pursuit of the first three. We have in daily conversation among the high and the low, heard the question repeated *ad nauseam* — To what end is this thing? Or, for what *purushartha*? But that is asked either in cynicism or in despair or merely as a joke but seldom practised in the judgment of a work of art. Of course, unfortunately, we only have concepts—our very thinking was conceptual as the Sutras have exemplified—and are not in possession of a method by which to use them in daily life, by which to judge not a stanza here and a stanza there, but the work of art as a whole. Is it because our culture refreshed only a tiny minority leaving vast masses of people untouched? And did this minority share certain assumptions which it did not feel called upon to articulate or elaborate for the benefit of the many? Is that how we may account for the most regrettable lack of full and complete expositions of whole works of art in Sanskrit criticism? A string of conjectures and no satisfying explanation! But we must pass on. Now consider Eliot's theory of Impersonality. When Mr Eliot says poetry is not the expression of personality but the extinction of it an Indian should readily perceive the parallel in the constant Indian endeavour to transcend the self, the lower self in the interest of the fuller expression of the higher

self. And lastly when Eliot speaks of the critic's seeking corroboration from as many of his fellows as possible in the common pursuit of true judgment; when Leavis demonstrates it so convincingly in his 'exploratory creative' approach to the work of art: 'the work of art organizes itself this way, doesn't it?' 'yes, but' etc. etc.; and even when such a minor critic as Helen Gardner speaks of 'loving to sit folding your legs and talk it with others'—all these critics are, possibly without knowing, expounding the role of the *Sahrdaya* in Indian Poetics.

Well, I shall not tire the reader with these parallels which if pursued like this may smack of parochialism and defeat the very cause which I seek to espouse. For I am not so naive as to seek to establish cultural colonies or worse still condemn myself to 'cultural book-keeping', by talking of influences and impacts.

After all the Seminar was conceived in the attempt to forge links with a past with which we today have lost connection in a vital way. But our pathetic mimicry of now Aristotle, now the Neo-classicists, then the Romantics and lately the New Critics without absorbing them so as to suit *our* present needs—it is this that has distressed some of us as it has embarrassed many a thinking, Western critic well aware of the Indian potential in this regard. Let's remember that Dryden, by no means a very great critic, argued that if Aristotle had lived now he would probably have changed his rules. Besides, Aristotle was a celebrated thinker—a geometrician, biologist, philosopher and perhaps a literary critic of sorts—who tried to meet the needs of his own time and of his own country, though even of that serious doubts have been entertained today by intelligent Indian undergraduates who are disappointed to find no discussion whatever in the *Poetics* of those profound problems of life, death, the ways of the gods and the mystery of the universe which must have troubled the Greek tragedians—thus contributing to what might seem to be an iconoclastic attitude sharply focused in the question: Why do historians of Criticism begin with Aristotle and not with T. S. Eliot, unless it be for chronological reasons? While one need not go as far as that it is still valid to make a reappraisal of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the light of Sanskrit criticism, almost of the same period, though a couple of centuries had to elapse before it was embodied in documents like Bharatha's *Natyasastra*. It is argued that while Aristotle dwells on the *purgation* of the emotions of Pity

and Fear, as proper to Tragedy the writers of Sanskrit Poetics went further than that when they spoke of the eight or nine important *rasas*. It is obvious that in talking of Pity and Fear Aristotle lays emphasis on the ultimate effect of tragedy and does not concern himself with the actual involvement or engagement of the spectator through the course of the play. Such aesthetic concepts as *hrdayasamvada*, *tanmayibhavana*, and *Akhandcarvana* resulting in *rasanubhava* which produces *Ananda*, a state beyond the duality of pleasure and pain, should prove to any one not merely the great advances made by Indian aesthetics in relation to Aristotle but its amazing modernity and unparalleled adequacy in the midst of the chaos of modern critical theories.

I am anxious that I should not be thought of as trying to seek a monopoly of all the critical principles for the ancient Indians. On the contrary, that the most outstanding Western poets and critics of our time and of the past century should have either consciously or unconsciously said the very things which were central to our ways of thinking and feeling in a distant past must induce some introspection in us and help to focus our attention on the sources of our own culture. It must not sound presumptuous to a European ear if incidentally one may claim that the Indian approach may have something for the West to profit by. As Frederick Ivy Carpenter puts it in respect of American transcendentalism of the 19th century: 'Just as in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the newly discovered literatures of Asia have been stimulating the leading writers of America to new explorations'. Its recognition in philosophy and poetry while fairly widespread, is almost nil in the field of aesthetics and criticism with the notable exception of Ananda Coomaraswamy whose art criticism got a hearing throughout America.

But the greatest need of the hour is not so much to presume to give anything to Europe or America but to set our lands in order, to explore the possibilities of enriching our European borrowings by the fertilising contact of the Indian tradition, and make them meaningful to us in terms of our own tradition.

For history has shown that whenever a people have revitalised themselves they have done so both by going back to the sources of their own culture and by looking around to imbibe influences from outside. It may be recalled how the Germans helped to

show the world the transcendental qualities of Shakespeare which lay hidden from the Anglo-Saxon view for well over two hundred years after the poet's death. So distinguished a critic as Hazlitt thought that no English critic had shown 'like enthusiasm or philosophical acuteness' of the kind that the German Schlegel was capable of. It was a solitary exposition of the poetic principle by an isolated American poet-critic, Edgar Allan Poe, which fired the imagination of French poets and caused a new movement to which belong some of the greatest poets of the Western world, I mean poets like W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Rilke, Mallarme, Paul Valery and T. S. Eliot. We should therefore keep our doors and windows open for fresh winds to blow into our houses. But it is obvious that salvation can come only by following one's *swadharma* though lest we petrify and ossify we should absorb and assimilate other influences. And this can only be on *our* own terms for otherwise they cease to be influences and become chains of cultural enslavement. Surely the French and German critics have judged English and American literature by their own standards even as the English and the Americans have reacted to European literatures, each according to their own genius. Not so in India. We have been petitioners at others' doors too long and indulged in endless mimicry, the more despicable since this is true where our own treasures of art and literature are concerned: It is rightly observed that where there is no European approval there has been neglect. It is time that we set in motion reciprocity instead of the one-way traffic we now have with Europe and America. That calls for an examination of our strength as well as our weakness.

It is important to realise that Literary Criticism is fairly recent in the English-speaking world. For after Aristotle and Longinus the Western world had to wait for over 1500 years before it witnessed anything resembling criticism. What are usually called the Dark Ages of Europe happened to be the most creative period of Indian history. Consider the great names in literary criticism in India in the first millennium after Christ: Bharata, Bhamaha, Dandin, Vamana, AnandaVardhana, Kuntaka and Abhinavagupta and their amazing contributions of *Rasa*, *Alankara*, *Riti*, *Dhvani* and *Vakrokti* to Sanskrit Poetics. Some of the newest approaches of the new critics of the West had been discussed by them threadbare before the first millennium A.C.

was out. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that New Criticism has to travel a long way before it can catch up with India's yesterdays. And when that is demonstrated to ourselves as well as others we will have paid our debt to the West substantially though not wholly. To this end both the Indian teacher of English and the Sanskrit scholar must fully collaborate—if the one brings a dynamic, modern sensibility, the other offers the immemorial wisdom of a mature past. Collaboration between these implies not mutual politeness but agreements as well as differences, both acting and reacting on each other, correcting each other's excesses and of course fertilising the field as never before. That is precisely what the Mysore Seminar aimed at and the papers that follow should help to demonstrate it to an extent, yes to an extent, for this is but the beginning.

IS UNIVERSAL CRITICISM POSSIBLE?

MULK RAJ ANAND

THERE has been very little attention paid to the relation of Criticism to Creative art in India during the last quarter of a century. And we must be grateful to the sponsors of the present Seminar for initiating discussions, which may stimulate more dialogues on the various mootpoints and release the new talents in this field from the orthodoxies of the ritualistic repetition of mantras, the banalities of text books and the remasticated phrases of the newspapers.

I wish, tentatively to offer a few thoughts on the question: 'Are universal standards in criticism possible?'

May I say, in the first instance, that my own answer to this question is in the affirmative. But this view can be justified by more than a mere personal bias in favour of universalism—by reasserting the fundamental connection between art and life in all ages, in so far as the deepest urges in the realm of creativeness have an integral relationship with the world of *human* feelings, passions and ideas which are the sources of action. Also, any analysis of the sources of creativeness in human beings might reveal, in spite of minor eccentricities, certain basic common tendencies, and some reference to the operation of critical faculties in men and women may compel the realisation, in spite of the variety of individual opinions, of a number of shared norms of judgement.

In my opinion, standards of criticism have always tended to be universal, because though hardly any one face of man or woman is like another, the genes which are the pooled energies of life are similar in character. Only, the separation of the various stocks of the human race, the differences of natural background and the effect of dispersed social causalities, as well as political developments, led to the imposition of a dominant local sense both in space and time, in literary and artistic expression, making often for opposition, or vital differences in outlooks, though today we may be within reach of the recognition of the humanness of humanity. Almost all the epics of the world are, however,

universalist in their inspiration and appeal, in so far as they include myths, legends and private histories, based on the fundamental causalities issuing from the *human* heart. But we must not slur over the differences between obscure spatial areas of the past, with their peculiarly limited atmosphere and of the eternalist sense of time measured by the course of the sun, the moon, as against the broader appeal of the inspired works produced after Galileo's discovery that the earth goes round the sun and the shared prose of the later industrial, atomic and space ages.

If I indicate the differences between the words of the various ages, symbolically, it is not because I am unconscious of the dangers of generalisation, but, for convenience of discussion, perhaps it may be possible to mark off certain temporal boundaries.

For instance, it is possible to speak of the words of prehistory as *magical* words, in so far as they were, mostly, invocations for the appeasement of good and bad spirits, obsessive expressions of fears, inhibitions and terrors, as also exclamations of joy about fortunate good things. Again, though there was the hangover of magical words in the dawn of history, the demands of the age of pastoral pursuits and of the time of food gathering through the hunt, which brought forth narrative poetry and prose of the bards. And the exigencies of agriculture, the need for rain, the blessings of the Sun, and the harnessing of one's own energies with prayers, led to the elaboration of nature myths and legends about the gods, evolved from man's dreams, reveries and fantasies, forebodings and hopes, almost the perfection of human nerve-ends into beneficent powerful spirits. In the epic dramas of Vedic India, as well as in the Greek dramas, the intervention of the Gods seems inevitable and significant. The essence of the expression of these vast periods may be said to lie in the instinctive urge that the *destiny of man is in the hands of the unknown power of fate*, the potential energies of the God, above whom is the Supreme God seated on the top of the sky....

During the post-Vedic centuries in our land, which saw the confrontation of the Buddha by himself, which witnessed the death of Socrates in Greece for asking fundamental questions, and the days of the Roman Empire when Jesus was put on the cross for preaching a new faith, the dignity of man, as the maker of his own destiny, begins to assert itself, irrespective of the unknown power of Fate, but various amalgams of magical and other

beliefs continue and even become embodied in the purist outlooks of the Buddhist Sangha and the Christian Church. In the European renaissance of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, however, all the previous beliefs were subjected to critical scrutiny and man was sought to be put on a pedestal of power. He questioned everything, explored, ventured out into the uncharted areas of the globe, (now found to be revolving round the sun), argued with others with a Faith in reason, emphasised fact and became a restless instrument of all his physical, mental and psychical powers, as in the example of Leonardo da Vinci. And thus the destiny of man came to be discussed in literature, not in terms of the unknown power of Fate, but in view of the power of evil and good in men and women themselves. The emphasis was shifted from the gods to man himself, and how he can realise himself. Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and the mediaeval poet saints of India, exemplify this change of emphasis, in spite of the fact that their words often have echoes of the voices of gods, spirits, angels, witches and fairies.

With the discovery of the steam engine, and the use of machine tools in the production of goods, particularly in the 18th century, the processes of the European renaissance were pushed further all over the world. Science and human knowledge began to transform man's consciousness everywhere; and though the basic human emotions remained the same, man became more self conscious about the values of the individual life within the group and began to put a value on the human being as such, which led almost to the worship of man at the end of the 19th century. This new humanism brought many more people than kings and queens and noblemen and ladies and the middle classes into literature. Poetry became the criticism of life and prose was used to dissect the human metabolism in order to discover new norms of human relations and explore the crisis of character in a fast changing world.

There were, of course, people who reacted against the machine age, specially because the means of production continued to be owned by the few as against the many. And some of the sensitive spirits rejected the machine civilisation as such and began to live in a world of pure art, associated with the ivory tower school of writing in the West. But the more positive humanists, who faced the challenge of the machine and wished to master the age of

mechanisation, wished to love every individual intimately, to honour and worship the people. Some of them conceived a passion for mankind and listened to the cries of the disinherited, the insulted and the injured.

In the one world, beyond national frontiers, which came through the industrial, atomic and space age in which we live, quite a few images of the age of the gods downwards have come to us, because man's heart and mind do not change mechanically. But to the inherited world of images of the human family, all of which we possess unconsciously, there have accrued a number of images which are the metaphors of the machine age. It is true that the locomotive, the aeroplane and the atomic particles, have taken a long time to enter poetry. And yet the imagery and metaphor of modern poetry and modern plastic and pictorial art are assimilating the new areas and dimensions discovered by science. And the whole world of images is sought to be possessed *consciously* in the new criticism, because only by the comprehensive awareness of man's creative works of all the ages, of all the times and all the places, can result in the one world culture, which has been rendered possible by the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy in the humanist world of our own time.

Of course, the optimistic view about the emergence of a Universalist culture, which may be built on the recognition of a variety of ways of life, local differences and individual flavours, is balked by the racial, sectarian, partisan and chauvinist fanaticisms. Infact, the concepts of co-existence and co-discovery are opposed by certain groups which believe in the superiority of their cultures. And it is possible that in this period of transition, which may last for a generation or two, creative art and literature may become less important. The militarists, the politicians, the men of commerce, the technicians, and all those who serve their limited interests, may not have the vitality or courage to face the spiritual struggle for the survival of human values. They may not wish to face the challenge of our tragic age of disintegration which has been brought about by vast upheavals and is threatened by complete destruction through the progress of knowledge and science. In that case, literature and art will tend to become decorative and will be concerned with incidental phenomena, creature comforts, transitory prejudices and bazaar gossip. The books of titillation will begin to take precedence over the books

of fundamental passions. The literature of the revolt against human degradation may, however come from the prophetic spirits, who have a vision of the world, which may outlast the present disenchantment, apathy, and despair and in which humanness itself, in all its weaknesses, fears and aspirations, becomes important for groping towards self-awareness.

The creative artist can, then, become significant, because he has the ability to see the world as a whole, in the sense in which he is possessed of an impassioned desire to achieve an integrated picture of man and the universe around him, with an active imagination which is concerned to see that his dreams are acted out. As the material from which literary works are constructed have their sources in the experience of the writer, and as those experiences are mostly immediate and local, the creative man has to have an *insight* into which part of the experience is significant for the whole world and can be raised from the local sense to the sense of universality, that is to say, true to *human* situation in the immediate environment and become possessed of the values which have meaning for mankind.

There is nothing miraculous about this *insight* unless it is the ability to seize upon those tensions, conflicts and crises which are the mootpoints of human consciousness even when it is dormant. The creative writer seizes upon the deeper layers of the obvious phenomena and brings the illumination of some mysterious comprehension which rouses the sleep-walkers from their routine existence.

The whole process is extraordinarily complex. The awareness of the creative artist is capable of more intense concentration on the various elements which go to make his experience of some intense moments or of the whole of life. He emerges from the details by a process of passional logic, which is both logic and the illogic of logic. He weeds out the irrelevances, purifies the apperceptions, energises his being into becoming, with a power of comprehension which keeps the subtlest nuances beneath the eyelids, as it were, and directs the kinetic gesture of the hand, or the exuberant rhythm of verbal utterance, into the statement which unites words, images and metaphors into some kind of balance, which may heighten the emotions of the reader and intensify his awareness by the kind of confirmation which is

available when the onlooker says: 'Oh! I felt the same—I could have written it myself. . . .'

In view of the fact, that the routine men of all civilisations tend to take the surface realities for granted, the literary artist is gifted with the talent to look beneath and beyond the superficies. And he generally picks upon those habits, beliefs, inhibitions and taboos, which are generally based upon easy acceptance and compromise and goes to the 'heart of the matter.' In this way, he frequently comes into conflict with those societies which live by custom or dead habit. Thus the creative writer often becomes a rebel. The uncompromising manner of the prophetic soul possesses him. And he inspires, by his new vision of the land after his heart's desire, all those who have not dared to look beyond their noses.

The critic is aware of the music in the soul of the artist.

The role of criticism in such an emergent universalist society, therefore, becomes a constructive one. The individual critic allies himself with the creative artist and shares his comprehensive world outlook. Perhaps, as a judge of the productions of impassioned men, the critic is more objective because he is a fundamental scientist or a philosopher who has worked out a more complete *Weltanschadung* than even the creative writer is able to do with his inner reliance on memory and the imagination. At any rate, the critic, in this sense, is more a prophet than the 'little critic' of the magazines who seldom allies himself with the integral world of the writer but carps at him from the point of view of his own pet political or social ideas or fashionable theories, or individual prejudices. Infact, the application of universal standards of criticism would need a more complete equation between the comprehensive human awareness of the creative artist and that of the critic. If this equation can be attained to any extent then felt humanness will itself supply certain criteria for the critic. And there could be mutual aid between the visionary artist and the perfector of vision, the critic.

The achievement of this correlation may lead to the adumbration of a new criticism.

But this task requires, in the first instance, the compulsion in the critic to understand the compulsion of the creative writer. As an ancient Indian rhetorician put it: 'The audience must bring

to the theatre almost as much imagination as the actors.' In the contemplation of works of literature, the critic has to judge, first of all, the passion which activates the words. In the second place, the appreciator has to see how far the author has utilised his insight upon a subject, coherently, from within the integral universe of discourse of the theme. Also, the critic must be able to grasp the various degrees of achievement of the atmosphere to the creation of which the talent of the writer is directed. The reader is often well placed to see that the writer has not dissipated his art in mere emotionalism, but, as a critic of his own work, has imposed enough restraint on his words to achieve the equilibrium where the quality of life is communicated as a permanent value. The critic can thus differentiate how far the writer is describing the two legs of a man or/and how far he is abstracting the two leggedness of the human species—that is to say, making the particular into the universal metaphor.

The co-incidence of the interest of the creative writer and the critic can be achieved more adequately if the latter is able to project himself into the impalpable, evanescent and mobile imagination of the creative writer, as it begins to work on the sources of inspiration and as it delivers the work of art from the original illumination through the constraining influences of self-criticism or balance into something like the aspiration to say his say as perfectly as possible, within the universe of discourse of an expanding order of human relations.

The critic has to partake of the power of the original impulse of the artist with sympathy. Then, he can see whether the author has, and how far the author has, succeeded in arranging his utterance, abstracted the elements, distorted or suppressed irrelevances, in order to express his intent, or the complex of intents; and to what extent the material process realises the harmony or discord intended, which may make or construct a total design. Thus the outsider is also able to judge how far the writer has detached himself or acted as the self-critic of his work.

Only, the coincidence of the released activity of the creative and the critical spirit, at more or less ever par, can conquer the opposed reality of the void where there was no work of art but where a total or near total picture is achieved out of the raw

materials of experience, as a kind of reservoir or further creativeness.

There are many complexities in the connections between human beings in every age. But when we arrive in the age when the gods are dispossessed and men began to adjust themselves to a human order embracing the whole world, then the disconnections between men and women of the different regions of the world, the differences in their traditions, the hangovers of disruption created by racial discrimination and political differences, as well as all the complex of contrarinesses and tensions of love, have interposed difficulties which can be only resolved by going back to the elements of humanness as the test of both creative art and criticism.

If literature is the heart of the world and the mind as well, and the wealth behind the pools of the eyes, in the entrails and in the mysterious Kundalini, then the sanctions for its realisations lie in the human condition, irrespective of the transient outer phenomena. In fact in the humanness is the content of a work of art. And from this very humanness emerge the standards of criticism, envisaging all the disorders, deviations, weaknesses and the strengths of the nervous system which is seeking to perfect itself, if only by finding one solution among many of the universal problem of the destiny of man, in the face of death, love, hatred, greed, violence and the unknown potentialities of the universe. In this sense, the music of the human soul becomes the ultimate criterion of the creative art of our time, when a comprehensive historical humanism must be accepted, with its fundamental human values or the human heritage be allowed to dissipate itself in the tawdry complacency of cheap commercial successes by vicarious indulgence in horror, crime and detection fiction, block-buster poetry and lethal gases released by the 'little critics' in the columns of newspapers, in choleric gossip and bitter egotistical outpourings, or say-nothing tame, safe writing, which disturb no one and win applause all round for accepting life as it is, never hinting at the potentialities that may open up if poetry is conceived as the criticism of life, as the prophecy of the more intense life, in a world without frontiers where universal cultural coexistence is possible . . .

APPROACHES TO CRITICISM

NARESH GUHA

NEARLY seventy five years ago while Bankimchandra was still alive and active, one Purnachandra Basu wrote in an article in Bengali: 'European literature has its peculiar standard in the European society, because their customs and creed, and their system of values are quite alien.' As will be obvious, he was bemoaning the impact of Western literature on our own, and the view that he was championing represents a very widely shared misunderstanding of the process and character of literature. Nationalism may or may not be a virtue for an honest citizen, but certainly no qualification whatever for a competent literary critic. And yet, unfortunately, it is not at all a minority view that literary criticism should only refer to a particular national literature or a group of literatures having a common tradition, must have a distinctive character of its own, and should conform to the ideas and 'typical' emotions of a particular people. I do not know if 'typicalness' of emotions of a particular people is a psychologically valid notion. In any case it has a touch of mysticism. But I will not be surprised if respectable scholars, even those with specialization in foreign literatures, claim, for example, that the famous pre-occupation of Indian literature with Beauty-Goodness-and-Truth (*Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram*) must inevitably play a part in determining *our* kind of literary criticism. This sounds like the extension of the caste system to literature.

Obviously there are a number of approaches to this problem which raises characteristic questions and return appropriate answers. Assumptions and preoccupations determine the results. The historical or biographical critic gets involved in the details of poets' life, parallels, sources, movements and periods. The assumption, perhaps, is that these extraneous details somehow will throw a revealing light on a particular piece of work. As if art is self-expression in the most obvious way, literature a faithful mirror of life, a documented history of civilization, or as if we can know enough of a poet's inner life to understand the full implication of his work! Taine's famous criteria of race, milieu, moment,

hold for them the key to the mystery of creation. Aestheticism on the other hand declines to profess any such deterministic attitude. Literary interpretations of the aesthetes well up from within, from the supposedly uninhibited, enlightened, and priestly hearts of theirs that intuit. The arbiter of literature functions there in complete subjectivism, and individual experience of a work of art is regarded as inviolable. However, they do in fact no better than claim paradoxical infallibility for a private reader's reactions, though these are bound to vary from person to person since scientific knowledge is not involved in the appreciation of art. Nobody is contending that literature is *not* primarily an object of specialists' concern. Literature is simply there for the readers to enjoy, and a reader is well within his rights to refuse to admit any mediatorial interferences. Ideally that is exactly what he should do. But if the critic has any valid function to perform, he would better not try to interchange his position with that of the reader whose aims are more or less distinct.

A third kind of approach to criticism tends to rely on scientific positivism. Critical interest now is directed to the finding of causal antecedents, origins, evolutions, verisimilitudes, naturalness, realism, or economic, social and political causes determining the work of art. Prescriptive, or didactic criticism has its birth under the star of scientific positivism. Questions asked by such critics are as follows: Has there been a faithful representation of life? and sufficient dispassionateness on the part of the author? Has poetry been reconciled with real life? Does the author depict 'social realism' which is 'the fulfilment of all art and literature'? Does the author show 'an insight into the structure of society and the future direction of its evolution'? Does it show any 'progressive' outlook? The aim of such critics is to be impersonal and objective which, if correct questions are asked, is a very laudable aim indeed. But if realism is the criterion (did not even Flaubert object that he was not a 'Realist'?)—if realism is the scale of judgment then what do we do with a literary work which has no intention of depicting life faithfully? *The Divine Comedy*? 'The Ancient Mariner'? or *Meghadutam*? *The Trial*? and *Waiting for Godot*? Elements in literature are sometimes culled from dreams perhaps, or from fantasy: should we ignore these? What about stylized or abstract literature? The stream of consciousness method? Apart from the question of

legitimacy of applying the scientific method to the appreciation and evaluation of literature, another difficulty also crops up at times. Since science wants not only to understand and interpret phenomena but also to predict, attempts of some of the scientific literary critics land us into ridiculous positions.

The scientific critic asks extra-literary questions, more or less like the historical critic, and evaluates literature according to the answers to those questions. Marxist criticism, for example, explores the social and ideological implications of a work of art, and though it swears by 'realism' and 'truth', never asks what really and truly is the nature of literature. Criticism without a theory of literature is not much rewarding. Psychological criticism also occupies itself with peripheral questions—with hunting for the subconscious or unconscious meaning, sex symbols, and things like these, revealing a simple faith that the value of literature lies primarily in being a handy evidence of our subconscious life. The Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex can, for them, explain the complex character of Hamlet, thus reducing Hamlet to not much more than a mere type. Myth criticism, similarly, cannot do more than demonstrate literature as an unexpected conveyer of myths, primordial images, or 'archetypal patterns'. No body should question the importance in its own way of the discovery of the subconscious or unconscious of man's mind as a store house of the inherited images of the divine father, rebirth, descent into hell or the sacrificial death of the god, and of the discovery that these archetypes are the organizing principles of any meaningful work of literature. But this must not be confused with a comprehensive critical method.

This short account of some of the trends of current literary criticism is by no means intended to be a comprehensive survey. But it is sufficient to demonstrate how chaotic the critical situation is. If we accept the notion that the critic's function is to attack literature with conflicting assumptions in mind and to grind their own axes, we will reach nowhere or remain where we are in the middle of utter confusion and anarchy. To say this is not to deny that these critical 'leaps forward' including the Marxist variety, serve in their own way some very valuable purposes. What Maud Bodkin said in defence of her psychological method is equally applicable to the other methods—that genuine appreciation of literature must be sought 'with the complete

resources of our mind' and that any insight is valuable as a component of our enriched apprehension.

The simultaneous existence of so many methods and standards of literary criticism could in itself have been a sufficient intellectual stimulus for attempting a reconsideration of the entire problem. And this has been done by an influential group of Western critics in this century with interesting results. Before coming to consider their revised method or methods, let us remember for a while why for us in India this problem of finding a dependable and unified standard of criticism has become so urgent.

India is a multilingual country with a number of literatures having distinct character and appeal. At least a few of these literatures have long histories, and cannot be dismissed with a shrug or a patronising nod as still belonging to the category of the 'underdeveloped' or just 'developing' literatures. Forming the background and linking one with the other, there is the imposing bulk of Sanskrit and Dravidian literatures coming down from our antiquities. And in recent years a considerable amount of writing has also been done by the Indo-Anglicans. I am not competent to refer to the conditions prevailing in the South. So I shall confine myself to Sanskrit and Bengali literatures in the context of our modern system of education which, however, is based on the English system to a large extent. Our question is, we who have read Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Scott and Dickens on the one hand, and Henry Morley, Leslie Stephens, W. J. Courthop, Edmund Gosse, John Aldington Symonds, Arthur Symons and George Saintsbury on the other, how should we evaluate our own literature? Some ultra-patriotic people would want us to believe that between our old and the new, the traditional and the modern literatures written in our living languages, an inviolable link is necessarily perceptible; and the literature created by those recent writers who seem to have broken or ignored this sacred link is of dubious quality and should therefore be rejected as bad. Remember what even Bankim himself one of the great pioneers of modern Bengali literature, said while referring to the new writings of his time: 'Madhusudan, Hemchandra, Nabinchandra, and Rabindranath are poets for the sophisticated Bengalis—but a pure Bengali poet is Iswar Gupta'. His exas-

peration, however, can easily be seen from what he said in the very next line in the paragraph I have quoted from: 'Pure Bengali poets, alas, are not longer born'. And this was toward the end of the nineteenth century. The question that troubled them most was how to evaluate the literature they themselves were creating. The only available standard known to them was the English standard of the time—mainly historical—and instinctively they shrank from the prospect. By and large, the question remains unanswered to this day.

Our history and the form of our education have added a further cause of bewilderment. By the time the English pattern of education became the norm in Bengal, in the thirties of the nineteenth century, we learnt to take a pride in our heritage. But strangely enough, from the literary point of view, this late Renaissance of the nineteenth century in Bengal hardly revived our critical interest in Sanskrit literature. This was mainly because our normal awareness of tradition had been lost until the rediscovery of its importance was handed down to us first by the English and then other European Orientalists. Our indebtedness to these Orientalists is boundless, but they were rather unhelpful as regards the new evaluation of our literary inheritance. The Orientalists were not so much concerned with poetry as such, though a few enthusiastic translations (or, should I say 'transformations'?) were attempted. What interested them most was largely a scholarly study of our past for gaining knowledge in our history, archaeology, linguistics, and comparative philology. We did no better. Even when Vidyasagar and Tagore drew our attention to the excellence of Kalidasa and other ancient writers, they had no recognisable critical method to use. I must refer here to two most valuable articles by Bankim and Tagore, both on a comparison between Kalidasa's Sakuntala and Shakespeare's Miranda. What these articles reveal, however, is that the attitudes to 'love' and 'nature' are different in Kalidasa and Shakespeare, and Tagore quite convincingly argues for his preference of Sakuntala to Miranda. The question of values decides here the issue. The articles, as I have mentioned, deserve high praise. But I fail to see how they can be strictly called literary criticism. They are discussions of values and attitudes, considered out of their immediate contexts of literary organizations. Such discussions are perfectly legitimate, but they cannot decide how a

literary critic is to function. Consideration of moral and ethical values can never be a determining factor in literary criticism, as otherwise, one should from Tagore's article on Sakuntala and Miranda come to this inevitable conclusion that for us Indians the character of Sakuntala should seem superior to that of Miranda. That Tagore knew better can be seen from his innumerable references to Shakespeare. Critically he regarded Shakespeare as a Master; preferentially he valued Kalidasa more.

I have raised these questions of evaluating Sanskrit and Bengali literature to show how complex is the problem of deciding on a reasonable standard of literary criticism. The modern world is not composed of closed societies. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the walls dividing one literature from another have been gradually crumbling down. More and more we are being exposed to literatures other than the respectable ones known in Western Europe till the end of nineteenth century, showing heterogeneous views of life, and distinctive literary forms of their own. There are the Celtic, the Norse, the Indian, the Chinese, and the Japanese literatures and views of life. There are forms like Haiku, Noh, and the Sanskrit drama. Modern drama of the absurd is unlike anything in the past. There is the modernist trend in poetry demonstrated by the writings of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings, and Dylan Thomas. Among unconventional fiction writers we have Proust, Kafka, and James Joyce. Keeping in mind this changed and complex situation of our times, it is hardly possible to ignore questions like these: How can a Hindu, or a Japanese, or a Chinese critic, who does not share the Christian world view—how can such a person evaluate Dante, or Milton, or T. S. Eliot? Should he first neutralise himself of any traditional affiliations, then get infected by the values and ways of life of a Dante or Milton or Eliot, and then function as a critic? How can a critic who values only the classical genres of Western drama react favourably to a Sanskrit or a Japanese Noh drama? Can we really fix the ultimate character of literary genres? Can we accept T. S. Eliot's notion that the critic must show a preference for a view of life which is acceptable to him as 'coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience?' That a view must be coherent is quite clear, but are not the other two criteria rather loaded?

But the same Eliot back in the twenties of this century founded an English version of the formalist school of European criticism which promised to answer the questions raised above. His vigorous condemnation of the prevailing mode of historical criticism prepared for a most reasonable shift of emphasis in modern criticism. 'Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation', he wrote in 1920, 'is directed not upon the poet, but upon poetry'. ('Tradition and the Individual Talent'). In 1928 in the Preface to *The Sacred Wood* he wrote again: 'When we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing.' And yet again in 1933: 'If poetry is a form of communication [he was commenting on I. A. Richards] yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself.' (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*).

This new conception of poetry as constituting an organized and independent *form* (remember Eliot's formulation that poetry is an 'impersonal organization of feelings' that successfully finds a precise 'objective correlative') is not entirely new in the history of European criticism. The basic ideas of Croce's aesthetics are not very dissimilar, and both Croce and Eliot discarded the historical method as fallacious. It has become fashionable now to question Eliot's critical stature. He himself became sarcastic about the techniques of some of his most distinguished followers—called the linguistic criticism the 'lemon-squeezer school of criticism' for example. But he never disowned his basic notions, and these basic notions are the most important points of departure for any criticism to-day, important because if one starts from there one would come to study literature for what it is and not for another thing. The result would be that a careful technique derived from these principles could be equally applicable to any form of literature.

Once we accept this basic notion that the traditional interest in poets should be abandoned in favour of an interest in poems as autonomous, self-sufficient artefacts we are inevitably led to the corresponding developments demonstrated by critics like I. A. Richards, William Empson, F. R. Leavis, Cleanth Brooks and others. My intention is not to defend the detailed activities of all these new critics, some developing techniques of linguistic or semantic analysis, and some analysing verbal 'ambiguities'. I only want to emphasize that the critical movements which accept

the basic notion of poetry being an autonomous, self-sufficient, organized form are international movements, have 'transcended the boundaries of any one nation' (Rene Wellek), and what is more, show some remarkable similarity of approach and analysis to the formal and linguistic criticism of our Sanskrit *Alamkārasāstra*. In the *Alamkārasāstra* all the emphasis is on the work of art: *Bibhāvānubhāvabyābhichārisamyogadrasanishpattih*. Volumes have been written on this criptic formulation in Bharata's *Nātyasāstra*, and as can only be expected, subsequent theoreticians expanded its implications and some pushed their analysis to impossible lengths or in even quite wrong directions, proving thus how elusive and complex the work of a literary critic is. But the core of their analysis has remarkable affinities with that of the organistic-formalism in modern European criticism. External and internal elements are fused in a work of art by the impact of poetic genius into a complete whole. Justification of the use of various elements in a particular piece of work must be analytically found in the work itself. The poet has the full freedom of a godlike creator. Analysis of the poetic use of words, naturally, occupies a significant part of the *Alamkārasāstra*. As far as I can see, Empson's interest in the ambiguity or verbal nuances in poetry is legitimately comparable to the preoccupation of the *Dhvanibādis*, and Richards' exploration of what he chooses to call the 'emotive' language in poetry has a like ambition. Moreover, since 'arts are the supreme form of communicative activity', Richards very appropriately explores also the nature of the effect of poetry on individual readers—the nature of communication —as is done by the *Rasabādis*—and like them he also views the problem of communication not from the poet's end ('the mental processes of the poet are not a very profitable field for investigation' —*Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1924), but from the readers' end. After all—and the Sanskrit analysts knew this as well—all readers do not react to a work of art in the same way. Some may fail to understand the plain meaning, some may tend to sentimentalize, and others may have inhibitions or doctrinal adherences. This is the applied side of the poetic effect and it occupied Richards' mind because of his interest in teaching poetry. The full impact of poetry is available only to that reader who has cultivated his mind adequately, who is *Sahrdaya*, and whose mind is like a polished mirror as the *Rasabādis* would say. This will explain

Richards' programme of practical criticism—an extension of a literary critic's function. And though René Wellek deplores Richards' conception of the psychic organisation that art imposes on us, a *Rasabādi* will be surprised to find in Richards a modern exponent of the most valuable conclusions of Abhinabagupta, that 10th Century Kashmiri Brahmin of giant intellect.

This short article can do no justice to this most fascinating similarity of outlook. My only hope is that a capable Sanskrit scholar who is also a comparatist of wide reading, who has a questioning mind with his fingers on the pulses of the modern situation, will soon explore this subject further, and possibly contribute to the most fruitful method of modern literary criticism. Those who have the notion that *Alamkārasāstra* is preoccupied with the moral implications of a work of art should remember Dhananjaya's stricture that they are good people, though really simpletons, who hunt for morals in poetry. The humanist who may feel embarrassed with the alleged equation of aesthetic pleasure (*rasāswāda*) with the Brahma-experience (*Bramhaswāda*) may consider what a modern Bengali scholar has said on this point: 'The equation,' he says, 'is evidently a facade of compromise with the current mood of the people, since no such conclusions can be legitimately derived from the analysis of the actual text'. The position of a formalist-linguistic critic, therefore, is likely to be this (and I follow in this René Wellek to whom I am greatly indebted for various ideas):

We do *value* literature, and a critic's function is to 'help his reader to understand and enjoy' it (Eliot: *Frontiers of Criticism*, 1956). We value literature not because the enjoyment leads to some other results, but for what it is. And what it is can only be found by a careful analysis of the form itself. Words, behaviour, experience, attitudes, and ideas which go into the composition of literature are organised and fused into an artistic object of enjoyment. There is nothing, including ethical and didactic ideas, that cannot enter into such an organization. But a critic's function is not to discuss those ideas in isolation after removing them from their proper context, because they are mere bricks for the construction of the entire form. If this formal transformation remains incomplete, the work is faulty. Use of all the material should have a necessary justification in the context of the particular form. And the final evaluation should depend [illegible] on its

conformity to some allegedly 'mature' view of life but on the noble complexity of its organization—on the 'amount and diversity of materials integrated',—on the poet's amalgamating power of disperate experiences, not merely bound by violence together, but actually integrated, and finally on his power to create a 'difficult beauty' which may not be always immediately agreeable. This is the mode of criticism which is capable of assimilating what other methods have to contribute peripherally.

What Atulchandra Gupta has said in his brilliant short introduction to the *Alamkārasāstra* (and which is equally applicable to the methods of the formalist-linguistic criticism), could be a suitable postscript to this article:

"The analytical rigour of this method will, no doubt, repel those readers who are habituated to the so called 'constructive criticism'. But the *Alamkārikas* did not care to sentimentalise in the name of poetic criticism. Most 'constructive criticism' either pours down as criticism a pale version of the original aesthetic pleasure, or makes the poetic emotion an occasion for poetizing. The analysis of the meaning of poetry is open only to intelligent criticism .... Readers are expected to enjoy poetry simply by the reading of poetry. Enjoying poetry with the promptings from poetizing critics is a modern phenomenon. If the critic is a poet as well, only then the aesthetic pleasure of poetry can also be communicated in criticism. This is a rare combination. The *Alamkārikas* knew well that they were merely competent critics with love for poetry."

WHETHER CRITICAL APPRECIATION IS BOUND BY CONSIDERATIONS OF RELIGION, COUNTRY, AND TRADITION

DAVID JOHN MCCUTCHION

LAST year the *Times Literary Supplement* invited 17 critics, nine of them Anglo-American, eight continental Europeans to give their views on the function of criticism. A French journal commenting on the English contributions headed its article 'Strange Criticism From Across The Channel'. Apparently it was strange because the English critics tried to bring their criticism, and consequently the literature they were discussing, into close relationship with life—they were more down to earth than their continental colleagues, who were 'far more technical . . . they tend to esoteric procedures that must confine them to a small and specialised audience'*. So here we have the makings of a generalization about differences of national approach—the French are abstract, precise; the English empirical, tentative. And to a certain extent one can so generalize about the different national traditions of European literature and culture in general. The French are the great classicists—the very quality of their language tends to the universal: they never counted the streaks of their tulips; when Ronsard says 'rose', he evokes the essence of all roses. It is impossible to translate Shakespeare's language, so physically metaphorical, into this transparent medium, just as Racine sounds pompous in English. Romanticism was no sooner established in France than it took classical forms (Baudelaire, the Parnassians, Symbolism). English literature is earthy, rambling, moody; French literature orderly and clear—English 'empiricism', French 'logique'. And the Germans we all know are profound and transcendental. They are the Romantic nation *par excellence* —they never had a classical period at all: when Gottsched tried to impose French classicism on them, he failed; the classicism of Goethe or of Schiller was a personal venture. As is to be expected,

* Graham Hough, reviewing the collection in *The Listener*, Oct. 29th, 1964.

these nations produced criticism appropriate to their literatures—French preoccupation with form, English preoccupation with morality and 'criticism of life', German emphasis on revelation and spirit.

But a moment's thought reminds us that these critical attitudes were by no means confined to their respective countries. Throughout the whole history of European literature, there has been continuous interaction. The Augustans took their critical theory from France, Coleridge his from Germany. Early in this century the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* invited so un-English a theorist as Croce to contribute the article 'Aesthetic'. National predilections alone are far from deciding critical attitudes. A far more important factor is what might be called the dynamics of literary taste. Literature is not timeless, but functions within a growing tradition. The European progression: Renaissance—baroque—classicism—romanticism—realism . . . is typical. Such a progression cuts across national boundaries. This, far more than any law of classicism or fidelity to an image, national or otherwise, is a law of literature—that it must change; if not, it grows stagnant and dies. The French tried to cling to classicism for a century after its vitality was exhausted: the result was mediocrity—that was what came of trying to be national! T. S. Eliot rejected Milton and preferred Laforgue: what Laforgue had done for the French had not yet been done for the English. The same impulse of renewal prompted the Augustans to reject the Metaphysicals, Victor Hugo to reject Corneille, Hulme to reject Tennyson. Valéry said of Baudelaire: 'It is clear enough that Baudelaire sought out all that Victor Hugo had not done; that he refrains from all the effects in which Victor Hugo was invincible'. Evidently the creative impulse to originality is at least as strong as the conservative restraint of national tradition. In fact, as a literature develops it tends to grow more international.

These two factors, national character and contemporary international expression continually fuse and modify each other. Thus Romanticism takes different forms in Germany, England, and France, more in tune with German than with French national genius (the French Romantics are the least interesting). Similarly classicism is at its greatest in France, tends to satire in England, and is merged with Romantic idealism in Germany (Goethe and Schiller). Even in the age of greatest universalism, it is diffi-

cult to imagine a French Johnson or an English Voltaire, yet a movement like sentimentalism can sweep across the continent sending even a 'philosophe' like Diderot into rhapsodies. Could anyone call Rousseau 'typically French?' yet he is not typically English or typically German either. His prose style 'French', his emotionality 'German', his sense of the real 'English'?—how nebulous are all such attempts to apply national labels! The French are great classifiers, yet one of their greatest critics, Ste. Beuve, followed a more rambling 'English' method, declaring that he preferred to walk about in the garden of letters rather than be a botanist in a laboratory.' It is doubtless true that the French are less likely to understand Shakespeare than the English or the Germans, but nevertheless one of the most esteemed modern studies of Shakespeare is by a Frenchman—Henri Fluchère. So we see it is impossible to be dogmatic on this score: national characteristics exist, but individuals are not bound by them, or if they are, in ways that cannot be dogmatically seized upon.

An awareness of this interaction between national genius and the international dynamics of taste may clarify an issue that frequently arises in India: European realism, or 'sordid' realism as it is generally called, is characterized as an alien influence on modern Indian literatures, whose traditions are said to be spiritual and otherworldly. Tagore made a famous attack on European Expressionism in his Religion of an Artist, and could not appreciate the preoccupation of Baudelaire with sickness and despair. Such a preoccupation was for doctors in a hospital, he declared, and his own poetry continually transmutes grief into mystical acceptance. Certainly it may be argued that this is very Indian—and Tagore rested his faith in the Upanishads—but it is also very much like Shelley. A generation before, Michael Madhusudan Datta, in a letter to his actor friend Keshab Chandra Ganguli, had made an explicit contrast between East and West:

> . . . in a great European drama you have the stern realities of life, lofty passion and heroism and sentiment. With us it is all softness and romance. We forget the world of reality and dream of Fairyland.

Now how far is a Bengali bound by the world of 'softness and romance'? Ostensibly Michael Madhusudan is contrasting Shakespeare with Kalidasa, but essentially he is describing the

period of Bengali literature which he himself was just initiating —the period whose greatest representative would be Rabindranath Tagore. Not all of Sanskrit, not even all of Bengali literature was softness and romance: *The Mahabharata* is full of blood-thirsty battles and the coarsest folklore. The 18th century poetry of Bharatchandra is as remote from Michael's own as are the tension and vigour of Hindustani classical music (of which there are great Bengali exponents) from the softness and romance of Rabindrasangeet. The coy elusiveness of Tagore's treatment of love contrasts strongly with the full-blooded erotic realism of *Gitagovinda* or even *Vidya Sundar*. Similar contrasts could be pointed to between the English Victorians and Elizabethans. After Rabindranath a new generation of poets arose who refused to dream of Fairyland. The poetry of Sudhindranath Datta is much closer to the world of tragedy, for all its Sanskritic diction. Now more than ever the world is one, and when not decided by government decree, taste is international and contemporary—a Kafka, an Eliot make world-wide impact. But cultural traditions in different continents were never so isolated from each other as is sometimes supposed: it is significant, for instance, that the closely similar poetry of the Troubadours, the Sufis, and the Bhaktas arose at roughly the same time celebrating divine in human love. So too in our own time it may be expected that India will share any world-wide tendency. And in fact we generally find it is the older generation opposing the 'realism' of the younger—it is not a matter of Indianness but of taste.

Except in the case of an originator like Baudelaire, nationality and the dynamics of taste might be considered the *impersonal* forces operating on an artist or critic. Religious and moral convictions I am inclined to consider personal—at any rate in any country where a Renaissance has established some form of individualism in these matters, although even before a Renaissance, under an all-pervading religious and moral authority, men differ personally in their religious and moral behaviour. The relation between these religious or moral convictions and the appreciation of art is not to be defined simply. We may begin by discounting all those whose religion or morality is an unquestioned conventionalism, for most literature presupposes a sensibility developed beyond mere conformism (a pious reader appreciating *The Pilgrim's Progress* but not Chaucer is not appreciating literature).

The Puritans hated the theatre, but we need not take them seriously unless they try to prevent *us* from going to the theatre. We do not expect a Jehovah Witness to respond to Goethe, for the fanaticism of a Jehovah Witness is part of his untrained intelligence, or rather an intelligence which refuses to be trained, for reading Goethe would be part of that training. But we do have to take the religion of a Kierkegaard or a T. S. Eliot seriously. When Eliot declares: 'The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards,' he is speaking as a Christian, committed to set of beliefs not common to humanity. And these beliefs clearly make him prefer Baudelaire to Goethe, Dante to Shakespeare (the dynamics of taste make him prefer Donne to Milton). They make him attack Yeats for pursuing 'the wrong eternity', or D. H. Lawrence for his strange gods. He is against Blake for the same reasons. Kierkegaard is an even more striking example: his acute perceptions on Don Juan are part of his subordination of art to his own peculiar dialectics. With beliefs so uncompromising, Kierkegaard could have no appreciation for any writer who found his way to an accommodation with the world. Clandel is such another to whom Goethe was an ass, or Pascal, for whom any activity that did not lead to the conviction of human inadequacy was mere distraction (*divertissement*). Nietzsche's attack on all art which leads away from the world is a bias in the opposite direction. But in spite of their bias, these critics are among the most stimulating, and innumerable readers not sharing their beliefs may benefit from their insights. We become aware that our response to a work of art may be enriched by responses different from, even incompatible with our own, i.e., beyond the mere elucidation of a work of art, there is also intellectual stimulation beyond its immediate impact or reference—the work becomes part of the stock of our mind for the free play of intellect. In the same way of course we may appreciate the works of authors whose beliefs we do not share—a non-Christian may love Dante, a humanist may thrill to Nietzsche. The aesthetic realm is far broader than the real—but is it infinitely broader?

This brings us to the vexed question of belief and literature. Do we agree with Eliot when he says that 'Literature . . . has been, is, and probably always will be judged by some moral standards?' An easy way out is simply to deny it, as has been fashionable

after Mallarmé: 'Poetry is made of words'. It may be asserted that the work of art exists autonomously, that it is an elaborate 'structure' which we appreciate for its 'beauty', i.e., the complicated harmony of its interweaving patterns, both matter and form. But this is to reduce art to a kind of game or spectacle: if difficulty or complicated balance are the criteria, then there is no qualitative difference between *The Brothers Karamazoff* and a tightrope performance. The theorists of art for art's sake would indeed agree: in so far as art affects our real life it ceases to be art. But this would deny the evidence of centuries of commentary from Aristotle down, and the almost incontrovertible evidence of literature refining the moral sensibility (cf. Lionel Trilling on the novel as 'moral realism'—'its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as he sees it . . .') — which is quite different from saying that literature should teach. On the other hand literature demands neither an exclusive adherence to the beliefs expressed—otherwise we could not appreciate both Pascal and Voltaire, both D. H. Lawrence and Joyce—nor a strict conformity between the values of a work we appreciate and the values we live by. One way out of these apparent discrepancies is to give up the notion that we ourselves are consistent wholes. The very fact that we can be ironical about morality implies an awareness of incompatible 'goods'—e.g., vitality and social restraint. In literature as opposed to real life we may realize a wider range of these incompatible 'acceptables', enabling the same person to respond to both *Four Quartets* and *Thus Spake Zarasthustra*, or an agnostic to realize his Christian and Buddhist selves. Of course there is a razor's edge between this *disponibilitié* as Gide called it, or openness to experience, and the aestheticism which reduces all art to decor and entertainment. For the aesthetic realm is not the realm of real life, nor does it involve us in the same way: there is a qualitative difference between the death of Othello on the stage and the death of a real man before our eyes—if the spectacle makes us leap to the rescue of the hero or weep for his death, we are confusing the aesthetic and the real. But I would argue that our moral convictions are as much at play in an aesthetic experience as in a real life experience; the moral themes in a work of art are not simply neutral elements but involve our sympathies or hatred and reverberate

beyond the actual aesthetic experience. If not, then the only difference between *Hamlet* and *The Comedy of Errors* is degree of complication, and tragedies could hardly be distinguished from comedies.

The contrast between a narrow dogmatism and a wide range of moral sympathies is well illustrated in the single case of Tolstoy —the writer of *Anna Karenina* who made an adulteress his heroine later developed into the 'moralist' who denigrated Shakespeare as immoral, and declared that 'Art is a lie' (because it makes us sympathise with an Anna). And the contrast between an all accepting aestheticism and moral involvement may be clarified by realizing the limits of what is acceptable—for instance a poem celebrating the Nazi gassing of the Jews or the burning of Asian children by European napalm bombs would be simply loathsome to me, however marvellously structured. At this point the personal element must enter: each man realizes for himself the limits of his moral tolerance in the aesthetic realm (I can tolerate dacoits as heroes but not fascists). It is impossible to lay down any law on this issue. A dead body may make a beautiful picture* or a beautiful poem. And what about Medea murdering her children? Goethe objected to this scene on tapestries decorating a room for Marie Antoinette—was he right in his assumption that the horror of the subject would not be subsumed in the beauty of the treatment? Can such a subject be at all acceptable as art unless it evokes the tragic myth of which it is a part? This raises the further question whether a painting may subsume horror in its formal aesthetic elements in a way not possible in literature, where words can never cease to refer out to the real world and somehow involve us in the moral dimension. But Lessing in his *Laocoon* believed the opposite: that the shriek could be described but not painted. Whatever be our answers to these extreme problems, it seems to be established by experience that, even though there may be a mode of existence of a literary work independent of moral values, most of the world's greatest literature does involve moral values as an intrinsic part of the aesthetic worth, is often indeed an exploration of moral values, and the degree of our sympathy or understanding will be affected by the extent to which we share

* See the controversy on Hyman Bloom's 'Female Corpse, Back View reproduced in Wimsatt and Brooks: *Literary Criticism, A Short History*, p. 520.

these values, or are aware of their validity. For example, at the back of many a debate on Eliot versus Yeats will be found a degree of acceptance of or alienation from the beliefs of one or the other.

But this is not to say that literature should be judged by the standards of morality. Although our values may determine our preferences, they cannot be made into absolute criteria. We may prefer Dante to Shakespeare, or *Wuthering Heights* to *Middlemarch*, but we cannot lay down a rule, viz., literature must lead the soul to God, or: literature must explore the hidden depths. Let us consider two such absolute criteria which are attempts to impose moral convictions on art. The first declares that literature should be *life-affirming*. Thus Hugo is superior to Baudelaire, Heinrich Mann to Kafka. Some such belief would seem partly to underlie F. R. Leavis' admiration for Lawrence, as it certainly underlies Lawrence's hatred for the whole tradition from Flaubert to Joyce. 'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds' affirmed Shelley. We can see that Shakespeare or Tolstoy are greater than Baudelaire, but this greatness cannot be contained in any simple formula like 'range of human sympathies', for Hugo also has this range, yet does not satisfy as Baudelaire does. The explanation would seem to lie partly in the shallowness of Hugo's beliefs—his trite optimism and sentimentality—and partly in the inadequacy of their expression, for when all allowance has been made for his metrical skill and verbal harmony, his vocabulary is often rhetorical and facile. It is not just a question of belief that makes someone admire Baudelaire as profound, and reject Hugo as shallow, for one may admire both Wordsworth and Baudelaire (though many don't!). It is finally a question of acceptable beliefs in uniquely appropriate language, and not a matter of preferring despair to life-affirmation or vice versa. Kafka is a test case—the marvellous expression of total despair (unless the fact of such creativeness itself is affirmative, the patterning of the patternless). The communists for instance reject Kafka totally, as they would reject any writer presenting the world as a labyrinth, intrinsically beyond improvement. But no amount of theorizing about life-affirmation or faith in man can convince anyone who responds to Kafka's imagination that his pessimism makes him inferior to J. B. Priestley.

My second example of an absolute criterion determining criticism is the belief that literature should 'lift' us to higher spheres. 'I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul' (Edgar Allan Poe: *The Poetic Principle*). The Romantic poets are the leading exponents of this view, intimators of immortality, a Shelley or Novalis, calling down the divinity into our everyday world. A denigration of sordid 'reality' generally accompanies this attitude, such as we find in Novalis' review of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Those who hold this view will deny themselves a proper appreciation of the entire literature of realism. On these grounds the German Romantics even turned against Shakespeare, preferring the transcendental vision of Calderon. Or Shelley may be found superior to Goethe because Shelley is more transcendental. Many of the students I teach are thereby prevented from appreciating writers so diverse as Chaucer, Donne, Swift, or Pope, not to mention the 'cynical' moderns.

A further objection to the use of criteria like 'life-affirming', 'transcendental', 'universal' etc. is that they tell us nothing about the *literary* quality of a work. Dante, Shakespeare, Kleist. Tagore . . . are all 'transcendental', but how different from each other! To illustrate this inadequacy, or even irrelevance, we have only to compare Poe and Baudelaire. Poe is a typical 'etherialist' seeking 'the beauty above'. In his essay *The Poetic Principle*, he describes Tennyson as 'the noblest poet that ever lived' because he is 'at all times, the most etherial—in other words the most elevating and the most pure.' But many of the poems quoted to illustrate these highest standards—poems by E. C. Pinkey, W. C. Bryant, Th. Moore, Longfellow, Hood, etc.—now seem to us intolerably trite and sentimental. Clearly, words like 'ethereal' and 'pure' have no precise meaning at all. To prove the point, by a strange paradox, we find this same poetic theory of Poe being taken up by a totally different poet who did not write of sweetness and purity but rather of vice and corruption, not champak odours but rotting corpses—Baudelaire. Transcendence has many mansions. In his essay Poe spoke of the 'taint of sadness inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of pure Beauty', and quoted Longfellow in support:

A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain,

And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

But when this principle is incorporated into Baudelaire's aesthetic it is transformed utterly, as in *Madrigal Triste*, e.g.

Je t'aime quand ton grand oeil verse
Une eau chaude comme le sang;
Quand, malgré ma main qui te berce,
Ton angoisse, trop lourde, perce
Comme un râle d'agonisant.

(I love you when your large eye pours
Water warm as blood;
When in spite of my hand rocking you,
Your anguish, too heavy, breaks through
Like the rattle in a dying throat.)

Obviously what is of interest to the critic of literature is not any declared similarity of belief between Baudelaire and Poe, but the different kinds of poetry they write. To put it another way, we must distinguish between intellectual concepts and their aesthetic expression—we must be certain our criteria of judgement do not belong solely to philosophy.

Before philosophy intervenes, a purely literary judgement must be made. It may be true as Eliot says that 'greatness' cannot be judged by literary standards alone, but he hastens to add: 'though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards'. And here we pass beyond the reach of intellectual persuasion. I can only agree with Theodore Greene for instance, when he says: 'the unique character of the artistic quality of a work can only be immediately intuited, and though it can be exhibited and denoted, it cannot be defined or even described'[1]. Or as Ezra Pound put it: 'You can take a man to Perugia or to Borgo San Sepolcro but you can't make him prefer one kind of painting to another'.[2] At this level the dynamics of taste may operate strongly, national predilections less so (leaving aside the problem of language), but belief not at all. I cannot prove the wonderful quality of a line like

[1] *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*, Princeton, 1940, p. 389.
[2] *Make it New*, Faber, 1934, p. 9.

'That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea'—I can only feel it (and my attempts to persuade others may only tempt them to feel what they do not feel). That sense of perfect rightness which is part of the highest aesthetic pleasure, may be analyzed infinitely, but never reproduced by rule, others may, often do respond 'wrongly', find the trite and sentimental perfectly 'right', and we can only leave them to their taste, which may or may not change—they may find thoughts that lie too deep for tears in simple celandines, where we require ornamental gardens. The starting point of literary discussion is a certain area of shared taste. To give another example: I have always felt the lines

> The rainbow comes and goes
> And lovely is the rose

to be intolerably trite (redeemed, however, by much else in the poem). A German translator recently commented: 'Their beauty depends evidently on the organ sounds of the vowels'[3]—well, if he hears the organ sounds, I don't, so we had better talk about something else.

Perhaps I am exaggerating: actually I was interested to read about the organ sounds, even though I may never hear them. What I want to establish is the subjective origin of the aesthetic experience, which alone makes art worthwhile, after which comes the desire to understand better and communicate with others. When communication begins, two areas of shared agreement may be found—the aesthetic and the moral[4]—from which discussion may fruitfully grow. But as the moral lends itself more easily to discussion, it tends to predominate. With all these reservations made, the question may be raised, to what extent may I establish the validity of my response for others? The rightness of the *aesthetic* response may be considered roughly proportionate to the extent to which the sensibility is practised in the tradition to which the work belongs, although even at this level tastes differ strikingly, and in practice we generally fall back on some kind of consensus. As for moral interpretations: to begin with, certain responses can be characterized as limited

[3] Hans Hennecke in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, Indiana, 1964, p. 10.

[4] Using 'moral' in the widest sense to include religious and philosophical convictions.

to those who share the beliefs prompting them: a Freudian, a Marxist, or a follower of Sri Aurobindo may each have his own interpretation of *Hamlet*. It will be true for him and his fellows, but not for others. To the extent that Eliot speaks exclusively as a Christian, many of his judgements will not be valid for non-Christians. The question may be raised: is not a Roman Catholic the best critic of Dante, a follower of Sri Aurobindo the best critic of *Savitri*? His insight may help us to understand the poet's intentions, but we are not bound by his evaluation. Nor is there any final evaluation—or even final interpretation. We cannot oppose modern (e.g., Freudian) interpretations of Shakespeare by postulating an Elizabethan Shakespeare ('Shakespeare's Shakespeare' so to speak), for he is now beyond our reach, and even if we could find him he would prove less relevant to our appreciation than the contemporary Shakespeare. Even the 'historical' school, while providing valuable insights, is essentially correcting 19th century interests (realistic psychology) in favour of modern interests (the play as an entity in itself). And if we decide that the most viable approach to an author is that reflecting the most widely held beliefs of our own day, we may do him less than justice. The 18th century, lacking tragic awareness, saw Shakespeare's plots as moral examples. The German critics of Storm and Stress confused his sublimity with melodrama. Tieck and other German Romantics of the forest-and-fairies variety preferred *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* to the great tragedies. So the best approach would be that which combines both the preoccupations of our age and the unique richness of the poet's achievement. The problem of relevance has been well posed by Dr Leavis:

> The business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiar completeness of response and to observe a peculiarly strict relevance in developing his responses into commentary; he must be on his guard against abstracting improperly from what is in front of him and against any premature or irrelevant generalizing —of it or from it. His first concern is to enter into possession of the given poem (let us say) in its concrete fulness, and his constant concern is never to lose his completeness of possession, but rather to increase it'[5].

[5] *The Common Pursuit*, London, 1953, p. 213.

The amount of controversy that Dr Leavis' own interpretations have provoked only reveals the difficulty of attaining this objectivity—or at least of persuading others that you have attained it. And the reason lies largely with Dr Leavis' vigorous commitment to certain kinds of moral awareness which he demands of a writer, the absence of which will lead him to condemn a Laurence Sterne for example for 'insignificant and nasty trifling'.

In the light of all these findings, let us consider a final example: to what extent may an Indian appreciate tragedy? We begin by noting the absence of tragedy from the Indian literary tradition. Next we note that the full impact of tragedy depends on some such convictions as these: that a man has only one life and after it 'the rest is silence'; that there is a force in the universe which strikes the good as well as the bad, which cannot be forestalled or propitiated ('fate'); that life is supremely worth living, and the individual life is of great worth (Cordelia—that irreplaceable *person*—will never come again). Frequently these conditions are not met: a believing Christian for example, will expect his reward in heaven for sufferings on earth—of course he may feel pity for a noble unbeliever like Hamlet, but the Christian himself is not involved in the tragedy. Alternatively, fate itself may be denied, as in the 18th century trust in Providence: a 'sentimentalist' would have imagined Lear and Cordelia reunited in heaven. Or a modern rationalist like Sidney Hook may believe that fate can be controlled by science: efficient drugs would soon put a stop to the plague ravaging Thebes; meteorology would have prevented the sacrifice of Iphigenia. To a communist, tragedy is simply out of date. Or if the conviction of the value of individual life is weak, if the community is exalted above the person, an audience will feel greater relief at the restoration of order than dismay at the deaths of an Antigone or a Lear. Clearly, the Hindu tradition, with its belief in *karma*, emphasis on the community, and view of life as divine *lila*, not ultimately real, is unpropitious for the emergence of tragedy. And even if many present-day Indians no longer believe in karma, there is a momentum of attitudes and patterns of behaviour long after a belief has been discarded. Certainly the response to tragedy in India has been poor. My students generally find tragedy indistinguishable from pathos —'saddest songs are sweetest'—they would weep for a Hamlet

as for an Ophelia. The quater-centenary issue of the Sahitya Akademi journal devoted to 'Shakespeare in India' reveals that the tragedies, though popular, were improperly understood (played as melodramas, given happy endings) and their influence was slight. But we should not jump to the conclusion that it was only the Indian tradition telling against Shakespeare—it was also the mood of the age. We have already seen how Romantic otherworldliness rejected realism. Alongside this Romanticism, and often part of it, was Victorian optimism, supplemented in the 20th century by the influence of Marx and scientific rationalism. The emancipated Hindu is more likely to turn to Ibsen and Shaw than Shakespeare. But even the way in which we are bound by our beliefs is hard to define clearly. Did Europe cease to be Christian when it started to create and appreciate tragedy at the Renaissance? Often we do not quite believe what we profess, or like Bacon we keep this world and the next in quite separate compartments of the mind. So we cannot argue a priori even that a Hindu who believes in karma cannot respond to tragedy. We can only say that a believing Hindu is less likely to respond to tragedy or interpret it correctly. But he may make out of it something quite new, and valid for himself—just as Goethe's appreciation of *Shakuntala* was rooted in his own cultural development.

To sum up what I have been trying to say. The creation and appreciation of literature are clearly conditioned in part by national, religious and traditional considerations, but this conditioning is so complex and elusive that no simple or final conclusion can be reached about its operations. In such a situation it is advisable that as many critical approaches as possible be used in order to develop the widest range of appreciation. But we must also bear in mind the problem of relevance: the best approach will be such as to bring out the richest qualities of a work, not to impoverish it, nor to impose upon it aims remote from its intrinsic purposes. The task of the critic is first to elucidate these purposes within their own tradition (both before and after), then to relate them both to his own tradition, if different, and to universal human truth.

CRITICISM BY PRINCIPLE OR BY PERCEPTION?

S. RAMASWAMI

THE history of literary criticism, like the history of art itself reveals nothing so clearly and decisively as the variety and, what is more, the inevitability of variety, of artistic experience as of critical experience. This is, of course, a commonplace but it is one of those fundamental commonplaces which we tend often to ignore. When William James spoke so illuminatingly of the varieties of Religious Experience there was doubtless a very natural reaction of admiration. It would have redounded more to the credit of human intelligence if we had not had to wait for William James to point it all out. What indeed is more natural and more inevitable than that every man should make an image of God of his own and admire and worship it? This individual image of God that every man makes for himself is his work of art or artlessness or of both together. The artistic impulse at work is twin brother to the religious impulse and this accounts for the agelong communion between art and religion which makes so many of our finest works of art at the same time symbols of religious worship. The varying degrees of honesty, impartiality and integrity that these individual images of God have reflect the scope and limitations of the individual artistic impulse. One may even go so far as to say that an honest God is the noblest work of man—an as yet unachieved marvel of the art of religion. In groping towards his image of God with whatever degree of intensity and integrity his artistic impulse allows, man seems but to be paying back a dubious compliment of God to man. If what Scripture says is true, 'God made man after his own image'. We have only to look at ourselves a little more objectively than we usually do and we shall realize that this is rather unfair to God. But, as we all know, God has a lot to answer for. The first works of art, viz., this universe of Sun, Moon, Stars and planets and man, were, according to the theologians, the work of God. It is easy to be facetious, unseasonably facetious, at this point and say that God is but one pseudonym of the unknown artist and that

this particular artist has a good deal of justification for concealing his real identity. Scripture is wonderfully brief and tactful on this subject. It says 'God Almighty looked at his handiwork and found it good'. Most of us have, of course, other opinions on the subject. Indeed on this matter some of the most philosophical and some of the least seem to come together, the former in a spirit of pained resignation and the latter in a spirit of impotent anger. But even when we call Him the Great Bungler, we perceive a touch of greatness in the bungling. Bungling on this colossal scale is a proof, isn't it, that God is indeed Almighty. (It is like our beloved Jawaharlal's monumental gullibility, one of his varied exquisite and unique gifts, in respect of Communism and the Chinese, a gullibility which we can now see has become a sort of tradition, a part of our political religion, to which we render reverent sraddhanjali on all possible occasions.) But, to return to God, Hardy with his face set like a stored-up thundercloud, regarded Him as the great villain of the universe. Shakespeare's Lear compendiously dismissed the whole gang of Gods as a superior kind of wanton boys! Humanists regard God with a certain imaginative sympathy, as one who, like themselves, has taken on a task too huge even for His allegedly illimitable resources. Pessimists regard life itself as the martyrdom of Man with God as the deliberate, proximate cause of it all. They derive an intense artistic satisfaction from this mode of contemplation. There is devastating comic relief provided, in this approach, by the priesthood of all the religions for, like some book reviewers and literary critics, the priesthood is a vast amorphous group of well-paid or ill-paid or wholly honorary champions and apologists of their supreme Artist. Of course God has given them their cue as indeed do authors who anonymously review their own books or get their friends to do so. It is, I hope, duly heartening to those on the brink of lapsing into creative literary activity that that supreme pseudonymous artist himself exhibited the kind of wild ambition or smug complacency—call it which you like, which we lament in artists of lower degree, who have done much less harm to the world. Even literary and critical authoritarianism, both of the rightist and of the leftist variety, can be traced back to Jehovah who, taking no chances whatever with the hearing mechanisms of the men he had created, thundered and said 'Thou shalt have no other Gods but me'. The process of artistic criticism,

or interpretation set in motion by the colossal artistic enterprise called the universe is still at work. They call it philosophy. And what we do by way of literary criticism strictly so-called is rather like the ludicrously inefficient and extremely expensive Government-sponsored small-scale industries of India. It is derivative and pathetically subservient to authority. Of course even this is part of the artistic process which we call, not altogether ironically, Cosmos. (Don't ask me if Chaos could possibly be very different. I don't know the answer any more clearly than you do.) The Hindu view of the artistic process called creation, as set out in that great poem, the Purusha Sūkta, is of Prajapati sacrificing Himself in order that man and the universe may come into being. (How odd that Mr T. S. Eliot's theory of the artist sacrificing his personality to achieve art should find apparent vindication in the Purusha Sūkta! Mr Eliot seems hardly right about the gradualness of the process. It is monstrously unfair to regard the process of artistic creation as a kind of 'strip-tease' exercise. I am no admirer of T. S. Eliot but it is remarkable that he should have put forward this idea of the sacrifice of the artist's personality, albeit in what seems to be a dangerously imperfect form. It is truer than he thought. Hamlet has to die, Oedipus and Antigone have to die, Ravana and Macbeth have to die so that in the result the works in which they figure may become artistic masterpieces. Even Lear has to die—though his crime consisted in nothing more terrible than mismanaging and bungling in the process of 'rigging' up an elocution competition on himself. (His distinguished modern imitators in the real world, uncannily enough, flourish in our midst.) Imagine Hamlet having cocktails with Claudius at the conclusion of all those sensational events! Or Othello and Iago shaking hands over the recovered handkerchief and Desdemona suggesting that it be insured against theft again with Lloyds of London! There would be a grievous failure of *aucitya* in such a handling of the plot. (Incidentally, I am both pained and puzzled by the attempt made by Dasgupta, Bhagavandas and others to justify the absence of tragic drama in Sanskrit literature: tragic situations and tragic heroes are far from absent in Sanskrit literature. Is not Ravana like Satan or Macbeth who has said to himself 'Evil be thou my good!'? Valmiki's handling of the episode shows more than a touch of authentic tragic genius.

But this is by the way). We may now conclude this phase of our attempt to trace the history of the evolution of art and art-criticism by a frank recognition that the universe created by God is astonishingly modernist in its artistic conception and execution, astonishingly like Mr T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in its apparent structure-lessness, complexity and obscurity as in the wealth and variety of commentary it has evoked. The only difference, it seems to me, is that God has failed to append a quantity of his own Notes, unlike Mr T. S. Eliot.

The next big landmark both in the evolution of art and in the evolution of art criticism, is to be found in the magnificent artistic response of Valmiki's roused imaginative sensibility to the killing of the love-bewildered Krauncha birds by the wicked fowler. It was a moment of supreme Kavyodaya as well as of Kavitattvavicharodaya. When Brahma helped Valmiki to recognise his articulate *soka* as a *sloka*, as poetry, playing Ezra Pound to Valmiki's T. S. Eliot, criticism achieved its first triumph, in inducing a vivid awareness in Valmiki of the power of art to transmute experience into beauty. I do not forget that far the most wonderful of similes in the world has already emerged from Valmiki's lips when he compared the pellucid clarity of the waters of the river where he had his prātahsnāna to the untroubled purity of mind of a sage. Such transcendent intuitive apprehension of artistic similitude owes nothing to any Aristotle or Anandavardhana. But a yet more instructive episode comes just a little later. The Ramayana affords us the first example of the power of great poetry to evoke a measureless, an utterly rapturous and spontaneous self-surrender to its magic on the part of reader or listener. The Rishis, young and old who were on their way to watch the Aswamedha yagna of Sri Rama, listened to Kusa and Lava singing the Ramayana as they went along. A most remarkable thing happened when they had finished listening to the youngsters. The rishis parted with all they had and could—one gave away his collection of darbha (Kusa grass), another his precious vessel, a third his collection of samit, a fourth his vastra and so on, to the young singers who had thus sung the great epic unto the world. The authentic power of great poetry to stir the imaginative sensibility of *tapaswins* and anchorites, at a time when apparently there was no established precedent either of poetic creation or of critical response to it, as thus illustrated, seems, to me, to be

so decisive of the issue of whether we criticise by principle or by perception. The rishis were nature's gentlemen and owed nothing to universities or schools. What they responded to was the poetry. The apparent spontaneity and immediacy, the absoluteness of their response seems to suggest the total irrelevance of an antecedent aesthetic metaphysic in this sphere. If we are to attempt to explain the phenomenon in modern critical terms we can perhaps do so by saying that the anchorites were a select band of *sahrdayas*. But they were anchorites who had brooded long and strenuously on the meaning of the mystery called life. They had, we may presume, subdued their senses and sensibilities, as tapaswins are bidden to do. They were surely not responding to the morality of the Ramayana, or to its perfect conformity with the moral and social dharma of the age. The untaught and unteachable absoluteness of their response was to the whole poem. I venture to suggest that it proceeded from something inherent in man which like a powerful radio set was finely attuned to picking up what that poem was, a magnificent evocation of beauty from the poet's experience of Rama's personality. Says the Taittiriyopanishad, Raso vai sah. The supreme Brahman is also Rasa in its plenary perfection. The disciplined seeker of the Brahman and even more so, the *brahmagnani* has an effortless ease of access to this Rasa and a wholly unalloyed if unacademic enjoyment of it. I have often noted with utter astonishment the matchless facility and felicity of response which my revered guru, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi, made to things literary. He went to no University—indeed he was taken away from school when he was twelve and installed as the Acharya of the Kanchi Mutt. But you may perhaps ask—aren't these exceptions? That they are exceptional —in a great many senses—I concede. But in this matter of their aesthetic response to great art and great literature, they seem to me to be rather like the rest of us *in essence* but enriched by a plenitude of experience of life in its infinite variety and vicissitude, in short enriched by their tapas. The Peter Bells of the world are blind not merely to the primrose by the river brim but to the full-blown as to the flawed, mangled, strangled flowers that lie strewn about in unregarded corners of the garden of life. Perception, as I understand the term in this context is intuitive perception, perception which is not necessarily irrational, the untaught imaginative sensibility of a human being alone functioning.

What life does to this is of the profoundest significance—though often we find life has failed to do anything with it in many cases—for reasons we need not go into. The thrilling contact of this imaginative sensibility with the fine flower of another person's imaginative sensibility gives rise to the best criticism. This is the central truth about literary criticism, it seems to me. It doesn't mean that creative artists always make good critics. But what I do want to say is that the greater the creative artist, the greater the critic. How wonderfully Shakespeare anticipates the Hamlet criticism of the Polonius school, and—the school! Unfortunately for us the greater the creative artist, the less bothered he is about criticism. Of course all along I have assumed that the function of criticism is to help comprehension (joyous comprehension, instructed comprehension, absolute comprehension) of the work of art. It may begin with what A. E. Housman described as a physical sensation but it transcends this and at its best it involves the whole being of the reader—his intelligence, imagination, knowledge and experience of life and his previous knowledge, if any, of literature. This knowledge of life may be comprehended under the term 'principle' of the title of this paper. In fact all other principles—I mean those that don't derive from a realization of literature as life experience transformed into beauty and power—are a frightful irrelevance. If you attempt to tell a Shakespeare that he mustn't mingle the tragic with the comic, he will, if he doesn't look on you as an opportunity for another play, just smile and be silent. The notorious dramatic unities, not insisted on even by Aristotle who started talking about them first, form perhaps a good thesis subject for somebody suffering from Ph.Ditis. Look at the fate of Johnson—a good man and an honest man and on the whole, a sound critic. When he abandoned his 'principles' and relied on his perceptions, he did wonderfully, witness his tribute to Shakespeare's Falstaff. When he clung to these principles, he blundered. Look at his absurdly fond notion that in *Lycidas* Milton wanted to cry in grief. Milton as we all know wanted to write a poem and have his fun. And what a fine poem it makes! What fun it affords! How terribly ironical Milton can be. 'He knew himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme!' Edward King a poet! God forbid! And the complicated irony of making Camus and St Peter form part of the mourning procession as if Edward King was the Pope

himself or at least the Archbishop of Canterbury—all this Johnson misses because of his obsessions—which you may call principles—about what an elegy should do. As an exercise in skilfully concealed irony *Lycidas* seems to me to be superb.

In fact the real difficulty with any kind of critical judgement by principles is that there are, actually, so many of them and, potentially, an infinitude of them, and choice among these is inevitably subjective. Absence of standards, you may say, is barbarism. But the world of literature, and particularly of poetry, is not a civilized world. When people say, 'We must have aesthetic principles', I feel very puzzled. Haven't we had quite enough of them? Who, in all conscience has been helped by them to enjoy literature? You may pass examinations enumerating them, applying them, swearing by them—if examiners are as great fools as examinees. As if there wasn't enough trouble with the mass of high-sounding nonsense called principles of aesthetic judgment, we now have religion-centred, politics-centred, sociology-centred principles of aesthetic judgment. Every propagandist has his proper goose! There are those who have sold their souls to the modern pseudo-science of psycho-analysis and the principles it offers. And there are critics strenuously achieving turgid prose on poetry. And others there are who because they see literature using words, go about asserting that literature or poetry is made with words. You remember the air of insolent triumph with which Lytton Strachey quotes Mallarme. As though he or Mallarme was the first to notice this ludicrously trifling detail! We could go further and say poetry is made up of sounds, yea, go yet further and say, it is made up of the letters of the alphabet. There is one major difficulty with all those who favour judgment by principles. It leads straight to criticism by authority. Somebody said of Tsardom that it was an absolutism tempered by assassinations. But in literature, thank God, the absolutism is of the critics. And if we may judge by the experience of Leavis and Eliot, assassinations, as for example of Milton, are by no means final. Authority in literature as in religion, makes for discipline and stability, doubtless. Law in taste is the enemy of life in poetry. As Chanakya said long ago, ***balam chittam vikaroti.*** Power is so prone to corrupt. The corruption may take manifold forms. The sexually frustrated critic has an opportunity of securing vicarious sensuous satisfaction from the

number of times the sex act in varied horror of technique is described in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, while professing a lofty adherence to the respectable principle of the absolute autonomy of art. The Marxist damns the Tudor imperialist in Shakespeare—seeing nothing else in him. Mr C. S. Lewis sees Christian theology of the brand he likes in Milton and a proper denigration of Satan in the later books of *Paradise Lost* and passes for a literary critic while he is expounding his special theological preferences. The Jingo patriot praises the Tory aristocrat Shakespeare of *Henry V* and *King John* and the Tory aristocrat thinks that Coriolanus himself and Shakespeare together exhaust the significant universe. The moralist thinks of art as an ideal instrument for the exposition of the age-old hypocrisies of morality. Not that I have any special quarrel with any of them. Far from it. I sympathise with them deeply and humbly for, there, but for the abundant grace of God, go I! They are like the six blind men of Hindustan who went to see the elephant. A mighty big objective correlative—isn't it? The aspiration to see the elephant is however unfortunately at the mercy of a fundamental limitation, the blindness called imperceptiveness.

It is now time to conclude. Literature is the elephant we want to see and must try to see. Principles—even the best of them, be they romantic ones, classical ones or Leavisite ones—will give us a view of the trunk or the legs or the ears or eyes, not of the elephant as a whole. Intuitive perception is,—(and this is distinct from mere impressionism)—as I know from bitter personal experience, not everybody's portion. You must be lucky. I have seldom been lucky. If you aren't lucky, kneel and pray. If you are still unlucky, kneel and pray again. If you see no improvement even then, go home and do something else.

Old Sir Walter Raleigh once said that it was absurd to teach literature. You really can't do this. It is like teaching you to love your mother or your wife, by learning up some principles and applying them. You will be led straight to the Divorce Court on a charge of frightful mental cruelty. It is even more so with literature and the arts in general. If your ear doesn't respond to music, tutorials won't help. If your sensibility can't perceive all the charm of all the muses flowering in some lonely word, God Himself can't help you except by asking you to go home to make

you up again. In the last resort, criticism is a respectable academic word concerned with whether you like or dislike a thing. You cannot learn to like a work of art except by constant study of it, companionship with it and, in the end, by humble surrender to it. Receptiveness which Coleridge called the willing suspension of disbelief is not a quality you can acquire. It seems to me that critics, like poets, are born, not made. This may cost us our jobs. But the truth is more precious than our jobs. Literature is, like spiritual experience, *svatasiddham.* And criticism of literature by ritual reference to principles will be an unpardonable impertinence. But, thank God, poets are like children and seldom know that it is. So criticism can go on. I know it will.

METAESTHETICS: CINDERELLA OR QUEEN?

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

MOST philosophers feel constrained to add a kind of footnote or appendix to their speculative systems. After they have thought out their philosophy, petty or profound, they add a section or volume—on Aesthetics, and live happily ever after. However pitiful, such condescension stands witness to the relatedness of Beauty to other values, to, in fact, Truth and Reality as the philosophers have found or formulated it, if not to the thing-in-itself, *ding an sich*. From such alliance with philosophy, upon which poets and philosophers have from time to time looked askance, aesthetics has gradually moved towards self-sufficiency and set up a kingdom, or many warring kingdoms, of its own. Today the Varieties of Aesthetic Experience are either openly asserted or implied, a variety which, it would seem, nothing can unify. Attempts towards a Field Theory of Aesthetics are rare and almost always doomed to fail. One can only try.

In our own days the absence of any common or viable philosophy has brought aesthetics to a state of near anarchy. Art and beauty have become autonomous and autotelic. Both our world of perception and of values are divided and disturbed, and different aesthetic assumptions chase each other across the void of solipsistic incommunication. The link with systems has snapped, not an unmixed blessing. And we find poets out of joint dreaming of social hierarchy ('How but in custom and ceremony/Are beauty and innocence born?') and a fancied Byzantium, out of nature and history. But such fancies are hardly a cure. Everywhere there is opinion, individuality, an endless rationalization without reference to any principle. Every author, even the period of an author, sometimes every book, calls for a new canon. It is the same with all the arts. Chaos rules. Instead of something valid and universal, a *lingua communis*, we have a number of personalized poetics. As Plato put it: Everyone chooses his love out of the object of beauty according to his own taste. *Chacun à son gout*. Aesthetics, in other words, has

been reduced to the level of sensation and opinion, it has turned into a branch of the behavioral sciences, the science of manipulating responses. The only Art today is Art in Industry (in a non-Ruskinian sense), usually the art of Advertisement, a parody of persuasion that would strike the ancient master of rhetoric with amazement. The cult of 'significant form' is part of the parody. About such dangerous half-truths one is not even allowed to ask the question: significant of what?

If we are to make sense of life and art, that is our total experience, we must turn from such modern error, exaggeration and eccentricity towards surer foundations, of the being, at least hypothesis. That is what we shall briefly try to do—to rediscover the lost living or traditional link between aesthetics and metaphysics, a unity of being and thought which the age so singularly lacks.

We are faced with a paradox: no age shows such an obvious and organized interest in the arts and the artistic life as our own. And yet, judged in terms of life-values, no age has been so unlovely. Art and beauty may be active on the circumference of our life, rarely at the centre. But, according to Croce, 'To be the root, not the fruit or the flower, is the function of art'. Unless, in some ways, art derives from reality (or whatever we believe to be reality, it is so hard to be certain), and unless it becomes a part of our living art can only be an ornament (hiding or embellishing nothing) or entertainment, in brief a tremendous trifle. Having killed the goose we are now trading in golden eggs: in museums, exhibitions, journals, monographs, antiques, snob values, all the familiar tawdry tricks. As Coomaraswamy put it with his usual forthrightness: Art *is* a superstition, art *was* a way of life.

Looking for explanations, antecedents and the way out, one is obliged to fall back upon certain older, basic formulations or principles. Of these only an indication can be given. To deal with it adequately one will have to write a Revised History of Contemporary Meaninglessness. Luckily, it is unnecessary, for we are all familiar with it. It is our *Existenz*!

Briefly, we might say beauty is both a principle of perception and a manner of operation, a way of seeing things and a way of making things. Thus to win our way back to beauty—'keep back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty . . . from vanishing

away'—might be to bring meaning back to life, to cleanse the doors of perception and to lead integrated lives. As Nietzsche said in one of those dark, dazzling aphorisms of which he was always capable, 'the world is justified as an aesthetic experience,' an insight on par with the archetypal Indian view. But lonely insights sparked off by agitated prophets are not the Joyful Wisdom but its broken syllables. What we need is a structure of insights, immediately verifiable, a groundwork of experience. Such a view we get in ancient Indian thought, borne out by the experience of artists in every age. Against the present crisis in criticism one turns with a certain hope of help and discovery to what I have called metaesthetics. The word means, simply, the metaphysics inherent or implied in aesthetic experience and not an aesthetic theory that is inferred or follows from a preconceived intellectual philosophy. Its logic and psychology are part of experience. Hence its abiding value. In the present confusion metaesthetics may well point to a renewal of life and purpose in a dead universe and bring back faith in creation, for it is the aesthetics of the free, creative self. 'Man in the twentieth century', says the *enfant terrible*, Colin Wilson, 'suffers from an insignificance neurosis, which can only be attacked from "inside".'

Metaesthetics may be that 'inside'. It is this that the older cultures—the Indian among them—can offer, for they are based on that inner view. This must not be confused with orthodoxy or revivalism. What we are suggesting is a return to the roots, even if, as in the traditional doctrine, the roots are 'above'. Since the aesthetics of the Indians was based on psychology or human nature, or possible modifications of human nature, it is open to verification and self-perpetuating. At a certain stage of growth and maturity it becomes inevitable. No wonder its verification is to be found throughout the world and in almost every age (except ours) where the artist has grown aware of his function and the nature of the universe. Now and then these insights or principles sound *ex cathedra* but that is partly because they speak unequivocally the language of experience which carries its own authority. It is also characteristic—a characteristic which they share with mediaeval Christianity and with Meister Eckhart, for instance—that the ancient cultures did not deal with any specialized or exclusive science of aesthetics. It was part of their total outlook and living. During the earliest period of

Indian history, the seed time of her culture, in the Vedas and Upanishads there is no explicit aesthetics as such. But the source of metaesthetics is there more than anywhere else. Art and beauty formed part of, were indeed the basis of their world-experience as well as the social living. This is how Northrop, in terms of his favourite thesis of the theoretic component and aesthetic continuum, explains it: 'It is to be emphasized that when the Oriental designates the Tao, Nirvana, Brahman, or *Chit* to be something which is not given through the specific senses, he does not mean that it is a speculatively postulated, syntactically designated, and only indirectly and experimentally verified such as the mathematical, as opposed to the sensed, space in Newton's physics, or the unseen God the Father in the traditional Christianity of the West. He means, instead . . . something which is not inferred, not speculatively arrived at by the logical scientific method of hypothesis, but which is directly experienced, its "transcendency" of the senses being due to the fact that the senses deliver specific, limited, determinate data within it, whereas it is indeterminate and all-embracing. Precisely because of this the tremendous emphasis upon aesthetics and the highly ineffable and mystical quality of Oriental culture.'

In the older, traditional cultures art and beauty were a reminder, or symbol. A ritual of identity and participation it the creative principle, the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe, beauty was a road to transcendence. The close relation between art, ritual, doctrine and integration is well brought out by Marco Pallis in *Peaks and Lamas:* 'The aim of ritual—and ritual must be regarded as a synthesis of all the arts, acting as the handmaids of Doctrine and collaborating towards an end—is to prepare the mind for metaphysical realization, to spur it on to pierce the veil of the finite and to seek Deliverance in Knowledge, that is, in identification with the Supreme and Infinite Reality.' One with life, the life of life, aesthetics had not yet become a separate function, using a private idiom, bordering on the absurd and abnormal, aloof and atomised.

Since the best way to study the normal and traditional older view will be to point its difference from the prevalent attitude towards art and beauty, we begin with a slight contrast and move on to an account of some of the problems, or solutions, found among the seminal Indian thinkers, mostly anonymous.

Sometimes, as we have said before, aesthetics has been determined or dominated by philosophy. The tendency has been strong in the Western tradition. As Hiriyanna points out: It is 'usual for every important philosopher in the West to regard the question of beauty as a part of the problem he is attempting to solve. Hence aesthetics has come to be recognised there as a regular part of philosophy'. This easily explains its variety: as many philosophers, as many aesthetics. And since most Western philosophers believe in the primacy of reason, rational order, or the intelligible form, they tend to look upon art and beauty in rational terms, as a rational factor or quality. We cannot give the name beautiful to anything irrational, says Plato. A champion of the life of reason and ideas, Plato was suspicious of ecstasy and enthusiasm, which seemed to introduce a disturbing factor into the Life of Reason. Plato who wrote with such distinction reveals, it must be said, an entirely un-aesthetic approach. 'The most poetic of philosophers was an enemy of poetry'. In the end his passion for truth and morality, and the well-being of the citizens, leads him to banish the poet or the rhapsodist from the ideal Republic. Concerned with the 'use of poetry' the puritan Plato feared dramatic presentations, with their questionable theme and language. These, he thought, only 'watered the passions'. He seemed to be in favour of 'official' and didactic art that is, he did not seem to recognise the principle of 'aesthetic or psychic distance' involved in art experience. Standing at the head of the Western tradition, his case is typical. (And is paralleled in the Indian tradition represented by such sociologists as Manu, Chanakya and the early Buddhists.) In some of the later defences of the arts we hear of their 'contribution to the achievement of all or any of the Four Aims of Life', a view properly pilloried by the pure aesthetes, as in *Dasharupa*. As Dhananjaya puts it rather sarcastically: 'As for any simple man of little intelligence, who says that from dramas, which distil joy, the gain is knowledge only, as in the case of history and the like (mere statement, narrative or illustration)—homage to him, for he has averted his face from what is delightful'. It may, however, be mentioned it is not possible to go into details that the Platonic position was sufficiently answered by Aristotle and that the Greek theory of imitation, for instance, was not naturalistic, as is popularly imagined. It was the imitation of an ideal

content or universal form. The content being ideal, or possible, rather probable, was, as Aristotle pointed out, superior to the actualities of history.

A notable exception in the rationalist account occurs in the hierarchy of the arts and the place assigned to music. Not only do the walls of the city crumble as the modes of music change, the secret rhythm of the universe makes the music of the spheres. The idea is echoed, centuries later, by the pessimist Schopenhaeur who thought that while other arts represented reality, music was reality itself. This would receive further and characteristic emphasis in the writings of Walter Pater. It has been well summed up by Rilke: *Singing is Being*. This too has its parallel in the Vedic Age in India when we hear that one who has learned to play the *Vina* and was an adept in tone and rhythm could enter the path of liberation more easily. The tradition of mystic poets and singers is still there.

But such correspondences apart, Indian aesthetics is in many ways the opposite of the official Western tradition. Aesthetics in India may not have run adrift from philosophy but it did not take a back seat. In fact, if did not admit any division. In the unitive experience, to which Indian culture has been always loyal action, thought and aesthetics were one. This creates problems of its own. But it has certain immediate and even enduring advantages, in any case inescapable once its premisses are accepted. Indian aesthetics, it has been well said, is 'more a psychology of artistic experience than a philosophy of beauty'. Those (*alamkarikas*) who wrote professionally on aesthetics were not philosophers as such though, as a rule, they were allied to the different *darshanas*, from which followed differences in emphasis and analysis. But neither the Indian sages nor the professional aestheticians ever made the mistake of equating beauty with intellectual truth, they have distinguished aesthetic contemplation or understanding from intellectual or discriminative understanding. Though they may not have talked, in the manner of the moderns, about the emotive aspects of communication, a more-than-rational value or residue—*rasa, dhvani, vakrokti, vyanjana*—has been implicit in their scheme or view of things. Of course the emotiveness or feeling quality in a work of art is not the same as in everyday life. In our day to day life there is contingency and passivity. But aesthetic experience is undergone freely without any kind of

compulsion or inhibition of the empirical ego. The aesthetic self is a free self.

It may be added that from the Eastern point of view the art object is not an object or objective reality. Hence, perhaps, the allergy or absence of analysis. The art object or experience however contains a flavour or relish, sap or essence of the object or experience portrayed, its *rasa*. Other than the *rasa* the object or experience is not. *Rasa* is that reality or super-reality. The *rasa* experience or doctrine is one of the major distinctions of Indian wisdom. And so we hear of the Self or Brahman, essentially beautiful, because of this original creative Bliss of Being, the joy of the creative Self: *Rasoh vai sah*, The Self is Delight itself. Here is the foundation, the foundation above, to speak in the cryptic words of the Veda, of Indian aesthetics. In a much later age Visvanath's bold and simple analogy harks back to this. In *Sahitya Darpana* we hear him say about the art experience: 'It is pure, indivisible, self-manifested, compounded equally of joy and consciousness, free of admixture with any other perception, the very twin brother of mystic experience (*Brahmasvadasahodara*) and the very life of it is supersensuous (*lokottara*)'.

Such awareness of the delight and beauty of All-Existence is obviously not discursive knowledge. Nevertheless, it is knowledge of a kind, perhaps the highest kind, knowledge by identity. Here is another distinction of the mystical East. 'Throughout the East, wherever Hindu or Buddhist thought have deeply penetrated, it is firmly believed that all knowledge is directly accessible to the concentrated and "one-pointed" mind, without the direct intervention of the senses'. This, it may be safely guessed, is a gift of India's ageless yoga, the art and science of union. It is on all fours with the later Hindu view that the practice of art is a form of yoga which identifies the aesthetic emotion with that felt when the self perceives the Self, than which there nothing higher is, an Indian edition of epiphany.

Here the twin concepts of *Maya* and *Lila* come in useful, *maya* not in the sense of illusion so much as in the sense of self-deployment or determination. As P. J. Chaudhury has pointed out, 'The concept of *Maya*, which is the pivot of Vedantic metaphysics, can have meaning only in an aesthetic sense'. As for *Lila*, in the sense of divine sport, or purposeless purpose as Kant called it, it is the nearest answer to the question: Why creation?

Art being the free activity of the creative Self or Spirit to know, understand and imitate the Divine Artist is to be correspondingly free. Hence, according to the ancient formula, art is an angelic vocation that liberates, *devajanavidya* and *muktipradayi*. In this all-inclusive formula there is neither high nor low, but complete equality, *samattva*. As the Koreans say, 'He who succeeds in setting down the soul of bamboo, of stone, of old trees, that man must feel free and divine.' The simplest explanation of catharsis and communication in terms of the universal self and soul-vision.

Indian metaesthetics is based on an understanding of the creative self and its process. As said before, one of its marked characteristics is that we have 'to recognise reality as an experience such as we have in art, the object experienced having no independent reality apart from experience.' Or as *Sahitya Darpana* puts it, 'It is enjoyed by those who are competent thereto, in identity just as the form of God is itself the joy with which it is recognised.' The genius of the East, as Northrop has pointed out, is that it has 'discovered a type of knowledge and has concentrated its attention continuously, as the West has not, upon a portion of the nature of things which can be known only by being experienced . . . The basic Oriental premises which have made these experiences what they are, and which have defined the standpoint from which the Orient views them must . . . be grasped.' Its perception being indivisible from experience, it cannot be a matter of separative knowledge. But on that account it is not to be regarded as eternal or as interrupted: it is timeless, hyper-physical (*alaukika*) and the only proof of its existence is to be found in experience. Thus, there is no convincing the philistine, the *alpabuddhis*. The experience of art, of world-experience as art, is essentially ego-less, universal, the same for all, though all may not experience the same way. This becomes the norm of the aesthetic experience or moment and it includes even what appears as not-self. But since the Self or Brahman is all that there is, everything is its own inalienable self-expression or modification. Similarly, the artist too feels, through empathy or *Einfühlung*, his own self in all selves and things, even in what appears as not-self. This is because, as Northrop would say, of the aesthetic continuum in the essential nature of all things. The human artist becomes like the divine archetype, all that he imagines. 'Negative capability' is his natural status, nature or prerogative. It is easy to see how close this

comes to the ideal of the *jivanmukta*, the liberated person who, by definition, is all-experiencing, *sarvanubhuh*. Through aesthetic contemplation we too, if we are *rasikas*, can enter the penetralia of creation and become one with the Self, one in all. Such experience cannot but be subjective. Subjectivity is truth, as Kierkegaard said—but it is not less real, unless we confine reality to materiality, a needless error. And since the Self or Brahman is not an object or thing, how we can be parts of him or reflect him is no problem at all. Through all forms of life, and art, there is the same immanent Self or Real. In the words of James Cousins, 'Indian art practises the Western mystical doctrine of the Perpetual Presence.' It is this that we variously encounter or enjoy, according to capacity, through degrees or levels of consciousness. To the extent that we ourselves are embodied beings, and works of art but embodied ideas or consciousness, some kind of qualified monism seems called for to explain the world-phenomenon as well as our reactions to it, including the objects of our own fashionings, such as works of art. The metaphysics involved in art experience is no foreign matter but an inevitable relation and clarification, even if it takes us beyond the object. Aesthetics is a bridge between the visible and the invisible. The picture is not in the painting.

This natural or perennial metaesthetics is the result of vision and maturity, an attitude and experience essentially renewable. As evidence of which we quote the following verse, *Poem of Ecstasy*, by Skryabin. Skryabin knew nothing of the Indian tradition of the Dance of Shiva, but had reached the same experience on his own. This is what makes it even more significant.

The Spirit (purusa) playing,
The Spirit longing,
The Spirit with fancy (yoga-maya), creating all,
Surrenders himself to the bliss of love . . . .
Amid the flowers of his creation (prakriti) He lingers in a kiss . . . .
Blinded by their beauty, He rushes, He frolics, He dances, He whirls . . . .
He is all rapture, all bliss, in this play (lila),
Free divine, in this love struggle
In the marvellous grandeur of sheer aimlessness,

And in the union of counter-aspirations (dvanda),
In consciousness alone, in love alone,
The Spirit learns the nature (svabhava) of His divine being
O my world, my life, my blossoming, my ecstasy!
Your every moment I create
By negation of all forms previously lived through:
I am eternal negation (neti, neti) . . . .
Enjoying this dance, choking in this whirlwind,
In the domain of ecstasy, He takes swift flight,
In this unchanging change (samsara), in this flight, aimless, divine,
The Spirit comprehends Himself,
In the power of will (chit-shakti), alone (kevala), free (mukta),
Ever-creating, all-irradiating, all vivifying,
Divinely playing in the multiplicity of forms (prapancha) He comprehends Himself . . . .
I already dwell in thee, O, my world,
Thy dream of me—'twas I coming into existence . . . .
And thou art all—one wave of freedom and bliss . . . .
By a general conflagration (maha pralaya) the universe (samsara) is embraced,
The Spirit is the height of being, and He feels the tide unending
Of the divine power of free will. He is all-daring:
What menaced, now is excitement,
What terrified, is now delight . . . .
And the universe resounds with the joyful cry, 'I am.'

This, the 'universal aesthesis', the archetypal art of creation,* has been well expressed by Sri Aurobindo the mystic poet-critic: 'World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of dancing.' Nataraja, king of dance and drama, is the source, at least one of the sources, and goal of metaesthetics. We are, as Coomaraswamy wanted us to be, worshippers of Nataraja still. And shall always be.

* Revealing itself, in Coleridge's phrase, 'in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities' which is the mark of imagination.

THE POET AS CRITIC—SOME COMPARISONS IN INDIAN AND ENGLISH LITERARY CRITICISM

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WHO is an ideal critic? Is it correct to say that only a poet can be a critic? What are the distinctive functions of a poet and a critic? How are they related to each other? These are some of the questions which have interested poets and critics all over the world from the very earliest times. Confining our attention to English and Sanskrit literatures we may see how these questions have been answered from time to time and examine how far modern conceptions are satisfactory.

It is a fact that among both English and Sanskrit literary critics there have been many poets. Sidney, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Dr Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Matthew Arnold and Mr T. S. Eliot are just a few important names of such poet-critics. Similarly in Sanskrit Poetics we have the names of Dandi, Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Viswanatha, Jagannatha and others. There have also been instances of great critics not being poets. Middleton Murry and Dr F. R. Leavis are such, for instance. Bharata, Bhamaha, Udbhata, Vamana, Bhattanayaka, Mahimabhatta and Appayya Dixita are not known as poets. Even on a superficial glance of such names it may appear to us that there is no necessity that a critic should be a poet also. But extreme views have been held at different times. Everyone knows the common saying in Sanskrit that 'the true enjoyment of a poem is only for the reader and not the poet'. 'Kavita rasa madhuryam rasiko vetti no kavih' Mr Eliot says that he once held the extreme view 'that the only critics worth reading were the critics who practised and practised well, the art of which they wrote',[1] reminding us of Dryden who had also said: 'Poets themselves are the most proper, though, I conclude not the only cirtics'.[2] Between these extreme view we may consider Middleton Murry's view that 'Art is the consciousness of life and criticism the consciousness of art'.[3] This correctly

[1] *Selected Essays*, p. 31

[2] Preface to *All for Love*.

[3] For *Aspects of Literature*, ' The Function of Criticism '.

implies a subtle distinctions between the two functions and the two kinds of consciousness. Mr Eliot himself was preoccupied with this question till the end of his life and in many of his writings, particularly in *The Three Voices of Poetry*, *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism*, and *The Frontiers of Criticism*, has left very satisfactory answers to these questions. But before considering them in detail we may survey what other poets and critics have said on these questions in English and Sanskrit literatures.

Alexander Pope describes an ideal critic as:

'. . . . the man, who counsel can bestow,
Still pleased to teach, and yet not proud to know?
Unbiassed, or by favour, or by spite;
Not dully prepossessed, nor blindly right,
Though learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere,
Modestly bold, and humanly severe:
Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
And gladly praise the merit of a foe?
Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfined;
A knowledge both of books and human kind:
Gen'rous converse; a soul exempt from pride;
and love to praise, with reason on his side?'[4]

As a contrast to such an ideal critic he also describes the 'mad abandoned critic' as:

'The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned slumber in his head,
With his own tongue still edifies his ears,
And always list'ning to himself appears'.[5]

Criticism is not 'savage liberty'. Even the critic must be creative, and should take care how he conveys his ideas: for

'Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do;
Men must be taught as if you taught them not'.[6]
'Nor in the critic let the Man be lost'.[7]

Pope has given many important qualifications of the critic and with the critics of his time in mind he is giving a piece of advice to them as to what they should do, and what not. When we look up

[4] *Essay on Criticism*, lines 631-642.
[5] Ibid, lines 611-615.
[6] Ibid, lines 573-79.
[7] Ibid, lines 523.

the history of the 18th century literature in English, the first fac to catch our attention is the degraded state to which criticism ha fallen in the hands of inferior men. Dr Johnson ridicules suc critics thus: 'Criticism is a study by which men grow importar and formidable at a very small expense . . . and he whom natur has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support hi vanity by the name of a critic. . . . All the other powers c literature are coy and haughty, they must be long courted, and t last are not always gained; but criticism is a goddess easy of acces and forward of advance, who will meet the slow, and encourag the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words an the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity'.[8] Agains this background it is not difficult to understand why Pope approa ches the subject as a law-giver and not as a cool-headed theoris inquiring into the relative and distinctive functions of poetry an criticism. Fielding, in his introductory chapters to various book of *Tom Jones*, makes it a point to attack such critics, whenever a opportunity arises, by calling them 'reptiles' and so on. Eve Coleridge warns the critic by writing that the 'praises of th unworthy are felt by ardent minds as robberies of the deserving— and the eulogies of critics without taste or judgment are th natural reward of—authors without feeling or genius'.[9] Bu Coleridge's individual contributions to poetics are his definition of poetry, imagination and fancy, and the essential function o poetry. He said: 'The final definition then so deduced, ma be thus worded: A poem is that species of composition, whic is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediat* object pleasure, not truth'.[10] This reminds us of Viswanatha' definition: 'Vākyam rasātmakam kāvyam' 'Poetry is a sentenc of which "Rasa" is the soul.' 'Tēna vinā tasya kāvyatvābhāvasy pratipāditvāt'. 'It has been established, that without *Rasa*, composition cannot be called a poem'.[11] Coleridge was probabl the first critic to define poetry unequivocally, in terms of thi *essential* quality, without which poetry loses its individuality an becomes indistinguishable from prose and philosophy and othe

[8] From 'Dick Minim the critic' in *Selected English Essays*, Ed. Peacock p 144.

[9] *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter III.

[10] *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV.

[11] *Sahitya Darpana*, I. 1.

kinds of writing. No doubt Dryden had already said in his *Defence of Dramatic Poesy*: 'delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy: instruction can be admitted but in the second place; for poesy only instructs as it delights'. But he himself did not seriously maintain it, and actually improved the status of 'teaching' and placed it at the forefront as is evident in his following words from his introduction to *Troilus and Cressida:* 'To instruct delightfully is the general end of all poetry. Philosophy instructs, but it performs its work by precept; which is not delightful, or not so delightful as example. To purge the passion by example is therefore the particular instruction which belongs to Tragedy'. Coleridge on the other hand put 'delight' firmly on the forefront for the first-time. But in India Viswanatha was not the first to define poetry so. He was only restating it at a time of crisis in Sanskrit literary history. Bharata, the father of Indian dramaturgy, had himself been the first exponent of the *Rasa* school. He writes: 'Na hi rasādṛte Kaścidarthah Pravartate'[12] 'Without *Rasa* nothing can be done in drama.' Bharata also elaborates on how *Rasa* can be evoked in drama: 'Vibhāvānubhàva Vyabhicarisamyōgabhāvādrasaniṣpatitih.' Abhinavagupta remarks: 'Eka ēva tāvad paramārthato rasah sutrasthanīyatvēna rupakē pratibhāti'.[13] One *Rasa* runs like a thread in a composition. But some later critics thought that for poetry which was a different type of composition from drama, there must be a soul other than *Rasa.* No doubt they did give it some importance, but did not recognise it as the essence of poetry. Thus Dandin who was more of an *Alaṁkarika than Rasa Vādin* says: 'Kamam sarvopyalankarah rasamarthēniṣiṁcati / Tathāpi agramyatā ēva ēnam bhāram vahati bhūyasā//'.[14] 'Granted that each and every figure imbues the sense with sentiment; nevertheless it is *the absence of coarseness* that for the major part bears this brunt'. Similarly Bhāmaha also did not count upon it as *the* essential feature of poetry, but included it among the *alaṁkaras*; rasavadalaṁkārah. Dandi defined *Alankara* as that which gives beauty to a poem. 'Kāvya śōbhākarān dharmān alaṅkāran pracakśyate'.[15] Bhāmaha defined

[12] *Natya Sastra*, Vol. I (Gaekwad Oriental Series), p. 247.

[13] Ibid, p. 273.

[14] *Kavyadarsha* I. 62.

[15] Ibid. II. 1.

Kāvya therefore as 'Śabdārthau Sahitau kāvyam',[16]—a 'composition with word and meaning'. Following Daṅdi Vāmana defined *Alaṁkara* 'as the aids for the further improvement of the qualities of the poem'. 'Kāvya śōbhāyāh kartāro dharmā gunāh/ tadatiśaya hētavastu alaṅkarāh'.[17] Rudrata and Mammata, later followed this definition. Even Jagannātha defined it as 'Ramanīyārtha pratipādakah sabdah kāvyam'.[18]—'The word which denotes beautiful meaning'. There were 'śabdavadins' and 'arthavadins'. Vamana followed a new path and defined poetry as that species of composition which was distinct by its style: 'Rītirātma kāvyasya' and 'Viśiṣtā padaracanā rītih':[19] Which is like saying that poetry is 'best words in the best order'. Kuntaka's *Vakrokti* school coming as a reaction to the Dhwani-school, followed the idea: 'Vakroktih kāvyajīvitam'—'Vakrokti is the life-essence of poetry'. This *Vakrokti* was defined as the special meaning created in an ordinary everyday word by a special usage in a new context, 'Rūdhi vaicitrya vakratā'—The elevation of the ordinary word into an exalted height of meaning. 'Vaidagdhya bhangī bhaṇitih'. Ānandavardhana propounded the *Dhwani* theory to resurrect the *Rasa* school and Abhinava Gupta gave it universality by his celebrated commentary. It is clear that all these qualities are necessary for poetry but what makes a work a piece of poetry is essentially *Rasa* and this was not universally recognised until the time of Ānandavardhana, after Bharata. Similarly in English literature Sidney in his *Apologie for Poetry*, recognised the quality of imagination, which he calls the power of invention, as the chief quality of poetry. He calls the poet's world 'a second nature', and the poet 'a maker', deriving its meaning from the Greek word. He classifies poetry as sacred, philosophical and poetry in the strict Greek sense. This third class of poets are described as those 'which most properly do imitate to teach and delight, and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be, but range, only reined with learned descretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be. . . . these indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which

[16] *Kavyalankara* I. 16.
[17] Kavyalankarasutravrtti. III. i. 1-2.
[18] Rasagangadhara I.
[19] Kavyalankarasutravrtti II. ii. 6-7.

without delight they would fly as from a stranger, and teach, to make them know that goodness where unto they are moved, which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed'.[20] Sidney's division of poetry into sacred, philosophical and the normal kinds reminds us of similar divisions of 'śāstram, kāvyam, kāvya śāstram and śāstra kāvyam' by Kṣhemendra. 'Śāstram Kāvyam śāstrakāvyam kāvyaśāstram ca bhēdatah/kāvyam viśiṣta sabdārtha sāhitya sadālankrti'.[21] Sidney does not state whether instruction is more essential or delight to poetry but implies that instruction is done through delight. This again reminds us of Bharata's idea that a work of art is like bitter medicine coated with sugar: 'Guḍa pracchanna kaṭukauṣadha kalpam', or medicine mixed with milk, 'Kṣiramadhyāvasthita auṣadhōpayōgavat'.[22] Sidney includes in poetry, philosophy and history and thus claims superiority of poetry over the others. But he did not like Coleridge categorically state that teaching was subservient to delight. Sidney's idea that poetry instructs through delight may be compared with Mammata's 'Kāntāsammitatayā upadēśa',[23] instruction in the manner of the wife. The Scriptures, *Vēdas*, order 'Prabhu sammita', the Purānās are meant mainly for instruction, though in a milder, friendly way, 'mitra sammita', but literature hardly gives the impression of teaching. Sidney's argument is just a close parallel: 'Philosophy gives precepts, history gives examples, but poetry gives both'.[24] Thus while Sidney was defining Poetry's chief purpose, Coleridge is defining its chief characteristic. No doubt ultimately the 'Kāvya lakṣana' and the 'Kāvya prayōjana' are inseparable, but a slight emphasis on this or that aspect of poetry gives rise to a similar distinction in the function of criticism; it gives rise to the question whether a critic is concerned more with finding whether a work is a work of art at all, or with estimating its greatness by finding out what it aims at and whether it is realised; whether criticism means mere recognition of works of art, or includes interpretation and assessment; whether 'elucidation of work of art and correction of taste' is the sole concern of the critic, or the establishment of

[20] Ed. by J C. Collins, p. 11.
[21] Suvṛttatilaka 2-4.
[22] Nātyaśāstra (Gaekwad Oriental Series) Vol. I, pp. 10-11.
[23] Kāvyaprakāṣha I 2.
[24] *Apologie for Poetry*, p. 16

hierarchy of poets; whether the form or the content is more important, etc. How these questions are of great importance can be taken up later, but here it can be noted that Coleridge put delight before instruction for the first time in English criticism, just as Abhinava Gupta said: 'tathāpı prītirēva pradhānam . . . prādhānyēna ānanda ēvoktah',[25] and Mammata put delight at the head of all poetic uses: 'Sakalaprayōjana maulibhūtam samana-utaramēva rasāsvādana samudbhūtam vıgalita vēdyāntaram ānandam'[26] Coleridge also said: 'if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all ın their pro-portion harmonising with, and supporting the purpose and known influence of metrical arrangement. . . .The Poet descrıbed in ideal perfection brings the whole soul of man into activity, wıth the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spırit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses* each ınto each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power first put in action by the wıll and understanding, and retained under their irremıssive, though gentle and unnoticed, control reveals ıtself ın the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualıtıes: of sameness wıth difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea with the image' etc.[27] This definıtion of 'ımaginatıon' corresponds to Bhatta Tauta's similar definition: 'Prajnyā navanavōnmesa śālinī pratıbha matā/Tadanuprāṇanajivadvarṇanā ṅipuṇah kavih/ Tasya karma smṛtam kāvyam'. Coleridge's ideas of compositeness of the poem and its utter ınterrelatedness of several parts and qualıtıes among themselves also remind us of the *Aucitya Vāda* in Sanskrıt poetics: 'Anaucityādṛate nānydrasa bhangasya kāraṇam/ Prasiddhaucitya bandhastu rasasyōpaniśat parā//'[28] Coleridge thus resembles Indian critics in many respects and the credıt of gıvıng a firm foundation to English criticism goes to him.

Wordsworth's criticısm came maınly to justıfy hıs practice as a poet. His main interest was in creating the poetry of the

[25] Dhvanyālokalochana (Nırnaya Sagara Press), p 12.
[26] Kāvyaprakāsa I. 2.
[27] *Bıographia*, Chapter XIV.
[28] Dhvanyāloka III. 14.

most natural type, in both manner and matter. But his assertion that 'there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition',[29] gave rise to a storm of criticism and Coleridge was the first to condemn this idea. Similarly Wordsworth's idea that his poetry is written 'in a selection of language really used by men', which is 'to adopt the very language of men', also came under the severe, but correct criticism of Coleridge. No doubt Wordsworth demonstrated that real poetry could be written without the use of conventional metaphors—lines like:

'But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me'.[30]

and

'many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone'.[31]

are such splendid examples of genuine poetry. But it did not occur to him that this is not the real language of men. The words are simple here no doubt, but the real poetry consists in what is suggested 'Dhvanita' and not said. He demonstrated to put it in terms of Sanskrit poetics, that *Alankaras* were external to poetry and were not indispensable, but forgot that in so far as poetry here lies in the 'Vyangyārtha' and not 'Vācyartha' it is no longer the language of the rustics. The selection makes it no longer natural. Thus, whenever he adhered strictly to his theory, bald poetry was the inevitable result. Secondly, Wordsworth claimed that his poems had each 'a worthy purpose' and asserted: 'If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings'.[32] Wordsworth thus corrected the possible misunderstanding of poetry's chief use that delight is for its own sake.

[29] *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.* [30] *Lucy.* [31] *Michael.*
[32] *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.*

He placed delight as an accompaniment of teaching. 'Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge.' 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.' He agrees with Aristotle 'that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing.' But he recognises that there is only one restriction 'namely the necessity of giving immediate pleasure, to a human being possessed of that information . . . not as a lawyer, a physician, . . . or a natural philosopher, but as man'. 'Pleasure' was thus the immediate object, and teaching the ultimate object, to him. Summing up his description of the poet he writes: 'The poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner.' Even in his poetry he wished to be considered either as a teacher or nothing. Wordsworth's emphasis on teaching through delight reminds us of Viswanatha's idea that the highest ideals are realised, even by the less intelligent, through the pleasure of poetry. 'Caturvarga phalaprāptih sukhādalpadhiyāmapi/ Kavyādeva. . .'.[33] Wordsworth was not a *Kēvala Rasavadin*. Wordsworth's ideas must be studied in the modern context of 'poetry for its own sake', and concepts of 'pure poetry' and criticism. That there were such critics in India also is amply evident in the history of Sanskrit poetics; Dhananjaya, the author of *Dasha rūpaka*, says ironically, 'Salutations unto him, who turns his back upon pleasure and says that in a play overflowing with delight, instruction alone is the chief use, as in scriptures'.

'Ānanda niṣyandiṣu rūpakēṣu
Vyutpatti mātram phalamalphabuddhih/
yō pitihāsadivadāha sadhuh
Tasmai namah svadu parañmukhāya//'[34]

Bhatta Nayaka before him similarly, and even more emphatically declared that 'delight alone was everything in a poem, neither knowledge nor instruction'—'Kāvye rasayitā sarvō na bōddha na niyogabhāk'. Such exclusionist tendencies have done a great harm both to poetics and life in general. The fact is, at the moment of enjoyment of a poem there is immediately pleasure and simultaneously through it, perhaps *in* it, instruction or knowledge is also realised automatically. But since we cannot speak

[33] *Sahityadarpana*, I. 2. [34] I. 6.

of both of them simultaneously, we have to treat them one at a time. Abhinava Gupta rightly says that 'it is wrong to consider instruction and knowledge as separate. Both have the same object in view. Delight is the result of a poetic composition embodying correct objective correlatives, and in the understanding of their true nature, knowledge and instruction are automatically got: 'Na caitē prītivyutpattī bhinnarupē ēva, dvayōrapi ēka viśayatvāt/ Vibhāvādi aucityamēva hi sadyah prītēh nidānamiti asakrdavōcāma/vibhāvādīnam tadrasōcitānām yathāsvarūpa vēdanam phalaparyantībhūtatayā vyutpattirucyatē'.[35]

Shelley's general approach in his *The Defence of Poetry* is summed up in the famous statement of his: 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.' He resembles Wordsworth more than Coleridge in this respect. He recognises, no doubt, that 'poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be "the expression of the imagination"' and 'Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure'. But he never conceived pleasure as its chief end. He considers the poet as a seer,—a 'drastara' like our *Vedic Rishis*—visualising infinite patterns of life, of the past, present and the future, combining the legislator and the prophet in their personalities, and asserts that 'to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression'. Shelley discusses at length the problem of expression and its human history and praises its divine nature and vital importance in poetry and gives the largest meaning to the word 'Poetry'. Consequently, the critic is concerned with the full implications of the work before him and not merely with the 'how' aspect of it. This tendency of criticism was predominant throughout the 19th century, and degenerated so that poetry was thought to be a mere substitute for Religion or Philosophy. The solution lay in not making poetry exclusive of them but in its inclusiveness, and in its chief characteristic of yielding immediate pleasure.

Matthew Arnold came to give a decisive turn to the literary flow at such a time of decadence. Here after we may take him along with Middleton Murry, Mr Eliot, and Dr Leavis, as they

[35] Locana (p. 149).

have many things in common. Arnold defined criticism as 'the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is'.[36] But after giving such a broad definition of it, it is rather puzzling to see him accept that 'the critical power is of lower rank than the creative'. If, criticism is the consciousness of art which is consciousness of life, it should mean that the critic is not merely conscious of the art of the poet, but also the life of which it is a representation; the critic's job would be thus doubly important, unless we give the word 'art' a very narrow meaning. Mr Eliot improves upon Arnold's distinction between creation and criticism and says: 'I have assumed as axiomatic that a creation, a work of art, is autotelic; and that criticism, by definition, is *about* something other than itself'.[37] There is no difficulty in agreeing with this. He even goes a step further to say that a large part of creation is criticism, but says they cannot be equated on this basis. We shall see how Mr Eliot's notion of art's being autotelic occasionally leads him to art's autonomy and thus lands him into the argument of '*kēvala rasānubhava*', pure enjoyment of poetry. But for such occasional misunderstandings Matthew Arnold defines the critic's job correctly by prescribing for him proper qualifications: 'knowledge and ever fresh knowledge must be the critic's great concern for himself'. The critic is not 'an abstract law-giver' but a man of 'a fair and clear mind' with fresh knowledge, letting his mind form disinterested judgments. Mr Eliot similarly says: 'The critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact. . . . The sense of fact is something very slow to develop, and its complete development means perhaps the very pinnacle of civilization'. The world must be grateful to Mr Eliot for giving this lofty conception of a critic. He tells us that this all-inclusive conception is an alternative to the extreme view that he once held that only a good poet could be a good critic. He discards later his own idea that 'criticism is the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste', to make it more inclusive. In 1956, he writes: 'Thirty years ago, I asserted that the essential function of literary criticism was the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. . . . I could put it more simply and more acceptably to the present age by saying to "promote the

[36] 'The Function of Criticism' in *Essays in Criticism.*

[37] *Selected Essays,* p. 30.

understanding and enjoyment of literature".'[38] He also improves upon his earlier notion of a critic by saying: 'A critic who was interested in nothing but "literature" would have very little to say to us, for his literature would be a pure abstraction. Poets have other interests beside poetry—otherwise their poetry would be very empty: they are poets because their dominant interest has been in turning their experience and their thought.... into poetry. The critic accordingly is a *literary* critic if his primary interest in writing criticism is to help his readers to *understand* and *enjoy*. But he must have other interests, just as much as the poet himself; for the literary critic is not merely a technical expert who has learned the rules to be observed by the writers he criticises. The critic must be the whole man, a man with convictions and principles, and of knowledge and experience of life'.[39] Mr Eliot's earlier writings should always be examined in this light before we accept them. This vast culture which he prescribes for the critic is what is known as 'Vyutpatti' in Sanskrit poetics. Dandi had stated long ago that a poet should have imagination, culture and practice 'Naisargikī ca partibhā srutan ca bahu nirmalam/ Amandascāthi yogō Syāh Kāranam kāvyasampadah'[40] and by calling the critic a 'sahrdaya', one of equal response, the same qualifications can be applied to the critic also. Mammata similarly had said: 'Saktirnipunatā lokakāvyādyavekṣanam/ kavyajnya sikṣayābhyasa iti hetuh tadudbhave//'. Culture, 'Vyutpatti', is defined by Rudrata as: 'Chandō vyākaraṇa kālalōka sthitipada padārtha vijnyānam/yuktāyukta vivēka vyutpattiriyam samāsena'. All these can be applied to the critic also, if he is to be a *Sahrdaya.* We must also realise that earlier Mr Eliot had written that 'literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological stand point',[41] because, at that time he probably held a secular theory of criticism and finding it inadequate, thought of supplementing it in that way. For, if criticism includes all these view points there is no need of any such special addition. That Mr Eliot *did* incline himself at that time towards a secular idea of literature and criticism becomes evident when we remember the following instances in his earlier essays: 'The difference

[38] The frontiers of criticism, in *On Poets and Poetry*, p. 115.
[39] Ibid, p. 126.
[40] *Kavyadarsha* I. 103.
[41] *Religion and Literature.*

between Shakespeare and Dante is that Dante had one coherent system of thought behind him; but that was just his luck, *and from the point of view of poetry is an irrelevant accident*'.[42] 'It is not a permanent necessity that poets should be interested in Philosophy'.[43]

'I would suggest that none of the plays of Shakespeare has a meaning, although it would be equally false to say that a play of Shakespeare is meaningless'.[44] One wonders if this is not a bit of verbal jugglery. As against these and similar other ideas, we see him coming slowly towards the correct ideas in the following instances: 'The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards'.[45] Notice must here be taken of the expression 'sole literary standards', implying pure criticism, and pure poetry. Again: 'Criticism of poetry moves between two extremes. On the one hand the critic may busy himself so much with the implications moral, social, religious or other —that the poetry becomes handy more than a text for discourse. . . . Or if you stick too closely to the 'poetry' and adopt no attitude towards what the poet has to say, you will tend to evacuate it of all significance'.[46] Accepting these ideas, without a reference to Mr Eliot's latest writings would be very misleading.

Mr Eliot describes the process of poetic creation in his unique way in his *The Three Voices of Poetry*. He says that the poet 'has something germinating in him for which he must find words, but he cannot know what words he wants, until he has found the words; he cannot identify this embryo until it has been transformed into an arrangement of the right words in the right order. When you have the words for it, the "thing" for which the words had to be found has disappeared, replaced by a poem'. This, the poet does in order fundamentally to relieve his burden and then 'he can say to the poem: "go away! find a place for yourself in a book—and don't expect *me* to take any further interest in you".' The poet alone knows whether the experience of the poem is similar to, if not the same as, its original; only when the critic is also capable of similar experiences can he verify whether the poem

[42] *Selected Essays*, p. 136, 1927. [43] *The Metaphysical Poets*, 1921.
[44] *Selected Essays*, p. 135. [45] *Religion and Literature*. [46] *The Use of Poetry*.

has been a success and yet, the poet's is the problem of expression and the critic's that of verification; but both must have similar hearts of experience. This is the idea of the *Sahrdaya* in Sanskrit poetics. If the poet himself does this job after composing his poem, he is no longer a poet at that moment. Hence, when a poet of greatness is also a considerable critic, it only means that he is capable of both these faculties, which are different; not that they are identical.

This survey would be incomplete without including Middleton Murry, Dr Leavis and Dr I. A. Richards in it, though they are not poets. Mr Murry has said some of the best things on the functions of a critic, and his qualifications, and Mr Eliot acknowledges his gratitude to Mr Murry in this respect. According to Murry: 'The true literary critic must have a humanistic philosophy. His inquiries must be modulated, subject to an intimate organic governance, *by an ideal of the good life.* He is not the mere investigator of facts; existence is never for him synonymous with value, and it is of the utmost importance that he should never be deluded into believing that it is'. 'An ideal of the good life, if it is to have the internal coherence and the organic force of a true ideal, *must inevitably be aesthetic*'.[47] It is Murry who first pointed out that criticism and creation were involved in each other and that Mr Eliot's claim of autonomy for Art was made without realising their mutual dependence. Mr Eliot's later views are probably the result of this penetrating analysis by Murry. It was also he who effectively pointed out: 'The function of true criticism is to establish a definite hierarchy among the great artists of the past, as well as to test the production of the present by the combination of these activities it asserts the organic unity of all art'.[48]

Dr Leavis, has more things in common with Dryden, Coleridge and the earlier Mr Eliot than with Arnold and Murry. I. A. Richards would be representing an exactly opposite trend to that of Dr Leavis, developing the ideas of Arnold and Murry. It is common knowledge that Dr Leavis came to serious disagreement with the later views of Mr Eliot. To summarise Dr Leavis is an impossible task, but some broad trends of his critical theory and practice may be pointed out.

[47] *Aspects of Literature.* [48] *Aspects of Literature.*

According to Leavis 'The ideal critic is the ideal reader'. 'By the critic of poetry I understand the complete reader'.[49] This ideal reminds us of Arnold's critic with 'fresh knowledge', Eliot's critic 'with a highly developed sense of fact' and Mr Murry's critic with a 'humanistic philosophy', and 'the governance by an organic ideal of the good life'. Leavis goes even further to state explicitly 'No doubt a philosophic training might possibly—ideally would—make a critic surer and more penetrating in the perception of significance and relation and in the judgment of value'.[50] But in all these instances of large generalisations, he imposes very serious restrictions on the function of the critic to make him a purely literary critic and stops, one wonders, just short of the idea of Art for Art's sake. Let us study those restrictions: 'it is to be noted that the improvement we ask for is of the critic, *the critic as critic*'.[51] 'Words in Poetry invite us, not to "think about" and judge but to "feel into" or "become"—to realise a complex experience that is given in the words'.[52] If every time we read a poem we 'become' that experience, criticism would cease to exist. Criticism implies the consciousness of not merely the work of art before the critic, but also the consciousness of similar poems and dissimilar poems, the consciousness of as much of life as possible. The critical activity is analytical in nature. If the critic is to be lost in the enjoyment of the work before him, there is no need why he should be a 'complete reader' or 'an ideal reader'. The knowledge and experience of all the literature and philosophy he has read, which he cannot help bringing with him, need not be considered extraneous and such an approach is not always an 'one-eye-on the standard approach'. Again the use of the words 'value', 'goodness' and 'evaluation' must be taken here in the pure literary sense. Leavis suggests again and again that literary criticism is a bit of mystery, and seems to hold that the literary critic need not bother about moral, religious and philosophical considerations, in value-judgment:

'Literary criticism and philosophy seem to me to be quite distinct and different kinds of discipline—at least, I think they ought to be (for while in my innocense I hope that philosophic writing commonly represents a serious discipline, I am quite sure

[49] *The Common Pursuit*, p. 212.
[50] *The Common Pursuit*, p. 213.
[51] Ibid. Italics mine.
[52] Ibid, p. 212.

that literary critical writing commonly doesn't.' . . . . . 'I am not the less sure that it is necessary to have a strict literary criticism somewhere and to vindicate literary criticism as a distinct and separate discipline.' The exclusive nature of criticism according to him may further make us ask whether it is worth having at all? The only answer, would be perhaps, that it is an end in itself. And what is this but 'Art for Art's sake'? A. C. Bradley's following exposition of the theory of Art for Art's sake tallies exactly with the trend of Dr Leavis's criticism. Bradley writes:

'What then does the formula "Poetry for Poetry's sake" tell us about this experience? It says, as I understand it, these things. First, this experience is an end in itself, is worth having on its own account, has an intrinsic value. Next, its *poetic* value is this intrinsic worth alone. Poetry may have also an ulterior value as a means to culture and religion; because it conveys instruction or softens the passions, or furthers a good cause; because it brings the poet fame, or money, or a quiet conscience. So much the better . . . . but its ulterior worth neither is nor can directly determine its poetic worth as a satisfying imaginative experience; and this is to be judged entirely from within. . . . .The consideration of ulterior ends whether by the poet in the act of composing, or by the reader in the act of experiencing, tends to lower poetic value. It does so because it tends to change the nature of poetry by taking it out of its own atmosphere. For its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase) but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous'.[53] There is nothing in the writings of Dr Leavis to prove unequivocally that his is a different approach from this. On the other hand, there is everything to support it. Mr I. A. Richards examines this theory in detail in his *Principles of Literary Criticism.* He points out the nature of evaluation of a work of art: 'Culture, religion, instruction in some special senses, softening of the passions and the furtherance of good causes may be directly concerned in our judgments of the *poetic* values of experiences. Otherwise . . . . the word *poetic* becomes a useless sound'.[54] He points out that 'A too narrow view of values, or a too simple conception of morality is usually the cause of these misunderstandings of arts. The agelong controversy as to

[53] *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 5.

[54] P. 74. See the complete chapter 'Poetry for Poetry's sake'.

whether the business of Poetry is to please or to instruct shows this well'.[55] He points out again that 'pleasure seems to be a way in which something happens, rather than an independent happening which can occur by itself in a mind. We have not pleasures, but experiences of one kind or another . . . . which are pleasant'.[56] By detailed analysis he tries to convince us that 'pleasure and unpleasure are complicated matters arising in the course of activities which are directed to other ends',[57] and that 'To read a poem for the sake of the pleasure which will ensue if it is successfully read is to approach it in an inadequate attitude. Obviously it is the poem in which we should be interested, not in a by-product of having managed successfully to read it. The orientation is wrong if we put the pleasure in the forefront'. He points out that this mistake is the legacy of the age of Coleridge which lacked in psychological vocabulary Dr Richards' work is an answer to the 'purists' of literature on the one hand and the *Kevala Rasanubhava Vadins* whom we may still find in the West as well as in the East.

It should be clear after going through this survey of the relation between the poet and the critic, between poetry and criticism, that in life there are no separate, isolated, 'pure' things. To ignore the organic nature of Reality is to misjudge in every field of human activity. In India, the greatest literature—the Vedas, Upanishads, were considered as *Apauruseya*, Supra-human of origin, and hence literary considerations, theory and practice, were unaffected by these great treasures of literature. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata were considered as *quasi Divine* and our very admiration prevented us from considering them fully and systematically in literary matters and in treating them and their qualities as exemplary in creation and criticism. In India the literary critic was not bothered with topics like, *Valmiki's* vision of life, or philosophical, religious or moral considerations in the *Ramayana*. This was deemed the task of the religious commentators like Govindaraja and Maheswara Tirtha. Let us imagine what would have happened to English literary criticism by excluding Shakespeare out of literary consideration, or Milton, or in general, Dante, Homer, Virgil and others. To go a step further, we can imagine our literary criteria in the absence of

[55] Ibid, pp. 67-68. [56] Ibid, p. 92 [57] Ibid, p. 96.

works like Mr Eliot's *Quartets*. It is a great pity that our very admiration should have made our great treasure of literature 'untouchable' by throwing it into a category by itself. No wonder our critics went in search of pure pleasure as an end in itself, under the strong influence of philosophers who negated the actual world which was the very basis of all experience. Prof. M. Hiriyanna says: 'Art may be, indeed, characterised as the layman's yoga. . . . By the attitude of detachment which it evokes, it gives man a foretaste, albeit momentary, of the supreme peace'.[58] 'The artistic attitude is one of disinterested contemplation but not of true enlightment'.[59] 'The artist's function is thus to restore equanimity to the mind by leading us away from the common world and offering us another in exchange'.[60] 'It is this transcending of self-consciousness—this migrating from our narrow self, to put it otherwise, that constitutes the secret of aesthetic delight. The highest function of the poet who easily rises to this mood is to communicate the same to us'.[61] Prof. Hiriyanna is only following Abhinava Gupta, and it has now been established[62] that Abhinava Gupta's aesthetic theories were but corrolaries to his system of philosophy, which was a variety of *Adwaita*. One striking feature of all Indian aesthetics is that it was largely bred and brought up under the shadow of *Mayavada*, as we know it today, for the two greatest figures who dominated the literary scene so completely as to give it their permanent stamp were Anandavardhana and Abhinava Gupta, both from Kashmir and both coming immediately after Sankaracharya and working in the philosophical atmosphere of *Adwaita*. However, there are modern scholars in Indian aesthetics who are aware of this exclusionist and escapist tendency in the writings of Abhinava Gupta and his interpreters.[63] A study in comparison between English and Sanskrit poetics may help us realise many of the pitfalls to which even great critics have fallen and thus point the way to better understanding.

[58] *The Quest after Perfection*, p. 33.
[59] *Art Experience*, p. 10.
[60] Ibid, p. 13.
[61] Ibid, p. 20 see also p. 32.
[62] See K C. Pandey's. *Abhinava Gupta, an historical and philosophical study* and his *Comparative Aesthetics*, Vol. I.
[63] See Dr K. Krishnamoorthi's *Rasollasa*, (in Kannada) pp. 30-32, where he criticises this trend strongly.

VAKROKTIJIVITAM AND MODERN ENGLISH CRITICISM

DAMODAR THAKUR

> Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory—
>
> HAMLET V, Sc. 2.

SOME years back I was drawn by the kind of mind present in the Vakroktijivitam, as it appeared at first sight, and three of us, Dr Narmadeshwar Jha, Sri Umanath Jha and myself attempted a fresh translation of the text. Due to other calls on our time, the translation remained a fragment, but the depth and comprehensiveness of critical intelligence that opened out from the closeness of the text as we tried to get it clearer has made such an abiding impression upon me that I am grateful to the University of Mysore and my friend Professor Narasimhaiah for this opportunity to take up this subject again.

Even when I am making assertions the intention is to pursue an enquiry, ask a question that moves in a particular direction.

Coming late in Sanskrit Poetics, and having wonderful opportunities for the diversionary tactics of learned definement, division and inventories, Kuntaka cuts through them to get to the proper business of a critic of poetry. Whether the theory of Vakrokti is a complete theory of poetry or not is not today as important a consideration as the object of Kuntaka's attention in poetry. In Sanskrit poetics, we are constantly coming across the distinction between *Sastra* and poetry; yet the study that deals with poetry tends to overlay the poetry and the intelligence that deals with it with so much *sastra* that there is little hope for poetry left. Kuntaka shares with modern English critics like Dr F. R. Leavis, Dr I. A. Richards and Professor William Empson a central and practical interest in the way poetry should be analysed.

Even when he seems to be making the ritual beginning of the prayer to the goddess, he comes down on his subject with an order and precision of ideas that delight the modern reader.

He writes, 'I pray to the goddess who is like a dancer in the

dancing hall, on the bright face of great poets, the goddess whose beauty shines in right words, whose movement is her grace.'

The goddess is not merely the patron of poetry, she is poetry, and she is conceived in terms of a delight of motion, a delight of mood present in words and their movement. In Part III of *Practical Criticism*, on Analysis, Dr Richards quotes a proverb which aptly describes his similarity to Kuntaka in precise and ironic use of metaphor for the analysis of poetry.

'Let us get closer to the fire and see what we are saying.'

Kuntaka's Vakrokti is not so much a system of thought, as a training of the attention of 'seeing' poetry. There is a similar penetration in Kuntaka's remark on the familiar metaphor of the body and soul of poetry. When literary criticism becomes as much a learning as Sanskrit Poetics is, the defined terms are incapable of making a critical appraisal of themselves.

Kuntaka writes, 'If the body be ornament, what then will you ornament? Can anyone ride on his own shoulders?' *Alankara* or the figures in poetry are not an addition, because then you would have to admit a prior matter to which these are an addition. Dr Richards in the Philosophy of Rhetoric has advanced the view that the figures are integral to poetry, the matter of poetry is present in the metaphoric mode itself. It is interesting that Kuntaka does not go on to mention the soul of poetry. Denying that poetry is *alankara*, or ornament, since what is called *alankara* is the body of poetry, poetry as we see and know it, he does not turn round to some other element or aspect as the soul or the most important thing. Neither *dhvani* nor *Rasa* as leading away from the poetry have the attractiveness to take him away from poetry. *Rasa* particularly, as the unifying principle of delight of the arts as well as wisdom and contemplation has a deep and enchanting power to take the critic away from poetry. The critical faculty implies this sense of delight at work in the meanings and movements of precise words. The uniqueness is held within these words. Since the *Rasas* are many, poetry is not made what it is by these different states of feeling. Nor is it possible for the reader of poetry to reduce these different states of feeling to one unified state of bliss. The dependence of a theory of poetic criticism on the acceptance of a philosophy about experience comes about most frequently to the disadvantage of criticism. Kuntaka defines the pleasure of poetry in a manner that enhances

the relevance and uniqueness of the poem read. 'That strange quality of feeling that creates unusual pleasure on account of a very particular newness of use is called ornament in literature. Ornament is literature which means to accomplish, master and consummate strangeness of language. Ornament is unusual, striking and new.' The strange quality of feeling is peculiar to poetry, and strange to life. It is made anew, with the instruments of language, under conditions which bring about the state of fulfilment that is here described. Kuntaka in speaking of the nature of *alankara* does not describe *alankara* connected with words, or *alankara* connected with meanings, but a new quality of feeling which both of them have brought about. The Vakroktijivitam instead of speaking of *Rasa* as a content of poetry or the achieved effects of poetry points back to the figurative, unifying by the spirit what the letter had divided in endless multiplicity. Poetry is not equated with a figure of speech, because what creates the unusual pleasure of poetry is a very particular newness of use. Once a figure is recognised, and exhausted by a description or analysis, the quality of feeling of something *made new* will no longer arise. The perpetual activity of aliveness in the language is the expression on the face of a speaker recorded in all the points of difference from other use of language.

The pleasure of *alankara* is brought about by the special difference, the individual expression of a situation seen by the imagination. Kuntaka is implying that just as the poet has to see this situation in order to be a poet, the critic has to see it in order to be a critic. This is where Kuntaka strikes any student of Richards as having reached a similar position by a similar mental process. Speaking of sincerity in Practical Criticism, Dr Richards writes, 'And it may be possible, by apprehending this sense more clearly, to see what general conditions will encourage sincerity and what steps may be suggested to promote this mysterious but necessary virtue in the critic.

'We may take self-completion as our starting point. The completed mind would be that perfect mind we envisaged above, in which no disorder, no mutual frustration of impulses remained.' 'The form is the cause of the pleasure felt by the lettered,' says Kuntaka, and again, 'The beauty of worldly action acquires a new propriety by those who perform it *only through* the study of good literature.'

The form as the source of pleasure, as the perception of a propriety, a sense of orderliness is like the self-completion that Dr Richards takes as his starting point. Where Dr Richards speaks with a deceptive neutrality of the reordering of the impulses so as to reduce their interferences with one another to a minimum, Kuntaka speaks of the consequence as well as the process, saying that because of the form, the *pleasure* is dominant in the process. Dr Richards uses Confucius in the Chung Yung to state what this tendency towards a more perfect order brings about. 'It enables us, without effort, to hit what is right, and without the exercise of thought to apprehend.' Kuntaka speaking in the orthodox way says that those who understand get through the study of literature a deep pleasure transcending the pleasure one gets from the acquisition of the four ends of life. Just as Kuntaka speaks of 'Those who know', Richards, following Confucius says, 'It is only the superior man who naturally and easily embodies the right way.' The difference between knowledge and the experience of the arts is a distinction which both Richards and Kuntaka use in a significant manner. In fact it is a triple distinction between the language of common use, the language of the different subjects of learning, and the language of poetry.

'It is said that literature produces the sense of the subject-matter and moves it.' The sense of the subject matter is the appropriate context of learning which is found within a poem, directing the choice of the appropriate meaning to be selected. This 'method of the Shastras', which Kuntaka says the civilised (meaning the man of taste in poetry) shun, forms an order within an order. When pleasure is dominant in the poetic process, the effort, the labour, the skill are mastered and altered. *Vakrokti* is a shaping activity bringing about delight by playing upon Forms—the figures, the meanings, the knowledge and in place of teasing out the organisations of the available interrelations between words and meanings which Richards following Coleridge calls interinanimation, Kuntaka speaks of an accomplishment of this activity by which it acquires an independence, a sense of grace without motion. 'The effect is attained with such perfect absorption that one is oblivious of the means and the intention, unlike the methods of the Shastras which the civilised shun.' The obliviousness of means and intention indicates the freedom of the Vakroktijivitam from overemphasis either on technique or

philosophy of life. The Vakroktijivitam is not a handbook of the techniques of poetry and the bearings of poetry on the growth of language are clear in the text. 'It is well-known that what is expressed is meaning and words are the means of expression yet in the procedure of literature both these have *a master meaning*.' We may, if we want to carry the statement nearer to our times, say that this master meaning is the poem as a whole, which does not say a given number of things, but is one complete build-up of affects.

An aspect of the Vakroktijivitam that brings it close to the work of Dr Richards and of William Empson, particularly in the Structure of Complex Words is its position on 'statement'. Poetry is a 'vakrokti'—a statement, but a statement with an inflection. It is not an ornament, not a feeling—but a statement which taking off from the statements of common life reaches to a different condition of existence. 'Words exist with the intention of making some particular communication but poetic expression is different.' The parallel with statement and pseudo-statement in Richards is obvious. But the poetic language tends to settle down either as a habit of poetic diction or a mystery of romantic atmosphere by separating the affects, the feeling and atmosphere of poetry from anything *said* in the poem and the result is a restricted, tame, pedantic criticism. William Empson in breaking up the affects of the power and feeling of words into the activity of a number of statements organised in the poem has made the understanding of poetry sharp and accurate. Poetry instead of working only with inbred poetic diction is really a key-language unifying different special languages. The structure of poetic meaning is built up of common elements and can always look out for the entirely new. This sally out into the world of common language, this alert eye and ear for the current word suddenly taken out of its habitual 'set' and set free to exhibit some of its unexpected applicability, this research of 'form' in the field of the commonly visible is one of the most vital gifts of poetry. The Vakroktijivitam instead of being an obscure learned text is the theory of statements in poetry suddenly made new and opening insights into the experience of poetry. 'Notwithstanding that there is only one word, many purposes or shades of meaning exist within it.' The intentional use of this co-existence or harmony within words makes for a great access of energy to poetry. Since

it is the fashion even among the learned (perhaps the exigencies of teaching may have something to do with it) to use certain key-words to describe authors, *vaicitrya*, *vicitti* has become attached to Kuntaka and every time one thinks of the strangeness or uniqueness one may tend to think of some special quality, instead of the poem as a whole being so particular that it is itself and different from other poems, however close they might get to it. Bad poems lead an amorphous common life, any one of them might serve the purposes of any other and the rest need not exist. The *vaicitrya* which Kuntaka describes is the sort of particularity which makes a poem *valid* even while it is quoting a number of other poems. 'By shaping the common speech of life into the figures, the poet produces a higher state of meaning.' Kuntaka's fidelity to an actually existing language rather than to a peculiar poetic dialect needs to be dwelt upon. *Vakrokti* seems to stand apart from *Riti* and in saying that *Vakrokti* is not one part of poetry but the nature of all poetry, it does seem to have set its face against the common language. But he says, 'By differing absolutely from the customary and habitual usage and the meaning of language it is not possible to say anything because without some contact with custom and usage the import becomes incommunicable.'

Kuntaka seems to be making use of concepts for the means of bringing about the change from common language very similar to the thought of Richards. 'And yet the ornament for both is the indirectness which is the *tone* expressing the attitude that derives from the poet's peculiar stance within the experience.' *Vakrokti* is a tone arising from an experience and a precise position within that experience, and the tone controls the words and their meanings, and their ordering into forms. Such a *tone* cannot be expressed by the language of the Shastras.

The Vakroktijivitam is in many ways like Seven Types of Ambiguity. Both the works imply a high degree of sophistication both in matters of language and literary theory. Both of them work to clear and refine existing excess of theorising by a direct attention to poetry. The analysis of poems in the English text forms the bulk of the book in contrast to the Vakroktijivitam, but we have to remember the differences brought about by a complete manuscript and immediate publication.

The two authors share an interest in clarity and obscurity. The exclusive kind of clarity which means one thing and only one

thing is foreign to the analysts of Vakrokti and ambiguity alike. Kuntaka writes, 'If there is further ornamentation in common speech already ornamented the understanding of their difference may become either clear or obscure.' The ambiguities of metaphoric language are part of the *Vakrokti* of poetry—when all the strands of thought and feeling are carried everywhere and meaningful everywhere, then what may initially have led to doubt become in the end clear.

Vakrokti is the kind of language which makes its own clarity and cannot be understood completely in terms of preconceived meanings. 'When clear everywhere there is truly creation.' 'Words only have meaning when they are together'—which naturally reminds of what Pope said about the authority of dictionaries—that he would not allow them to know the meanings of two words put together.

Vakrokti refers not to the sense of a poem as one component, the sense or the statement—but of the direction of the whole effect of sense, feeling, tone and attitude together, Kuntaka in fact refers to the implicitness of the meaning of literature and says that it is different from the usual word-meaning. Some change has been brought about. Vaicitrya which Vakrokti produces is a sense of newness as if language had become fresh, clean washed, pure in its colours. 'Where there is strangeness, there you get the life of the strange indirectness within which a certain literal exaggeration springs up.'

The full force and subtlety of theoretical criticism such as this needs to be put by the side of a poem such as this by Donne:

O more than Moone,
Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy spheare
Weep me not dead, in thine armes, but forbeare
To teach the sea, what it may doe too soone,
Let not the winde
Example find,
To do me more harm, than it purposeth,
Since thou and I sigh one another's breath
Whoe'er sighs most, is cruellest, and hasts the other's death.

This is a prayer for relief from the unintended cruelty of love. Tears and sighs at the one end and drowning, storms and waste of breath on the other end are the two extremes. The literal

exaggeration of 'weep me not dead' and the sea and wind 'learning' from the perverse kindness of a woman how to be unkind, the strange statement of 'Whoe'er sighs most is cruellest' are instances of the general applicability of a good theory of poetry.

Kuntaka refers to six kinds of indirectness, each producing its own kind of beauty. Empson advances his seven types of ambiguity, ranging from many points of resemblance in the I type to a full contrast or opposition in the VII, and the true state of affairs is properly described by Kuntaka when he says that of the indirectness of sentences there are 'a thousand forms which include all the classes of ornament'. Neither *Vakrokti* nor ambiguity is a means of dealing with odd kinds of poems, because the general broad contrast of modes of meaning is clear in Kuntaka. 'There is more in the verse because of the ambiguity—and less, without the ambiguity in the commentary, words used in the text are given greater definition in the commentary but that is not the end of it.'

In fact the unity of *Vakrokti* with a sound appreciation of the existing language is a part of the foundation of the Vakroktijivitam as literary criticism. *Vakrokti* is the growing tip of the language, but the life, the vitality, the form of the language impels the growing tip of the language forward. *Vakrokti* is a sign of that profound pleasure in linguistic energy freely expressing itself which is a mark of the health of the common language. The text speaks of the sensuous quality of poetry—that which is not too soft and not too hard is attractive to the man of taste and we can see the accuracy of literary perceptions in such a remark when we put it beside the comment of T. E. Hulme on the hard and clear in poetry and the applied criticism of Ezra Pound on the hard and soft in French Poetry. If there is any fear that the centrality of poetry may be lost in the subtlety of irony and ambiguity in the works of such nature, one may refer to the safeguards of fidelity to taste and accuracy in language in the works of Kuntaka and Empson alike.

Kuntaka refers to 'the middle way—in which there exist in completion two beauties in equal measure', and the fastidious, and says, 'By that which gives ripeness to the excellence of literal meaning, by the particular form of its propriety, the right content comes alive'. *Vakrokti* is the union of mobility and refinement with this sound base.

Empson can pay his decent homage to the power opposing 'ambiguity'. 'Evidently all the subsidiary meanings must be relevant, because everything (phrase, sentence or poem) meant to be considered as a unit must be unitary. One may say that if an ambiguity is to be unitary, there must be forces 'holding' its elements together.'

Vakrokti like the pseudo-statement is within the artistic unit of a phrase, sentence or poem and it is a principle of inner irony correcting the grossness of standard speech to the exacting needs of individual experience. The distance either of them can lean out depends upon how firmly the feet of the plain statement are planted upon the ground.

Both Vakrokti and ambiguity are possible and creative when the plain meaning has not, due to the assertiveness and overwhelming importance of one kind of scientific or factual discourse be-become rigid. There must be a constant and intelligent effort to keep the spirit of figurative speech in a sound state of health, for this makes the language fluid. 'In fluid language a great many very very precise meanings may be free to dispose themselves in a multiplicity of diverse ways'. This is not merely a general good, but a good in which the value of poetry is based. Dr Richards has a great deal in common with the reverence of the Vakroktijivitam for the spirit of poetic forms and poetry when he says, 'Poetry—the making art, the constituting energy—is a word of august rank, and of much studied resources. I need not do more here than remind you once more that Poetry as I am using it here, is words that are free to mean as they please (which need not be, "as you or I please").'

I hope we may share a little of this ancient and modern spirit.

A Postscript

I made an attempt in the paper I read to identify the specific points of modern interest in Sanskrit literary criticism, and for this purpose the Vakroktijivitam offers many starting points of discrimination. The intention of the Vakroktijivitam is twofold—(*i*) to unify, instead of dividing and subdividing the aspects which are necessarily present in variety in any rich body of poetry like Sanskrit; (*ii*) to discriminate between the final aesthetic state or result of art-experiences, and the accurate relevance of responses to a particular work of literature; to discriminate between literature

and experiences of life, physical, intellectual and spiritual which reach similar achieved state as literature, and to distinguish between the critical experience of poetry and the other arts, which constantly hover on the brink of poetry where there is a brightened and lovely state of culture making the different streams of art flow into life.

Vakrokti, starting from its position as but one of the *alankaras*, is not only treated here as the root of all the *alankaras*, but is explored as the nature and principle of poetry. The emphasis is not on type and exemplification but on the unique *vakratva* of the poem. Whatever the given or 'received' state of *alankara*, *riti*, *rasa*, *dhvani* at any moment of literary creation, the creativeness takes up the job from that point and carries it forward in a new, surprising direction. And the Vakroktijivitam in its emphasis on *Kavikarma* is not isolating technique for special emphasis, but the newness of the whole creative achievement, since the successes, particularly of technique, are standardised and subdued to the purposes of entertainment. Just as Shakespeare and Marlowe are 'ironical' in their use of the language and style of popular drama, just as T. S. Eliot is ironical towards the accepted modes of poetry, every poet must start off with *vakratva* towards the fluent and popular style of his period. *Vakratva* is a newness emanating from a critical sense of the immediately prior which is based on the comparison of the literature in occupation of popular taste with the classics.

'Vaicitrya', as a word, outside the precise application in the Vakroktijivitam, should be and is translated 'Strangeness', but for reasons peculiar to the context of comparison with English literary criticism, I should like to avoid it, because it makes a misleading suggestion. 'Strangeness' limits 'vaicitrya' to the Romantic English sense of strangeness from which the sense of 'vakratva' or 'vakrokti' as departing subtly, and with pleasure, from 'poetic diction' is very distinct. The other misleading direction in which 'vaicitrya' branches off is an emphasis on virtuosity of technique, the brilliance of 'learned' poetry to which a classical language like Sanskrit in its later phases is particularly prone. 'Vaicitrya' in the Vakroktijivitam is not let loose by itself, and should not be allowed to go its own way in interpretation. 'Vaicitrya' is an appercept controlled by 'Vakrokti'. If this 'vaicitrya' is so adventurous and has proceeded so far from the

base to which vakrokti is bound by implication, then the work has become centrifugal and *Vakrokti* has been replaced by 'Vaicitrya', novelty exploding without reference to any central principle. That is why perhaps the part of the Vakroktijivitam dealing with the *Vakrokti* of the entire composition or *vakrokti* of form, has considerable importance.

Kuntaka comes late enough in the history of Sanskrit Poetics to become a critical observer of poetry and a refiner of literary criticism, instead of an aesthetic theorist or system-builder. The comprehensiveness and power of clarifying an entire body of knowledge have their own attractions, but literary criticism has to mark the point of its break-off from aesthetic theory and draw up a general intelligible basis for its principles and practices. The Vakroktijivitam seems to be marking off the division between a general theory of aesthetics and literary criticism. This would be particularly true in contrast with of the theory of Rasa beginning in Bharata who was concerned with an art using music, dance, stage-properties *and* words.

The principle of *Dhvani* is worked out entirely in terms of poetry, but the distinction between the progression of internal resonances in *Dhvani* and the immediate relevance to the text in *Vakrokti* deserves to be examined by the practice of literary criticism. *Dhvani* exists for the poet and the *Sahrdaya*, and they hear it, but the growth of critical judgment cannot work in terms of music heard or unheard. On the other hand, *Vakrokti* can build upwards from the ground of the text, isolating the *Vakratva* wherever it occurs and then possessing the uniqueness of the entire work with complete lucidity.

Just as when we translate 'Vaicitrya' as strangeness, in translating *Dhvani* as suggestion, there is an inevitable limitation of the kind of poetry it can judge adequately. At the mention of a theory of poetry based on suggestion, Eliot's description of the poetry of Dryden comes immediately to mind. But perhaps there is more in *Dhvani* than suggestion; how much more, it would be interesting to have a competent estimate.

It seems evident that *dhvani* is a rare and valuable element in poetic meaning, and that the tools of critical analysis incapable of handling *dhvani* are too coarse to measure valuable distinctions. But it is more difficult to agree that all poetic meaning can be understood in terms of *dhvani*, it is even more difficult to imagine

the relation of poetic meaning and the meaning of words in life, according to this theory.

Vakrokti is posed against *svabhawokti*, the language of life in all its types and varieties, including the 'set' poetic language abstracted from previous poetic practice. Therefore the poetic activity of making new and unusual gives a new direction to the common language. The poet is not concerned with the satisfaction that is to be attained by 'svabhawokti'; his nature is to seek, perceive and realise 'vakrokti'.

A great deal of ancient poetic theory begins in metaphysical and philosophical speculations. The author of the 'Vakroktijivitam' stays clear of metaphysics to the great advantage of his literary criticism. In speaking of poetry, there are two divisions he opposes one, by rhetoric, the other, by implication. The first is the division between body and ornament, and may be aimed against the *alankarikas*. 'If the body be ornament, what then will you ornament?' Alankara, or the figures in poetry, are the body of poetry. What Kuntaka is implying, at the same time, is the indivisibility of form and content in poetry. 'Vakratva' is not applied technique, because there is nothing apart from it or prior to it to be treated by this technique 'Vakrokti' is the achieved unity of word and meaning, and of the present word and meaning with other existing and potential meanings, so that the sheer weight of the existing structure of experiences and language is a guarantee against lightness or frivolity of technique.

The second is the division between the body and the soul of poetry. Kuntaka avoids mention of the soul of poetry. *Rasa* has been obtrusively called the soul of poetry. There is the feeling that Dhvani in replacing *Rasa* succeeds to the status of the soul of poetry. The silence of the Vakroktijivitam on the soul reminds of two kinds of sectarianism. We have the critical sectarianism of Arnold speaking of poetry composed in the soul and poetry composed in the wit. And we have the metaphysical 'sectarianism' of those who believe in the soul and those who do not. Such sectarianism is not very far from the ancient Indian judgments on poetry and provides the *raison d'etre* for system-building.

At any rate, it is sound caution for a critic not to pass on from poetry to the soul of poetry.

There is one word in the 'Vakroktijivitam' that occurs very frequently and with great precision of meaning and value. It is bound up with the process of literary creativeness which Kuntaka analyses. In Chapter 1, verses 4 Kuntaka says **व्यवहार परिस्पन्द सौन्दर्यं** in verse 9 he uses the phrase **स्वस्पन्द सुन्दरः** and in verse 20, he refers to **सर्वसम्स्पत्परस्पन्दसंपाद्यं**. **स्पन्द** represents a living breathing image of animation and interinanimation, and probably it has a dual role describing both a natural activity and a literary operation: but the requirement of **स्पन्द** is exactly that sort of vitality which cannot be attained without the inwardness with language and form which genius alone possesses and learning cannot duplicate. The metaphysical elaboration of **स्पन्द** may provide the ground; but the literary application is the most fruitful not only in the 'Vakroktijivitam' but in other critical works from Kashmir.

EMOTIONAL EFFECT: KATHARSIS AND RASA

K. VISWANATHAM

Rasasparsāt ayopi swarṇaām vrajet—
Rasenaiva sarvam jīvati kāvyam—Locana
Tasmāt satām atra na dūṣitāni
matāni tāny eva tu śodhitāni—Abhinavagupta

1. Text

The two celebrated texts mentioning Katharsis and Rasa are the following:

(*a*) According to Aristotle Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; the language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

(*b*) Bharata's well-known sūtra is
Vibhāva anubhāva vyabhicāribhāva samyogāt rasaniṣpattiḥ

2. Tragic Pleasure

Katharsis is a Serbonian bog in which armies whole have sunk. About katharsis we are dazed by quotations quoted from quotations and commentaries commenting on commentaries. The net result is we are distracted from distraction by distraction. How is it pain in a tragedy does not pain us? Many explanations suggest that pain by a magic formula changes into pleasure.

Psychology, Philosophy, Aesthetics, Psycho-analysis, Classical scholarship, Literary interpretation have had a go at katharsis only to resile like splintered lances from an Achillean shield.

Some of the alamkarikas have wrestled with the problem of tragic pleasure in their discussion of karuna rasa (pathos) unavailingly. The authors of the *Nātyadarpana* have the rare courage to admit

sukha duḥkhātmako rasaḥ

Another alamkarika observes: sarveṣu raseṣu tulyasukhānubhavah na/ rajastamo amsamiśraṇāt tāratamyam anugantavyam. Still another states: rasāhi sukha duhkhāvastā rūpāh.

Abhinavagupta himself talking about the beatitude of all rasas remarks that Vira is katu (harsh). It is maintained by Viswanatha that tears in our eyes at the sight of pain constitute no proof of unhappiness: they well out of ārdratā and sentiment. According to him these vibhavas are alaukika. Jagannatha points out that the shedding of tears is not because of pain; the devotee also sheds tears at the description of a deity. The analogy is wrong and the explanation unconvincing.

Dr Johnson, as good a sahrdaya as any, could never put up with the end of *King Lear*. And while witnessing *Othello* one in the audience, we are told, shouted at him: You great black fool! don't you see it is all right?

3. Katharsis

Katharsis is said to be a medical metaphor meaning Purgation (or Purification). The tragic pleasure is traced to Purification by Lessing, to sublimation by moderns, to homeopathic, Like cures Like, to abreaction by psycho-analysis, to calm of mind by Milton, to sadism by Rousseau, to masochism by others, to a higher harmony by Hegel, to an insight into evil by Schopenhauer, to curiosity by Lucas, to vital causality by Abercrombie, to a balance of the impulse to approach and the impulse to retreat by Richards, to the goat-man in us by Nietzche, to faith in man by Dobree, to an affirmation of life and individuality by others, to the integrative value of all emotions, even to mere emotional stirring (it is better to be grieved than bored, says one), to the activity of imagination, to being fictitious like the picture of a hungry lion, to humiliation suffered by the hero, to the hero being made a scapegoat, etc. But in the brilliant epigram of Lucas, the theatre is not a hospital.

Tragic delight does not bamboozle us if we note the following:

1. To the Greeks tragedy meant a play with a happy or unhappy ending.
2. Catastrophe meant not a sudden disaster but a gradual resolution corresponding to the Sanskrit nirvahana. The catastrophe is a nuptial, says Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

3. Aristotle speaks of tragic delight.
4. There are Greek tragedies which not only do not have an unhappy ending but have a close of resounding triumph; Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus;* Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Tauris.*
5. Aristotle speaks of a hero passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness or from happiness to misfortune.
6. The expression 'tragic flaw' is an absurd translation of hamartia. Hamartia etymologically means failure to hit the mark and hence means an error, by no means a moral taint.
7. Aristotle's preference for the tragic endings of Euripides has became the world's preference. But it is not a law.
8. Peripety means not reversal of fortune but reversal of direction or intention.
9. Tragic plot, tragic hero, tragic delight and, perhaps, tragic ending together make a tragedy; not the tragic ending alone and by itself.
10. Scholars revise their opinion of Chorus in Greek plays. The chorus was supposed to be the comment of elderly wisdom on the aberrations of the hero. Now it is realized as the voice of senile mediocrity unable to hep-hep-hurrah the hero. The hero is not the tainted wether of the flock but the high Pamir of individuality and strength of will.

Aristotle himself may have to be revised and supplemented. If tragedy is delight, how can catastrophe, the tragic flaw, etc., produce that delight? If tragedy is unhappiness, who will go to the theatre ? If tragedy were morally tainted, it would not have been held out as an example: the Greeks, as much as the Hindus, ethicized their aesthetics.

4. Rasa

Similarly Rasa has invited unending exegesis and commentary. The semantics of Rasa is an amazing voyage from the kitchen to Kailasa, from gastronomy to God, from the sense to the spirit, from bhoga to brahmānanda. The two key words—samyogāt and nispattih- have given rise to Bhattalollata's Utpattivāda, Sankuka's Anumitivāda, Bhattanayaka's Bhuktivāda. Honestly

it is none of our business to deal with these views because their works are not extant and our knowledge is based on the summary of their views by another. Abhinava's Vyaktivāda is the coping stone in this edifice of rasa.

Rasa is translated as sentiment by Haas, passion by Dr Jha, impression by Faddegon, savour by Ballantyne and Thomas, stimmung by Jacobi, De and Nicoll, aesthetic experience by Gnoli, poetic emotion by Brough, taste, flavour, relish, motif, interest, etc.

Ballantyne renders Vibhāvas, Anubhāvas and Vyabhicārabhāvas as Excitant, Ensuant, Accessory; Jacobi as Factor, Effect, Concurrent; Gnoli as Determinants, Consequents, Transitory.

Vibhāvas can be equated with Eliot's objective correlative; vibhāvas and anubhāvas stand in the relationship of stimulus and response.

All are not capable of this response unless they are sahṛdayas. The uddīpana and alambana vibhāvas activate the sleeping dragons of vāsanas (from root vas = to stay). Personal inclinations of readers of poetry can be traced to these vasanas which are dormant in all and can be cultivated too. Perhaps this formulation approximates to Miss Maud Bodkin's Archetypal Patterns; 'engramas' is the word used by Richards. Vyāsabhāsya identifies vāsanas with samskāras. But vāsana generally refers to the tendencies of past lives most of which lie dormant in the mind; only those appear which can find scope in this life. Samskāras are the subconscious states which are being constantly generated by experience; vāsanas are innate samskāras, not acquired in this life.

Keats wrote with unerring insight that poetry should appear almost like remembrance. Wordsworth expresses this doctrine of reminiscence:

> Oft over my brain does that strong fancy roll
> Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
> Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past;
> We lived ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.

Rossetti expresses the same idea:

> O born with me somewhere that men forget
> And though in years of sight and sound unmet
> Known for my soul's birth partner well enough.

C. Day Lewis in his Poetic Image (p. 86) quotes approvingly Rainer Maria Rilke: For it is the memories themselves that matter. The mind of man, observes Prof. Raleigh, is peopled like some silent city with a sleeping company of reminiscences, associations, impressions, attitudes, emotions to be awakened into fierce activity at the touch of words (On Style). Kalidasa's Ramyāni vīkshya madhurāmsa nisamya sabdān . . . is a fine poetic summing up of this doctrine. Herbert Read quotes in the *Meaning of Art* a relevant passage from Roger Fry the famous art critic (p. 49): Or it may be that art really calls up as it were the residual traces left on the spirit by the different emotions of life without however recalling the actual experiences so that we get an echo of the emotions without the limitation and particular direction which it had in experience.

The classic description of the sahṛidaya is that of Abhinava: yeṣām kāvyānusilana abhyāsavasat viśadībhūte manōmukure varṇanīyatanmayibhavanayogyatā te sahṛdayasamvādabhājah sahṛdayāh. Rajasekhara very happily bifurcates pratibhā into (*a*) karayitri, (*b*) bhavayitri. Pratibha is

> 'The shaping spirit of imagination' and
> 'Reason in her most exalted mood'.

This pratibha is also termed Sakti by Rudrata or Prakhya by Abhinava. Bhatta Tota defines it: prajnā navanavollekhaśālini pratibhā mata. Abhinava describes it as apūrvavastunirmāna ksamāprajnā (Lochana). It is the vision and faculty divine, the light that was never on land or sea. The poet is almost divine in the act of creation: apāre kāvyasamsāre kavireka prajāpatih.

The poet through his pratibha composes a kavya. His poetic language suggests the emotions to the reader or sāmājika; it kindles the sthāyins in the reader whose heart is full of subconscious impressions of various emotional experiences. These emotions of the reader are alchemized into poetic passion through sādhāranikarana or universalization. Terms like depersonalization or universalization create a wrong impression that the emotions are devitalized into something abstract and colourless. It is not so. Sādhāranikarana merely postulates that emotions are purged of the conative drives of life and become aesthetic or relishable as rasa. Anuvyavasāya is at work. Wordsworth's emotion recollected in tranquillity is similarly misunderstood and contrasted,

out of ignorance, with his spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, though the poet points out that in the recollected emotion there is no abatement of power.

Rasa thus manifested is different from the vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhicarins just as a beverage is different from its constituents. This rasa is alaūkika and cannot be brought under any one of the categories mentioned by philosophers. The gastronomic associations have to be set aside as rasa is a cognitive pleasure: manasā āsvādayanti.

It is variously described as camatkara nirvesa (awakening of poetic charm), rasana (relish), āsvada (taste), bhoga (fruition), samāpatti (accomplishment), laya (lysis), viśrānti (repose), nirvrtti (solution). Poetry is

> music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all and you are the music
> While the music lasts.

Camatkara means aesthetic experience, the fruition of rasa. This word, writes Gnoli colours the whole of Indian aesthetics and religious speculation from the Yogavasishta to the Agnipurāna, from Abhinava to Jagannatha. Etymologically camat is exclamation arising out of wonder and kṛ (causing), though it is traditionally connected with bhuj (enjoy). The pleasure given by a spectacle increases when there are large numbers of spectators: collective āsvadana is richer than individual āsvadana. Religious ceremonies confirm this; we eat more at a feast.

In this account four things are important:

1. That emotions are suggested by poetic language,
2. that a sahṛdaya has vasanas in him,
3. that sādhāranikarana makes the emotions aesthetic,
4. that rasa is alaukika.

If one is told that one is promoted to a higher cadre, one is filled with happiness but happiness is not the meaning of 'promoted to a higher cadre'; hence emotions are only suggested. If the word love is whispered into the ear of a teen-age girl, she may ask for Parry's sweets but if the letter 'l' alone is mentioned to a grown-up girl, she spells out o-v-e- instinctively; hence the need for sahṛdayatva. Unless the emotions are a song seraphically

free from taint of personality, they are not aesthetically relishable. That rasa is alaukika disposes of the vexed Bermoothes of Art and Life, Art and Knowledge, Art and Morality.

As Rene Wellek points out in *The Times Literary Supplement* Symposium (Art is illusion, fiction, the word changed into language, paint or sound. It seems an oddity of our time that this simple insight into the aesthetic fact is construed as a denial of the relevance, the humanity and significance of art. The recognition of the difference between life and art, of the ontological gap between a product of the mind, a linguistic structure and the events in real life which it reflects does not and cannot mean that the work of art is a mere empty play of forms, cut off from reality. The relation of art to reality is not as simple as older naturalistic theories of copying or imitation or Marxist 'mirroring' assume. Realism is not the only method of art. It excludes three-quarters of the world's literature. It minimizes the role of imagination, personality, making. A work of art is not a social or historical document, not rhetorical exhortation, not religious revelation, not philosophical speculation—even though it can for certain purposes be viewed as such.)

Regarding knowledge it is being recognized by the scientists themselves that the poet's intuitions are no less valid than their analyses and that the poet alone is a sufficiently sensitive instrument to register these intuitions:

> To launch ideal fleets,
> Lost regions in the stars to claim.

The electro-magnetic waves which express a sunset to the physicist, writes Alexis Carrel, are no more objective than the brilliant colours perceived by the painter.

Art is not morality but saves morality from itself:

(*i*) by annihilating our separative Ego,
(*ii*) by freeing us from a Hindenburg line of beliefs,
(*iii*) by giving us a peculiar insight into reality as artistic enjoyment eliminates emotional-conative activity.

(Art enriches our sensibility)—pratibhāvijṛmbhaṇa, as Abhinava rightly and richly states. (This relish is sometimes impeded by seven obstacles: 1 lack of lokadharmi and natyadharmi: realism

and idealism, 2 personal involvement or indifference, 3 hrdayagranthi—personal grief, 4 inadequacy of means, 5 lack of clearness, 6 maximising the trivial, 7 doubt in the poet himself.

Whether the rasas are eight or nine shall not detain us. There is nothing very sacrosanct about 8 or 9. Even in the past the number was extended by mādhurya, vātsalya, etc. In modern times patriotism, humanitarianism must be received, writes Ramaswamy Sastri (Indian Aesthetics, p. 111), into the magic circle of rasa. In short Indian aesthetics was a growing art and should not refuse to grow hereafter.

The psychological scaffolding of the rasa theory is found fault with in the light of modern writers. I am not a student of psychology and hence not competent to make any statement. But there is acute difference of opinion. For instance, Prof. Rakesa Gupta remarks that the distinction between the sthayins and the vyabhicarins is meaningless, whereas Pravas Jivan Chowdary says it is very fruitful and is to be found even in Aristotle (*Studies in Comparative Aesthetics*). A hierarchy of values is not graphed by the theorist in Samskrit, though the poeticians gave importance to Śṛngāra, the most ductile and universal of the passions and vīra the most energising.

The Hindu genius for synthesis grouped all the rasas under four: Karuna, Śṛngāra, Adbhuta, Śānta. Still further the poeticians regarded 4 rasas as primary and the rest as derivative and linked these with certain emotional states:

Śṛngāra—	Hāsya—	Vikāsa
Vīra—	Adbhuta—	Vistara
Bībhatsa—	Bhayānaka—	Kṣobha
Raudra—	Karuna—	Viksepa

5. Viswanatha

After this brief survey of rasa we shall tackle the tragic pleasure from the Indian point of view, though technically there is no tragedy in Sanskrit except Bhasa's *Ūrubhanga*. In section 3 of this paper it was pointed out that to the Greeks at least tragedy never meant a play with an unhappy ending *only*. Now I shall try to prove that aesthetically tragedy has no 'unhappy' ending at all; materially it may have.

The finest explanation of tragic delight is in Viswanatha's statement in the discussion of karuna rasa: tebhyaśca surate dantaghātādibhya iva sukhameva jāyate.

What gives us pain in life should give us pain in poetry and drama too. Pain is pain and does not vanish but is supplanted by a sense of thrill or pleasure, just as in love sport though the lady is subjected to undue violence by the lover she derives pleasure only. Statements of like import are found in *Pratāparudrīyam* (sambhogasamaye strīṇām adharadaṃśanādau kṛtrimaduḥkhānubhava sītkāravad atrāpy upapattiḥ) and Abhinavagupta (tathā by ekaghanaśokasaṃviccarvaṇe'pi loke strīlokasya hṛdayaviśrāntir antarāyaśūnyaviśrāntiśarīratvāt).

This idea is liberally expressed by poets. Shakespeare's (or Cleopatra's).

> The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch
> That hurts and is desired

reads almost like a translation of the passages quoted above. In *The Tempest* occur:

> There be some sports are painful and their labour
> Delight in them sets off.

Kalidasa talking about Janaka's city writes:

> prītirodha masahiṣṇa sāpurī
> striva kānta paribhoga māyatam.

The lover's pinch hurts but is desired. Similarly tragedy hurts but is desired. Pity and fear are purged or eliminated by a feeling of admiration for these tragic heroes who hold even life at a pin's fee, if their magnificent obsession is thwarted. Bacon's essay on *Death* and Hazlitt's *On the Fear of Death* are more convincing explanations of tragic delight than tons of pedantry. Tragedy = Arete is the formula of tragedy. That tragedy = unhappy ending is contradicted by the utterances of the tragic heroes or heroines themselves:

Hamlet: Absent thee from felicity awhile
Antigone: Doing this it is good to die
Macbeth: Yet I will try the last

Charudatta: mrtyuh putrajanma samo bhavet
Jimutavahana: tṛptim na pasyāmi ca te mahātman
Cleopatra: The stroke of death is as lover's pinch
That hurts and is desired.
Gandhi: If blood be shed, let it be our blood
Rama: sneham dayāmca saukhyamca yadiva Jānakīmapi
Karna: bhikṣate vajrine dadyāmapi jīvitamātmanah
Desdemona: Nobody, I myself; farewell, commend me to my lord.
Antony: I will be a bridegroom in my death.

These utterances of heroes in fiction or life, in tragedy or epic or romance, belong to the same heroic ideal; they stem from different linguistic areas no doubt. When some ideal is at stake, Luke's iron crown is a laurel wreath and Damien's bed of steel a spread of asphodel. Hemlock is honey and crucifixion crowning. The pangs are forgotten in the birth and the lover's pinches in the body's rapture.

If Katharsis, according to Greek scholars, means elimination, then what is more sensible than to say that Pity and Fear are eliminated by admiration for the hero's undeviating and unflinching self-will? This explanation does not prop itself on moral absolutes or metaphysical postulates or philosophical assertions.

It is relevant to note in this context:

1. that Aristotle was answering Plato's charges:
   (*i*) art is far removed from reality,
   (*ii*) poetry feeds and waters the passions that ought to be weeded out
2. that Purgation means elimination
3. that pity and fear are eliminated by tragic pleasure

The charge of 'far removed from reality' eliminated by the fact that art (tragedy) is an imitation of an action, loses its force. In the words of Sidney the poet never lieth because he never affirmeth; in art knowledge and pleasure are indistinguishable. Keats' assertion that he was not convinced of the truth of anything unless the holiness of heart's affections told him so approximates to Abhinava's statement: ekaviṣayatvāt; ānanda is knowledge and poetic truth is ānanda. Secondly instead of feeding the wrong passions tragedy eliminates them in favour of energy.

6. Value of Sanskrit Poetics

I shall round off this paper with the remarks of two western scholars. Faddegon writes: For the main idea of this theory is so important that it is worth getting into the occidental theory of dramaturgy. As a study in aesthetics Raniero Gnoli states: Their thought, although at times ingenuous and uncertain reaches with Abhinavagupta conclusions which are still valid today and even relatively novel to Western thought.

So great and perpetually modern is the speculative thought of India, writes Joad, that the latest novelties of the 20th century turn up casually as it were and as matters taken for granted. Prof. Edgerton exhorts all interested in literary aesthetics to study dhvani carefully and Prof. Brough points out that Sanskrit poetics is at least as well worth reading as Aristotle's Poetics or Horace's Ars Poetica and in many ways much more sensitive in its approach to poetry than either of these works. Still no outstanding modern critic deigns to take notice of it. Caudwell refers to dhvani in his *Illusion and Reality* and Myers in his *The Near and the Far* refers to Rasa; Susan Langer devotes a paragraph to this in her *Feeling and Form.*

It is, I believe, the duty of every Indian student of literary theory to cultivate as much awareness of Sanskrit Poetics as at least of Western critical theories.

ARISTOTLE AND BHARATA: WESTERN AND EASTERN DRAMATIC MODES

V. Y. KANTAK

SOMEHOW, what Aristotle has to say about the nature of poetry in general seems more profound, more universally valid, than what he has to say about drama and Tragedy as a specific *genre* of poetry. While his insights into poetry and art appear free and uninhibited, those concerning drama seem somewhat narrowed by too close an application to Greek practice. One might, of course, put this down simply to the fact that drama, and particularly Tragedy, happened to be one of their most conspicuous artistic achievements. But the fact remains. Take for instance his insight into the sources of art; in those famous words you sense at once the great initiator of psychology and all the positivist sciences. 'Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. . . . Imitation is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for harmony and rhythm'.

Now that is a statement about art in general and not only about the nature of drama. These two impulses—to imitate and to seek harmony—are at the basis of drama at the one end and music at the other. Both these operate together in music as in drama. It is not as though the dramatic art sprang from the one and music from the other—as Francis Fergusson seems to interpret it in his well-known book *The Idea of Theatre* (page 251). What is implied in Aristotle's statement is that a certain kind of imitation or 'histrionic' sensibility lies at the heart of the activity called art and that such a sensibility works in complete unison with the instinct for harmony, that inner need to see disparate elements as unity. Imitation is used here more in a metaphorical sense to describe the activity of the imagination, the kind of 'imaging' that is involved in all art —the force of the analogical activity, the seeing of one thing in terms of another, which is at the root of simile and metaphor, or, to use the currently more fashionable word 'imagery'. No one perhaps can explain satisfactorily the secret of metaphor; its mystery is so like that of life itself. The nearest we can ever

get to it is when we see it as life's effort to extend itself through art by means of a kind of feigning or playing. Such a 'playing' we observe also in the play of kittens or in the primitive man's hunting dance or war-dance. The actions of hunting or of defiance in this mimic form become more rhythmic and harmonious than those of real fighting or hunting. So the two instincts work together. In this basic sense, too, we are all actors 'imitating' ourselves or others, feeling our way histrionically through the tangle of personal relationships; it is the kind of 'imaging' which helps us to gain direct perception of a man's real motives discounting his rationalisations.

It is a misfortune of criticism and a reflection on the inadequacy of our language that the same word 'imitation' has to be used to describe this generic or primary sense of imaging in art and the more literal sense of a realistic 'mimicking' of action upon the stage. I have a feeling that even the insights of the great Aristotle are not quite free from the confusion that has resulted from this inadequacy. Or, if one so chooses, one may lay the blame squarely on his interpreters. The difficulty arises when we ask: what is the distinctive feature of drama that sets it off from the other arts? In other words, what is the irreducible idea of drama? Since imitation in the metaphorical sense is common to all arts we are likely to assume that imitation in the more literal sense of a realistic mimicking is the differentia of drama—a mimicking that has a proper regard, and often a sneaking regard, for those norms of time and place and of psychological plausibility which we assume to be true of our every-day existences. This is not, of course, always a matter of a conscious adoption of dogma. But some such subtle bias, some such covert limitation, seems to have worked secretly and conditioned the Aristotelean view and the critical tradition he inspired. That is also what makes Aristotle so seminal to the Western dramatic mode in practice as in precept.

Consequently, the Aristotelean view of drama does not seem to be wide enough to include the possibility of dramatic modes like those that have developed independently in the East—the Indian, the Chinese and the Japanese. Even in the Western drama there has been a constant straining at the Aristotelean leash and constant though somewhat tentative raids upon alien modes of drama. The Greek drama itself, whether Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedy or Aristophanic comedy, was far from realistic in

technique. The lyrical and the ritual elements had dominant sway; character interest in the modern sense was only nugatory; and the whole form described a curve predetermined by the Greek *ethos*. In that respect the Greek drama had vital similarities with the Eastern theatre. Nevertheless it did lay down, as it were, the pattern of the Western dramatic mode. Psychological realism and realism of situation was already making itself felt in Euripides and the future flowering of the drama of individual character was already reflected in his work.

The theatre of the middle ages did indeed develop, for a time, a native European tradition which seems to have possessed strong affinity with the Eastern modes particularly in its naively symbolical manner of handling character and situation. The great Elizabethan achievement absorbed this mode of drama as well as the earlier and created a magnificent pattern whose strength ultimately lay in an intensely vivid imaging of the deeps of personality. Of course, in the inclusive ambit of Shakespeare's vast work one can perceive amazing kinship of spirit between the last Romances and Classical Sanskrit drama, between *The Winter's Tale* and *Shakuntalam*, for example. But, then, Shakespeare's is a case apart, as always. For the rest, the entire course of British and, to a large extent, European drama since the Renaissance, has retained the original impetus from the Greek and vigorously extended the scope of its 'mimetic' function. If Renaissance humanism merely strengthened the trend and gave it momentum, with the coming of a particularly blank kind of realism in the modern theatre the vogue seems to have worked itself to the point of exhaustion. And now there has been evident a need to achieve an entirely new beginning with much peeping over the fence into Eastern practice, as Western experiments like those of Yeats or those of *the Theatre of the Absurd* seem to show.

I have said that the Eastern modes are beginning to have an influence. Indeed, the Western critics have looked upon this with some concern and voiced their uneasiness at the new trend. The Eastern 'spell' might well be dangerous; it is so antithetical to the genius of the West, its *mores* and its culture. Francis Fergusson, for instance, finds it disquieting that contemporary theories of art should omit or reject the Aristotelean notion of imitation of action as the basis of all drama. You sense this feeling of alarm even when Ivor Winters, himself a poet and a

critic of poetry, asserts the position of the true-blue realist with immense vigour and sophistication—more vigour than sophistication. He finds fault with poets like T. S. Eliot for indulging in what he calls 'the fallacy of the imitative or expressive form'.

In the same way, in a slightly different context, Wyndham Lewis in his notable book *Time and the Western Man* sounds a warning against a loss of the Western man's sense of time and those certainties which have always lain at the basis of Western life. His is really a plea for a firm adherence to Aristotelean canons both in the sphere of art and in the sphere of conduct. But, perhaps, the most effective statement of this kind of East-West confrontation in recent years has been that of W. B. Yeats. Yeats's is, of course, the voice of a 'renegade', one to whom the Eastern habits of thought and feeling have become as much a part of his being as the Western. In his poem 'The Statues' Yeats speaks of the essential Western gift for numbers, measurement, calculation, which was symbolised by Greek sculpture. Pythagorus gave numbers and Phidias with his skilled craftsmen sculpted 'the plummet-measured face'. That is the gift which has been the basis of the West's vast civilisation and power, what really overcame the East by putting down 'those vague Asiatic immensities'. The poem's final word is that, for the Irish and for Yeats, however, the way to the plummet-measured face lies through those very Asiatic vague immensities so confidently contemned by the Western man:

> We Irish, born into that ancient sect
> But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
> And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
> Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
> The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

And so far as drama and art were concerned Yeats firmly moved away from his Western mentors, Pythagorus, Phidias, Aristotle, gave up their certitudes in favour of the mystique of the Japanese Noh.

There is, of course, never any ambiguity or doubt about the distinct character and individuality of the Eastern dramatic tradition. Even a cursory comparison between Western drama, on the one hand, and the Classical Sanskrit or the Japanese Noh, on the other, would reveal the great gulf that separates the two

traditions. The same difference is naturally reflected in the theoretical formulations based on these diverse practices as is obvious if we set the *Poetics* of Aristotle beside the *Natyashastra* of the 4th century Bharata or the *Kadensho* of the 14th century Zeami, the foremost exponent of Noh. It is tempting to see this broad and pervasive distinction in terms of a neat opposition of basic tenets. In the way of this, unfortunately, the texts themselves present a problem. While Aristotle's is a clear enunciation meant for the study or the lecture-room, Bharata's is a kind of compendium or hand-book for theatre folk, dancers, musicians and the practitioners of the theatre arts. And above all, it is a 'Shastra' to boot, with all the 'aura' that must surround '*the* book' consecrated to a certain mystery. Its tone is intimate, that of a Guru speaking to novices and apprentices of the art rather than to theoreticians. Altogether, one might say, the *Bharatanatyashastra* is too naive sort of a book for a serious treatise on dramaturgy. It has a folk-lore air about it. It seems to have emerged from folk-tradition and remained close to it, and, in fact, might have been cast in that form of deliberate purpose.

The result is that if it contains the most sophisticated analysis of dance technique, gesture and human states, it also offers sound advice as to what ought and ought not to be done in all sorts of contingencies, some of which are hardly theatrical occasions at all, strictly speaking. Often the series of do's and dont's is enlivened by sorties into folk-wisdom with a sly nudging at the sides. And it pronounces dire, divinely ordained, reprisals and punishments on those who swerve ever so little from the prescribed ritual. The general level of punishments is nothing short of sending the producer to hell perpetual for omitting to perform some minutae of the routine. It has no qualms about thus confusing life with art nor about finally trailing off into a jungle of the most fruitless kind of classifications. All the same, and despite these seeming puerilities, there is nothing tentative about the *Natyashasrta*. Its categories are firm, because firmly based on abundant practice and precedent. One feels that it is the record of the stylistic perfection reached after centuries of testing and modification in an unbroken tradition of drama, dance and music.

This peculiarly integral relation between music, dance and drama is in itself one of the major points of difference from the Aristotelean conception. It is one of its identifying aspects.

The Indian drama is not poetical in the Greek sense; the element of the lyrical or of dance does not subserve the drama. The entire drama is poetically conceived in quite a different way and dance and music are essential ingredients of its texture and technique. This synthetic connection is the first premise from which Eastern drama starts. As someone said, the staging of drama in Asia is primarily the problem of enacting poetry. It follows a poetic logic of its own rather than that of an action-packed story and has therefore little use for the unities of time and action. These would be powerful helps if the purpose were to emphasize the physical features of the story in its enactment. In the Sanskrit theatre poetry retards the normal speed of action of deliberate purpose and induces a 'static' mood. This is actually drama's strength rather than a weakness because the surplus time thus released is required to enlarge and draw out a movement, a gesture, and so to bring the dominant sentiment to a ripe fullness. "In this on-stage leisure the artistic purport of a scene blooms". Thus poetry helps the actor to enrich his action and to entice from the spectator a series of emotions which extend and change the quality of what straight enactment of the scene itself would produce.

When translated in terms of the Western technique of presentation this purpose is lost and the heavily drenched scene of a *Shakuntalam*—that of Shakuntala's departure in the fourth Act, for instance—simply becomes ridiculous in its poetic prolixity. But, for the Indian concept, the essence of the drama lies in this function of poetry and not in the mere enactment of a story. This is 'action' and not merely recitative or lyrical verbalisation. "One should take good care of words", says Bharata, "for these are known as the body of the dramatic art (natya). The gestures, the costumes, the make-up and the temperamental (satvic) acting merely clarify the meaning of words". And again, "the Shastras are made up of words and rest on words; hence there is nothing beyond words, and words are at the source of everything", says the *Natyashastra* wisely. It might have added 'everything including mischief!' And if this claim to 'action' on the part of Sanskrit drama should seem paradoxical to the Westerner, one might remind him that whereas those who witnessed a Greek play were addressed as an audience the witnesses to a Sanskrit play were addressed as spectators (प्रेक्षकाः) It is primarily some-

thing seen, a spectacle and an action unrolled to the view of the beholders.

This, then, constitutes action on the stage—action impregnated with poetry—not merely the motives and activities of men and the events that result from them. And poetry itself is impregnated with Rasa (रस) the fine flavour of things and life's situations which a sensitive man's apprehension will grasp. In Vishwanatha's words: वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यम् ॥ So when we carry over to Sanskrit drama our Western idiom of criticism and speak, a-la-Dryden, shall we say, of 'a just and lively image of human nature' that drama presents, we should think of this kind of quintessential action that has been extracted from the chaos of raw life. Indeed, Asiatic drama has thus subtilised action with a poetic apprehension, you might almost say, to the point of spiriting it away! In the Japanese Noh, for instance, action is so purged of its physical accoutrements that it assumes the nature of a stance—action happening out of time, in the stillness of the soul. What the Noh presents is the flower, the *Yugen*, the final bloom of the tree of action—not the bole, the roots and the worms. Though the Noh might derive this idea specifically from Zen Buddhism, the Noh idea of action and the Indian have, at bottom, an obvious blood relationship. The distinctnesses are merely family differences.

When, therefore, we come to the celebrated Aristotelean dicta: Drama is an imitation and what it imitates is men in action: and set them by the side of corresponding pronouncements in Bharata and in Zeami, we notice a superficial resemblance to begin with but the hidden differences are deeper and more profound. It is indeed a deceptive kind of resemblance. Both Aristotle and Bharata use roughly the same term 'imitation' which could, in both cases, be variously rendered as 'mimicry', 'imaging', 'representation' and so on. In Bharata, however, there is always some qualification, some tell-tale detail which puts us wise of the immense submerged difference. Take, for instance, the most prominent of these *Natyashastra* statements: "Drama is a representation of the state of the three worlds"—the phrase used is भावानुकीर्तन. The *Natyashastra* further states that it is not exclusively a representation of man's activities but of those of gods and demons or daityas as well:

देवानांचासुराणांच राज्ञामय कुटुंबिनाम्
कृतानुकरण लोके नाट्यमेतद् भविष्यति ॥

That is to say, 'natya' is not a reflection or a camera-like imitation of man's virgin world. The world it reflects the state of has already been impressed with the free play of man's imagination and peopled with its products. It is nothing short of the state of the three worlds that drama imitates. The term 'the state of' (अवस्था) is itself intriguing. "The drama", says Bharata, "becomes instructive to all through actions and states that it images and through sentiments arising out of them". Always, the emphasis is on 'states', 'sentiments'—the essence, the being. In this way, "when human nature and human life with its joys and sorrows is depicted by means of representation through gestures and the like (i.e. words, costumes, make-up and temperament or Sattva) it is called drama". Even in Dhananjaya's *Dasharupa*—which is a sort of condensed adaptation of the *Natyashastra* lacking in the pith and humour of the original—the expression used is: अवस्था नुकरणम् नाट्यम् ॥ (i.e., an imitation of अवस्था or states is drama).

I am only drawing attention to the fact that 'imitation' is not here the simulation of the three-dimensional reality, the so-called world of man's activity in its raw condition, but rather a scrutiny, a refined sense of its 'state', in other words, an apprehension of its Rasa or its true being. I have always thought that there is much wisdom in the story of the first dramatic performance which precedes the discussion in the *Natyashastra*. It was perhaps meant to be a parable warning us of the mischief of taking 'imitation' too literally.

For the first performance given at Indra's banner festival, Bharata says innocently, "I devised an imitation of the situation in which the daityas were defeated by the gods". The performance, however, became a fiasco. The gods were greatly pleased and began to shower gifts on the performers. The daityas, it seems, at first behaved themselves handsomely and swallowed the affront of the defeat part; but when it came to killings and mangling of bodies, got up in rage shouting, 'Come forward, we shall not tolerate this performance', and instigated the 'Vighnas' to break up the performance. The situation was saved only by the lavish use of

the famous 'Jarjara', Indra's flag-staff, to quell the riot. When the daityas were hauled up before Brahma to explain their conduct they roundly charged Brahma with partiality: "The knowledge of the dramatic art which you have introduced for the first time at the desire of the gods puts us in an unfavourable light and this is done by you for the sake of the gods; this ought not to have been done by you who are the progenitor (प्रजापति) of the world, from whom came alike gods as well as diatyas". At the first performance 'imitation' caused trouble. Both the gods and the demons had made the mistake of taking it too literally, too realistically. Bharata couldn't have done better to guard against a possible misunderstanding of 'imitation' than by prefacing his analysis of drama with this excellent fable.

Now whether it is only my own fancy or Bharata really meant it that way, there is little doubt that the अनुकरण, अनुकीर्तन or अनुकृति of Sanskrit dramaturgy is basically a different concept from the Aristotelean 'imitation'. When this concept occurs in Sanskrit treatises in the fine arts like the *Silpasāstra*, the term imitation takes a peculiar shape. It has to do with the twin canons of Indian art—Sadrishya and Pramana (सादृश्य and प्रमाण). In art, we will be told, all forms are ideally determined with regard to Sadrishya and Pramana—likeness and ideal proportion. Sadrishya (synvisibility)[1] usually translated as likeness or imitation, is more accurately described as correspondence of formal and representational elements in art. A closer translation would be 'analogy', not imitation or image. In rhetorics, Sadrishya is illustrated by the stock example of 'The young man is a lion'. It is similitude but rather such as is implied by the term simile rather than *simulacrum*. The likeness of anything to its artistic representation cannot be the likeness of nature but analogical or exemplary or both. Here again, what is imitated is the subtle essence of a thing as we apprehend it with a kind of integrated total apprehension and not merely by the senses. Sadrishya is a quality which is self-contained within the work of art itself—a correspondence of mental and sensational factors in the work. This becomes further clear from the fact that Sadrishya is always coupled with Pramana—natural shape and ideal proportion are the twin criteria. And Pramana is properly conceived design.

[1] The translation is Anand Coomaraswamy's.

Imitation of the Indian conception has to be conditioned by properly conceived design, which means the design woven with the help of highly conventionalised forms and symbols. So when a portrait is to be painted no actual sitting or posing for portraiture is necessary. We hear of instances, as in the *Vikrama Charita*, where a certain artist is supposed to have painted the portrait of a Queen after having seen her just once. He must have determined if she was a Padmini or a Shankhini and so on, according to the formal categories, and having decided for instance that the subject was पद्मिनीलक्षणयुकम् proceeded to make the likeness. So, too, in Indian dance and drama everything was determined by highly conventionalised forms of representation. So was it also in the case of the Japanese Noh. The Noh is actually the most formal and the least naturalistic of all kinds of drama in the world.

Indeed, care is taken to see that the dance or the drama does not degenerate into realistic imitation. And as to drama, it is clearly laid down that 'realism' is only a kind of concession made to popular or uninformed taste. There are two practices or styles of representation, says the *Natyashastra*, the two धर्मी, the one which is realistic or popular लोकधर्मी and the other, the true one, the conventional or the properly theatrical नाट्यधर्मी. Similarly, Zeami would declare that the arts of music, dance as well as drama are modes of imitation; but then, it would become clear from the way he describes the process that what he means by the term is something entirely different from what is implied in the Aristotelean tradition. "In imitation", says Zeami, "there should be a tinge of the 'unlike'; for if imitation be pressed too far it impinges on reality and ceases to give a likeness"—which would only sound like a hash of incomprehensible paradoxes to the critical ear conditioned to the Western aesthetics of imitation.

Once this broad basic distinction is grasped, differences in the consequential detail would become apparent. For instance, the gulf that divides the two conceptions is brought into sharp relief in the classification of the hero. The Aristotelean notion of men better or worse than ourselves as fit subjects of Tragedy and Comedy respectively is still an 'imitative' concept. Even the doctrine of the tragic flaw rests on a similar foundation. To all

this, the *Natyashastra* opposes a lofty scheme of classification which emerges from a radically different set of basic assumptions. Heroes can be either धीरोदात्त, धीरललित, धीरशान्त, or धीरोद्धत. This implies a concept of man already moved out as it were of his native matrix of animality. An initial comment is assumed. Already life has been probed and searched and man is viewed in terms of higher categories, measured by a more sophisticated standard. The main interest, the object of contemplation, resides not so much in ourselves as we are, as in ourselves as we may become by our potentialities to fulfil ourselves. The Aristotelean theory prescribes that the tragic hero be better than ourselves but does not legislate on the nature of the difference. If we take the entire tradition of Western drama as one, this distinction is seen to be not necessarily a matter of moral or spiritual excellence. We can only ascribe to the renaissance hero a certain kind of *Virtu* in the Italian sense as the irreducible requirement. And this is, in the main, a form of virility or capacity for physical and mental striving whether for good or for evil—it is so like neutral energy. The formula provides simply the basis for the creation of value rather than value achieved. In the Indian conception the hero has to be 'heroic' in the normative sense. He is धीर self-contained, first of all, before being further specified as ललित (light-hearted or vivacious) or उदात्त (magnanimous) or शान्त (poised or calm) or उद्धत (vehement). These are not human types in the ordinary sense but rather types of perfection possible for men who may have different elements in their composition as Nature has mixed them. Moreover, the main object of Sanskrit drama is not to distinguish characters but to create an artistic whole, a design woven out of various sentiments each contributing to the synthesis of a music-like composition. Character in the Western sense is strictly incidental to it.

Similarly, Aristotle must think of the plot of a Tragedy as an action of a certain magnitude, with a beginning, middle and an end. In Tragedy, of course, the action moves from relative stability to a critical point to be followed by the catastrophe and the resolution. What Aristotle says about Peripeteia and anagnorisis as aspects of structure shows how closely the plot reflects the Greek *ethos*. It is like a diagrammatic representation of the Greek comment on life. Tragedy naturally takes the shape of that

comment. Even so, in Aristotelean dramaturgy 'plot' purports to describe merely the external form (being a sort of geometric emblem of the play) rather than prescribe a certain kind of content. His 'beginning, middle and end' leaves scope for innumerable possibilities of different kinds of actions, men, motives and events as the subsequent history of Western drama has shown.

Whereas Bharata's concept of plot prescribes not only the form but the content as well. There are firstly the five formal elements the अर्थप्रकृतयः—the Bija, the germ; the Bindu, the expansion; the Pataka, the episode; the Prakari, the episodal incident; the Karya, the denouement. And then there are the five avasthas or stages of the action 'which are set afoot by those that strive after a result':—the beginning or Arambha, the effort or Prayatna, the prospect of success or Prapti Sambhava, the certainty of success or Niyata-phala-Prapti and the achievement itself or Phala-Prapti, or Phalayoga. What is notable is that the plot has to be cast in the form of a striving that ends in a fruitful result —beginning, effort, hope, certainty and success. This rules out Western tragedy, or rather, takes us beyond the point where drama is designed as a kind of therapy of the soul and presents a poise already achieved Sanskrit drama has splendid, serious, and tragical scenes but no tragedy. Of suffering and of pathos there is a great deal. In the delineation of graciously endured grief there is hardly an equal to it even in Greek drama. But there is no Tragedy in the strict sense. The entire basis of the Indian concept is alien to Tragedy. In fact, as someone said, a tragic close to a Sanskrit play would be as curious as if the Christian Passion play were to be performed as far as the Good Friday scene omitting the Resurrection!

The defining quality of a Sanskrit play can only be adequately stated as a spiritual equilibrium. The play's movement is circular rather than progressive. It doesn't even, strictly speaking, move from evil to good or from insufficiency to sufficiency. The plays end neither in death as in Tragedy nor in marriage as in Comedy but in re-union. We think of the close of *Shakuntalam*, *Svappnavasavadutta*, *Mricchakatika*, *Uttararamacarita* and so on. It is because Shakespeare's last plays have something of this same poise that they seem so close to Sanskrit drama. But it is hardly possible here to consider the distinction this *genre* has reached

in its own sphere in the shape of concrete dramatic creations. My intention was to briefly indicate that distinction on the conceptual level—very briefly, indeed, without trying to define the highly controversial notion of Rasa and the intricate machinery of its production which Indian dramaturgy developed side by side with the practice of the dramatic poets.

For the most part, Western critics have remained so convinced of the primacy and universal validity of the Aristotelean imitative concept of drama that the Eastern *generes* have been treated, though indulgently, as some sort of childish freaks or aberrations from the Aristotelean norm. Many like Bereidale Keith who have written splendidly on Sanskrit drama have appraised the plays according to the Aristotelean aesthetic and commiserated the Indians for the lack of true characterisation and true tragedy. It is only recently with the sharp reaction in favour of poetic drama that poets have begun to question whether the Aristotelean formula is useful or valid or, at any rate, the only possible one.

T. S. Eliot, to take one example, has had such doubts. He was inclined to take the dramatic more as the finding of the 'objective equivalents' for feeling than as the imitation of an action. And yet it is clear that, despite his defection, his true affiliation is to the Aristotelean rather than to Eastern drama. The peculiar problem with which he was pre-occupied, that of the difficulty of finding the appropriate verse idiom for drama simply does not exist for the Eastern drama. In his essays like *The Three Voices of Poetry* and *Poetry and Drama*, Eliot's concern is to probe the difference between speech as used in life without an awareness of it and prose and verse used artistically for a deliberate dramatic purpose. How to preserve the feel of natural speech while giving it the highly expressive power of dramatic poetry—this question is pertinent only to drama based on the imitative concept. According to that dogma a character's speech has to be life-like in that it is like his peculiar idiom expressive of his individuality while, at the same time, subserving the over-all poetic design. The way Eliot solves the problem for his own purposes cannot be adjudged wholly successful. Whether successful or not, it is the kind of problem Eliot's dramaturgy busies itself with because he is true to the tradition of Western drama.

The more interesting case is that of Yeats who from the beginning had his difficulties with the Western tradition. He ultimately

found what he needed in Japanese Noh and successfully produced a play like *Purgatory* which he himself called 'a modern mystery play'. And Yeats's Indian experience is a literary event of considerable significance. The Irishman in him seems to have discovered one more 'passage to India' via primitive Ireland. Not only did he find Aristotle inadequate but he found Christianity inadequate. If he turned to the Noh rather than to Sanskrit drama it was because he was seeking a drama that was totally antithetical to the Western . . . but that will need a separate consideration in itself.

ARISTOTLE, BHARATA, AND T. S. ELIOT ON DRAMATURGY

P. LAL

THIS is a paper on the dangers of critical slogans and catch-phrases. I hope you will forgive me if I open with a few important reservations and confessions of inadequacy. First of all, my knowledge of Greek amounts to nothing, and the references in the course of this analysis to Greek literary terms have been introduced after getting whatever clarification I could from classical scholars abroad and some Jesuit Fathers in the college in Calcutta where I lecture (I might add that the Fathers were embarrassed by the rustiness of their Greek and considered their suggestions to be of a tentative and exploratory nature only). Not much material is available on Bharata's *Nāṭya-Śāstra* and, apart from an excellent (or so I am told) Italian translation, there is only one English version, a rather free rendering which often departs widely from the original. A great deal of T. S. Eliot's writing on the drama is available in *Selected Essays* and *On Poetry and Poets*, but much remains buried in magazine articles and cautious interviews. Often Eliot prefers to play Ol' Possum; in his careful replies to an interview he gave to Nevill Coghill at All Souls' College in 1935, he said that, in writing *Sweeney Agonistes*, he had meant something very different from what Rupert Doone's production had made of it. Yet he accepted Mr Doone's interpretation. 'But can the play mean something you didn't intend it to mean, you didn't *know* it meant?' asked Mr Coghill. 'Obviously it does', was Eliot's reply. 'But if the two meanings are contradictory', continued the bewildered interviewer, 'is not one right, and the other wrong? Must not the author be right?' Eliot's reply was: 'Not necessarily do you think? Why is either wrong?'

Consider also the personalities involved—here are three magisterial critics and architects of literary principles from three different traditions with three distinct world-views—Greek, Indian, and Christian; three classicists concerned deeply with coherent theories of drama that rise directly from stage-production, not wishful thinking; three literary specialists with very

individual and fastidious styles of intellectual persuasion. One, a medical writer, a skilled botanist, a political analyst and theorist, and an ethical idealist, the moral logician *par excellence;* another whose comprehensive view of life is indicated in his implication that the dramatist should, before he begins writing, have at least a theoretical knowledge of most, if not all, of the *chatu-ṣaṣṭhi kalā*, the sixty-four arts which constituted, in ancient India, the acquired culture of the true gentleman; and the third, the prophet of the Waste Land who was in a lifetime bank clerk, benevolent publisher, blurb-writer, air raid warden, high priest of twentieth century poetic drama, definer of the idea of culture and the role of a Christian society, and the epitome of the sixty year old smiling public man.

I give this long preamble of their complex excellence in order to disguise my own inability to do even the smallest justice, in a half-hour paper, to their writings on dramaturgy; and to find an excuse for limiting myself to a fumbling enquiry into certain implications of three key concepts used by them. I am not even sure that the enquiry will develop into a full investigation, but I hope it will prove stimulating and provide something in the nature of the 'enlightened mystification' which Eliot says he was left in after four years of study of Patanjali's *Yoga-sūtras*.

In the case of Aristotle, I shall act as a puzzled but curious enquirer who wishes to find out what Aristotle meant by Katharsis, and in particular why he singled out pity and fear for the purpose of purging in tragedy. In the case of Bharata, I shall consider an approach to the concept of rasa as it applies to the performance—not the reading—of Sanskrit Drama, keeping in mind that rasa (with its many nuances of dhvani and vakrokti) is a central principle of all Indian literary esthetics. And in the case of T. S. Eliot, I shall briefly consider the relevance of the much-used (and abused) phrase, 'the objective correlative', to the composition and production of plays, keeping in mind that the objective correlative applies to all artistic composition, not just drama.

Aristotle's Katharsis

The meaning of Katharsis in Aristotle's theory of the experiences of Greek tragedy is one of the great literary teasers. The scholar and critic Peter Green, author of *Essays in Antiquity*, says that he is hampered by 'a constitutional inability' to take it

seriously. 'It strikes me as the kind of risible rubbish that any serious minded biologist might be expected to produce when let loose on literary criticism. This frightful urge for definitions and abstraction which bedevils so much of Greek thought! All the pre-Socratics, incapable of finding the answer to one thing without thinking that meant they found the answer to everything'.

A good starting-point is the closing paragraph of Plato's *Symposium*. 'There came in a number of revellers', says Plato, 'and took their places on the vacant couches, and everything became full of confusion; and no order being observed, every one was obliged to drink a great quantity of wine'. Eryximachus and Phaedrus went home to bed. Aristodemus went to sleep on his couch, and slept long and soundly. He woke at cock-crow and found Agathon the tragic dramatist, Aristophanes the comic dramatist, and Socrates, still arguing, though drowsy. 'They were drinking', says Plato, 'from a large cup which they passed round from left to right, and Socrates was holding forth to the others'. Aristodemus heard only the conclusion of Socrates' argument, which is reported by Plato in a few sentences in *The Symposium's* concluding paragraph. 'The chief thing that Aristodemus remembered', reports Plato, 'was Socrates compelling the other two to acknowledge that the genius of comedy was the same with that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy was an artist in comedy also'.

I quote from the Benjamin Jowett translation; but it is instructive to mention two others. Hamilton translates it in the following way: 'The main point was that Socrates was compelling them to admit that the man who knew how to write a comedy could also write a tragedy, and that a skilful tragic writer was capable of being also a comic writer'. And Shelley, early in the nineteenth century, translated it as: 'It terminated by Socrates forcing them to confess that the same person is able to compose both tragedy and comedy, and that the foundations of the tragic and comic arts were essentially the same'.

A literal translation from the Greek would be something like this: 'The essence was that Socrates was compelling them to agree that it belonged to the same man to have a craftsman's knowledge (*techné*) of comedy and tragedy, and the tragedy-maker (*poion*), by craft, was also the comedy-maker'. Four important points

arise: (1) The word 'also' is added by Vindor to the original text; what Socrates, as reported by Plato, said was simply: 'The tragedy-maker, by craft, was the comedy-maker'; (2) Nowhere is there the least suggestion of a daemón (as Benjamin Jowett's translation, 'the *genius* of tragedy was the same with that of comedy', suggests); (3) The Greek word for tragedian is a compound 'tragedy-maker', and it is useful to know that the Greeks had no idea of the difference between 'creator' and 'maker'; (4) Socrates uses the word 'comedy' first in the first half of his argument, but in the second he uses 'tragedy-maker' first, when instituting the equivalence between tragedy and comedy.

All this is a little baffling, and the critic who attempts to divine the pattern of Socrates' argument beats, in the luminous void of the great thinker's abstractions, his wings in vain. How is the 'genius' of tragedy the same as the 'genius' of comedy? Why should the tragic writer be ideally fitted to be also a comic writer? Was Socrates merely flattering and encouraging Aristophanes to try his hand at tragedy? Was he praising Agathon? Did he believe in tragedy, the purger of pity and fear, as being a social corrective as useful as comedy, which reformed with the help of satire and farce? Or—sobering thought—had he had a drop too much?

C. M. Bowra says, 'Something mysterious lies behind this' remark of Socrates, and continues, 'I suspect that Plato and/or Socrates meant that the creative faculty which produces tragedy is ultimately the same as that which produces comedy'. But 'ultimately' is, like Arnold's 'Poetry is, *at bottom*, a criticism of life', a long way off; ultimately all art springs from the same human faculty of creativity. Professor F. L. Lucas, in a letter, deals with this at some length. 'In practice', he says, 'Greek tragic dramatists do not seem to have written comedies (apart from the farcical satyric dramas that normally followed tragic trilogies); nor comic dramatists to have written tragedies. Tragedy was supposed to be idealistic, comedy crudely realistic or caricature. The first depicted men as finer than they are; the second depicted them as grosser. But I suppose Socrates might have argued that the *essential* art of the dramatist is to *compose plots* and *create characters*, whether he produces tragedies or comedies. (Compare Shakespeare). This somewhat ignores the fact that we are not

all as good at being humorous as at being serious, or vice versa. For example, Milton's humour is apt to be ghastly; and Dryden had not much comic gift'. Professor H. D. F. Kitto takes an entirely different view. According to him, 'Plato is arguing (as often) that Poetry (Art) is not a science, like Philosophy, but a mere knack or a gift, or inspiration. If the dramatic poet really *knew* what he was doing—if he were master of a conscious craft or science (*technê*), like a carpenter for instance—he would be able to write tragedy or comedy indifferently: he would have the know-how. It is akin to the argument in his *Ion*'.

The problem, however, remains; and it is good that it does, for tragedy is linked to an area of human experience that is both ineffable and incommunicable. I would like, though, to connect Socrates' intriguing statements with the theory of katharsis that Aristotle propounded much later in the *Poetics*. From the age of 17 to 37, Aristotle was a student (later a teacher) at Plato's Academy at Athens, and must have imbibed (as Humphry House points out) many strongly-held Platonic beliefs. 'Their thought about all subjects was directed towards practical ends, and their speculation was never far removed from the business of teaching'.

When Aristotle uses the word 'katharsis', he is employing, according to F. L. Lucas, 'a definitely medical metaphor—a metaphor of an aperient'. Aristotle's step-father was domestic doctor to King Amyntas II of Macedonia, and when Aristotle uses a Greek word that simultaneously means 'menstruation' and 'purging', he is obviously thinking of the human body needing to rid itself of unwholesome elements in order to emerge healthy once again. 'The theatre is not a hospital', says Professor Lucas. True, but Aristotle apparently conceived of it in healing, restoring, and purifying terms; and Greek tragedy, like shock therapy, may be considered as a corrective of the emotional life of the Athenians. The ideal, for Aristotle, was the good citizen, the whole citizen; and the Greek historical situation then, with the Persian tiger outside the gates of Athens, produced an art form that properly purged pity, the sentimental impulse to approach, and fear, the sentimental impulse to retreat, because both these emotions are highly undesirable in a martial society. It needs to be remembered that Athens was a standing army; that attendance at the theatre was compulsory; that the good Athenian was the good citizen soldier.

Notice how carefully Aristotle selects only pity and fear to be purged. He leaves out emotions which we would consider equally, if not more, worthy of katharsis—hate, cruelty, and vindictiveness. The seven deadly sins of Christian doctrine—Sloth, Gluttony, Anger, Envy, Lust, Covetousness, and Pride—are conspicuously absent (but perhaps we have no right to 'jump' history). It seems to me that Aristotle, with his usual practical acumen, did not feel that these so-called sins needed purging, for the good citizen who is also the good defender of Greek values against the Persian *barbaros* (the word is indicative of Greek prejudice) could in fact remain a good soldier even if he possessed hate, avarice, cruelty, and pride. Pity and fear, to the Greeks were the really contemptible weaknesses—pity for, and fear of, the hostile forces that threatened Greek culture, the self-styled, proud possessor of a total myth. (It is instructive to read what Arnold Toynbee has to say about the *Persian* viewpoint).

That perhaps, is why the nature of tragedy is the same as the nature of comedy. As products of a society informed by a total myth, they affect the people with moral usefulness. Comedy corrects society by satire, and tragedy corrects society by shock therapy.

I put forward this interpretation of katharsis very tentatively, knowing that it has not been suggested yet by any critic, in the hope that it will suggest a parallel with the literary esthetic of ancient Indian society, which also possessed a total myth, and which also evolved an art form that revolved around a subtle concept—that of rasa. This is a good springboard for more discussion. In the same letter to which I have already referred, Professor F. L. Lucas admits that 'Aristotle's old theory of katharsis is apt to strike a modern reader as very odd and far-fetched', and Professor Kitto says, 'about the katharsis-passage, I feel as you do; the traditional explanations do not make sense'.

Bharata's Rasa

In the first chapter of the *Nāṭya-Śāstra*, Bharata says:

> 'Ākhyāpito viditvā' ham nātyavedam pitāmahāt putrān adhyapayam yogyān prayogam casya tattratah'.

('I learnt the Veda of Dramaturgy from Brahman, I passed on its theory and its practice to my sons and disciples'.)

Drama, in other words, is the fifth Veda, a secular art form with divine antecedents.

And the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭya-Śāstra* says, 'Na hi rasādṛte kas cid arthah pravartate'. 'Nothing exists or excels without rasa'. Then, a little rhetorically, he asks the two important questions:

Rasa iti kaḥ padanthah? atra ucyate;
āsvādyatvāt. Kathan āsvādyo rasaḥ? atra ucyate.
('What is rasa? I will explain.
How is it enjoyed? I will explain that too'.)

Instead of explaining, he gives the famous analogy whose full meaning continues to escape even such a percipient Sanskrit literary critic as Ānandavardhana. 'Yathā hi nānāvyañjana-saṃskṛtam annam bhuñjānā rasān āsvādayanti sumanasaḥ, puruṣāḥ . . .' and so on. A fairly close translation is: 'In the same way as, when finishing a meal that has many courses and flavours, diners are left with the single delightful experience of a good dinner, an audience is left with the single delight of having witnessed experiences conveyed by the presentation of the stable emotions in various dramatic movements and gestures (nānābhāva-abhinaya)'.

This passage, which is supposed to contain the essence of Bharata's concept of rasa, has an important syntactical arrangement in the Sanskrit—an arrangement that is of relevance to any discussion of the meaning of rasa. Bharata uses the word rasa only once, and that in the first half of the statement, and then only in connection with the experience of the dinner with many courses. He does not use it when he speaks of the dramatic experience, though the implication is that just as the different dishes lead up to the single satisfaction, and just as the satisfaction of having had a good dinner cannot be explained by the dishes that help to produce it, so the interplay of words and movements in a play leads to the total esthetic experience, but the total esthetic experience cannot be explained in terms of what apparently helped to produce it. Berriedale Keith says beautifully that rasa 'is one, it is a single, ineffable, transcendental joy'; it cannot be subdivided, he adds, according to its own nature, but only 'according to the sentiments which evoke it'. But subdividing it also

contaminates it. The Aitareya Upanishad's aphorism, 'Raso vai sah', is a pointer; 'The well-carved is the well-loved' or, putting it differently, 'Perfection alone is delectable'.

Drama is an eight-course meal, each of the courses being a stable emotion, a sthāyi-bhāva. There seems little doubt that this is what Bharata meant. It is more a feast than a meal, for the eight emotions chosen run the gamut of human experience:

1. Rati or Sringāra (desire, affection, erotic longing).
2. Hasa or hasya (laughter, comic or farcial joy, but not laughter involving cynicism or scorn).
3. Krodha or raudra (anger arising from the feeling of ill-treatment).
4. Śoka or karunā (sadness as a result of separation from a loved one, but not the sadness or weltschmerz or spiritual angst).
5. Utsāha or vīra (pride in one's own powers, leading to the display of energetic enterprise, bravery, charity, or forgiveness).
6. Bhaya or bhayānaka (fear or reproach or attack).
7. Jugupsa or bhībhatsa (aversion or loathing).
8. Vismaya or adbhuta (wonder in the sense of an encounter with anything that stimulates child-like surprise: 'O brave new world, that hath such people in it!').

One school of Sanskrit critics adds a ninth sthāyi-bhāva, that of śānta or serenity, and by doing so misunderstands, I think, the true meaning of Bharata's rasa. While each of these eight emotions might be described loosely as having their own rasas, rasa itself is unique, total, and single. It is indescribable and supernatural. Bharata suggests that the ninth rasa, that of śānta, is in fact the only real rasa, the others being steps to it, or ingredients in it. The total is more than the sum of its parts, and different from them. The experience of ideal drama is, in some mysterious way, a fleeting glimpse of the divine; hence perhaps the conception of drama as a fifth Veda.

The problems that this concept of rasa raises are so complex that I shall merely hint at them here. At what point does the ineffability of rasa begin? How does a purely secular pursuit

such as the performance of a play become a brief experience of the divine ground of life? Since each play has its dominant sthāyi-bhāva—in the case of Kālidāsa's *Shakuntala* it is Śrngāra or erotic affection, and in the case of *The Later Story of Rama* by Bhavabhūti it is *Karunā* or the sadness of separated love—how does the dramatist go about achieving a proportional arrangement of the other seven bhāvas within the play's framework? What happens to the drama if so much attention has to be paid to the creation and arrangement of moods? In some ways rasa is to drama what rāga is to music—both aiming at evoking the spiritual source of artistic expressions—but how does a play, with flesh-and-blood material to work with instead of the convenient abstractions of music, succeed in transcending its obvious limitations? Rasa's the thing, suggests Bharata, and the play a vehicle or a medium to achieve it. Did the audiences of classical India think of appreciating drama on these rather subtle metaphysical terms; and if they did (which I doubt), is it ever possible for an age lost in desperate searches for private myths, an age such as ours, to get any real insight into the workings of artistic endeavour in an age which believed itself possessed by the vigour and richness of a total myth?

Eliot's objective correlative

Eliot's death in January makes it imperative that any comment on his critical work should begin by paying tribute to a fine intelligence that refused to be corrupted by authority and fame. Eliot's later critical charity is almost as well-known by now as his early pontifical tone. His revision of his earlier—and rather harsh—judgements on Milton, Yeats, and Shelley, and his refusal to permit the reprinting of his 'primer of modern heresy', *After Strange Gods*, in which he was less than kind to Ezra Pound, D. H. Lawrence and other contemporaries, have disappointed his young admirers but pleased the discerning. In a memorable remark in her book *The Business of Criticism*, Miss Helen Gardner says that the true critic wields the torch, not the sceptre.

It is in the light of a torch turned upon its holder that I wish to take up this discussion of 'the objective correlative'. In 1955 Eliot's American publishers asked him to make a selection of his essays for publication in a paperback edition in the Harvest Books series. Eliot selected nine essays which appeared under the title

Essays in Elizabethan Drama. In a Preface written specially for that edition Eliot said that he was surprised when he re-read his own essays with the intention of making a selection. 'Two of the essays were concerned with Shakespeare: *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca* and *Hamlet and His Problems.* A third was entitled *Four Elizabethan Dramatists* with the somewhat pretentious subtitle 'Preface to an Unwritten Book'. All three of these essays on re-examination embarrassed me by their callowness, and by a facility of unqualified assertion which verges, here and there, on impudence. The *Hamlet*, of course, has been kept afloat all these years by the success of the phrase 'objective correlative'—a phrase which, I am now told, is not even my own but the first used by Washington Alston . . . I have rejected these three essays in compiling this book'.

Eliot's reluctance to reprint the essay on *Hamlet*, a play which he describes as 'the "Mona Lisa" of literature', has to be seen in the context of what that essay says about the play's failure to embody in it the 'objective correlative'.

'So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece', Eliot declares, 'the play is most certainly an artistic failure. . . . The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. . . . The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet.* Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear . . . Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. . . . Nothing that Shakespeare can do with the plot can express Hamlet for him'.

Certain implications arise immediately from a study of this passage. First, Eliot conceived of the objective correlative in relation to a play, in this case *Hamlet.* In fact, the only other works mentioned in his essay with regard to the objective correlative are plays too (*Romeo and Juliet, Measure for Measure, Othello, Coriolanus, Antony and Cleopatra, Macbeth, The Revenge of Bussy d' Ambois, The Spanish Tragedy,* and *Arden of Feversham*). Does

he wish it to be considered chiefly as a theory of dramaturgy? He does not explain; instead of explaining, he prefers to describe the phrase as an 'embarrassing' one, and does not apparently wish the essay on *Hamlet* to be taken too seriously.

The second problem is born out of a sudden switch in ideas in the passage I have quoted at some length. You will have noticed that Eliot speaks of the necessity of a 'complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely', he adds, 'what is deficient in *Hamlet*'. But here it is *Hamlet* the play he is referring to. It is perfectly reasonable to argue that Shakespeare failed to find an organic pattern for his play. It is a loose, long play, with much of what seems to be padding and five-finger-exercising; and even if the length and looseness are explained (as some modern critics do) by arguing that *Hamlet* is a revenge play in which the revenger's waiting is of the essence, since he plays a cat-and-mouse game with his victim, it is not quite easily possible to explain the relevance of the prolix passages or, say, the bawdy songs. All this is concerned with the play's nature and structure. But Eliot's next sentence shows that he is not considering the play as a play; he is considering *Hamlet* the play as dependent for its success solely on Hamlet the man. 'Hamlet (the man),' he says, using 'the man' within parentheses, as if aware of the confusion that is bound to arise, but not removing the confusion in any way, 'is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible. . . .' A good question to ask is: Why should *Hamlet* the play be a failure if Hamlet the man does not know his own mind clearly enough to understand his 'disgust' for his mother? Hamlet the man may not be able to 'objectify his feeling', as Eliot says; but why should this prevent Shakespeare from experimenting with the pattern of a revenge play? Is it not conceivable that Shakespeare did in fact find a perfect objective correlative for an indecisive and even ambivalent revenge-tragedy villain-hero who is swamped by his inability to know his real feelings? In any case, the switch from *Hamlet* the play to Hamlet the man is uncalled-for, and the pontifical assertion that *Hamlet* the play 'so far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, is most certainly an artistic failure', ignores the fact that it seems to have done rather well on the stage for more than 350 years. It is like dismissing *The Family Reunion* outright as a bad play because Harry, Lord Monchensey, is unable to objectify, in terms of a proper correlative, his confused feelings of guilt

about the murder (or was it suicide?—we are never told) of his wife.

I suspect that self-criticism similar to this was what Eliot had in mind when he said that he found his essay marked by 'callowness, and by a facility of unqualified assertion,' 'bordering on impudence'. He had, in fact, committed the cardinal sin of the dramatic critic—he had divorced the play from the stage, and studied it in pure, fatal, literary isolation. This is something Aristotle and Bharata never did. What succeeds on the stage--as *Hamlet* does—can afford to be without an objective correlative.

THE 'DHVANI' SCHOOL OF CRITICISM IN SANSKRIT

K. KRISHNAMOORTHY

'THERE may be rules and rules in handbooks of Sanskrit rhetoric. But is there at all any criticism in the sense we understand it today? How can any dogmatic canon, prescribed in bygone days, be of service to us in understanding even the basic principles of criticism? The school of 'dhvani' is in no way free from the characteristic Indian trait of pigeon-holing analysis. Has it not been observed by no less an authority than Dr S. K. De, the doyen of studies in Sanskrit poetics, that the study of *Alaṁkāra-śastra* is like reading the index of a book and not the book itself?'

These were some of the questions hurled at me by a friend and colleague of mine in the English Department on being told that I intended reading a paper at this Seminar. I shall endeavour, therefore, to give here a picture of the vital contribution of 'Dhvani' theorists to the theory and practice of literary criticism, indicating, in passing, its relevance to literary studies even today.

I

According to the 'Dhvani' school, intelligent criticism is the privilege of a gifted few. Neither success in journalistic writing nor scholarship in linguistics will make one a literary critic. The difference between the ideal critic and the ideal poet is only one of degree and not of kind. Creative genius, many-sided experience and practical mastery of the art of poetry—all combine in making for a poet as well as a critic. The ideal critic is a *sahṛdaya* or one with the temperament of a poet. The poet creates and the critic recognises poetry because he recreates it in himself, being of a kindred heart. The poet and the critic are not two different units; they are two faces of one living principle like the mythical bird Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa on the Mysore flag. This is the basic finding of the Dhvani theorists headed by Ānandavardhana (9th century) and Abhinavagupta, his brilliant expounder.

Any approach to literature is conditioned thus by the unique nature of experience called poetry. We usually say that it is the experience of the poet alone; but the Dhvani theorist will add that

it will not be poetry unless and until it is re-lived or re-felt by at least one critic. And theoretically, the possibility is admitted of the poet himself being the sole critic of his creation. But what deserves to be noted here is the fact that creation of poetry is regarded as one function, and its critical evaluation another. Though the poet and the critic are alike in temperament, they are unlike in function. There is an element of spontaneous utterance in the poet corresponding to spontaneous enjoyment in the critic, provided that the poem is perfect. But it is an ideal but rarely realised. Perfect readers and perfect poems are both non-existent abstractions. In the whole world of poets, says Ānandavardhana, the designation of 'great' might apply to two or three at the most. The two explicitly mentioned by him are only Vālmīki and Vyāsa. Their 'greatness' is due as much to the vast range of their works, their epic design and sublime thought, as to the essential quality associated with poetry, a quality that runs through them as a whole though all but absent in particular parts.

Hence it is a credo of the Dhvani theorist that a seminal principle of criticism has to be inductively derived in view of the best examples of poetry, accepted as such by the considered opinion of *sahṛdayas* and not by normatively prescribing certain categorical standards from above. The principle must at the same time be so universal as to apply with equal force to the greatest epic as well as the shortest lyric; the principle must admit also of such infinite details that it will enable one to evaluate the exact individuality of any given instance of poetry, and to distinguish it by comparison and contrast; the principle must be so scientific and precise that it will win the approval of specialists in Logic and Semantics and establish the claims of poetry for a place no less significant than that of science, religion and philosophy, among the valued achievements of humanity. More than all, the principle should illumine in a new light, without supplanting them, all the formal categories of poetics like Figures of Speech and Qualities of Style, perfected by a host of thinkers. Such were the considerations, I feel, that led to the formulation of the theory of 'Dhvani' by Ānandavardhana.

II

The theory is so complex and manifold in its implications that the task of stating its essentials in summary fashion is well

nigh baffling. There has been a lot of writing on the subject latterly by Sanskrit thesis writers, generally unaware of modern criticism, wherein the essence is lost like a needle in a haystack. Almost the only book which I have found exceptionally thoughtful on the subject is the recent work entitled 'Towards a Theory of Imagination' by Prof. Sen Gupta of Calcutta, wherein the Dhvani theory finds a place in the history of aesthetic ideas. I shall content myself, therefore, with a broad indication of some salient aspects of *Dhvani*, generally left unnoticed.

'Dhvani' is the name given to the essence of poetry primarily in its synthetic aspect. It is first and foremost a complex whole, which also admits of intellectual analysis to cover every essential aspect of poetic experience. In this sense, the ability to be receptive to a poem taken as a whole is synonymous with the ability to explain the various ingredients that fuse to make the whole. Theoretical and practical literary criticism thus become the two sides of the same shield in this Dhvani theory. Every particular poem presented to a critic will be rightly appreciated by him only when he feels the 'Dhvani' as a total experience and is able to analyse it as a particular and concrete manifestation thereof.

For purposes of intellectual analysis, we are forced to distinguish between the 'form' and 'content' of poetry. We talk of the qualities that inhere in form or content. We say that form is beautified by this rhythmic device and content by that image. We believe that style is the bridge that somehow fuses form and content. The Indian theorists before Ānandavardhana—Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Vāmana and Udbhaṭa—could not go beyond this analysis. While they relegated the importance of 'rasa' only to drama, their 'Alaṁkāras', 'Guṇas' and 'Rītis' were more or less independent categories loosely hung on form and content. In theory, they too said that there was no dichotomy between the two; sāhitya (togetherness) was alone poetry by definition. But what vital essence effects or explains this fusion, they could not indicate. All these writers, except Vāmana, thought that they could illustrate the different graces of poetry with their own illustrations written up for the occasion. This shows their normative approach against which Ānandavardhana revolted.

Ānandavardhana turned round and told the traditionalists to their face: 'You have been analysing and analysing, adding to the divisions of 'guṇas' and 'alaṁkāras'. But I tell you that the

essence of poetry is that which baffles analysis in your way. I agree that no one can beat you on your own ground; but the truth about poetry lies another way. You may be good logicians and great grammarians; but you are not *sahṛdayas* at all. You have been only dissecting the body of poetry and missing its soul all the time'.

What, then is the soul of poetry? Well, the soul is that which sensitive *sahṛdayas* alone feel and which is beyond the meaning grasped by dry scholars. *Sahṛdayas* too admire the beauty of form and beauty of content just like any other scholar, but in their own way; they do not stop at it and say—'how beautiful!'; almost simultaneously, they realise the inner meaning or significance of the poem, if there is any. This is the soul or life whose beauty makes them admire the outer beauty as an adequate medium for its expression. Supposing there is no implied significance or charm, they will regard the poem as trash; may be full of artifice, but without art. The realised inner meaning itself, which is over and above the logical meaning or meanings of the poem, though invariably springing from this, is its 'dhvani'. The soul of poetry admired by *sahṛdayas* is thus logical meaning plus something which is *sui generis*.

What is the scope of this poetic meaning? Primarily, it is concerned with the experience of the poet as transmitted through the poem. The poet's experience, again, is to be distinguished from the experience of laymen or academicians in the work-a-day world. It is a total complex of emotion, imagination and thought which it is hard to disentangle, except by way of indicating which is prominent and which is subordinate. Yet one thing certain about it is that though the three are intrinsically related to each other, emotion supplies the focal point which shapes the imagery and colours the thought. Raw emotion in life has no unity or pattern about it; it is spent out in practical action. But the poet's emotion is without a touch of practicality and gets the serenity and detachment just enough to bring about an organised unity or patterning in his impressions of life, either direct or indirect. This organised experience is the poetic theme and it naturally explains the patterned rhythms and images in the external form of the poem also. When a *sahṛdaya* surrenders himself to a poem, he understands intuitively whether the poetic content or 'rasa' is successfully transmitted in the poem or not by the felt

ease or difficulty in his sharing the poet's meaning. That is why perspicuity is a poetic excellence and obscurity a poetic flaw.

Now we come to the crux of the Dhvani theory that *rasa* and *rasa* alone is Dhvani *par excellence*. 'Rasa' has so many shades of denotation; but in Ānandavardhana's text it has only one meaning relevant to poetry, viz., the organic or patterned experience-situation embodied in the poem pointing both to the contemplating emotion of the poet at the one end and of the critic at the other. Rasa is not concerned with the personal emotions of either; nor has it got any direct implication about the emotions of persons presented in poetry. 'Rasa' is at once the cause and effect of poetry; but by loose usage we regard rasa to be present in poetry. Poems contain only situations of nature as well as of human nature. If there is 'rasa', it will bind them into an organic whole like a running thread making for a wreath of flowers. If there is no 'rasa', they will hang loose and the poem is a failure. 'Rasa', in short, represents a state of mind which can hold together even the most disparate things. It includes not only the whole gamut of deep and long-lasting sentiments like love, but also individual passing moods like bashfulness. The poet can never fully communicate them by conventional language at his disposal. The language of daily discourse might only name it but can never transmit it as it is felt. The language of metaphor too will be inadequate for his task if the poet is made to obey the rules of logic in his use of metaphor. So the poet uses language in his own unique way, in a creative way, and this unique function of language is nothing but 'Dhvani' or suggestiveness.

We have said above that *rasa* or *rasādi*, to be more precise, is nothing if not 'dhvani' from the semantic point of view. But do all poems illustrate rasādi? There may be particular poems on subjects like the frisking tail of a monkey or a cataract, as Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja puts it. Ānandavardhana therefore adds guardedly that in a given poem, the focal point of rasādi may be either strikingly noticeable or pushed to the background by the preponderant imagery and thought. The beauty of a poem wherein *rasādi* is uppermost is different from the beauty of a poem wherein it is subordinate. The former is first-rate poetry, while the latter is only second-rate. A total absence of *rasādi* is almost unthinkable because nothing can be there which does not get

related in some remote way with human feeling. Yet artificial acrostics in poetry without any striking originality of feeling, might be classed as third-rate and pictorial, since any remote *rasādi* therein is as good as non-existent.

Even this will not answer the difficulty raised. Nature poems without clearly recognisable *rasādi* might yet be first-rate in the judgment of 'sahṛdayas'. Ānandavardhana therefore makes provision for their inclusion in *dhvani*, partaking as they do in the unique function of language in poetry, viz., suggestiveness. *Rasādis* relate to the soul of poetry because they are suggested. Similarly imaginative turns of thought can also become first-rate poetry if they are also exclusively and primarily suggested, either by direct or indirect expressions or by the imagery. An idea suggesting a paradox or a stated paradox suggesting, say, irony is equally *dhvani*. These suggested meanings may set in a chain of further suggestions also. Ānandavardhana was the first critic in India to realise and show with examples how expressions suggest images and how images might further suggest other ideas and associated images and so on. This kind of suggestion (*alaṁkāra-dhvani*) is distinct from *rasa-dhvani* in this that while the latter is almost simultaneously grasped along with the plain meaning of the poem, the former involves some mental effort and a noticeable time-lag between the two. It is compared to the resonance of a ringing bell. Finally, this theory admits that even common ideas of prose become poetry when they get suggested instead of being directly stated. This is *vastu-dhvani*. This will cover even epigrams, witty and sententious. However, what is common to all the admitted instances of first-rate poetry is one-pointed suggestiveness. *Dhvani* may be of *rasādi* or of *Alaṁkāras* or of *Vastu*. If the suggested feeling or image or idea becomes subordinate to the beauty of the direct meaning, we get second-rate poetry.

If we accept the theory of *Dhvani*, it will follow that we realise the importance of the unity of tone in the appreciation of poems and that our look-out will be to indicate how every word, or idea or image, every rhythm and rhyme-scheme, is integrally or organically related to the vital poetic meaning. Ānandavardhana could only think of two distinct literary qualities (besides the uniformly desirable perspicuity) as characterising *rasas*—sweetness and power. Whenever the critic's mind experiences tender sentiments like love and pathos, sweetness in style is felt, while

in the experience of spirited sentiments like Heroism and Fury, the powerful style is instanced.

Thus in the light of the Dhvani theory, the concepts of *rasa*, *alaṁkāra*, *guṇa* and *rīti*—all get their proper place in literary criticism.

III

I now turn to the bearings of this theory on practical criticism. Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta are the first critics in India to give sample specimens of practical literary criticism. Taking the whole of the *Rāmāyana* as one unit, Ānandavardhana has appreciated that epic as an embodiment of *Karuṇa-rasa* or pathos building up his judgment on the basis of passages in the beginning, middle and end of the work. Similarly, in the encyclopaedic epic, the *Mahābhārata*, he has illustrated the running string of *Śānta-rasa* or tranquillity as the dominant sentiment. In evaluating whole dramas, he has shown how the author of the *Veṇīsaṁhāra* has spoilt his otherwise brilliant play by including a scene of Duryodhana's leisurely love-making, just on the eve of the gruesome mace-fight; how the author of the *Nāgānanda* has deftly saved his work from failure by building a bridge of the Miraculous between the incompatible rasas of Love and Tranquillity. Coming to lyrics, he was the first to declare that a quatrain of Amaru was artistically as finished a work as any chiselled court-epic. Again, it was Ānandavardhana who showed hundreds of examples of pure poetry in even single verses of Prakrit folklore, by appreciating the suggestive implications of not only the situation but also of individual words and word-associations. Where Ānandavardhana is concise, Abhinavagupta has shown in his own way how a whole world of meaning is to be imagined by the *sahṛdaya* to catch a glimpse of the heart of poetry even in apparently simple examples. None of these critical judgments have been controverted by any writer. Yet it is indeed a pity that after these masters, none except perhaps Kuntaka and Kṣemendra attempted practical criticism in the history of Sanskrit criticism. Commentators like Mallinātha too followed the line of least resistance in paraphrasing only the logical meaning of poets, though paying lip-sympathy to the soundness of the Dhvani theory. Something like a revival of the spirit of the Dhvani theorists is required even in the appreciation of our Sanskrit classics today;

and this is a work yet to be taken up in earnest by the *sahṛdayas* in our country. In the present context, nothing more can be stressed by me than the impression that the details of the Dhvani theory, if fully mastered and worked out, would lead to a renaissance in our critical valuation and judgment not only of the classics, but also of our contemporary poetry. If the Dhvani theory does not encourage either impressionistic or subjective effusions in the name of criticism, it also disallows any dogmatic application of external canons. It points clearly to the existence of an internal law in each poem to be discovered for the first time by each critic to the best of his ability. Criticism in this sense is first and foremost a discovery involving the exercise of imagination as well as intellect. The law of poetry is summarily stated as 'propriety', and the propriety or otherwise in any given poem is to be decided by the critic on the basis of his own felt experience. There is no substitute for it. It is in this open recognition of the individual unity of each poem with its own terms of reference that Ānandavardhana stands apart from the rest of our critics. He could declare unhesitantly that the subjects for poetry are infinite and that even on one and the same hackneyed subject, the poems that could be written are infinite because of the infinite variations of the all-informing principle of *Dhvani* in its triple interplay.

IV

Lest I should be accused of avoiding the task of practical illustration, I hazard now to consider some examples from English poetry, adding my comments from the standpoint of Dhvani:

1. Let us take these oft-quoted lines of Gray:

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The Indian reader is at once struck by the mood of anguish that is characteristic of the elegy as a whole. The parallels adduced from Nature are themselves very beautiful and appropriate in so far as they accentuate the feeling of sorrow at the sight of worth and greatness allowed to die out without any recognition or use.

To appreciate the beauty of gems and oceans and flowers in themselves is to miss the central meaning itself. Even without knowing about the village Hampdens and Cromwells, if these lines were given to a Dhvani critic out of their context, he would grasp the intended suggestion and call it an *alaṁkara*, viz., *aprastutaprasaṁsā* or 'Indirect Reference'. But then he would not class it as first-rate poetry, but only as second-rate. For, the suggested pathos of the situation is not so powerfully felt in the four lines as the suggested idea itself that many a genius is allowed by the world to die without any opportunity for the display of his worth. This is an idea which could as well be put in prose; but it has ceased to be prosaic here since it is suggested instead of being openly stated.

But taken in the context of the poem, it is not an *aprastutaprasaṁsā alaṁkāra* at all. It is only a more prosaic alaṁkāra, viz., *Dṛṣṭānta* or Analogy. The two analogies mirror the idea actually stated in so many words in the poem. Thus the consideration of *alaṁkāras* by themselves does not make it first-rate poetry; but one who goes on like this is no *sahṛdaya*. A *sahṛdaya* would at once feel the depth of pathos in the situation as presented by the poet. The country churchyard is an ideal *vibhāva* or background for the rise of gloomy thoughts relating to death. He realises that the poet is imaginatively going over the varied precious potentialities that death might have nipped in the bud; and sees at once how the analogies cited add to the crystallisation of the mood of sorrow. In other words, the *sahṛdaya* would not hesitate to take it as a very telling example of *karuṇa-rasa-dhvani* with its beauty enhanced by the apt application of *alaṁkāra* and characterised by the quality of Sweetness and Perspicuity in style. The poet's touch of originality is seen in inviting sympathy towards the common run of mankind in lieu of the usual heroes of history, and suggesting that there might be persons in the countryside more intrinsically worthy than some recipients of honour at court.

2. How a single word, apparently plain, may prove a storehouse of rich suggestive associations can be illustrated from this oft-quoted single line of Homer:

Dying, he remembered Argos.

The dying Greek soldier on the Trojan battle-field remembered his home, with all its tender associations and attachments of parents, brothers wife and children, and all the scenes that had been dear to him since birth by a thousand personal ties. None of these is stated in any word of the line. 'Argos' is not used here like any proper noun without connotation; it has become a symbol for all that could be imagined by a *sahṛdaya*. This is nothing but *dhvani* in the word, with its ever-widening circles of associate-meaning adding to the larger *dhvani* of pathos.

3. Here is a short lyric by Scott, 'Proud Maisie':

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

'Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?'
—'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkwood shall carry ye'.

'Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie say truly?'
—'The gray-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

—'The glowworm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady;
The owl from the steeple sing
Welcome, proud lady'.

Palgrave notes that here no moral is drawn and that the pathetic meaning is left to be suggested by the mere presentment of the situation. That is exactly what the Dhvani theorist would say. He would add that the form of question and answer in the lyric is an art of *alaṁkāra* which does not diminish but adds to the gleam of pathos; it is further enriched by the figure *viṣama* or juxtaposition of unequals, viz., the bridal and the graveyard.

4. Dhvani is not restricted to the level of emotion and feeling. It can well extend into the symbolical and the allegorical. Ānandavardhana himself has quoted these well-known lines of the *Gītā* as an instance in point:

Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ
Tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī;
Yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni
Sā niśā paśyato muneḥ.

(What is night to everybody is daytime to the sage; and what is day to them is verily his night!)

This is no riddle, but just the adequate language of poetry to express the complicated thought of the poet who means that the sage is awake to spiritual values to which the ordinary run of men are blind. This is exactly the dhvani of *śānta-rasa* whose vista is vast as infinity. In another sense, it sums up also the very nature of *dhvani* itself, and I cannot think of a better conclusion for this paper.

'MEANING IN POETRY' AND INDIAN POETICS

V. N. DHAVALE

THE problem of 'meaning' has become in this century a basic problem in all fields of inquiry and speculation—in metaphysics and logic, in psychology and other social 'sciences', in literary criticism and in scientific discussions. Some thinkers have even begun to doubt whether language is, or can be, a reliable medium for social communication. The nature of 'meaning' in poetry has naturally become almost an obsession with certain critics in Europe and America and we frequently hear of a 'linguistic' or 'semantic' school of criticism[1]. It is necessary to remember in this connection that though 'language' has only recently become the centre of interest in Western criticism, it has always been the starting point for literary theory in ancient India. Our rhetoricians and commentators, like our grammarians, philosophers and logicians, were always aware of the importance of a careful consideration of all the aspects of language. It is not necessary to refer here to the views of grammarians and philosophers, but it must be borne in mind that writers on poetry also generally depended on several metaphysical assumptions and the full implication of their views can become clear only if we consider the philosophical background also. The purpose of this short paper, however, is merely to show how several modern views seem to have been anticipated by Indian critics more than a thousand years ago.

According to Dr Pandey, 'the problem of meaning in the context of Aesthetics engaged the minds of great Kashmirian thinkers for about four hundred years from the 9th to the 12th century A.D.'[2] Of the five leading 'schools' of critical theory in Sanskrit at least four were primarily concerned with the linguistic aspects of poetry—including the semantic aspect. But each school naturally emphasized only those aspects which helped the development of its own critical theory. Thus the *Alamkāra*

[1] *e.g. Concepts of Criticism* by René Wellek, Yale University Press, 1963. Particularly pp. 349, 351 etc.

[2] K. C. Pandey—*Comparative Aesthetics*, Banaras, 1950, Vol. I, p. 270.

school paid attention to the sound and meaning of words (and sentences) in order to discover as many figures of speech as possible. Though Bharata mentions only four *Alamkāras* the number gradually grew so rapidly that Appayya Dikshithar describe 124 *Alamkārs*! A classification of *Arthalankāra* (figures of speech dependent on meaning) obviously implied an analysis of the ways in which poetry can be made more charming by the use of 'figurative' language. The *Rīti* school concentrated on questions of style and diction. The *Dhvaṇi* and *Vakrōkti* schools, however, depended entirely on an analysis of meaning. The theory of poetry propounded by these two schools shows a real insight into the nature of poetry: and Western critics[1], who generally do not include Indian theories in their discussions, will perhaps be surprised to see how some of their important conclusions were anticipated by Indians long ago.

Consider, for example, the ways in which a word or a sentence comes to have a meaning. Are words signs? In Western criticism, such problems are left mainly to philosophers. Only philosopher-critics like Plato and Coleridge were aware of the 'power' of words. But the 'power'—or 'powers'—(*Shakti, Vrtti* etc.) of words was the very basis of the *Dhvani* and *Vakrōkti* schools. That a word can normally have three meanings—*Abhidhā* (expressed sense, denotation, primary meaning), *Lakshaṇā* ('indicated' sense, a secondary sense indicated by the primary sense) and *Vyanjanā* (suggested sense)—seems to be a common-place of Sanskrit criticism. *Abhidhā* is direct signification or sense: *Lakshaṅā* and *Vyanjanā* include all the associations which a word may have because of the particular context. Naturally the meaning of a sentence or a poem cannot be restricted wholly to what may be called the 'surface' meaning—*Abhidā*. The *Dhvani* school, therefore, regards *Dhvani* (suggestion) as the soul of poetry. The *Dhvanyalōkā* one of the most important treatises on poetics in Sanskrit, discusses the various aspects of *Dhvani* and regards *Dhvanikavya* as the best kind of poetry. According to the *Dhvanikāra* 'The learned call that particular kind of poetry *dhvani* in

[1] In *The Meaning of Meaning* by Ogden and Richards (London) we have the following statement.

'The atmosphere of verbalism in which most Indian philosophy developed seems to have been even more dense than that of the Scholastics or of the Greek dialecticians. . .' (p. 39; 8th Ed., 1946).

which the (expressed) word and sense, subordinating themselves, manifest that (other suggested) sense'.[1] Thus in all great poetry more is meant than meets the ear. The views of Ānandavardhana Abhinavagupta and others dominated the minds of competent or discerning readers (*Sahṛdaya*) for many centuries. The opposition to the views of Ānandavardhana also reveals the influence which *Dhvani* exercised[2].

Another extremely interesting theory of meaning (in poetry) is the theory of *Vakrōkti* propounded by Kuntaka in his *Vakrōkti-jīvitam*. The word *Vakrōkti* may literally mean 'crooked or sarcastic speech'. But in Kuntaka's book, it seems that *Vakrōkti* has a much wider meaning. It is not a mere figure of speech, but it is the 'soul of poetry'. Thus in its literal as well as extended meaning, *Vakrōkti* closely approaches 'irony', 'ambiguity' or 'oblique statement'. Here another modern critical creed—the search for irony, paradox and ambiguity in poetry—seems to have been anticipated in India a thousand years ago.[3] Kuntaka like Empson, Cleanth Brooks and others, wants all poetry to be 'indirect' or oblique. In fact the criticism of *Svabhavōkti* and the defence of *Vakrōkti* (in Kuntaka and others)[4] will inevitably remind a student of English criticism of the two words 'direct' and 'oblique'. It is true that Dr Tillyard's use of these two words in his well-known book is not exactly the same. But the striking similarity is enough to prove that many Sanskrit critics were very acute in their investigation of the true charm of poetry. How close Kuntaka's views are to modern English criticism can best be seen in the following passage by a Western historian of Sanskrit literature:

'He (Kuntala) insists that *Vakrōkti*, crooked or figurative speech, is the life of poetry, distinguishing it from science and any merely ordinary or natural mode of expressing facts of any sort. It is, therefore, a deviation from the ordinary language of life in order to produce a certain striking effect (vicchitti), or an imaginative turn

[1] S. K. De—*Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics*. Vol. II. Luzac & Co., London, 1925, p. 200.

[2] Since a paper on *Dhvani* is to be read at this seminar I need not refer to further details here.

[3] Kuntaka probably wrote in the 10th century A.D.

[4] See S. K. De—*op. cit.*, p. 62.

of speech (*bhāṅgī-bhaṇiti*) .... He goes in great detail through all the forms of poetry in order to show that the principle of Vakrōkti covers adequately all developments, citing copious examples from the poets, especially Kālidāsa. It is to the imagination or skill of the poet, his work (kavikarman), that we owe the presence of *Vakrōkti* in any poem, and this work can be classed according as he exhibits it in regard to the letters, to the base or termination of words, to a sentence, a particular topic, or a treatise as a whole'.[1] And a well-known Indian scholar who praises the *Vakrōktijīvītam* as a 'work of great value'[2] remarks:

'This insistence on *Vakrōkti* emphasizes two characteristics of poetry, viz., that, though poetry necessarily takes the words used in common speech its choice of words is different from that of ordinary speech i.e., its diction is different and that the poet gives expression to striking combinations or relations of things which are beyond the reach of ordinary matter-of-fact men'[3]. The analysis of different kinds of *Vakratva* cannot be considered here in detail. For Kuntaka *Vakrōkti* becomes the all-pervading characteristic of great poetry. The view that the charm or beauty of a poem depends on irony—verbal and structural—is a very important thesis indeed. And though the *Dhvani* school remained a more popular school of criticism, the approach suggested by Kuntaka can easily be appreciated by modern poets and critics.

Though Kuntaka is the greatest exponent of *Vakrōkti* earlier writers also had recognised its significance. Thus according to Dandin,

[redacted] श्लेषः सर्वासु पुष्णाति प्रायो वक्रोक्तिषु श्रियम् ।
[redacted] भिन्नं द्विधा स्वभावोक्तिर्वक्रोक्तिश्चेति वाङ्मयम् ॥

And for Bhaṁa there is no real figure of speech without *Vakrōkti*.

सैषा सर्वैव वक्रोक्तिरनयाऽर्थो विभाव्यते ।
यत्नोऽस्यां कविना कार्यः कोलङ्कारोऽनया विनः ॥[4]

[1] A. B. Keith—*A History of Sanskrit Literature*, O.U.P. 1920, p. 392.
[2] P. V. Kane—Introduction to Sahityadarpana, p. 223 (3rd ed. 1951).
[3] P. V. Kane—*op. cit.*, p. 367 (1951 ed).
[4] See P. V. Kane—*op. cit.*, p. 18. (Notes on Sahityadarpaṅa).

The basis of all these discussions, however, is the recognition by Sanskrit critics of the importance of the metaphorical use of language. The discussion of *Lakshaṅā* and *Vyanjanā* however technical and dry on occasions, reveals that Sanskrit rhetoricians had grasped the fundamental importance of metaphor. In Western criticism, the discussion of metaphor, in spite of the classical and medieval rhetoricians, is somewhat unsatisfactory. In fact, as Dr Richards has pointed out, even the necessary words for discussing simile and metaphor are not easily available in English. Hence his use of the new terms—'tenor' and 'vehicle'. In Sanskrit works, however, words for all kinds of subtle distinctions are available and the discussion of metaphorical language errs on the side of over-elaboration and uncritical classification. Thus Mammata who sums up many of the earlier theories can easily illustrate twenty-five varieties of *Upamā* (simile) alone!

We have enough evidence to show that Sanskrit poets and critics knew how a poem can yield several meanings on *all* levels —*Abhidhā, Lakshanā, Vyanjanā* etc. It may appear odd to one who is not familiar with Sanskrit that the same sentence or poem can deal—in its primary meaning—with two or even three subjects. This achievement is no doubt due to the peculiar characteristics of the Sanskrit language—(the normal use of *Shlesha* and *Samāsa*)—and cannot naturally be imitated—by languages which do not have a similar grammatical structure and vocabulary. Apart from a few puns here and there, an English poem cannot yield two or three clear 'senses' (direct meaning or *Abhidha*) there cannot be two or three 'statements'. In Sanskrit the constant use of *Shlesha* (paronomasia) seems to suggest that the poets and prose writers were constantly 'playing' with meaning, and trying to exhibit their full awareness of the manner in which words perform their functions. A Western reader feels irritated by this pre-occupation with multiple meaning—direct multiple meaning. Dr Keith, for example, refers to certain poems where even the direct statement is 'multiple', and describing such poems as 'a triumph of misplaced ingenuity' adds:

'Both these authors perpetrated poems styled *Raghava-pandaveeya* in which we are told simultaneously the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The feat, which at first sight appears incredible, is explained without special difficulty by the

nature of Sanskrit'.[1] The irritation of western scholars is perhaps justified. But poets or critics who are hunting for ambiguity in all poetry should be delighted to find that ancient Indian literature provides innumerable instances of 'deliberate' ambiguity. We have meaning or meanings with a vengeance!

The best known modern attempt to classify the nature of 'poetic' meaning is that of Dr I. A. Richards[2]. In his *Practical Criticism*, he refers to four kinds of meaning—sense, feeling, tone and intention. Of these, the 'sense' is the equivalent of *Abhidhā*. Sanskrit writers refer to many more factors governing the nature of meaning in poetry. Mammata, Viswanatha and others refer to the views of earlier critics who have stated some of the conditions which determine the meaning of a poem. Viswanatha cites the following verses, well-known to all students of Sanskrit poetics:

संयोगो विप्रयोगश्च साहचर्यं विरोधिता ।
अर्थः प्रकरणं लिङ्ग शब्दस्याऽन्यस्य संनिधिः ॥
सामर्थ्यमौचिती देशः कालो व्यक्तिः स्वरादयः ।
शब्दार्थस्यानवच्छेदे विशेषस्मृतिहेतवः ॥[3]

and in describing *Vyanjanā* he gives the following list:

वक्तृबोद्धव्यवाक्यानामन्यसंनिविवाच्ययोः ।
प्रस्तावदेशकालानां काकोश्चेष्टादिकस्य च ॥
वैशिष्ट्यादन्यमर्थं या बोधयेत्सार्थसम्भवा ।

'That suggestion is said to arise from the sense of words, which causes one to think of something else through the peculiar character of the speaker, or the person addressed, or the sentence, or the proximity of another person, or the expressed meaning, or the occasion, or the place, or the time, or the modulation of voice, or gestures etc.'[4]

It is obvious that the factors mentioned here or the 'causes for recollecting a particular sense of a word' (mentioned in the two verses from Bhartṛhari cited by Viswanatha are not always operative. Such lists clearly show that all the factors governing

[1] A. B. Keith—*op. cit.*, pp. 137, 138 etc.

[2] In Hindi *Vakrōktijīvitam* (Ed. by Dr Nagendra, Delhi, 1955) there is a special chapter 'Paschātya Kavyashastrme Vakrōkti.'

[3] P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 13 (text).

[4] P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 14 and p. 77.

a 'meaning-situation' were relevant for Sanskrit poetic theory. The total meaning of a poem for any reader or critic implied a careful consideration of innumerable factors. This insistence on the 'context' is a very noteworthy feature of Sanskrit criticism: the meaning must be determined by the 'context' and not by the 'text' alone.

In any account of 'meaning' (as discussed by ancient rhetoricians) the theory of *Vakrōkti*—though not applicable to all poetry—must hold a very high place. The approach proposed by Kuntaka whether original[1] or merely traditional, is no doubt one of the most striking in view of the 'concepts of criticism' current today in England and America. Though every language must formulate its own theory of poetry—and the nature of meaning in poetry—in the light of the illustrations available in the language, certain broad principles acquire a larger significance, and *Vakrōkti* seems to be one of them. In fact, *Vakrōkti* is only one of the many important critical theories propounded by Indian writers long ago.

I do not wish to imply that Sanskrit writers who discussed the nature of meaning had no faults or limitations. Some of these are known to all students of Sanskrit literature. Perhaps the worst defect was the desire of every writer to suggest as detailed a 'classification' as possible. As Dr Keith remarks:

'In the sub-divisions of which India is so fond there is often much ingenuity in finding legitimate grounds of distinction, but there is always present the tendency to lose sight of the broad and important lines of demarcation while concentrating on minutiae'.[2]

It is the genius of the Sanskrit language—formed by Paṇini and other Sutrakars—that leads to these 'divisions' and 'sub-divisions'. And before condemning any 'classification' we may have to pause for a while if we consider the valuable warning of Coleridge:

'. . . for one error resulting from excess in distinguishing the indifferent, I would show ten mischievous delusions from the habit of confounding the diverse'.

[1] See particularly *Studies on Some Concepts of Alamkāra Śāstra* by Dr V. Raghavan (Adyar, 1942), pp. 235-242. Mahibhatta's criticism of Kuntaka is also mentioned by Dr Raghavan; and also *Philosophy of Poetry* 'Kavyatatva-samīksha' by Dr N. N. Choudhuri, (Delhi, 1959), pp. 269-270 and p. 64 (English Synopsis).

[2] Keith—*op. cit.*, p. 410.

LITERARY CRITICISM IN TAMIL CONSIDERED IN THE MODERN CONTEXT

KA NAA SUBRAMANYAM

IT IS easy to say that there is no literary criticism in traditional Tamil literature and so avoid the whole question. It would not be completely true. There is of course no literary criticism as we understand it as practised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, I. A. Richards and others with whose work in English we in India are only too familiar.

But as I said it would not be completely true. Any creative activity in any field whatsoever implies acceptance of certain critical criteria and ancient Tamil literature is by no means an exception. In this section and the next I shall deal with the two aspects of Tamil letters from which we can derive a few critical concepts, and then go on to detail the major aspects of the Tamil literary tradition in respect of literary criticism.

I

The poets of the so-called *Sangam* age were writing within certain accepted and well-defined conventions. Their verse (of which nearly twenty-five thousand lines have come down to us) is unequal in quality. It is blank verse, in conversational periods with changing caesura, highly flexible, using the spoken idiom of that day. *Sangam* Tamil poetry unlike poetry of the same period anywhere else in the world and for that matter unlike poetry of any other period and language, does not seek to 'move' the reader, does not give prominence to mood or sentiment, but to observe factual detail and narration from a conventional point of view. It is poetry of what would be called 'emotional stasis' by James Joyce. The culmination of this *Sangam* poetry was in the epic *Silappadhikaaram* of which I shall speak in some detail in the second section of this paper. The *Sangam* poems belong, it is generally accepted now, to the first three centuries of the Christian era.

As it has come down to us, the *Sangam* literature is in two groups—(*i*) *Pattuppattu* or the Ten idylls and (*ii*) the *Ettutohai* or the Eight Anthologies. Of the ten idylls two are generally

conceded to be of later date and do not belong to the *Sangam* age and one is not available at all—only references to it exist. Of the Eight Anthologies six are definitely accepted to be of the *Sangam* era and as anthologies always presuppose a critical position, it might be profitable to examine them a little less briefly than we do the other poems.

Ahananuru is a collection of four hundred love poems of thirteen to thirty lines each.

Aingurunuru is a collection of five hundred love poems of three to six lines each.

Padirruppattu is a collection of a hundred poems consisting of ten equal sections.

Kurunthohai is a collection of four hundred love poems of four to eight lines each.

Narrinai is a collection of four hundred love poems of nine to twelve lines each.

Purananuru is a collection of four hundred poems on *puram* themes of from four to forty lines each.

The major critical criterion accepted by these Anthologies is the division of poetry into two broad divisions according to their theme and content—the *aham* and the *puram*. The *aham* means the 'inner' and the *puram* the 'outer'—meaning, in modern terms, 'the subjective' and 'the objective' theme. That the subjective theme in Tamil literature was always love is evident; the objective theme was almost always war; sometimes it was charity. Apart from this one consideration which has something of the critical about it, other considerations like the arbitrary bringing together of four hundred poems of each kind, of the counting of lines and naming the collections as *Aingurunuru* (short poems 500). *Kurunthohai* (short shorts put together) seem to be rather uncritical and offer no worth-while criteria at all (unlike the fourteen lines and the rhyme scheme in a sonnet for instance).

I would submit that the critical classification of the theme of poetry into *aham* and *puram* (the subjective and the objective) is capable of being extended to modern conditions in a complete manner. That the *Sangam* writers of Tamil used the classification for conventional purposes of their own limited their power of expression to a great degree and made for the unevenness in the quality of the verse. And there is the possibility that a set of

bureaucrats sitting over the selection of an anthology might not have brought together the best poems available to them (as happens often in modern times as well).

Aham poems predominate in *Sangam* literature. As C. Jesudasan and Hephzibah Jesudasan say in their History of Tamil Literature (Y.M.C.A. Calcutta 1961) 'The life of a couple of lovers is given in its setting in time and place (*mudal*) and its natural background (*karu*) and then the details of the conduct (*uri*) of the lovers are worked out. We can trace out the life of lovers running through the whole gamut of experiences so provided by the system from the bloom of the first fresh passion in the greenwood of *kurinchi*, through the pains of parting in early wedded life in *palai*, the patient waiting of the lone woman in *mullai*, the longing and the agonised waiting of the woman in *neidal*, down to the entry of infidelity into the scene of mature love and quiet domestic happiness in *marudam*. Into this structure the whole variety of experience may be filled, with provision of course for variation; (*Kaikkilai* and *Perundinai* are the remaining two aspects of *aham* and deal with unfulfilled love)'.

And about *puram* the authors say: '*Puram* is chiefly concerned with the feats of tribal days. The names of the divisions, *vetci*, *vanchi* etc., indicate flowers worn by the parties concerned. *Vetci*, the first division, concerns the daring feat of capturing cattle from enemy territory and also the daring recapture of the prize by its former owners. *Vanchi* is the taking up of the offensive in anticipation of aggression. *Ulinai* takes us to a more sophisticated phase of warfare, the attack and defence of a fort. *Tumbai* moves in the heart of the battle-field where opposing forces meet. *Vahai* deals with the military glory of kings. *Kanchi* is the natural step next to these worldly glories—the poetic reflection on their instability. *Padan* deals with the glories of patrons like charity etc'.

It is quite an elaborate, and well-worked-out, convention—the so-called *thinais* of the *sangam* poetry and the four hundred and odd poets (by Jesudasan's account, it is 461 poets) of the *Sangam* age work well within the conventions. They accept them wholly except in a few cases and submerge their individuality uncritically to an accepted convention. The stepping aside of the writer as an individual to obey a literary convention is no-where so evident as in the *sangam* poems of these anthologies, though, within

limits, a few poets do also emerge by their individuality of expression, observation of particular aspects of nature and the like. The rare breaking away from the convention accepted indicates and accentuates the conventional values and their mainly uncritical acceptance. It is a moot point with Tamil historians of literature whether *Tolkappiyam* (literally the old book) which lays down these conventions in exact detail preceded, or succeeded, the *Sangam* age.

That the anthologies of the old Tamils were not critically selective anthologies should be evident now. They were put together by virtue of their theme and subject matter than by virtue of their quality as poetry. They could also have been selected by virtue of their using a standardised Tamil idiom which was apparent at the time of the *Sangam* age; there is an attempt at literariness as against the spoken idiom of large sections of the people in various parts of the Tamil-speaking world. And the length of the poem seems to have been a major consideration with these anthologists (whoever they were) as the names of the collections indicate.

But the classification into *aham* and *puram* remains a purely Tamil contribution with modern critical connotations which could be worked further in the field of a critical study of literature. The classification has possibilities of modern application—as can be evidenced by the application of these terms to short stories of the current period in Tamil. That the classification can be redefined to include other departments of letters should also be evident to students of literary criticism.

I shall offer here two or three examples of the *aham* and the *puram* poetry of the Tamils and I shall offer them without comment, as comment, I believe, is unnecessary.

The first poem is from the *Ahananuru* (number 122). It is said to be by a poet called Paranar who can be called one of the few of the handful of highly individual poets of an age largely of conformity. The beloved unburdens her heart of its sorrow, telling her companion that her lover does not come:

'It is not a festival day yet the revellers
of the City rarely go to sleep at night;
even if the revellers leave the city streets free
my mother goes not to sleep and keeps endless watch over me;

even if she, sharp of tongue and careful of her daughter's honour,
go to sleep, the sleepless guardians of the city go their rounds;
even if the armed sentinels of the city are not passing
the dogs would wake and bark loudly at anyone passing;
even the dogs might sleep but the moon
makes the night a day.
Even when all things are favourable to me one day,
he comes not, as he is fickle of heart.'

This is my own inadequate translation of a beautiful poem in Tamil. I give below a translation of the woman poet Avvai by the Jesudasans; it is a *puram* poem and is contained in the *Purananuru* (No. 235):

'If he had a little wine, he gave it to us; that is no more to be!
If he had more.
He drank with joy the while we sang; no more to be!
His little rice in many plates he served; no more to be!
If he had more, in many plates he served: no more to be!
All the meat, fat upon the bone, to us he gave; no more to be!
All the ways shot through with arrow and with spear he faced; no more to be!
With hand that smelt of fragrant limes
He caressed my head that smelt of flesh; no more to be!
The spear that launched upon his warrior breast
Pierced through the almsbowl of the minstrels great.
Tore through the palms of beggars
While his subjects' eyes grew dim with grief,
Shot straight upon the tongues of bards renowned and wise.
Where is he gone, my father and my stay?
Henceforth the poets are not, nor those that give to bards.
Many the lives that will not give;
Large winefilled flowers of rattle-wort
Lie useless on cool waters still.'

This is a poem of Avvai on the death of her patron chief Adihaman.

I shall quote another poem, a rightly popular *aham* song by Kabilar who is also one of the reckonable poets of the age. The translation is mine.

'No one was there except the thief (of my love).
If he should turn false to me what should I do,
whom should I then call as my witness?
Only the longlegged stork was witness
when we came together; it too
was peering into the water for prey.'

II

I have already mentioned the name of the epic of the Tamils, the *Silappadhikaaram*. The critical criteria which seem to have shaped this epic deserve detailed study but both the materials and the critical outlook necessary for such a study seem to be wanting among the Tamils both of the academic and the nonacademic world.

The *Silappadhikaaram* is considered one of the five epics of the early Tamil genius—two of these seem to be irretrievably lost; we have nothing of them except their names. Of the other three epics available, the *Silappadhikaaram* is the only epic of any great literary quality. It sets out to narrate a locally current story among the Jains in a more or less secular context. It is the earliest of the epics of the Tamils—whether we take it as belonging to the second or the seventh or the tenth century. The date is by no means certain. Written by a Prince of the Royal line of the Cheras, legends about whom are current among the Tamils, it seeks to justify the ways of fate to man and seeks to plead with man that he should accept whatever fate offers him.

Unlike the epics of the West, or the epics of India in the Sanskrit language, this epic does not attempt 'the grand style'. It has a heroine as its chief protagonist, not a hero. It does not contain descriptions of the land, the people, the river, the city etc., as is usual with other epics known in India. The poet seems to continue the tradition of 'emotional stasis' begun by the *Sangam* poets; only the *Sangam* poets wrote shorter verses and the author of this epic Ilango (which means junior Prince) attempted in the same method a longer narrative which gave immense scope for rousing the emotions but he does it all without seeking to rouse the emotions; it is all objectively done, stated with the minimum of so-called effect. And it seems to have been done with a critical consciousness far in advance of the times of the poet.

The *Silappadhikaaram* is a long, rather loose narrative poem interspersed with moving lyrics of great intensity of feeling—it would seem to me that the poet included these lyrics just to indicate that he could do the moving lyrics that were currently becoming the fashion in the *bhakti* age but that he preferred to do the 'emotionally static' type of poetry for the major part of his epic. The marvellous precision with which this most conscious of poets in Tamil sets out to 'kill' all emotion, to attain to an 'objectivity' that is rare enough in world literature, has to be critically examined to be understood.

The story of the *Silappadhikaaram* is an exceptionally emotional story and that is why, as drama, it has long held the attention of the Tamils. The poet of the *Silappadhikaaram* sets out to tell this story in a dry, intellectual fashion as an observer who refuses to be drawn into the moods of the moment, with a loftiness of ascetic outlook which came perhaps naturally to him, as, according to legend, he was a *sanyasin* being known as Ilango Adigal. 'Emotional stasis' is nowhere better achieved in world literature than in this long epic of the Tamils.

The conscious technical virtuosity of the poet is nowhere more evident than in two climactic scenes in the narrative which I shall briefly indicate here without offering inadequate translations of the verse. Two wholly worth-while translations of the *Silappadhikaaram* are available for those who do not know the Tamil language and would like to look into it in the English language. The one is a literal prose translation of the epic by V. R. R. Dikshithar; the other is a translation into rhythmic prose by Alan Daniélou. I prefer the prose rendering of Dikshitar as it keeps to the monotone of the original as against the rhythmic prose of Daniélou.

The courtesan Madhavi is dancing in the first part of the story and this is a critical situation in the epic—a situation which leads to Kovalan's separation from his wedded wife and to all that follows in the epic. The poet casually mentions Kovalan and narrates in detail, spending really a lot of time on it, the technicalities of the dance, the varieties of musical instruments accompanying the dance, the dimensions of the stage, the wide variety of dances that Madhavi presented showing herself and the author himself adept in the art of the dance. There is the conscious object of the artist Ilango here that the reader's attention

should be distracted from the emotional intensity of the drama that was developing. The understatement is not due to naivete or callousness but the effect of an intensive selfconscious development of the critical faculty—the poet knowing what he wanted to do and doing it against all accepted convention, perhaps.

There are quite a number of places in the epic in which the author does consciously play down the emotion and distracts the attention of the reader from what is really happening but I can single out another instance towards the climax of the story when Kovalan has been unjustly accused of theft and punished for it with loss of his life by the Pandya King, and Kannagi, his wedded wife, accuses the Pandya of injustice. This is a situation which justified anger but the poet even tempers the words of the wife with involutions of an elementary kind screening the anger to narrate the event objectively as if it were a newspaper report and not a work of art. The art with which this artifice is worked out is so great that it inspires me whenever I read that particular canto. Reportage which narrates emotionally great things but without any emotion and the art of producing very good reportage is a comparatively modern art in the West practised to a certain extent by James Joyce and John Dos Passos in English, and by Proust in French, and here, we have a poet of the Tamils practising it a thousand years before the present century.

No doubt we in India accept the position that all literature, all creative activity, is aimed at producing the peace which passeth understanding. Even those who might not accept it as the sole aim of art, will admit that it might be one of the aims of art. *Santhi* is as much a *rasa* as any of the others—perhaps more difficult of achievement than others. There will always be writers who strive to bring a tear of joy or sorrow to the eye of their readers but even they can, I hope, theoretically concede that *santhi* might be worth attempting. A critical acceptance of *santhi* as the final *rasa*, the *rasa* of *rasas*, seems to be present ever to the mind of the poet of the *Silappadhikaaram* and his critical selectiveness of material and his artifice of over and understatements at critical points in the story would indicate that here was one poet who knew what he was doing and went about it in the manner that was available to him, ignoring contemporary conventions. He had exacting criteria and he strove to achieve them and did, as I read the epic *Silappadhikaaram*, achieve them.

I have merely indicated here a new approach to the *Silappadhikaaram*. There might be critics who disagree with me on this reading of the *Silappadhikaaram*. But an objective-narrative technique like the one that the poet attempted in that work is well worth attempting even today and, without well formulated critical criteria, it might well-nigh be impossible of achievement even today. Hence I would think of my approach to *Silappadhikaaram* as a worth-while exercise in literary criticism.

III

Having singled out these two details pertinent to our enquiry in the long stretch of Tamil literature, let me go on to give a conventional, traditional resume of the history of literary criticism in Tamil in so far as it is available to us today. Very little work is done of a significant kind about the past in Tamil and many concepts and themes and theses are only just vague and not fully worked out as we would like them to be—a fuller attempt at evaluating literary criticism among the Tamils might be a long time in coming. Tamil scholarship so-called, especially of the academic variety in the Universities and the Colleges is poor indeed —so poor that it is quite negligible; the professor and the *pundit* in Tamil are ill-equipped to grapple with problems of literary criticism—its theory and its practice. A few creative writers have of recent times devoted themselves to the task of creating literary criticism in Tamil and their work is proceeding slowly but inevitably.

The Tamils always tend to start any discussion of their language with the Old Book, the *Tolkappiyam*. It is a book of grammar which deals with etymology, syntax, prosody and the subject matter of poetry in detail; it sets forth the conventions under which the poets of that day were constrained to create poetry.

The next landmark in critical material in Tamil would be the work of the learned commentators who drew from a knowledge of Sanskrit their vast erudition. Their main concern was the explication of a given and obscure text in as many ways as possible. The thoroughness of the commentators can be instanced by their having made themselves indispensable for an understanding of all the old poetry in Tamil. Most of the *Sangam* classics, the *Tolkappiyam*, the epics of the Tamils are evaluated even today only through the aid of these commentators; no independent evaluation

is possible. It is not attempted even today. These commentators knew more about the works they commented on than the original authors themselves. Great names like Nachinarkkiniyar, Parimelazhagar, Ilampuranar, Adiyarkkunallar, Perasiriyar have dictated the terms on which we have to accept the old Tamil poems even today, some eight hundred years after they lived and wrote their pieces. It was an avalanche of learning which no Tamil reader could escape, or has escaped to this day. Needless to say many of the middle period texts have no commentaries.

Apart from the commentaries and the grammars there was very little of what can be called literary criticism in Tamil during the early or the middle period. Even in the modern period, literary criticism was late in coming and found no general acceptance when it did come. The first novelist of the Tamils, an Indian Christian, named Vedanayakam Pillai, called novels 'prose epics' and proceeded to equip Tamil with a prose epic named *Prathapa Mudaliar Charitram.* In the body of the novel, he gives his opinions on language and literature and tells us that the Tamils love to read of Kings and Queens and so he gives a King and Queen some place in his novel. One can perhaps extract some critical tenets from Vedanayakam Pillai but they are quite elementary in kind. But when V. V. S. Iyer, a revolutionary leader who had had a classical training in England, came upon the scene, he tried to talk of poetry and the aims of it and of the grand style and Milton and the Tamil epic poet of the 12th century Kamban in clearly critical terms. He has left a body of work which has not been available for over two decades after his death and even when made available recently did not make a great impact on the public. Subramania Bharathi himself wrote very little that can be called criticism proper but he has expressed stray opinions which might tend towards a body of critical criteria. But his literary output in prose and poetry showed a fine selective critical spirit and *that* has influenced the modern period in Tamil letters.

The current renaissance in Tamil letters started with an interest in the short story in the early years of the thirties and many of the writers who ushered in this renaissance were persons who were conscious of Western literary criticism in the modern context. They wrote mainly about fiction and sometimes about other departments of letters, like poetry, drama etc. Of these two writers, (both of whom are no longer with us) deserve mention—one was

the late Pudumaippittan who has left a body of critical writing which makes up a slim volume but one which is a complete presentation of theories which could embrace and be extended to embrace all departments of literary activity. He was a humanist but a frustrated humanist who felt that all things were going wrong in the world; his sense of frustration is the chief point which comes out in his short stories, in his theories of literature and in his new attempts at poetry (of which again he has left a slender volume). The late Ku Pa Rajagopalan did not have frustration as his theme for he was a traditionalist trying to derive his inspiration from Valmiki, from Tagore, and from Bharathi and a few pieces on poetic appreciation and on the short story are all that he has left us. Here was a fine sensibility which was trying to make available to the Tamils the critical work of England mainly Matthew Arnold (like V. V. S. Iyer before him).

The critical work of the current period is being done by a few stalwarts, like P. Sri, A. Srinivasaraghavan and a newer set of critics among whom C. S. Chellappa should be named. A pioneer in the movement for literary criticism in Tamil was the late T. K. C. who for the first time in Tamil literary history stated boldly that most old Tamil poetry that has been preserved for us to this day is not of very high quality and that we should learn to distinguish between what is good and what is not especially so among the old poets. My own plea in my published work is for a movement towards the definition of the classics in the Tamil language—sifting the worth-while from the nonliterary, from the vast quantity of material which has come down to us from the past. A movement towards new poetry, free verse in a modern idiom, has been mainly sustained by critical theory since 1959; it has produced a few notable critical statements but no major poetry as yet.

IV

One major feature of conscious attempts at literary criticism as it is practised (except by the academics) today in Tamil is that it is completely free from any alien influence in its critical jargon especially. My own attempts as a critic have been directed (as I have shown in the first two sections of this paper) towards producing a reference point to the old literature of the Tamils and to try to apply it to the new and also to extract our present critical

values from the current reading of the Tamils themselves. We have as yet no critical jargon in Tamil—jargon which in most cases clouds more issues than it clears. I think that it is a good sign that we have no critical jargon, either inherited or imported. But this does not mean that we have to close our eyes to what is happening elsewhere in the world—nor do we.

A handful of Tamil writers—far from the academic world let me emphasise again—have an awareness of Tamil literature as one of the tributaries of what can be called the mainstream of world literature. It is this awareness that the literary critic in Tamil is called upon to emphasise and create anew for his own language. He has also to create a set of criteria which will be applicable to world literature wherever it might have had its origin. Towards a critical theory of letters and the act and the art of creation which might be applicable in a larger sense to world literature, the Tamils have their own bit to contribute as I have pointed out in the first two sections of this paper. Whether they will be able to do it in the near future and make it acceptable is as yet difficult to say—for the atmosphere among the Tamils themselves is against serious attempts at literary criticism of any kind. The vested interests in the academic world, (the universities, the colleges and the education department) militate against literary criticism and its development. The popular journal world which is overdeveloped in the Tamil language at the cost of the purely literary in periodical and book publication, does not yet recognise the need for literary criticism. The pseudo-intellectuals who associate themselves with institutions like the Sahitya Akademi, the All India Radio, the various Universities and the like are afraid of betraying themselves as pseudo-intellectuals and hence do not venture very far out.

The healthy development of literary criticism presupposes an individualistic approach to life and letters. And by tradition, we are community bound. The individual is a concept with which even our best writers are as yet not familiar. The individual, the unique, the one who is different, is the very basis of literature as we understand it today and hence also of literary criticism which points out this individuality, this uniqueness, this 'differentness' from others. The lack of literary criticism and its tardiness in emerging as a full department of Indian letters is perhaps a sociological phenomenon which should be studied as such in the larger context of the Indian scene and not merely of the Tamils alone.

MODERN INDIAN NOVEL: SOME BASIC QUESTIONS

KRISHNA BALDEV VAID

IN THIS brief essay I have tried to articulate a few questions that seem important to me. My qualifications for assuming even this not very ambitious task are perhaps quite inadequate. I do not know all of our fourteen modern Indian languages, although I have drawn some comfort from the hope that no one present here will claim that knowledge either. I have denied myself the obvious advantage of concentrating only on the Indo-Anglian novel, for I regard it to be a special case and shall risk my personal, and perhaps unpalatable, opinion on it toward the close of my paper. Thus I shall be generalising in what follows upon my awareness of the novel in Hindi and Urdu, such as it is, upon my limited access to the novel in some other Indian languages, and mainly upon my own pre-occupations as a practitioner, of no great repute, in Hindi.

First of all, then, it seems significant to me that, despite the notorious incapacity of critics and scholars to agree with one another on almost anything, there is a surprising unanimity at least on one matter of historical fact. Almost everyone who has written on the growth of novel in several of our languages has admitted, without any reservation, that it is the product of the impact of the West, including its fiction, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The use of 'modern' to qualify the Indian novel, therefore, is quite unnecessary, for there *was* no ancient Indian novel. Some Western literary historians have sought to provide their novel with a respectable antiquity by dragging it back to rather far-fetched ancestral origins. The literary historian in India, whatever his other shortcomings, which alas are many, has by and large resisted this temptation. This resistance is all the more remarkable in the presence of our ancient and unfathomable oceans of stories and fables. It is, in short, generally admitted that the progenitors of the Indian novel were not the remote writers of Sanskrit prose but more familiar personages like Bankim, Tagore, Saratchandra, Prem Chand, and so on. Furthermore, these pioneers were influenced not by ancient prose romances and beast fables but by the nineteenth century European, primarily English, novel.

A reiteration of this fact should, I suggest, lead us to an acceptance of its corollary, namely, that the only worth-while tradition relevant to a proper evaluation of our novel is the Western tradition. We may, hopefully, in the not too distant future, make some specifically Indian contributions to, and modifications in, that tradition. But, for the present, it is not desirable, nor is it necessary, to seek to adorn, or burden, the Indian novel with an exclusively Indian or even Eastern tradition. To put it bluntly, if we accept the newness of the Indian novel and its derivation from the European novel, shouldn't we hesitate to evaluate its achievements and failures in the light of our own traditional prose literature of aesthetic doctrines?

Few critics to my knowledge have ever really attempted to do so, but many have piously expressed a sort of faith in the possibility and fruitfulness of this task. This gesture of piety, this ritualistic bow, is perhaps, we feel, the least we can offer by way of a tribute to our rich literary heritage. After all, ancient Indian aesthetics is embodied in a formidable, almost forbidding, array of treatises, commentaries and manuals for poetic practice, ranging from Bharata's *Natyasastra* to Jagannatha Pandita's *Rasagangadhara.* Its values and criteria are exemplified by a correspondingly impressive number of religio-literary works ranging from the Vedas to the prose writings of Dandin, Subhandu and Bana. It is no wonder, then, that the scholar of Indian aesthetics should be beguiled into the temptation of at least expressing the hope that the theories, for instance, of *Rasa* and *Dhvani* should be applicable to the consideration of Indian literature including novel. My point is that he should go further than this and put his conjectures to an actual test. Until then, I consider it safe to take refuge in plain common sense. And from that unacademic corner I see a wide gulf between traditional aesthetic values and the modern Indian novel. Those values were developed for other times and for other literary forms. The times have changed, and some of those other forms such as poetry and drama have also been engaged in a long and tortuous process of emancipation from ancient models and the aesthetic criteria those models sought to satisfy or gave rise to.

Further, even in ancient times the traditional aesthetic criteria were applicable only to those prose works which approximated the ornateness of Sanskrit poetry. It may be objected that the

Sanskrit *Kavya* was meant to include any imaginative work and that it refused to make verse an essential. But in actual practice this obliteration of frontiers between prose and poetry was achieved at the expense of what we now recognise as the essential qualities of a good prose style. Prose in Sanskrit remained subservient to poetry and its highly figurative expression. In our time the erstwhile barriers between prose and poetry have been in the process of becoming more fluid. And in this mutual rapproachment it is poetry that has come closer to prose. In any case, one general direction in which prose in modern Indian languages has moved is the direction of simplicity. Indeed, one measure of the growth of the novel in our languages is the degree to which it has achieved directness of expression and contemporaneity of diction, and in this the modern Indian novel has learnt but little from the classical Sanskrit prose.

There is another view of tradition according to which this entire fuss about the modern Indian novel will, I am afraid, appear almost vulgar. This view, held by some great spiritual aristocrats, proceeds from an extreme degree of commitment to an outlook that is Traditional with a capital T. This Tradition is not bound by the normal limitations of time and space; it is perennial. Judged by this outlook, all that is modern is by definition a deviation from Tradition and hence degenerate. In modern society a divorce has occurred between work and play, between art and utility, between myth and actuality. This divorce, dating in Europe from the so-called Renaissance, has been accentuated by modern technology into what threatens to be a perpetual irreconciliation. Even in India we have turned away from the old integrated society where each individual had his well-defined place and role and where, presumably, he performed his duties, howsoever unpleasant, according to his nature. Now we are clear neither about our nature nor about our duties—both *svabhava* and *svadharma* have become things of the past, and what a pity it is!

This exalted view of Tradition, useful as it may be for an understanding of our glorious Past, is singularly inimical to an understanding of our Present. Once we surrender ourselves to the beguiling consolations offered by this view—and there is no denying its partial validity—we are prevented from any evaluation or analysis of any modern art or activity except to the extent of an

impassioned condemnation of all that has happened since medieval times. I have mentioned this view because of my conviction that in several insidious ways it has its hold on most of us. Scholars steeped in Sanskrit learning are particularly prone to this outlook. That is why several of them show either an indifference to or abhorrence of all modern literature. Subject to correction, I would also submit that this may be one reason why so many of them remained content with a mere parrotting of old aesthetic doctrines and so few of them have performed the more useful critical function of interpreting those doctrines anew and adapting them to modern literary conditions.

So much, then, for this question of tradition, which brings us back, however, to the question of relationship between the Indian and the European novel. As suggested earlier, the pioneers of the Indian novel were directly influenced by some European novelist or by a combination of some European novelists. Apart from registering some of the reverberations produced by the Western impact, they also modelled their novels, somewhat crudely, on foreign novels. But the models they chose had often already been either discarded or remodelled in the source language. Thus, to take the example of Prem Chand, his writing career coincided with some of the most spectacular and profound changes in English novel brought about by Henry James, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence. But in Prem Chand's work we do not see any awareness of these changes. He reminds us, at best, of Hardy, Galsworthy and Bennett. We notice the same phenomenon in Hindi poetry, where the so-called *chayavad* was a belated Indian echo of the nineteenth century English Romantics. Similar examples can be gleaned from literature in other Indian languages to inforce the point that our pioneers drew their inspiration from sources that had already dried up in their home country. Reasons for this time lag in the percolation of foreign influences can be found, and they are good reasons—defective communications, defective education, the actual social conditions of our country which were responsive to certain influences and insensitive to others, the pressures of nationalism which also encouraged a selection of influences and models in accordance with the needs of the nation, and so on. But obviously at that time the relationship between Indian and European novel was one-sided and incomplete. The European novelists then

writing had neither any need nor any opportunity to be aware of their unacknowledged and unknown poor Indian cousins.

The question, then, is whether on surveying the contemporary scene in Indian fiction we can say that the Indian novel has emerged from bondage into a living and mutual relationship with the European novel? Briefly, my answer would be that it has not. But this brevity does less than justice to the quality, if not the extent, of the change that has occurred in the Indian novelists' attitude to the living foreign novel. For one thing, leaving aside the old pretenders who still survive and thrive, I won't name them, many of the younger novelists are more self-conscious and selective about foreign influences. Their awareness of significant foreign currents is more keen and up-to-date. Of course, they still look to the West for inspiration as well as comparison. But this is a fact that we should accept rather than lament. We have more need, even as we are in a better position, to be aware of the Western novelists than *vice versa*. But the signs of servility, or of aggressiveness which shadows servility, in our search abroad for influences and affinities are fast disappearing. And that I think augurs well for the future of the Indian novel.

The Indian critic, I am afraid, is not very much in tune with this or, in fact, any other change. (He has failed to place the early pioneers in their proper place or perspective, and he often commits the mistake of measuring the newly emerging novel by worn-out and insufficient yardsticks. Still more often, the yardstick in his hand becomes a mere stick which he shakes in a schoolmasterly manner at all deviations from the so-called accepted standards. In the discussion of the earlier novelists he adopts a naive approach according to which the origin and the quality—this latter often dubious—of the influences itself are a sufficient proof of the lasting literary merit of the author and work supposed to have been influenced. In the evaluation of the important struggling younger novelists, he adopts a frown according to which all of them are derivative and imitative. He has never learnt, in short, to examine the intricate mechanics of literary influences upon a genuine writer.) But let me not talk of the Indian critic beyond this desperate wish that he had better not be there at all, for he lacks the essential qualities even of a most elementary nature necessary for his task.

Having made short shrift of Indian criticism, I wish to raise the question of standards that we should apply to our novel. There is a point of view according to which these standards should still remain largely internal or local. This view has the support of the old respectable doctrine of 'the race, the *milieu*, and the moment'. One major consequence, flattering to some but fatal to truth, of this approach is that many writers and works begin to assume a literary stature they would not have were they to be placed in a larger international frame of comparative references. The much too exaggerated stature, apart from their historical importance, of Bankim, Tagore, Saratchandra, and Prem Chand should be an abject warning in this respect. It is a valid approach in so far as it helps us to understand the actual position. But, on the other hand, it is self-protective in the extreme, leading to untenable evaluations and to an exaggeration of the peculiarly difficult circumstances of the Indian novelist.

Then there is the other point of view that we should stop making concessions to ourselves and evaluate our novel in the same rigorous way that others, if not we, adopt to the foreign novel. The value of this approach is that it will shake us rudely out of self-complacence and confront us with our diminutive literary size. It can also prompt us to better effort even though it may not necessarily result in better work. The danger, if it may be so called, of this approach is loss of realism and in some cases that of faith.

If I were to choose between these two approaches, I would choose the second. But perhaps a choice should not be forced, for they need not be so mutually exclusive. A precise awareness of the circumstances of the Indian novel—its recent origin, its numerous work-a-day difficulties, the transitional and hybrid character of our society, and so on—is necessary for a proper understanding and a reasonable confidence in the future. At the same time, an equally precise and ruthless assessment of our work on its merits, without the usual concessions, is also needed to know where we stand or whether we do so at all. The first approach may give us some cause for satisfaction; the second is a necessary counter-balance so that satisfaction does not congeal into smugness. In the first we should guard against the tendency to exaggerate our difficulties and to imagine that they are unique; in the second we should resist the temptation to play down those

difficulties and deny our achievements, limited though they may turn out to be.

I want to refer briefly now to what seem to me the main thematic pre-occupations of the Indian novelist. These are portrayal of poverty, hunger and disease; portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions; examination of the survivals of the past; exploration of the hybrid culture of the Indian middle-classes; analysis of the innumerable dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of industrialisation. This list is, of course, not exhaustive; few lists ever are. In fact, if I were to gather all these themes under one comprehensive rubric, I would say that *the* theme of the Indian novelist is to examine the process and problems of an agrarian, tradition-oppressed society currently in the throes of an unprecedented transmutation—unprecedented, that is, in the Indian context.

Stated thus, the theme may appear to be bald but, I suppose powerful enough. Statements do not lose by being bald but novels do. And, unfortunately, in our novels the baldness of the theme remains but the power frequently is not there. The question is why? What is it that prevents the Indian novelist from being equal to this great theme? One answer I can anticipate. It is nothing more mysterious than lack of talent or genius or creative imagination, someone might say and not stay for a further question. It is an answer that would, of course, silence all further questions even if that hypothetical someone were to stay on. But, it seems to me, this lack or deficiency of the Indian novelist manifests itself in his failure to recognize the deep psychological ramifications of the theme stated above. The failure itself is due, in part, to the overwhelming pressure of the problem in its surface or sociological aspects. In part, and this is the part I wish to emphasize, it is also due to a blatant commitment to a purposive approach to art. Preaching comes easy to us all. And in a hurry to be socially useful, our works are all too often vitiated by superficiality and propaganda.

Now, if our novelists could break the theme enunciated above into its psychological and individual components and work at a deeper level of creative engagement, if they could try to reflect the process of change in terms of the individual, if they could kill their sense of guilt about not attacking the large social problems, if they could resist the temptation to be big, if they could confine

themselves, in short, to their own *anubhuti*, they might liberate the Indian novel from its two great and disastrous obsessions, namely, propaganda and sentimentality.

This inclination toward lachrymose sentimentality could also find a corrective in humour and satire in which the Indian novel is very deficient indeed. The comic vision is rare, if not altogether absent; the satirical approach is also less frequent than it ought to be, considering the abundance of Indian pomposities that need to be punctured. The tendency to be solemn, pseudo-metaphysical, and dull is more in evidence. I can cite Krishna Chander, the best known Urdu writer, as an example of insufferable sentimentality and Jainendra Kumar, the best known Hindi writer, as an example of an equally insufferable pseudo-solemnity. It may be that humour is an inevitable casualty under the onslaught of the grinding misery that one finds everywhere in India. One knows that even some very humorous foreigners while in India become very irritable and glum. If this is the reaction of an outsider, who is not always exposed to the bleakest variety of Indian misery, the Indian novelist, who more often than not lives in the very middle of that bleakness, is even more likely to become humourless. Only his humourlessness disguises itself in a romantic sort of didacticism or else in a woolly sort of metaphysicalism.

In matters of form the Indian novel is timid, if not altogether completely averse to experiment and innovation. Several fears operate on the novelist's mind. For instance, there is the fear of being accused of an imitative pursuit of the Western experimental novel. This fear, I think, curbs the possibilities of even genuinely original experiments. This is also accompanied by the belief that most of these experiments in the West have led the novel into a blind alley and that the Western novel has also reverted to pre-experimental conventional modes of narration. This opinion, I think, is wrong but some Indian novelists and critics perhaps consider it expedient to spread this rumour. Then there is the fear of failure to communicate with the Indian audience. This is a valid fear and commands one's attention though not one's allegiance. As it is, the reading public in India is not too large; for experimental works it is bound to be even more limited. The sales of even popular, and bad, novels do not run beyond a few thousand copies. Even then, formal experimentation is

a sign as well as pre-condition for a vigorous literary movement. We get more evidence of it, incidentally, in the Indian short story, which I think has more to show for itself than the novel. This is linked partly with the fact that even stories of an unpopular variety are acceptable to large-circulation magazines that normally cater to popular taste but do not deny themselves the literary glamour that sometimes attaches to an occasional accommodation of less popular pieces. Also, the Indian fictionist has been much more successful in achieving an artistic realization of brief flashes, insights, and situations that the short story which is really short demands. Perhaps, this is so because in the short story he has been able to rely to a greater extent on his own experience and shake off the necessity to be purposive and didactic. Or, perhaps, is it because the short story demands less patience, if not less insight and labour? I shall leave this minor question hanging in mid-air and turn to the Indo-Anglian novel which I singled out as a special case.

Nowhere in Europe do we have this extraordinary phenomenon of such a large number of writers writing in a language that is foreign to them. It may be unacceptable to some but I have no doubt that in spite of its predominance in the past and its assuredly important future in India, English, for us, is a foreign language and will remain so. However, one can understand why so many of our writers have adopted English as their medium. Let me put in that I am not trying to insinuate that they have done so for material gains. At the same time, I don't think this choice, and the performance that has resulted from this choice, warrants the following assertion made by someone in *The Times Literary Supplement* of August 10, 1962. 'Whatever its form it seems certain that the Indian novel in English will surpass its counterpart in the regional languages perhaps because of an instinctive desire on the part of the majority of the authors to use this language for this purpose, because of the national and international public it reaches and the world-wide tradition the form enjoys. As regional taste improves, the standard normally associated with the vernacular novel at present will be discarded, and it remains a question whether that novel will rise to emulate its English counterpart, now enjoyed by the cream of the reading public, or whether the English novel will finally supercede it'. I crave your indulgence for having quoted at all from this bewildering article.

It is just not true that the majority of the Indian writers have an 'instinctive desire' to write in English. If it is a question of mere numbers, for every Indo-Anglian writer there are scores who write in the 'vernacular' languages. So far as the world-wide traditions of the novel go, one can be aware of them even better without wanting or trying to write in English. The assertion that the Indo-Anglian novel as such is enjoyed by 'the cream of the reading public' is just a wild conjecture, unsupported as it is by the reflection of that enjoyment in even a single good piece of criticism on the Indo-Anglian novel. Most foreign reviewers tend to be painfully condescending in their appreciation of our Indo-Anglians. The latest example of this attitude that I know of was contained in a wishy-washy article of William Walsh published in a recent issue of *Encounter*. The very feat of an Indian writing 'so well' in English plays a disproportionate part in these reviews. Also, the exotic and the local colour get an undeserved degree of attention. A certain superficial curiosity with regard to Indian manners, customs and environments is satisfied, and elements that should be marginal usurp the centre.

Now, I don't think that the serious Indo-Anglian novelist is consciously exploiting this superficial curiosity and 'selling' India to the foreign reader. But an awareness of the foreign reading public and of its limitations does influence, on the evidence of his work, his choice of material and detail to an undesirable degree. The main charge against the Indo-Anglian novelist is not that he is not Indian but that he is too self-consciously Indian. Most of his novels are cluttered with inessential details; more often than not they labour the obvious. No doubt all novelists inevitably mirror their country and her customs; but at their best they do so indirectly; they are a source of insight, and not of information, even to the foreign reader. I am sure, there are many details and implications that we do not grasp when we read, for instance, the great Russian novels; and yet the solution of this difficulty is not that an explanation of those details ought to be worked into the text, which is what many Indo-Anglians do. It does not help to concede that they may not be doing so very consciously, for my contention is that the very choice of the medium affects their writing adversely and in more ways than they are even aware of.

My views on this subject, I may conclude, do not proceed, so far as I am aware, from any patriotic or parochial prejudice

against the choice of English as a medium. My appreciation of high merit of some individual Indo-Anglian novels notwithstanding, I think as I do because of the generally admitted difficulties of giving oneself the best chance and challenge in a foreign language. Such a course may have the ostensible advantage of circumventing the problems of translation and reaching perhaps a larger, though not necessarily a more perceptive, audience. But in this process of circumvention several other possibilities of excellence and perfection are sacrificed at the very outset.

In the light of all these remarks about the Indian and the Indo-Anglian novel, I would like to pose my last question, which concerns the future of our novel. But that perhaps is an anxiety we should not permit ourselves to indulge in, or should we?

LITERARY HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

AMALENDU BOSE

I

LITERARY History and Literary Criticism: are they collateral or antipodal or unrelated modes of literary studies?

To me, from the professional point of view which fans out to cultural issues of wide implications, the question is important. Decades ago, when I was an M.A. student, there were not many universities in India (and of the few, four or five, exceptions of which the University of Calcutta was not one) which admitted Literary Criticism as a part of the Honours and M.A. courses in English. Today, there is hardly a university where the subject is not admitted and I notice that it is admitted also in the Indian language courses although these latter courses seem to be content with blissfully elementary school books such as Hudson's or Worsfold's or, at the most, Scott-Jame's crib-like works. As for the English courses, if you examine them closely, you will find that by and large, the courses are naturally courses in the history of critical writings in the English language, almost never looking further back than Philip Sidney's *Apologie*. Aristotle is sometimes admitted as the progenitor of European critical writings, and sometimes Longinus. In some universities, there is provision also for the outmoded Richardsian Practical Criticism. These minor variations apart, the emphasis is on English writers from Sidney to Eliot. The paper is thus a paper on the historical sequence of critical writings hardly calculated to instilling in the student an understanding of techniques of criticism or making them familiar with the essential theories of the major critical modes. For instance, I might point out that such a course does not give an idea of sociological criticism (especially the Marxian) or classical criticism (especially the French) for the reason that the English language does not provide any outstanding example of either.

This limitedness of the criticism syllabus is not a unique feature of Indian universities alone. You can notice a similar concentration on a particular approach to literary studies in British

universities and, as for American universities, Professor Helen C. White, in her presidential address to the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1963, described how woefully inadequate the discipline was in her own undergraduate days after the First World War.

I think it is high time that we enrich, widen and deepen our conception of Literary Criticism and apply this conception fruitfully to the pedagogic process. In order to do so, it should be useful to clarify, although briefly, our notions of the terms Literary Criticism and Literary History.

II

What is Literary Criticism and who is the Critic, the qualified Critic? The intellectual activity today implied by the term Criticism in Europe is of post-Renaissance origin, an activity that hardly existed before the Boileau-Dryden-Johnson chain of thinking. Aristotle's brief treatise on the art of fiction, significantly a complement of the dissertation on Rhetoric, was a part of his comprehensive attempt to arrive at a synthetic world-view and with Longinus too, poetry was a segment of a philosophical attitude. The writers of the Italian Renaissance, Castolvetro, Scaliger, Trissino and others, elaborated the questions of rhetoric implicit in the discussions of the earlier masters. The term Criticism did not exist in those days. Rhetoric was the acknowledged and honoured discipline, a discipline that improved and civilised man's taste. The Greek word *Kritikos*, the Latin word *Criticus*, bear a medico-physiological meaning which has not altogether disappeared from the English derivative even today, as certain uses of the words *crisis* and *critical* show. (e.g., The patient is in a critical condition. The Cuban crisis is not yet over.) Since the old lexical meaning of the word implied, on the part of the doctor, an ability to diagnose the patient's weakness, the term Criticism as applied to the arts, acquired the meaning of fault-finding. Even today, when you say that Mr X had criticized Mr Y's statement, you mean that Mr X has denigrated Mr Y's statement. For quite some time, the Critic was a fault-finder; more often than not, a harsh fault-finder. For long, till the day of the influential quarterlies of the early 19th century, the Critic was a convicting judge of the tribe described in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, a fault-finder often at loggerheads with the creative

writer whose head became blood-stained under the Critic's blunderbuss. Even the worm would wriggle when trodden. The poet at times hit back. The other day, Mr Narayanachar reminded us of Johnson's and Fielding's observations. To Johnson, 'Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense . . . and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critic'. And Fielding met rudeness with rudeness by calling critics 'reptiles'. It was this traditional animosity prevailing between the two parties, rather than any notion of formulating a serious theory of literature which was, I think, at the root of Dryden's contemptuous assertion that critics are poets *manque* and Ben Jonson's statement that 'to judge of the poets is only the function of poets'. Pope's withering *Dunciad*, Byron's scornful *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Tennyson's disdainful doggerel on Christopher North and Browning's vigorous *Pacchiarotto* mark the several stages in the long-drawn quarrel between the poet and the critic, the pejorative critic. In our own times, W. B. Yeats mocked at scholar-critics.

> Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
> Old, learned, respectable bald heads
> Edit and annotate the lines
> That youngmen, tossing on their beds
> Rhymed out in love's despair
> To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.
> All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
> All wear the carpet with their shoes;
> All think what other people think;
> All know the man their neighbour knows.
> Lord, what would they say
> Did their Catullus walk the way?
>
> ('The Scholars')

And since I am speaking of this protracted war between poets and critics, let me mention two acts related to recent Bengali literature. In my young days, a reviewer (an elderly woman) writing on Buddhadeva Bose, ended her piece with the wish that Bose's mother (who, it was well-known, had died when her baby was a few days old) had strangled the baby. The second fact

concerns that gentlest of mortals, the late poet Jivananda Das, who after enduring for two decades savage treatment in the hands of reviewers, retorted with an epigram which ranks high among the bitter invectives in our language.

This war notwithstanding, it began increasingly to be felt in the 17th century that a second party, a sort of conduct, was necessary between the first party (the poet) and the third (the reader or hearer). With a rapid increase of printed books, the experience of poetry from being a *heard* experience changed into a *read* experience; and also there was a fast-growing *bourgeoisie* who wanted to experience the arts but did not possess the inherited and native sensibilities of the affluent, art-admiring classes of the earlier centuries. In accord with this need for an elevated function of the mediator between the poet and the public, new words began to enter into the English language. As the Oxford English Dictionary shows, the words *critic, criticism, criticize, critical* were born between the middle of the 16th century and the middle of the 17th. It was not however till after the middle of the 19th century when Matthew Arnold began to write his essays in criticism that the hardy pejorative meaning of the term criticism began definitely to yield place to an aesthetic meaning and that the aim of criticism and the function of the critic began properly to be enquired into and defined. I doubt if an agreed definition has yet been achieved. I doubt if even a limited gathering such as ours, can produce an agreed definition of criticism any more than it can of terms like Poetry, Art, Beautiful and so forth. Yet I have no doubt that as a result of one century's searching deliberations, we are now in a position to share a number of common notions of the nature and function of criticism. To indicate the trend of these deliberations of our predecessors, I propose to quote a few statements:

(Matthew Arnold) Criticism is a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. Its business is simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas.

(H. L. Meneken) The function of a genuine critic of the arts is to provoke a reaction between the work of art and the spectator: the spectator, untutored, stands unmoved; he sees

the work of art, but it fails to make any intelligible impression on him; if he were spontaneously sensitive to it, there would be no need for criticism.

(I. A. Richards) Criticism, as I understand it, is the endeavour to discriminate between experiences and to evaluate them.

(Ezra Pound) Excernment: The general ordering and weeding out of what has actually been performed . . . the ordering of knowledge that the next man (or generation) can most readily find the live parts of it and waste the least possible time among obsolete issues.

(F. R. Leavis) The critic's aim is, first, to realize as sensitively and completely as possible this or that which claims his attention, and a certain valuing is implicit in the realizing... The business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiarly strict relevance in developing his response into commentary; he must be on guard against abstracting improperly from what is in front of him and against any premature or irrelevant generalizing.

From these and other statements—of these and other thinkers —I find it possible to extract a few commonly held or implied notions.

1. That criticism is a form of evaluation of the work under consideration. From this I deduce the further notion that the evaluation implies a term of reference, a criterion, a comparability. An incomparable object stands outside the periphery of evaluation. Evaluation is by its very nature the discernment of merit or demerit that is essentially relative. In the history of art, as in all things human, there never is a finality of achievement, no escape from becoming, and, for all we know, *King Lear* may one day be surpassed in respect of tragic intensity by another drama, the Meenakshi temple may be the second to a yet unraised temple architecture, El Greco's *A Woman* may conceivably yield its pride of place to another painting of the *genre*.

2. Evaluation presupposes knowledge. The merest tyro cannot assess because he has not knowledge enough, because he is deficient in the intellectual equipment to know. The knowledge is the knowledge of the entire gamut of life, for the undeniable

reason that, as Terence said centuries ago, the poet is a man and nothing that pertains to man can be alien to him.

More than any one else in the world, it is the poet who can say and say in all humility, 'I have taken all knowledge for my province'. Since the Critic derives his function from the poet, he has to know what his poet knows but, while alert like the aeolian harp to all experience, he has to possess a yet deeper knowledge of the particular experience to which he has applied himself, viz., the experience of poetry and all that poetry denotes and connotes, the poetic process, the poetic meaning, the poetic artefact and so forth.

3. Since evaluation is the end-result of the application of some term of reference, some criterion, it follows that there has to be some theoretical basis for it, no matter whether the theory is assumed or explicit. The Critic may not himself be a philosopher —few notable critics have constructed any coherent and consistent conceptual foundation for their assessments—but even the empirical critic cannot do without, as Matthew Arnold did not, some central and (for him) definite premises. The proof may be in the pudding but I must know what a pudding is and why the eatable in question is to be treated as a pudding. The historian-philosopher R. G. Collingwood remarked that a man who claims to know what makes Shakespeare a poet is tacitly claiming to know whether Gertrude Stein is a poet and, if not, why not.

4. A theory of criticism is indissolubly linked up with a theory of poetry; of literature, if you please, Or, I may say, a theory of criticism is an offshoot or a theory of literature since, as I have said a little while ago, if there were no creative literature, there would be no criticism. But a theory of literature which eventually turns out to be a segment of Epistemology, may have to hitch itself on to the wagon of some system of world-view, some philosophy. The Critic need not philosophize, he had better not, but he has to have a philosophical awareness of what he is doing and why.

5. In the Critic's function, there is an active energy, and energy that Arnold found to be the central quality of the Hebraic tradition. Since, for the critic, literature is a valuable experience for humanity, he must needs persuade the unpersuaded to his perception of the value of the work of art and thus contribute to the dissemination of an awareness of the good life. The Critic

is, functionally, an interpreter. The Critic has to assume this role because more often than not the poet whose works he interprets is himself unable to do so. Mr Lal has referred us to the curious interview between T. S. Eliot and Nevill Coghill in course of which the poet charmingly admitted that a meaning other than the one he had in mind could be very well constructed from *Sweeney Agonistes*. There is a letter of Melville's to a friend on the possibility of an allegorical meaning for *Moby Dick:*

> Your allusion to the 'spirit spout' first showed to me that there was a subtle significance in that thing—but I did not, in that case, *mean* it. I had some vague idea while writing it, that the whole book was susceptible of an allegoric construction but the speciality of many of the particular subordinate allegories was first revealed to me after reading Mr Hawthorne's letter which intimated the . . . allegoricalness of the whole.

Socrates, we gather from Plato, became convinced that the poets themselves are incapable of explaining what they do. He used to get hold of poets trudging along the roads of Athens and corner them with questions on their poetical performance. He must have been a dreadful bore and when the miserable poet cut his discourses with a plain admission of ignorance, I suspect there was more than genuine ignorance to it. But this experience provoked Socrates to making the important statement to his disciple Glaucon as recorded in Plato's *Republic:* 'We might also allow her champions who are not poets, but lovers of poetry, to publish a prose defence on her behalf'. The Critic's role as a mediator, an interpreter, was thus postulated by the wisest man of Attica.

6. There is another element of Criticism—to my mind, the indispensable central element—which English writers have variously called sensibility, taste, good sense, sympathy, empathy, and so forth. These terms refer to a gift without which nothing can lead the reader or hearer to a rich participation in the experience of poetry. This gift is the final differential of the Critic's nature. One man, as the saying goes, can take a horse to water but twenty may not make it drink. No amount of proselytizing zeal can prepare me for the experience unless I have a native predisposition for it. And prior to the reader, it is the Critic

who has to be blessed with this faculty. What the qualified Critic can do is to arouse, stimulate and refine the reader's dormant and untrained sensibility to an extent that he, the reader, becomes ready for full participation in the poetic experience. Criticism, then, is a discipline at once intellectual and emotional. I would go further and say that while a raw emotional sensibility has an advantage over the intellectual, in so far as even when alone, it can offer me the experience of poetry, however fragmentarily, intellectual sensibility by itself proves to be sterile. Standing singly, neither sensibility will qualify me properly for the complex and difficult business of criticism; integrated, they will utter for me the open sesame to the chamber of poetic experience. Of the two hemispheres of this discipline of criticism, it seems to me, the intellectual component has been stressed in the Western tradition of aesthetics far more than the emotional, and it is here, I believe, that we who aim at understanding the nature of Criticism as being critics ourselves and at training our young men and women as critics, have much to learn from the Indian tradition. Dr Krishnamurti and other friends here knowledgeable in the Indian tradition, have told us, during the last few days, of the fundamentally *sahrdaya* character of the critic. Leaving aside the somewhat vexed and nebulous question of what precisely constitutes the creative energy (a question which, I fear, will never be answered satisfactorily until our knowledge of the myriad-formed complex human psyche becomes perfect, if it can ever be perfect), leaving aside this question on which thinkers in the West as well as in India seem so frequently to differ, I find no basic difference among the Indian thinkers on what constitutes the qualification of the Critic. The critic is a *sahrdaya.* The emphasis is on the heart, on the emotive rather than the intellective faculty. And endowed with this cardinal faculty, trained adequately in the art of recognizing the organizational nuances of poetry, the Critic approaches particular poems with *tanmayibhavana yogyata,* the ability to become one with the artefact, the chameleon-like ability of which Keats wrote, a special psychical flexibility to merge one's self into the art-self. The Critic attains to a sublimation or rarefication rather than any extinction of his personality. Such an experience is bound to sharpen and heighten his humanness. The Critic can glide on easefully from the imagined personality to another, from the introvert Hamlet to the extrovert Falstaff,

from the moody Ophelia to the vivacious Beatrice, from the Shakespearean character to the Dickensian or the Tolstoyan; he can, with equal confidence plunge into the experience of a Herrick lyric and *The Ring and the Book.* Surely, by this process, the Critic should grow into a better and healthier man and should be an agent properly qualified to help other men grow into better and healthier men. Here there is the use of Criticism and herein consists its distinctive academic value as a discipline.

III

If such be the nature and function of literary Criticism, what are the function and nature of literary History?

A sense of history in literary discussions is as old as Aristotle who refers to the origin and development of tragedy. Some Renaissance Italians too refer to histories of literary *genres.* But such references, although indicating an awareness of chronological sequence, depend heavily on legendary tradition and are unmindful of any possibility of meanings of the sequence. Without forgetting Herodotus and Tacitus, one has to say that a sense of history as we understand it today, began to grow in the 18th century with the French Cyclopaedists and Gibbon. The question came to be asked: What is history, is it a collection of massive facts or is there any pattern, any law, underlying the facts? In 1725, Giabattista Vice's *Scienza Muova* was published; in the next century, Hegel and Marx propounded their philosophies of history. It was no wonder that the first real history of literature in any modern European language was written in the 18th century. I mean Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry. Since then countless histories of literature have come to us and certain views about literary history have been postulated. I quote a few:

(Carlyle) The history of a nation's poetry is the essence of its history, political, scientific, religious. With all these the complete historian of Poetry will be familiar;

> the national physiognomy, in its finest traits, and through its successive stages of growth, will be clear to him; he will discern the grand spiritual tendency of every period, which was the highest Aim and Enthusiasm of mankind in each, and how one epoch evolved in itself from the other.

In literature and its history, Carlyle looked for a nation's spiritual record. Materialistic interpretations of history demanded different meanings.

(Marx) The methods of production in material life determine the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.

(Engels) In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that speech.

I have no intention of probing into the validities of those views of history, the spiritual and the materialistic, but quite obviously both views regard literature as subordinate to processes other than the literary; the history of literature, in such views, has to subserve the claims of non-literary issues. It is possible to discover in several histories of literature (e.g., Taine's, Courthope's Greenlaw's) the same non-literary claim advanced for literary phenomena. Such claims and approaches to literature and its history, whatever their merits be from non-literary points of view, are unrelated to literary criticism in terms of its nature and function as I have described above and therefore do not concern us here. We shall pass by these aliens to literary criticism.

A history of literature has to be a record, in chronological sequence, of facts relating to literary phenomena so as to bring into clear relief the movements of the literary tradition. Such a history will take into account the dynamics and complex of literary themes and attitudes; literary types, forms, *genres;* literary derivatives and relationships; the highways and significant byways of the literary process. It is not merely the fact of the complex but the meaning of it that must demand the historian's attention although, of course, no meaning is valid unless the fact be authentic and accurate. The historian grows into the critic by virtue of his capacity for correctly interpreting facts and weaving them into a pattern, in terms not of wish-fulfilment but of severe fidelity to the facts as they are. Undoubtedly, the facts are innumerable and not all of them deserve recording, and the historian's

critical ability will be tested by his choice of facts but once he has found a significant fact, he cannot suppress or neglect it or, for that matter, glorify it, just to suit a preconceived pattern. The pattern has to be based on the facts, not the facts to adopt themselves to the pattern.

A necessary feature of literary history, too often over-looked, is its linguistic aspect. After all, literature is the art of the employment of language. The literature of any given period of history depends substantially on the state of the language prevailing in that period. The strong French element in 14th century English is reflected in the diction of Chaucer and Gower; the rapid inflow of new words in 16th century English is evident in the diction of Elizabethan writers; the 'bulbousness' that Bonamy Dobree has found in Victorian diction stems from the linguistic looseness that had set in at the time. Since language is a social product, a full explanation of these linguistic phenomena will no doubt require of the historian an adequate knowledge of the social correlatives but, as a historian of literature, he will concentrate on the linguistic and therefore literary consequences rather than on the sociological origins. And that ought to be his guiding principle for his analyses of themes, types, genres and so forth.

The literary chronicler, the source-compiler, may be a scholar such as Wells, that industrious and useful compiler of a Manual of Middle English Works, but his province is outside the bounds of Literary Criticism. The literary historian who does something far more than serially present thumb-nail appreciations of writers period-wise, who interprets the tradition of a literature on the basis of value-judgment, is a literary critic himself and can initiate the novice to the discipline of criticism. For purposes of academic study, let me suggest a close linking up of history and criticism. Indeed, the concept and practice of literary history is an integral part of the theory of literature even as criticism is. There are several possible ways of establishing this link and I would be the last person to propose legislation of a uniform way for all academic bodies. My plea is simply for an awareness of the inter-dependence between literary history (of which the history of criticism is a part) and literary criticism. Without the historical sense, criticism becomes irresponsible, wishful, impressionistic, opinionative; without value-judgment, history becomes

what an English father, one Francis Osborne, described in a letter to his son in 1956 as 'lumber and formes'. The critic's highest gift, his *tanmayibhavana yogyata*, is, as I have stated above, a native gift, capable of refinement and strengthening; his intellectual equipment, which is wholly a matter of education, includes an understanding of the historical process. Here lies, as far as I can see, the relation between Literary Criticism and Literary History.

REFLECTIONS ON ANALYTIC CRITICISM

KRISHNAMOORTHY AITHAL

LITERATURE has been studied from such diverse points of view as theory, biography, ethos, historical background and so on. Each approach has its own interpretation of poetry and method of valuation. Behind each stand, there is the belief that it has come to grips with the heart on the matter and that it captures the beauty, richness, and significance of the work of art. But in actual truth critics judging on these grounds fail to go into the full possession of the given work. They move away from the subject of their consideration. Their attention is distracted from what is before them. The basis of their appreciation obscures the integrity of the literary object. The art never reaches its arthood under their eyes. A number of critics have now demonstrated the invalidity of the above mentioned enquiries and there is no need to examine their irrelevance here. In this paper, it is intended to discuss the acceptability of analytic criticism which has replaced all these practices and which has become a dominating critical procedure in the twentieth century in England and America.

The first and the most important among the contemporary critics who have effectively showed up the ineptitude of the traditional approaches and who have helped to institute the new analytic method are by common acknowledgement T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards. Whatever may be their place as critics today, they are historically very significant. Now that a few of their views and opinions have been called in question, there is a growing tendency to think slightly of their impact, and to suppose that criticism would have developed in the present line without any of their major contributions and to trace the influence much earlier to Coleridge in England and to Spingarn in America. It may be admitted that criticism would have taken some such line. Coleridge and Spingarn for whom some of the critics practising today feel indebted certainly have made their contribution. The point of the argument here is that but for the efforts of Eliot and Richards the analytic criticism would not have won such a

widespread appeal, made the achievement in criticism it has done, or grown critically so deeply conscious. A brief study of their works will be helpful for a realization of their importance.

The chief problem of Eliot in *The Sacred Wood* as he describes in the Preface is 'The problem of the integrity of poetry, with the repeated assertion, that when we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing'. In the book, he exposes the infelicity of a number of approaches which turn a critic's attention away from the object of study. The most common of the current approaches is the biographical and Eliot puts an end to it by advancing an impersonal theory of poetry in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. The impressionism prevalent in the beginning of the century is also indifferent to the art object and Eliot launches his attack on this type of criticism as practised by Arthur Symons, the critical successor of Walter Pater and Swinburne in his essay 'The Perfect Critic'. Eliot assails the poetic misconceptions of the day on which several critical malpractices are based. 'And certainly poetry is not',—he insists, repudiating one hypothesis after another thus declaring the consequent inappropriateness of criticism founded upon them —'the inculcation of moral, or the direction of politics, and no more is it religion or an equivalent of religion, except by some monstrous abuse of words. And certainly poetry is something over and above, and something quite different from, a collection of psychological data about the minds of the poets, or about the history of an epoch, for we would not have taken it even as that unless we had already assigned to it a value merely as poetry'. Eliot criticises the moralistic bias of Irving Babitt and Paul Elmer More, the political preoccupations of George Wyndham, the metaphysical approach of Coleridge and the psychological interpretation of Sainte-Beauve in his essay 'Imperfect Critics'. He thinks that the historical and philosophical critics 'had better be called historians and philosophers quite simply . . .'

Thus he makes a vigorous criticism of all those approaches which tend to be indifferent to *poetry as poetry*. He calls upon the critic to focus his attention on the actual work of art. At a time when critics have been running amuck and laying waste their energies over hundred and one things, Eliot has called for a rationalization of the approaches and inculcated a sense of direction in their minds—where and what to look for. He gives the critic

comparison and analysis to use as tools of examination. But he has done very little practical criticism himself. Though the analytic method as we see it now is something which is hard to directly attribute to Eliot, who has actually expressed his regret over its later developments, it has nevertheless taken its inspiration from him. It could not have grown so quickly and luxuriantly had not Eliot's criticism cleared the ground. The reasons for eschewing the usual extraneous considerations are already given by Eliot for the analytic critic to proceed with his work.

Like Eliot, I. A. Richards engaged himself with the question of the right approach to poetry. He conducts an attack on the thoughtless and irrational ways of criticism prevalent early in the century. He illustrates the irrelevance of theoretical study in the opening chapter of *Principles of Literary Criticism* under the heading 'The Chaos of Critical Theories'. He criticises the aestheticism of Clive Bell and Roger Fry and argues that the experience of literature is like any other experience. 'When we look at a picture', he writes, 'or read a poem, or listen to music we are not doing something quite unlike what we were doing on our way to the Gallery, or when we dressed in the morning'. He feels that moral criticism is wide of the mark. He says that 'critical remarks are merely a branch of psychological remarks, and that no special ethical or metaphysical ideas need be introduced to explain value'. When we read literature with extraneous interests like theology or morality, he observes 'we have for the moment ceased to be readers and have become astronomers, theologians or moralists, persons engaged in a quite different type of activity'. He records a number of failures in *Practical Criticism* like sentimentality, inhibition, stock-responses, fixations and the like which mislead a critic. Though Richards' psychological explanations, naturalistic approach, synaesthetic theory and observations on belief are questioned by expert psychologists, metaphysicians and literary critics, he must be given credit for exposing several wrong-headed critical approaches.

Richards has done something more positive than this. The most significant part of his work in criticism is his semantic study. He is deeply interested from the beginning in language and in the meaning of meaning. He finds poetic language a rich field for investigation. He occupies himself in analysing subtle and elaborate verbal complexities in poetry. Much of Richards' asides in

practical criticism scattered throughout his books are concerned with illustrating the ambiguity, allusiveness, interinanimation of words. Though he approaches these problems in a Benthamite spirit and is close to the profound linguistic communication, he certainly is one of the first of the contemporary critics to stress the need for a close examination of the language in poetry. He may be regarded as the harbinger of close reading in criticism.

As we pass from Eliot to Richards, we see the slow evolution of the analytic method. In Richards' works, its beginnings are more easily seen. There criticism can be found moving in the direction of the analytic. Richards carries it from where Eliot has left off. From the discussion of general problems of irrelevance of the current approaches and the integrity of poetry, he goes to specific questions of poetic organization, the nature of language and the meaning of art. He describes the organic structure of the work of literature, ambiguity of its language and the complex meaning achieved by rhythm, tone, feeling and intention.

The criticism of the extrinsic method of literary study made by Eliot and Richards receives an immediate support and consequently theoretical, moral, historical and other traditional approaches have fallen into disrepute. Analytic criticism started as a reaction is variously known as new, formalist, organicist, contextualist, textualist and verbal. In this method poetry becomes the exclusive concern of the critics. They take every care to guard against all those preoccupations which divert the reader's mind from the text. They insist on discussing literature exclusively in literary terms. They give a close reading to the work, make a detailed analysis of its organisation and arrive at a judgment of its merit. They are alive to the whole work, to all its gentle vibrations, the soft whispers and remote echoes. They are sensitive to the suggestions of word, to the interanimation of words, to what is created as the eyes move from line to line, from sentence to sentence. They are highly responsive to the complexity of meaning and levels of significance. The object is to attain a completeness of understanding and appreciation.

Analytic criticism was thought of as a foolproof procedure in the beginning. But the weaknesses have come out and they are growing with the years. A lot of niggling elucidations has been written and offered as criticism. Instead of illuminating, they

have made literature a wearisome and tiring pursuit. It has taken away all the pleasure from the study of literature. The chief object of the critics becomes simply to analyse, to show the ambiguity, paradox, irony or tension. In their fervant search of these elements they often see ambiguities and paradoxes simply not there. They do not take care to assess the value of what is so ambiguously or paradoxically presented. Further they narrow down literary interest to practical criticism and ignore its relevant wider concerns. Eliot expresses his disapproval of the practice in his essay 'The Frontiers of Criticism' published in 1956. There he refers to it as 'lemon-squeezer school of criticism', as a 'very tiring way of passing the time'. He writes in that article that literature has become less enjoyable since he wrote his 'The Function of Criticism' and therefore he feels it necessary to change his definition of the conception of function of criticism from 'elucidation of works of art and correction of taste' to 'promotion of understanding and enjoyment of literature'. Richards has used practical criticism only as an experiment and he has never recommended it as an ideal. He cannot be happy over its recent developments. Some critics have concluded that analytic criticism is about spent. But it is very unfair to observe that it has done nothing to improve our appreciation of literature. We have quite a large amount of intelligent and valuable interpretation amidst the mass of unreadable stuff. It has certainly done a lot to increase our appreciation of literature. We will see from a brief study of the criticism of William Empson the weaknesses that the analytic approach is exposed to and note the way in which a scrupulous critic like Leavis steers away from them.

The earliest substantial contribution to analytic criticism is that of Richards' pupil, William Empson. Empson finds that the elucidation of manifold meaning of Shakespeare's sonnet 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame' by Robert Graves and Laura Riding in their *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* is an unconscious corroboration of multiple meaning. He realizes that the concept holds valid in case of all good poetry. He starts working on it and the result of his efforts is the famous *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. The book offers close and subtle readings of a number of poems. Through analysis, he unravels the hidden meanings from the texts operative at different levels. He brings to light a wide range of implications of the work under study.

Empson's book vindicates the analytic approach to poetry. But some have questioned the analyst's basic assumption that ambiguity is a poetic value. The term has irritated many. Its presence in the language is considered a fault, to be avoided. But those who carefully read in what context he uses it will find nothing much to quarrel with. He states that he uses it in a far more extended sense than in the sense of witty and deceitful riddles or in the sense of an expression of doubtful meaning. It stands in Empson for 'any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language'. It is valuable 'in so far (it) ... sustains intricacy, delicacy, or compression of thoughts or is an opportunism devoted to saying quickly what the reader already understands'. It is an expression in concrete of a rich human experience and could be related to that source. 'As I understand it', he says, 'there is always in great poetry a feeling of generalization from a case which has been presented definitely; there is always an appeal to a background of human experience which is all the more present when it cannot be named'. It is that which causes while reading poetry 'so straddling a commotion, so broad a calm'. What Empson means by ambiguity in poetry is the density of poetic language, which, in short, stands for density of experience. So it requires a sensitive critic to carefully analyse the work to catch its full significance. Bearing in mind such a concept of poetry and, further, the varied complex of meanings this method of approach has brought to light one can not underestimate the importance of the analytic approach to poetry.

Some critics have argued that Empson's poetic theory does not make room for simple, direct and lucid verse of, say, Blake and Wordsworth and that his method is said to have to that extent limited relevance. But it is inappropriate to say that Empson thinks this language to be poetry and the other unpoetry when his question is whether or not it has 'a background of human experience', whether or not it creates 'so straddling a commotion and so broad a calm'. What look like simple poems like those of Wordsworth are illustrated by Empson to have a wide range of meaning and to lend themselves to analytic interpretation. It would be wrong to say that the method falls short of general application.

While analysis justifies itself as a valuable method in Empson's

book, it also betrays its serious weaknesses. It can be carried too far by an unrestrained reader to a shocking amount of nonsense as many of Empson's own elucidations illustrate. There is license to display one's wit and ingenuity to read meanings into the work under study. A number of critics have exposed this tendency almost everywhere present in *Seven Types*. The typical passage is the author's remarks on Shakespeare's 'Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang'. He writes:

> '... the comparison holds good for many reasons: because ruined monastery choirs are places in which to sing, because they involve sitting in a row, because they are made of wood, are carved into knots and so forth; because they used to be surrounded by a sheltering building crystallised out of the likeness of a forest, and coloured with stained glass and painting like flowers and leaves, because they are now abandoned by all but the grey walls coloured like the skies of winter, because the cold and narcissistic charm suggested by choir boys ...'

There is no need to quote further. It goes on and on like that. The critic completely loses sight of the line, indulges in making all sorts of associations, takes the reader further and further away from the poem. It is true that poetry is ambiguous. But 'one right total meaning' should control the critic's elucidation of ambiguities. In the absence of that control, Empson overloads his line with relevant and irrelevant meanings and he fails to make out which of them to hold most clearly in mind. The very purpose of criticism which is to make the reader go back what is being discussed is defeated here. It is ironical that analytic criticism which found theoretical, moral and other approaches objectionable because they tended to ignore the literary object should itself show indifference to it. Empson's intellect is disassociated from sensibility and this leads him away from the business of criticism.

Another drawback of the kind of criticism practised by Empson is that it escapes the responsibility of value-judgment. The critic busies himself with spelling out the meanings explicit and implicit in a passage. He supposes that it is the end and aim of criticism. He keeps completely silent over the overall significance of a work. Empson himself admits that James Smith

is right when the latter observes that he (Empson) leaves out the judgment of value. But he adds that judgment is implicit in the very fact that he has chosen to go into a poem carefully and that the worth of the same could be determined from the analysis. It is rather difficult to find out the precise value of a work either from the care Empson gives to analysis or from the analysis itself and he leaves us often wondering whether he is really sure of it himself. A critic is expected to be explicit about his valuations for a complete discharge of his duty.

Dr F. R. Leavis's attacks on theoretical, moralistic historical and such other approaches to literature are well-known. He has repeatedly and untiringly criticised the attempt to treat creative works as anything but as works of art. He almost always places literary prior to criticism to suggest the frontiers of criticism. In his hands, literary criticism becomes a unique function. Everywhere in his books, he has tried to establish this activity as a distinct and separate discipline.

In all his studies, Leavis follows the analytic method. He asserts that 'No treatment of poetry is worth much that does not keep very close to the concrete'. He makes close reading, scrutiny of words, verbal analysis and shows a delicate sensitiveness to the subtleties and complexities of poetic language. He bases his criticism firmly on the text. He wants every critical remark of his to have textual sanction. He does not puzzle his readers how to account for a certain statement by him. He has laid down a rule to a critic that he should work in terms of particular analysis and 'to say nothing that cannot be related immediately to the judgments about producible texts'. The readers see that the ground for Leavis's remarks is there in the work under consideration and he makes them see its validity for themselves. They often find him confessing that his interpretation of a passage is rather crude and that they should go back to the passage itself to know the complete story. He greatly sharpens his readers' sense of the literary object and increases their appreciation.

For an illustration of his method, we may refer to Leavis's essay 'Thought and Emotional Quality: Notes in the Analysis of Poetry'. There he analyses a number of poems of varying degree of success by different authors. The analyses take the readers fully into all the nuances of meaning of the poems. They never give any impression that the critic is reading anything into the

text and we have absolutely no problem accommodating all that he has said into the compositions. Whatever he says is completely validated by the works. We may quote his analysis of Blake's 'The Sick Rose' to demonstrate his characteristic method.

Leavis starts by observing that he would not consider 'Rose' as a symbol because he thinks it would be to overlook its immediate presence in the poem. He notices how the Rose becomes a 'thing seen', 'a visual image', that belongs to 'the order of visible things'. The following is his analysis:

> 'Crimson', of course, makes an undoubted visual impact, but of the total work that it does, in its context, that visual impact is only one element. What 'Crimson' does is to heighten and complete the clash of association set up by the first line:
>
> O Rose, thou art sick
>
> To call a rose 'sick' is to make it at once something more than a thing seen. 'Rose' as developed by 'thy bed of crimson joy' evokes rich passion, sensuality at once glowing, delicate and fragrant, and exquisite health. 'Bed of crimson joy' is voluptuously factual in suggestion, and in ways we need not try and analyse, more than actual—we feel ourselves 'bedding down' in the Rose, and there is also a suggestion by a secret heart ('found out'), the focus of life, down there at the core of the closely clustered and enclosing petals.
>
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night,
> In the howling storm,
>
> offering its shock of contrast to the warm security of love ('She is all States, and all Princes, I, Nothing else is') conveys the ungovernable otherness of the dark forces, of the psyche when they manifest themselves as disharmonies.

This is a representative piece of Leavis's criticism. The critic's sensibility as well as intelligence can be seen working in close association. The interpretation grows out of the actual poem and when it registers the overtones and undertones of experience embodied in the poem, it says nothing that is not

strictly relevant. The analysis not only presents what is embodied in the poem, it also assesses it. The elucidation is accompanied by an evaluation of the vividness of experience, immediacy, reach and depth. It is important to note that Leavis does not simply take leave by analysing the details. Such a thing is impossible because the parts are subordinate to the whole and their function can be determined only by a consideration of the whole. As this and the other parts are analysed, they are put together, placed along with the various points of reference and developed into the one coherent whole it is.

A few of his general remarks on analytic criticism will help us understand the method of his work. His sense of the organic nature of works of art is revealed in his observation: 'What we are concerned with in analyses are always matters of complex verbal organization, it will not do to treat metaphors, images and other local effects as if their relation to the poem were at all like that of plums to cake, or stones attesting that the jam is genuine.' In the way he analyses a work of art there is nothing in the nature of murdering to dissect. What in analysis we do is, he says, 'to bring into sharp focus, in turn, this, that and the other detail, juncture or relation in our total response.... What we are doing is to dwell with a deliberate, considering responsiveness on this, that or the other node or focal point in the complete organization that the poem is, in so far as we have it'. In Leavis analysis is a creative process as we have seen from his criticism of Blake's poem. 'Analysis', he says, 'is not a disassociation of something that is already and passively there. What we call analysis is, of course, a constructive or a creative process. It is more deliberate following through that process of creation in response to the poet's words which reading is. It is recreation in which, by a considering attentiveness, we ensure a more than ordinary faithfulness and completeness'.

The difference between Leavis's analytic criticism and that of Empson must be obvious. Leavis has drawn attention to the temptations that the method has led Empson. He recognises the valuable stimulus *Seven Types* offers. But he says that it serves better as a warning—'a warning against the temptation that the analyst whose practice is to be a discipline must resist. It abounds in instances of ingenuity that has taken the bit between its teeth'. Then he goes on to describe the valid approach.

'Valid analytic practice', he says, 'is a strengthening of the sense of the relevance: scrutiny of parts must be at the same time an effort towards fuller realization of the whole, and all appropriate play of intelligence, being also an exercise of the sense of value, is controlled by an implicit concern for a total value-judgment'. He attacks the excesses of Richards and his disciple Empson regarding their views on meaning. 'The later semasiological work', he writes, 'in *Practical Criticism*, with its insistent campaign against the proper (or one Right) Meaning Superstition and its lack of any disciplinary counter-concern has tended in so far as it has had influence to encourage the Empsonian kind of irresponsibility'.

The most common complaint against analytic criticism is that it separates the study of literature from the rest of the concerns of life. It is true that literary appreciation is becoming more and more exclusive, narrowed down to matters of organization and internal consistency with most of the analystic critics. So there is some point on the observation that such criticism is fragmentary and can never be a complete account of the work of art. But this does not happen in Leavis. He does not remain enclosed in the context of the work under examination. He shows that continuous responses to a number of questions are involved in verbal analysis. When he says that literary criticism must be based on analysis, he is not suggesting that 'a serious interest in literature can confine itself to the kind of intensive local analysis associated with 'practical criticism'—to the scrutiny of words on the page, in their minute relations, their effects of imagery and so on'. He continues that 'a real literary interest is an interest in man, society and civilization, and its boundaries cannot be drawn.' Talking of *Scrutiny* in the essay 'A Note on critical Function', he underlines the responsibilities of criticism in society. 'I hate the suggestion', he writes, 'that *Scrutiny* is to be thought of as standing for a *critical method*—say, a technique of analysis. It stood for a full conception of literary criticism, and how much it entails well, that has been my theme'. Leavis's analytic study is fully informed of its obligations and duties. Analysis as a method can survive only if it is informed.

CLASSICAL TRENDS IN FRENCH CRITICISM

A. FLEURY

I THINK I must apologize for the use of the word 'classical' in the title of this paper, lest it should create a misunderstanding. My intention here is not to describe what historians have called the classical period in French literature. I wish only to use the term in its rather wide connotation of 'academically established', —in the sense a French critic, Emile Faguet, described himself at the turn of the century—and, with your permission, to describe the main influences which have concurred to make the accepted tradition in modern French critical writing.

The fame of French literary criticism rests on an older tradition, which, in fact, goes back to the XVII century, when the French Academy formulated the 'rules' of good taste, and critics like Boileau and Saint-Evremend enjoyed a European prestige. The Academy answered a natural instinct of the French mind for order and reasonableness; but it was inevitable that a conflict should arise between the excesses of dogmatism and natural good taste; this conflict, brought into the open by the Romantics dominated the XIX century and it runs through most of modern criticism.

For, as the dogmatism of Aristotle was given up, the French critics of the last hundred years set themselves, consciously or unconsciously, to substitute a new authority for the old, and they tried to find a philosophy on which they could base their valuations: in other words, to find a justification not simply for criticism but for art in general. The fashionable 'art for art's sake's did not go very far; and it was inevitable that, looking for an authority or at least a guidance to replace the rules, they should have turned to the scientific philosophies of the day. Critics like Taine believed that they had at last found in them a certain and safe basis for literary judgment, which would dispose of the vagaries of personal taste.

Two names dominate French criticism in the XIX century: Taine and Sainte-Beuve—and their influence can be traced to this day. They represent the two main trends in modern criticism: humanism and good taste on the one hand, systematic scholarship on the other.

Taine (1828-1893) was a writer of many parts, but he was above all a philosopher whose aim was to understand and to explain man and the universe, to find the law of life and to define its formula. Criticism for him was not an end but a means among others to test and justify his system. In his 'Essays in Criticism and History' and especially in the introduction to his 'History of English Literature', he set forth the principles of his method. As he surveys the literary history of a great people, he looks for the causes behind the facts, (the facts i.e., the birth of talents and masterpieces), and he reduces them to three essential factors, which he calls the 'race', the 'milieu' and the 'moment'. His philosophy is nothing but the most absolute determinism, and every individual achievement is determined by these great 'environment pressures' of the social and cultural background. His critical method is therefore historical, and his aim to explain the man and the work by the circumstances of time, place and society in which he lived.

Taine considered criticism, in his own words, as 'a natural history of the human mind', and one cannot but notice how often he borrowed from the vocabulary of natural history. One quotation will suffice:

> 'One can consider man as a kind of superior animal which produces philosophies and poems almost as silkworms spin their cocoons, or bees construct their hives. Now we want to know how, given a garden and a swarm of bees, a hive is built'.[1]

It was a strange performance indeed. However, the danger of his theory was not immediately perceived and was not so obvious in 1864 as it is today; and his insistence on the importance of environment in the study of literature gave a powerful impetus to the habit of methodical and conscientious research, which has now become an almost inevitable basis for academic criticism.

One cannot speak of Taine's scientific conceptions without mentioning, however briefly, the name of his disciple, Ferdinand Brunetiere (1849-1907). A professional critic, Brunetiere went to Darwinism for inspiration, and brought into criticism his famous theory of 'the evolution of genres'. According to him the genres are the expression of a certain state of mind which is common to a given generation at a certain time. Like the species of natural history, they are living, organic forms, which are born,

develop, evolve, decline and die, or rather are transformed into other genres. The best known example Brunetiere gave in support of his thesis is that of the evolution of lyricism in French literature; the lyricism of the XVI century was killed by Malherbe and gave way to eloquence—the eloquence of the pulpit and the rhetoric of classical tragedy. This eloquence was in turn slowly transformed into lyricism again under the influence of Rousseau, first, then of Chateaubriand and the Romantic poets.[2]

This theory brought into criticism and literary history novel preoccupations and habits of thought. The history of a genre being more important than the study of the individuals, the historian must give greater importance to the general exposition of ideas and manners, and neglect those writers who had no influence on the thought of their time.

Attractive as those theories might have been to a generation enamoured of comprehensive systems, it was inevitable that reactions should take place in defence of art and good taste. Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), a contemporary of Taine, showed at first some interest in scientific criticism and occasionally proclaimed himself a votary of science. But he never really subscribed to Taine's views, and there is between them a fundamental difference. Sainte-Beuve was not a scientist, he was not even a philosopher; though his scholarship was formidable, he was essentially a man of letters, a 'humanist' in the most authentic tradition. And the critical approach he followed and advocated as 'the true French criticism' was one 'more alert, less heavy with erudition, less theoretical and systematic, more in accord with good taste and sensibility'.[3] He had, of course, his own method, or rather his manner: and that was biography, with the aim of getting at the work through the man in order to discover the subtle links between the two. Criticism for him becomes a penetrating exercise in psychological analysis, and the ideal critic, while using every resource of his art to 'paint' a faithful 'portrait' (the words are his), must observe throughout enough detachment not to allow any preconceived theory or system to impinge on his judgment. Indeed, rather than to judge, his task should be to understand.

Thus, towards the end of his career, does Sainte-Beuve describe his method:

'Literature, the literary product, is for me indistinguishable from the whole organisation of the man. I can enjoy the work

itself, but I find it difficult to judge this work without taking into account the man himself.

One has to ask oneself a certain number of questions about an author, and give answers to them. Only after such questions can one be sure about the whole problem one faces. What did the author think about religion? In what way was he affected by the contemplation of nature? How did he handle himself in the matter of women? How in the matter of money? Was he rich? Was he poor? What rules of living did he follow? And so on . . . To sum it up: what was his master vice, his dominent weakness? Every man has one. Not a single one of the answers we give to those questions can be irrelevant to forming an opinion about the author of a book and about the book itself —that is, if we suppose we are dealing with something other than a treatise in pure geometry'.[4]

I have quoted this at length because the recourse to biography has influenced French criticism perhaps more deeply than any scientific theories, if one judges by the doctorate theses submitted to the Universities. And to show how strong the tradition is still, it will be enough to bring side by side with the passage just quoted a definition of criticism by the most significant poet of this century, Paul Valery: 'The aim of true criticism should be first to discover what problems the author, whether he knew it or not, set himself to solve, and then to find out whether he succeeded or not'.

Two main tendencies, therefore, have fashioned the present tradition in criticism; it must be admitted that, whether inspired by scientific philosophies, or conceived along the lines of biography and psychology, this criticism relies much on literary history. Its most devoted exponent in our times was Gustave Lanson (1875-1934), whose teaching dominated the Sorbonne before the last war and inspired a number of imitators. Lanson conceived literary history as a part of the history of civilisation; but, its material being very different from that of pure history, its method also has to be different. The genius of a writer, he says, can of course be 'explained' by a series of considerations which belong to scientific enquiry and justify the efforts of Taine and Brunetiere to make literary history a real science. But, when the process of investigation is over, when one has charted out all the external influences of race, milieu and moment, one realises

that there remains in the writer an element which cannot be reached by analysis,—his individuality, his genius. This, only the intuition and the sensibility of the critic can interpret. This last operation, necessarily subjective, cannot escape the shortcomings of impressionism, but it will be the last word in literary criticism.

On one condition, however: that, preliminary to the critical interpretation, all the resources of scientific investigation at our disposal should be used exhaustively: rigorous chronology, biography, study of sources and of influences, etc. 'The study of literature today' Lanson says pointedly, 'cannot do without erudition'.

Erudition is the key-word of his method, and it involves the danger, which Lanson and his disciples did not always avoid, of too heavy a reliance on documentation. In this, one may see the influence of Taine and Brunetiere! An influence which, in fact, went beyond national frontiers: American literary research in recent times has found wide scope in exercises relating literature to various kinds of influence: social, political, economic, climatic, etc. All which might be fitted under the most inclusive of Taine's three headings, the 'milieu'. And even in England, where literary history has generally been regarded with a certain amount of scepticism, we find an Oxford critic, F. W. Bateson, writing in 1942; '(If we modern readers want to understand a poem of the past), we need to be able to identify ourselves as far as possible with its original readers, the poet's contemporaries, whose ideal response to the poem in fact constitutes its meaning'[5]. Here indeed is 'milieu' and 'moment' with a new twist!

It is obvious that the modern critic cannot, especially when the past is concerned, do without a certain amount of scholarship; and science has its uses, though one may doubt the efficacy of the electronic computer in some kinds of textual research; But scholarship is not enough for criticism. Sainte-Beuve, in his essay on Chateaubriand discussing the writer's appreciation of Virgil, has the simple but illuminating phrase: 'this is devined (divine) from poet to poet'. To give full justice to a work of art, the critic has to be something of a creative artist himself.

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FOREIGN LITERATURES AND PROBLEMS IN RESPONSE

M. G. KRISHNAMURTHI

WHEN Professor Narasimhaiah invited me to participate in this seminar I wrote to him saying that the problem involved in responding to literatures in a language other than one's own has been bothering me for quite some time and that I would like to bring it up for discussion. However, when I started writing the paper I soon realized that I had no 'objective' data to present and that the problem could very easily become undiscussible. But it seems to me that the problem is an urgent one for those of us who believe that, as teachers of British and American literatures, our primary objective is to elicit our students' responses to what they read with the hope that in attempting to articulate their responses they would be able to organize them. Especially those of us who feel uncertain about the ultimate value of giving our students a set of literary principles to judge all works of literature by, will have to face the question—'What is the centre from which we respond to these literatures?'

By 'centre' I do not just mean an intellectual frame of reference which may be different from a British or an American's frames of reference. I mean something more elusive—a much wider frame of reference which subsumes the intellectual but also includes values, norms, literary frames of reference etc.

Though I realize that in a seminar of this nature the name of F. R. Leavis will be mentioned more than once, I have chosen a key passage from him in order to focus attention on the problem as I see it. He writes—'It is in the study of literature, the literature of one's own language in the first place, that one comes to recognize the nature and priority of the third realm (as, unphilosophically, no doubt, I call it, talking with my pupils), the realm of that which is neither merely private and personal nor public in the sense that it can be brought into the laboratory or pointed to. You cannot point to the poem; it is "there" only in the recreative response of individual minds to the black marks on the page. But—a necessary faith—it is something in which

minds can meet. The process in which this faith is justified is given fairly enough in an account of the nature of criticism. A judgment is personal or it is nothing; you cannot take over someone else's. The implicit form of a judgment is: This is so, isn't it? The question is an appeal for confirmation that the thing *is* so; implicitly that, though expecting, characteristically, an answer in the form, "yes, but—" the "but" standing for qualifications, reserves, corrections. Here we have a diagram of the collaborative-creative process in which the poem comes to be established as something "out there", of common access in what is in some sense a public world. It gives us, too, the nature of the existence of English literature, a living whole that can have its life only in the living present, in the creative response of individuals who collaboratively renew and perpetuate what they participate in—a cultural community of consciousness More, it gives us the nature in general of what I have called the "third realm" to which all that makes us human belongs'.[1]

What is relevant for my immediate purposes is the characteristically forth-right statement—'A judgment is personal or it is nothing' and its implications. Perhaps Allen Tate had a similar idea in mind when he said that literary criticism occupies a position somewhere between pure experience and pure rationality.[2] The perception that literary judgment is personal is of course balanced by the perception that as a result of the 'collaborative-creative process', i.e., critical discussion, the literary work 'comes to be established as something "out there" of common access in what is in some sense a public world'. I suppose the literary work is 'out there' either because it is a 'concrete universal' or because its medium, language, being a culture symbol makes an impersonal realm accessible to us. But once we assume that literature 'brings the whole soul of man into activity' we also assume that at some stage in our discussion of a literary work we will be discussing values, notions of emotional and spiritual health, and such matters—though it is true that we, hopefully, do it in the context of a given work. But all these matters are closely linked with one's cultural background. So we who are engaged in teaching literatures in foreign languages sooner or later face

[1] Leavis, F. R. *Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow*, p. 28.

[2] 'Is Literary Criticism Possible?' *The Man of Letters in the Modern World.*

the question—'From what background do we respond to the literatures we teach?' Perhaps the question is meaningless if we decide that as we are teaching literatures in a foregin language, we shall confine ourselves to a purely descriptive or a purely 'formalistic' study of these literatures. But such a decision runs counter to the assumptions we have made all along, the assumption that our students do respond to literatures in a foreign language and that they can articulate their responses and that such an attempt is valuable. The only supporting evidence that I can think of for this assertion is the kind of questions we ask our students. We ask them to comment on passages, and to write appreciations of works of literature.

When we assume the possibility of such a vital relationship between ourselves and foreign literatures and when we assume that in responding to them we can make it a part of our literary experience, it seems to me that sooner or later our experience of foreign literatures has to be related to our experience of our own literatures which is after all a part of our background. It seems to be unlikely that we can keep the two distinct, responding to them from different centres of our being as it were. Just as our experience of British and American literatures has affected our judgments of our writers, the achievements of our writers will affect our judgment of foreign writers. Are we willing to declare that our response to literatures in our languages is irrelevant and that we should purge ourselves of it before assessing British and American writers? Even if we are willing to label them as irrelevant *can* we purge ourselves of our responses to and estimates of our own writers?

It seems to me that we cannot do so and that our responses to British and American writers are bound to be slightly different from an Englishman's or an American's responses. It is at this stage that we come up against the 'Englishness' of British literature and the 'Americanness' of American literature—the latter phrase being the title of one of Leavis's essays who could have said with D. H. Lawrence—'I am English, and Englishness is my very vision'. (*Letters*) When we, specialists in British and American literatures, define our relationship with our own literatures we are likely to become more and more conscious of the differences.

To indicate that I am not speaking of an imaginary problem

let me refer to differences between critics who belong to the same school as it were—often as a result of different cultural backgrounds. The most widely known example I can think of is the critical exchange between Leavis and Marius Bewley in the pages of *Scrutiny* over the meaning and significance of Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*? and *The Turn of the Screw*[3]. Leavis drew Bewley's attention to some 'English possibilities' while Bewley felt that the novels have some American possibilities. He began his rejoinder by saying that their 'disagreement over these two novels has its origin at levels not readily open to critical persuasion'. After noting that their disagreement occurs 'in an area where the same critical language is spoken, and where one may presume the same critical postulates more or less govern' (p. 255, Vol. XVII, *Scrutiny*) he makes the most interesting observation—'Mr Leavis expresses his surprise that so many critics have made heavy weather of *The Turn of the Screw*. Most, if not all, of the critics who have done so have been Americans, and this is in itself suggestive to me that the story does indeed contain possibilities that the American may respond to more strongly, and take up more readily than others' (*Scrutiny*, op. cit., p. 257).

The reason I refer to this disagreement is just this—Marius Bewley, to judge from his books, is the most Leavisite of American critics. The critical exchange ended with the comment of Leavis—'I find no "horror" in *What Maisey Knew* and nothing "metaphysically appalling" in *The Turn of the Screw:* Mr Bewley and I have not shaken one another. We must submit the case to others' (p. 263). It is true that the disagreement was largely a matter of differences in emphasis, but such differences might affect the relative significance of, and the importance we attach to, individual works and possibly to writers.

Let me cite a few examples where differences in cultural backgrounds result in differences in interpretation and so possibly in critical estimates. The first example I have in mind is Hawthorne's short story—'Old Esther Dudley'. There is in the story, among other things, a contrast between Esther Dudley, the old royalist house-keeper and Governor Hancock, the representative American, who makes his appearance at the end

[3] *Scrutiny*, Vol. XVII, 1950-51.

of the story. So far as I am aware, American readers tend to view the old house-keeper as a grotesque character for whom time has stopped, who has isolated herself from her people. From this point of view Governor Hancock becomes symbolic of the reality which impinges upon and destroys the dream world of Esther Dudley. The American reader would also note the isolation of the old woman and as Hawthorne has a tendency to view isolation with distrust, and though no American reader would be so naive as Parrington to dismiss Hawthorne as some one outside the main stream of American life, he would tend to place the emphasis on the inevitability of what happens. But one coming from a cultural complex which emphasises the interrelationship between the past, the present and the future, like myself, and possibly a British reader to some extent, would note 1. The ambiguous relationship of the children with their parents and old Esther Dudley and 2. the curious rhetorical way in which Governor Hancock expresses himself towards the end of the story. The children, as you recall, are fascinated and bewildered by the old woman by what she symbolises. The old woman who is a relic of the past cannot be integrated into their experiences simply because the present as symbolized by their parents has rejected the past. Hence a non-American reader like me would view the story primarily as a symbolization of a tragic discontinuity between the past, the present and the future, i.e., the children, which is a source of confusion. Regarding the rhetoric of the governor a non-American reader might note that the confidence in the future he voices contrasts, ironically, with the certainties of the old woman. The old woman's certainty springs from her unreal hope that the British governor will come back and from her being more royalist than the king himself both of which are fictionally real. The American's confidence springs from a fictionally unreal future. The role played by the children makes a non-American think that Hawthorne is playing the children as the real future against the vague hopes about the future expressed by Governor Hancock. So he might conclude that the story is an ironic contemplation of a discontinuity between past, present and future.

When a non-American presents these findings, as in fact I did in class, the American reader is likely to respond, as my instructor did. He would say that this is a possible way of looking at the story but that his response is different and that for him

Governor Hancock is real enough. At this stage critical discussion becomes difficult and one does not shake the other. As further evidence let me cite the curious fact that Hawthorne's stories like 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux' and 'Old Esther Dudley' strike the non-American reader as more significant than they do an American reader. For instance, it is the British critics who have emphasized 'My Kinsman. . . .' It is not that the American reader would refuse to concede that Hawthorne's response to the past is rather ambiguous, but he would argue that a non-American makes too much of this ambiguity.

Another writer I have in mind is William Faulkner. The initial response of a non-American to many of Faulkner's novels is likely to be the one aptly summed up by the title of Leavis's review of *Light in August* (*Scrutiny*, v. 11, pp. 91-93)—'Dostoevsky or Dickens?' Leavis, like many British reviewers, spoke of an uncertainty in Faulkner 'about what he is trying to do' (p. 92). While it is true that Leavis's essay was written in 1933 when there was not much Faulkner criticism even in America and that even American critics were uncertain of Faulkner's importance, my point is that even now American Faulkner-criticism somehow does not allay a non-American's doubts. If I may draw on my own responses, the abstract nature of Faulkner's vocabulary, his rhetoric, his tendency to work in terms of mutually uncommunicating symbols like Joe Christmas and Lena Grove in *Light in August* are disturbing. The abstract vocabulary coupled with the rhetoric tenders the concrete realization of the novels difficult. One notes that Joe Christmas and Lena Grove are always on the move, for different reasons, but the significance of the parallel and of the contrast between them, somehow does not come through even after reading Faulkner criticism. The American critics' emphasis on the symbolic structure of Faulkner's novels does illuminate many aspects of the novels, but one is still left uncertain about the total impact of the novels. The question—'what relationship is there between the positives like Lena Grove and Dilsey and their opposites like Joe Christmas and Jason?—is left unanswered. This, in turn, affects one's estimate of the novel, simply because we might be asking different questions. In attempting to answer these questions, which I assume are questions with which a critic has to concern himself the assumptions we make are important. We cannot help

responding to these works from a centre which is the product of the interaction between ourselves and the cultural complex to which we belong. Belonging as we do to a cultural complex which makes us assume that there are limits to the claims an individual can make on life, however much we may be sympathetic we may be with a Joe Christmas or a Captain Ahab in their symbolic roles, the 'hubris' involved in their assertion would strike us more than it would strike an American reader because such an assertion of individual will over forces outside is not considered to be intrinsically wrong in his cultural complex. So he might tend to be more sympathetic to such an assertion more than we can be. As a consequence such writing might strike us as melodramatic and a little too loud. So when we find that our responses to a foreign writer differ from the responses of those who belong to the same cultural complex as the author, what are we going to do about this? Can we say that when our responses differ from their's, our's are not trustworthy? But if we assume, as some of us at least do, that a work of literature exists only in the 're-creative response' to it and that reading, in however rudimentary a form, is critical and that when we read a book our response to and estimate of it is in relation with other books we have read and life in general, we can write criticism only on the basis of our responses. While the critics who belong to the same cultural complex as the author might help us in taking note of aspects of a work which we might have missed, their responses cannot be ours and their judgment cannot be ours.

For purely tactical reasons let me reverse the problem—i.e., speak in terms of a 'non-Indian's' responses to a poem which assumes a particular cultural background. I do this simply because literatures in our languages are not as well-known in the U.S. as British and American literature is here. As the American student is exposed to literature in his language before he is exposed to any other literature, the differences between his responses to a foreign literature and literature in his own language will be more explicit than the differences between our responses I say, American literature and an American's responses to it: Hence the situation there can as well be the situation here once literatures in our languages begin to occupy an important place in our syllabi. Allow me to look closely at the following poem by Basavanna, a 12th century Kannada mystic poet.

The rich
may build temples
for Siva.
But what can I,
a poor man,
build?

My legs are pillars,
my body is the temple
my head a cupola
of gold.

O Lord of the Meeting Rivers,
the standing
shall fall,
but the moving
ever shall stay!

(Trans. A. K. RAMANUJAN)

The translation is a fairly close one and I shall try to isolate what seems to me are elements accessible to all readers and elements which require a particular background. This is one of the many poems I used in class at Madison and so shall draw heavily on the responses of my students there. The tension between the doubt and humility of the first stanza and the confidence, even arrogance, of the second is easily accessible to all. Perhaps a foreign reader will be impressed by what may appear to him a clever use of fancy resulting from a contrast between stanza one and stanza two. One of my students who has sufficient knowledge of Kannada to be able to read this and others in the original felt that there is nothing comparable to these in his own literary tradition. Incidentally he reads Sanskrit and Telugu and has a very good background in Hinduism and Buddhism. He also reads a few other European languages. When I drew his attention to some parallels between the techniques used by these poets and the British Metaphysical poets, he commented that the religious poems of Donne and some other 17th century poets do not have the sophistication of the *Vacanakārās* and that Donne is very long-winded. Though he felt that there is a

corresponding degree of sophistication in 17th century love poetry, he could not find it in 17th century religious poetry. The reason I mention this is that when a Kannada speaker, to confine myself to my own language area, responds to the Metaphysicals with his knowledge of the Vacanās he might draw the same conclusions. Such a reader will be less inclined than a British reader might be to evaluate the Metaphysicals solely in terms of the British literary tradition. Just as an American reader views a British writer, say, D. H. Lawrence, in terms of a general European literary tradition and the tradition of American literature, the Kannada reader will be inclined to view a British or an American writer in terms of more than one literary tradition. To say that his Kannada background is irrelevant is to ask him to unlearn what he has perhaps learnt since his birth, to say that his mind has to become a tabula rasa before he can read foreign literatures, which I am afraid is a rather tall order.

Another student whose background is mainly American literature, made a very interesting comment. He too was struck by the complexity of tone, and the way in which disparate images and attitudes are fused by the Vacanakārās. Commenting on the unconventionality of attitude and imagery, he saw some parallels between some Beat poets and the Vacanakārās, an idea which struck me as grotesque. He willingly conceded that the Beat poets rarely achieve the sophistication and clarity achieved by the Vacanakārās, but felt that a similarity exists on the level of the basic impulsion—an insistence that perception is unique and so a conventional mode of articulating that experience is inadequate for their purposes.

To return to the poem itself—a foreign reader can easily account for the emergence of the second stanza out of the first. He will note, for instance, the difference in the verbs 'may build' in the first stanza and 'are' and 'is' in the second. He will note that 'may build' refers to a possible action while 'are' and 'is' refer to an actuality. Then he will note that the verbs also indicate the differences between building temples and oneself being a temple. Once he knows something about the architecture of a temple, he will note the importance of words like 'pillars' and 'a cupola of gold'. Then passing on to the third stanza he will note the phrase 'Lord of the Meeting Rivers' and its connection with the words 'legs' and 'moving'. He will connect the word

'standing' with a built temple. But when he encounters the paradoxical statement 'the standing/shall fall/but the moving/ever shall stay' he might encounter difficulties in connecting it with the rest of the poem. He can note that the standing i.e., the built temples shall fall, but what about the idea that 'the moving ever shall stay'? Even if he learns that Basavaṇṇa is exploiting the possibilities of the Sanskrit loan word 'jangama'—which has in it the Sanskrit word 'gama'—moving but which in Kannada means a Vīraśaiva mendicant, his problem is still unsolved. Suppose his attention is drawn to the implications of the phrase 'Lord of the Meeting Rivers', to the fact that the meeting of the rivers and their moving together is instantaneous, he can only make intellectual connections between the implications 1. Śiva, i.e., God, is conceived of as a movement, 2. the mendicant is always on the move and 3. that salvation is merging with the godhead and so of becoming a part of an eternal movement. Even though the images of the poem make it accessible on many levels to all readers, a Hindu reader is likely to evaluate the poem differently from American students who were also impressed by the poem. The reason, it seems to me, lies in the fact that the religious experience the poem communicates seems to be outside my American students' religious tradition. As a consequence they were mainly struck by the brilliance of the poem while I am struck by the rightness of it. Another aspect of the poem—the purely lexical aspect—brings me to another point. The poem exploits the three strands of the Kannada vocabulary—native words, derivations from Sanskrit and Sanskrit loan words. The non-Kannada speaker might learn that the poem employs words from all these three categories but I do not think he can respond as a Kannada speaker would to the interplay between these three strands of the vocabulary and the way in which the different words isolate concepts and experiences and finally bring them together. For, this aspect of the poem assumes an inwardness with the language, an awareness of the roles the three strands of vocabulary play in the language, written and spoken.

It is likely that some such thing happens—when we respond to British and American literature. I wonder if we can be as aware of the interplay between the spoken and the formalized medium, between the literary and the dialectal forms of the language, as a native speaker of English can be. The problem is

acute with reference to American literature because we have not been sufficiently exposed to American idiom.

To sum up—the problems inherent in our responding to literature in English which is to most of us a second language and is at best a literary medium seem to result from 1. the difficulty in having the same inwardness with the language that a native speaker can have and 2. the differences in cultural backgrounds and the resultant differences in frameworks. While there seems to be little we can do about 1, the second need not be necessarily a disadvantage. It seems to be that an articulation of our responses and the kind of problems we face in responding to certain aspects of a work and an attempt to bring to the foreground the areas of difference resulting, perhaps from differences in background, might themselves be of value. At least such attempts integrate our literary responses. What value all this has for an English speaker, is for him to decide. But it seems to me such an attempt has a value for us.

CRITICISM AND CULTURE

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH

THE subject of my talk is such—there are no sanctions, no precedents, no body of organised data—that wherever you begin, whatever approach you make you are, unless it be by a stroke of good luck, most unlikely to escape the charge of being too naive or of making too tall a claim for it. I am myself conscious of my approach being a kind of *tour de force*. But there is some comfort in the fact that the idea at least is somewhat original, that is, no one was so crazy as to try to connect Criticism and Culture with a view to forcing a *statement* of conclusions which had better been left implicit. But I am approaching it from the point of view of what T. S. Eliot said of Matthew Arnold: that he was rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic. And I am not ashamed of being a propagandist in the Arnoldian sense (even Leavis defended it as 'higher pamphleteering' and one notices a touch of apology about his defence) for I do think the two functions are essentially inseparable and Mr Eliot himself was guilty of the charge he was levelling against Arnold. Arnold at least was deeply concerned—the urgency is evident in every word and phrase he wrote—about the state of criticism *per se* and of culture while Mr Eliot's criticism is more often than not the criticism of a practitioner, a practitioner who knew he had to create the taste by which he himself was going to be judged. And so I have no qualms and no apologies except for the woeful inadequacies in the actual performance.

I should think it suits my purpose to start with the assumption that human crisis is a crisis of understanding and all history, literature and philosophy, of the East as well as the West, reinforce the realization of the need for awakening of the human kind more than the need for comfort—it is good to remember that Buddha the Compassionate was also the Enlightened One. I have often wondered why the ancient Indians did not talk of Good and Evil but rather of Vidya and Avidya as if they were synonymous with Good and Evil. 'There's no darkness but ignorance' is not the rhetorical utterance of a teasing clown but

the implicit recognition by a supreme genius who approved, through a character who more or less served as his mouthpiece in the play, of the wisdom of a mature civilization which the Renaissance had helped to transmit to the common consciousness of a different age and people by encouraging free play of the mind.

It was in that civilization that philosophers were inquiring into ultimate realities. It is enough for my purpose to point out that in his concern for founding the ideal State, Plato was deeply exercised by the impact of poetry on the ordinary citizen, and the statesman who sought to banish poetry from the Republic was also the critic who recognised its claim as central to the very life of society. For there is unequivocal recognition of it in the observation: when the modes of music change the laws of the State shall change. Conversely, Aristotle the critic of literature was also the philosopher who opened his *Nicomachean Ethics* with inquiries as to what is the highest good or *summum bonum.* Aristotle was more practical than his master Plato and tried to come to grips with poetic activity—apparently in the interest of the State. If Aristotle thought that art was imitation of life, that is, of 'ideal activity at work in human life', the business of criticism was to focus attention of the reader or the spectator on the disparity that existed between the ideal and the actual so as to bring man nearer the ideal. Both art and criticism of art were meant to do it. This is not the place for me to question Aristotle's *mode* of criticising works of art as the end in view is not much in dispute.

After Aristotle, so far as I know, at no time in Western civilization was the question of the highest good so sharply and so persistently verbalized as in the 19th century. It manifested itself as idealism in life and literature in France, (Victor Cousin), in Germany (Kant), in America (Emerson and Thoreau) and in England (the Romantic poets and later, Victorian thinkers like Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman and Arnold) accentuated largely by the growing material prosperity (in the case of England there was an additional factor in scientific development and industrial revolution) which posed a serious threat to human values. Of all his contemporaries it is Matthew Arnold who invoked literature to assume the office of religion and make literary criticism the means by which the transformation of the individual and society ('the salvation of England') had to be brought about. In his essay,

Culture and Anarchy where 'Anarchy' is opposed to 'Culture' Arnold asks, rather, he makes Culture ask: 'Consider these people, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds. Would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that was one to become just like these people by having it.' At this very time Emerson was asking almost an identical question of his countrymen, even more forcefully than Arnold.

Arnold is here commenting on the ugly manifestations of the absence, or the lack, of culture in the society of his day. What is his remedy? That he explains in his essay on the 'Function of Criticism' where he virtually uses Criticism and Culture as synonymous terms. Consider some of the expressions he uses in this essay as germane to the life of Criticism: 'to know the best that has been thought and said in the world'; 'to produce a current of true and fresh ideas'; 'to make reason and the Will of God prevail'; 'to see the object as in itself it really is' irrespective of practical considerations; 'disinterested love of free play of the mind'. Ponder on them for a while and you see in them the constituents of culture—yes, constituents, because culture is not something that can be contained by any definition: it is much more elusive as is seen in Nietzsche's prescription that 'culture be studied and judged as life's continuous evaluation of itself'; or as suggested by the cautious title of Mr T. S. Eliot's book, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture.*

It is significant that the three important English critics of our time are all in the Arnoldian tradition—with different degrees of emphasis. One has only to read with pencil in hand Arnold's *Function of Criticism* and *Culture and Anarchy* in close association with Eliot's *Function of Criticism* and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture;* I. A. Richards's *Principles of Criticism* (except the chapters relating to Psychology which is a subsequent development) and F. R. Leavis's *Culture and Environment, Education and the University,* not to speak of the tenor and tone of his entire literary criticism—to realize their debt to Arnold. Where Arnold was rambling and rhetorical (he was a schoolmaster and restless inspector of schools) Eliot is precise, rather

cold, given to qualifications and reservations but there are unmistakable echoes of Arnold in the overtones and undertones, as in the paraphrases and restatements of Arnold's diverse positions. In Richards the influence is oblique rather than direct, nevertheless unmistakable when you read such as the following together: Arnold's 'the best that has been thought and said in the world' with Richards's 'nothing less than our whole sense of man's history and destiny of man is involved in our final decision as to value'. As for Leavis, it is more profoundly pervasive as seen in his integrity, courage and above all in his concern for literary standards as inseparable from standards of conduct in life—a real interest in literature, said Leavis, is an interest in man, society and civilization. To all the three of them the critic is not the occupant of an ivory tower, an alienated individual seeking self-realization in solitude but one who cares for the health of the mind, as the doctor does for the health of the body; one who is, in other words, a judge of values. All the three have exemplified in their work that at no time was there greater need to make criticism central to the stable sustenance of culture in society.

It is 'practical considerations' which Matthew Arnold speaks of in his essay that have impaired criticism and become a menace to culture. The very agencies that profess to foster culture are the ones that destroy culture, by aiming at it deliberately. Consider a few of them by way of illustration. Take, first of all, the ubiquitous institutes of culture. One can understand an institute of carpenters, of smithies, of barbers, surgeons, physicians, of engineers and of course, institutes of agriculture and horticulture and physical culture, even of music, art, literature—all of which can make for culture. But an Institute of Culture is something that passes one's understanding. I am not sure that such an institute by trying to exploit the prestige that attaches to culture will not ultimately become lifeless—with all spirit and no body. Look at all the ministries of cultural affairs all the world over. In India it is wisely absorbed into the Ministry of Education. The absorption obviously didn't matter to the Minister for Cultural Affairs for he continued as Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals though it is a far cry from culture to chemicals. Andre Malraux now Minister for Culture in France may not condescend to be a Minister for Chemicals to be able to retain his seat in the Cabinet

but it intrigues one as to how he agreed to be an official purveyor of culture or how that influential literary critic, Cleanth Brooks agreed to be *Cultural Attache** at the U.S. Embassy in England. Back home, look at our Council of Cultural Relations which publishes a Bulletin called *Cultural News from India*, an organ to propagate Indian culture—a quick glance through the backnumbers of which should convince any thinking Indian of the waste of public funds on our infantile efforts to publicise cheap, vulgar entertainments patronised by the State and Central governments through their Ministers whose culture is neither that of the masses nor of the elite but a crude brand of political opportunism. It is now common knowledge that one of the chief functions of Ministers is to preside over these entertainments and utter banalities which are reported by obliging local newspapers in the small town journalist's hackneyed phrases which are perfected into cliches by the bulletin's indifferent correspondents residing in the big cities of India. Is the Council so naive as to think our friends abroad will be taken in by these puerile efforts? If anything these have helped to tarnish India's image abroad in no small measure. It is precisely such enemies of Indian Culture that criticism must combat. Even Mr Nehru who wisely resisted all attempts at propagating Indian culture abroad through diplomatic missions was in effect guilty of minimising the sphere and scope of culture by making it the concern of a separate agency presumably because the idea was mooted by a colleague who needed to be placated in every conceivable way. And yet when the life of culture was threatened the so called agencies of culture could not stand upto ill-motivated, political pressure groups who caused a furore in Parliament against the translation of a book considered by Sahitya Akademi to be a distinguished work of art worthy of being read by the rest of the country and the world. And hardly any critics of literature that matter (not that there are many) fought against this sinister move with courage and consistency. One has no reason to think that that august world body called the UNESCO meant to promote international understanding through culture will put up a brave front against the enemies of culture should a similar contingency arise.

It comes to this then that culture is something that can be

* My protest here is more against the term than against the functions of the office.

created and sustained by political demagogues and bureaucrats who are not always exemplars of culture. The half-hour 'cultural programmes', those inevitable prefixes and suffixes to our inaugural and valedictory functions—congresses, conferences, seminars on serious subjects, anniversaries of institutions and foundationlaying ceremonies where these dignitaries occupy the centre of the stage or front line of a packed hall must be viewed in the context of providing entertainment or relaxation to these busybodies. But few seem to have realised the unfortunate implication of the term 'cultural programme', for it implies that we are aliens to culture for most part of the day, indeed of the week, even as church-going on Sunday mornings might very well carry with it the ominous implication that for the rest of the week godlessness is our share.

At a recent literary conference the head of a state government, quite innocently no doubt, exhorted writers to write nothing but heroic literature for the next ten years (possibly he had the Chinese and Pakistan aggressions in mind). Luckily the writers today are not as helpless as the slaves Shahajehan employed to build the Taj Mahal. Incidentally, at one time I viewed with amusement Gandhi's criticism of the Taj as a monument of slave-labour. Now I know why he said it: it was not like the temples of India or the cathedrals of Europe built out of the prayers of pilgrims. To come back to writing heroic literature, fortunately the better writers at any rate know they cannot oblige the honourable chief minister or his government but one is anxious about the manner in which public funds meant for patronage of art and literature can be abused by those in power. Experience has demonstrated convincingly that more often than not mediocre writers are raised to bad eminence or good writers are patronised for wrong reasons by pressure groups working *in*, and working *on* governments. They need each other for power, prestige, perhaps for sheer survival. And criticism is silent about it all. Silence or indifference may be interpreted as pusillanimity and in any case is not so dangerous as active support lent by criticism—interested propaganda masquerading as criticism—to those moving in the corridors of power for small returns. Dangerous, because if this vicious trend is not checked by responsible criticism it will prove to be suicidal to criticism in the long run. Mr T. S. Eliot's observation about the death of certain critical reviews in Europe

consequent on 'the cultural anarchy that inevitably followed the political and economic anarchy—the closing of mental frontiers of Europe', should serve as a warning to us and give an edge to the literary critic's concern about the increasing political domination of our intellectual life.

Consider, next, all those celebrations of centenaries and birth anniversaries of men of letters sponsored by official agencies. The Government of India, I fear unwittingly, contributed to taking Tagore away from people's minds and hearts by coming forward to celebrate the centenary of Tagore's birth a couple of years ago. Representatives of friendly countries were invited by the Government and they were deputed, again, by friendly governments. Why? Not to criticise Tagore's works, of course not, but to praise Tagore's services to the world through art and literature by using laudatory phrases. I am not sure that Mr Woodcock, the Canadian author of a travelogue called *Faces of India*, a very sympathetic account of the Indian scene, was a delegate but he permits himself to say, politely though, that the Tagore celebrations at Delhi were 'mildly scandalous' since the delegates discussed everything except what was to have been central to the occasion, namely, Tagore's poetry *as poetry*. It was obvious most of them were simply not equal to the task and so in the circumstances they could only utter a few platitudes either from hearsay or from scant knowledge of Tagore's work, hastily gathered from unreliable sources for the occasion. Now, if anyone thinks that he has promoted the study of Tagore's poetry or art by such bizarre means he is sadly mistaken. But the saddest part of it is these platitudes uttered by obliging delegates are quoted by literary critics in support of their admiration for Tagore, for these delegates spoke with all the prestige of public figures which they were. It is a pleasure to remark therefore that one of our well-known poets confessed to a feeling of embarrassment when a wandering saint called him Abhinava Valmiki for, the saint had only a smattering of the language on the poetic manifestations of which he was commenting so generously and the remark was echoed more liberally in literary circles which have thus been responsible for shelving the work from close study by students and scholars.

Take the question of language which affects us all vitally and no one has a greater responsibility in this regard than those

who call themselves educationists. I don't mean members of the Legislature and members of Parliament who speak on education but teachers, writers, critics who must determine the kind of education and the medium through which it has to be imparted to our children. And yet who are the people that have shown any public concern in this matter? The Prime Minister, the Chief Ministers, the Home Ministers and other Ministers, leaders of political parties, hooligans and large numbers of innocent students. The Prime Minister always spoke of 'consulting Chief Ministers' as to what should be the language of administration—which is not so unreasonable, but when they had to decide on the language of the Union Public Service Commission examinations it had a wider and more far-reaching bearing than it seemed to. For it involved the medium of instruction at school, college and university and it is not very complimentary to those in charge of education especially those in charge of language education, whether in English or other languages in this country that such a major issue should be decided by political agencies without so much as a courteous gesture of 'consulting' educationists to whom lip-service is paid from public platforms. While the late Mr Nehru, a writer of considerable standing in the world of letters and a maker of history was so hesitant as to express himself unequivocally—because the issue was so complex —either on language or on script, the innocent Congress President, otherwise a vastly respected man, not merely expresses himself so freely on the question of language and gets publicity in the front pages of newspapers for his utterances which shift their emphasis to suit changing political winds but contributes actively, and in this case, calamitously, to decision-making on such a fateful issue as language. If, as is contemplated, India will soon have fourteen *national* languages (a term of political appeasement) with several thousand youngmen writing their all-India examinations, each in his own language, certain consequences are bound to flow from it and when that happens what, I ask, will be the verdict of history on the intellectuals of this generation, especially those that ought to have had a say on language as medium of thought and feeling.

All I have said in the foregoing paragraphs relates immediately and intimately to art and literature and generally the life of the mind which is menaced in every way and should cause a state

of emergency in the world of criticism but there isn't so much as the stir of a leaf. And yet only literary criticism can 'mobilise' our sensibility—which is really the problem of culture.* But responsible criticism isn't mobilised in a systematic way throughout the nation and so lone voices do not count and might even be penalised by those in power for 'dabbling in politics'—expressing an honest opinion on education which forms the breath of our lives becomes politics, but legitimate when politicians pass *ex cathedra* judgments on matters of education, language, literature and art. It is not that they should not; indeed they should, for it is tribute to a nation's culture that its politicians can take such live interest in education. But that they should talk with such finality and without so much as a pretence of humility and that their glib and consistently conflicting statements should be unquestioningly accepted and endorsed by vast numbers of academics except a few 'black sheep' who engage in 'politics'—that is a sad reflection on the state of criticism and of culture.

I was once member of an inspecting commission consisting of university professors who were quite rightly asked by one of

* See Lionel Trilling: *The Liberal Imagination*, one of the finest expressions, and perhaps the best exemplification, of the Arnoldian function of Criticism in America. To Trilling the word liberal is primarily of political import and explains, according to him, why a writer of literary criticism involves himself with 'political considerations'. This may look like the enlarging of the scope and function of literary criticism (as was feared by some of the participants at the seminar where this paper was presented). But Professor Trilling affirms unequivocally in his preface to *The Liberal Imagination*, a significant title for 'Essays on Literature and Society': 'These are not political essays, they are essays in literary criticism. But they assume the inevitable, intimate, if not always, obvious, connection between literature and politics'. We are reminded by Professor Trilling that in spite of his political disagreement with Coleridge, John Stuart Mill urged liberals to read him and he valued Coleridge's politics because they were the poet's and hoped that they might modify liberalism's tendency to envisage the world in what he called a 'prosaic' way and recall liberals to a sense of 'variousness and possibility'. This should support criticism's concern with politics in a legitimate rather than an apologetic way, because as Professor Trilling says 'literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of the variousness, possibility, complexity and difficulty'. Apart from all these, it is important to remember that a critic of literature has to function at different levels including the level of higher pamphleteering. This is not to import 'practical considerations' but to enlarge his concern, have a sense of urgency and to fight for life.

the most dynamic chief ministers this country has had whether any of our economists in the fifty or so universities of India had torn the Second Five Year Plan to pieces; if not, what did universities want autonomy for? His question was unanswerable and speaking for myself (there is no condescension) I have yet to recover from the shame that I as an academic have had to share. For, the situation is not different in other disciplines in our universities to which the community has a right to look for lead in thought. Were it different I shouldn't now be discussing such questions as language and government patronage to art.

The crux of the problem is that in ancient Indian society the Brahmin, who was the conscience-keeper of society, the representative of a minority which created culture, could afford free play of the mind and because of the disinterestedness (he didn't care for his next meal which he knew would come from somewhere) with which his advice was offered on matters of state, a ruler like Janaka himself a philosopher, must have felt it a privilege to journey to the forest to consult the mendicant sage, Yajnavalkya. And we who have so many axes to grind cannot naturally afford either the disinterestedness or the courage that goes with it. How has this come about?

There must be scores of factors contributing to it and one of these at any rate is that Criticism stopped and with it the creative energy must have dried up. The castes in ancient India must have made for levels of culture which were also levels of power and which acted as checks and curbs on one another. And when there are levels of culture there is a possibility that the politicians may, theoretically speaking, know their place and entertain fear of ridicule by those who know better but now when power and culture reside in the same caste—today in India it is the politician and the bureaucrat, the proprietary and the supervisory elements, respectively, from whom the intellectual takes the cue in intellectual matters as if he were a hired piper and they have the right to call the tune—it follows that the intellectual has killed his conscience. While the humbler sections of society (not so much the factory worker as the peasant, for agriculture is not so much a vocation as a way of life) still have access to traditional culture, the half-educated and ill-educated—and most of us belong to these categories—fall an easy prey to 'exploitation of the readily available responses' by the radio, the film, the newspaper, cheap

fiction, government patronage, interests of pressure groups and such other factors. It is dreadful to contemplate the increasing number of educated men—who are no more than engineers, scientists, administrators—who are no more than mere craftsmen without the culture that belonged to each craft before the advent of the industrial era.

The family and the caste both of which nourished the culture of the individual at two levels have now lost their hold by offering them nothing. Book Societies, Book Guilds, Book Councils recommend readable books to the people attractively advertised, as for example:

'Out of the thousands of books published every year—there are between 12,000 and 14,000—how on earth is the ordinary person to sift the sheep from the goats? Distinguished critics attempt to guide the public, but they are often so hopelessly "highbrow" and "precious", and simply add to the general confusion and bewilderment.

'When the aims of the Book Guild were explained to me, therefore, it seemed too good to be true—an organization which would cater for the ordinary intelligent reader, not for the highbrows—an organization which would realize that a book can have a good story and a popular appeal and yet be good literature—be good literature and yet be absorbingly interesting, of the kind you can't put down once you've started, an organization which would not recommend a book as a work of genius simply because it had been recommended by some pedantic critic or other, but which would conscientiously sift really good stuff out of the mass of the pretentious and affected which is just as tiresome as the blatantly third rate.' (Quoted in *Culture and Environment* by F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson).

Then, what has happened to the innate faculty of questioning in modern man? My preoccupation is with the Indian scene and it is commonplace that a faculty which could have been channellised to function as responsible criticism has gone underground, as it were to manifest as gossip or loose talk in cliques, coteries and cohorts who live a sub-standard life not economically, but culturally. For they suffer from frustrations, bitternesses of many kinds caused by a sense of personal, social and economic injustices, which have led to hypocrisy in daily life, double-talk, double-think and double-do. Of course for such as these there

is less wear and tear of the nerves and possibly greater worldly success but culture suffers the first casualty in such a society.

We talk of liberal education but do so little to liberate the minds of the young and the surest way to do this is by breaking the dogmatism, narrowness and prejudice which are inherent in man as individual and man as member of a group. The chief accusation against the Indian student is that his mind is not trained to think, to carry on sustained enquiries for himself but to depend on authority, to submit to power and consequently to suffer loss of personality. Criticism, of all things, can make for civilized behaviour. In this respect we have much to learn from England which is such a small community where, by our norms, no criticism of government or literature or the arts should have been possible. But thanks to the critical attitudes inculcated in the young, which has made for certain social norms life can be lived at a decent level which is denied to us here for fear of consequences. The school of experience has proved to most of us that it is wise rather to be silent or take the line of least resistance than expose oneself to wear and tear by standing up. No student of literature can forget that it is Matthiessen the critic of a sophisticated poet like T. S. Eliot and a novelist of the same category, namely, Henry James who thought it his duty to tone up the level of politics by campaigning for a Presidential candidate who commanded but a small minority. While I have no doubt that this is obviously not the concern of a literary critic I should hasten to add that it does demonstrate the farthest limit to which a literary critic with his concern for life may go.

It demonstrates too that it requires a literary critic's kind of integrity, courage and perspective to espouse unpopular causes and stand for certain values in public life which is menaced, worst of all, by those who seek political power by using their literary prestige and by masquerading as promoters of culture. In other words only he is equal to it who has what Leavis calls 'a mature and delicate sense of humane values manifesting itself directly as a fine sensibility'.

Few others can be expected to have his concern to build up the inner resources of the individual and the community, and to meet the challenges and threats to the life of the mind and the spirit. And nothing is ever likely to build up this front so well as art and literature and when art and literature are vitiated the

very quality of our experience will be debased for as some one has said 'the arts serve purposes beyond themselves'. Precisely here lies the role of responsible criticism.

For after all, Criticism doesn't come like dead wood to a lumber room but comes as atmosphere, as a set of values, as an attitude, as a mood, or finally, as a way of life. So far as Indian poetics is concerned, it does not get down to the *uses* of poetry. Poetry has no uses, for it is valuable as an experience in itself—rasānubhava. Professor Hiriyanna says in his book, *Art Experience* that poetry must be regarded as a means of securing a spell of detachment from common life and not for any lessons or criticism of life it may contain. He thinks Poetry represents an attitude, it also yields certain results and the attitude is not less important than the results that follow. That experience which only an ideal reader can get is better than writing poetry for, as a Sanskrit sloka* has it—'If you are not conversant with the best of poets—the kings among them—*how* can you purpose to write poetry and if you are, why should you?' Pondered carefully the quotation should help us to recognise the value of sensitive *reading* of good poetry as even superior to *writing* mediocre poetry, so far as artistic experience means anything to man. One may well ask: which poet learnt to write good poetry by reading criticism? I don't know about the writing of poetry though it is common place that most poets and novelists and playwrights have invariably received the benefit of criticism of their work in manuscript from their friends—who are either fellow-writers or extremely sensitive readers. Mr Eliot unequivocally confesses the indebtedness of Yeats, Rilke, Mallarme, Paul Valery and himself to a movement caused by Edgar Allan Poe through his two seminal essays on poetics. There is in any case the classic example of Eliot's indebtedness to Pound who reduced *The Waste Land* to less than half its original length.

It would be more profitable and more to the point to consider whether without good and vital criticism a good chunk of the world's literature would not be lying locked up on the shelves of libraries. It is well to remember that it is the critics (though they were poet-critics) that commended the poet as teacher, as the unacknowledged legislator, the guide, the guardian of our soul and the source of all our moral being. The history of English

* Quoted by Professor Hiriyanna in the book mentioned above.

criticism has shown that Donne who had virtually perished for not being understood came back with added vigour, thanks to Eliot. The entire history of Shakespeare criticism far from irritating us can show that there have been several valid approaches and each has added a new dimension to Shakespeare and helped to establish him more and more firmly in people's minds and hearts. All the denigration of Milton hasn't destroyed Milton but helped to give a sense of proportion to our blind admiration for the poet who was bracketed with Shakespeare. Even the warmest of his admirers are today somewhat apologetic about his orotundity, his magniloquence, his self-righteousness, his perpetual presence in his poetry without standing apart, and his corruption of English. To the extent Criticism has helped one to get these revaluations flow into one's nervous system and the gastric juices it can be said to have preserved the individual from being a part of the unrecognizable mass. Consider again how, thanks to Eliot and Leavis, poets like Dryden and Pope who had been relegated to an inferior status, as poets who composed their verses in the wits and not in the souls, have now come back to their own, and form the main tradition of poetry to which the better poets of our age are related.

On the other hand, the praise once lavished upon the Romantic poets is very much toned down now thanks to the good beginning made by Arnold and in the case of Shelley the reaction against him has been fairly consistent for almost a century now and the stand is generally gaining ground. Mr Eliot set the tone for our virtual rejection of the Victorians—on the ground they exhausted their poetic fire soon and remained ruminating the rest of their long lives. It looks as if there is still not a full realization of the fact that the Victorians' incapacity, such as it was (for a few friends who mattered *did* know of his poetry), to judge Hopkins's poetry was responsible for arresting the growth of English poetry by at least a quarter of a century. In any case, the fact that Hopkins didn't feel prompted to publish his poetry may reflect as much upon the poet's indifference to poetic fame as upon the critical ethos which induced such indifference in him. Similarly the high premium put on the heads of the better moderns helped a large number of educated people to call men and things by their true and proper names; sharpen sensibility and train intelligence for operations outside the reading of poetry. The fact

that a bio-chemist like Yudkin could write an effective rejoinder in such imaginatively critical terms to Snow's 'Two Cultures' shows how good criticism can percolate downwards through a small minority until it becomes common currency. It is largely the literary critics along with cultural anthropologists that have given us in recent times a sense of vitality of the tradition while recognising the importance of the individual talent. As in poetry so in fiction it is again a critic like Leavis who gave us the great tradition of English novelists by helping us to view Fielding, Thackeray, Meredith and Hardy as good novelists perhaps but not as those increasing our awareness of the possibilities of life in a major way. Our interest in them, he said, is but historical and not intrinsic.

Turning to the Indian literary scene one witnesses a lack of proper criticism of the Vedas and the Upanishads. By regarding them as the revealed Word of God we have failed to build up a poetic tradition which would have been available to poets of succeeding ages had we only critically trained ourselves to look upon them as efforts of the astonishing spirit of man rather than as the revealed Word of God. Such an attitude would have won attention and respect for poetry and for the god-like power of creation in man. As a result of this critical debility a people who produced matchless nature poetry in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the epics and the classical drama came to look upon the relatively poor efforts of Wordsworth and Shelley as great nature poetry and brought out translations and adaptations of inferior Romantic poetry leaving out the better Romantics and seldom turning to the unique nature poetry of their own country. Again, it is sad that a people endowed with a magnificent mythical and symbolic imagination as evident in early Sanskrit poetry should have looked at the Imagist and Symbolist movements of Europe as a novelty. This leaves one in no doubt of the failure of criticism to function effectively, for responsible criticism might have altered the course of literary and cultural history had some great critic drawn the world's sustained attention to this wealth earlier. While good poets, endowed with a critical sense and a sense of tradition might have done their work anyhow by being in touch with works of the past, good criticism would certainly have released a new and hidden source of energy for being harnessed by poets for use today, would have, to apply Arnold's theory, created and nourished epochs

of poetry. To quote the already oft-quoted Eliot: 'The important moment for the appearance of criticism seems to be the time when poetry ceases to be the expression of the mind of a whole people'. But it didn't appear in India although poetry had ceased to be the expression of the mind of a whole people and that is the sad part of the story. If vital criticism had continued to appear after say, 1000 A.D., who knows, it might have been possible to grow new plants out of old roots. And such an energy and awareness of a vital tradition would have helped not merely poets but others no less by giving them a sense of belonging and a sense of spirit of the place both of which make for homogeneity while permitting at the same time plurality. It cannot be denied that literary criticism along with cultural anthropology and history has helped to form the consciousness of an American tradition in a way such as nothing else could have done. And that tradition and those insights are all available to subsequent writers and in a dilute form to all men and women. It is not for nothing that Mr T. S. Eliot said that 'from time to time, every hundred years or so it is desirable that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature and set the poets and poems in a new order.'

It is the absence of such critical activity (there was an abundance of cataloguing and classifying instead) that has caused the undeserved neglect of our literatures, philosophies and values which could have made a great difference to the cultural scene of India. Even mediocre criticism would have helped to focus attention on works of art and further our interest in them.

Lastly, I would like to say a few words on how Analytic criticism in the West with its attention to exploratory-creative use of language has helped to minimise the chaos of critical theories and by extension chaos in the cultural scene. For language is part of gracious living. Indeed as some one has observed it seems in some parts of the world speech is still an art and poets will tell us that the poetry of a people takes its life from the language and in turn gives meaning to it—it is the poet who refines the dialect of the tribe. Where the two have lost living contact with each other as notably as in our regional literatures, especially in poetry, growth has been arrested and both the art of poetry and the art of life have reached a dead end, as it were. When language is so important, when words rule the world, it is necessary that the literary critic should be calling our attention

tirelessly to the dichotomy between the true and the false language and help to bridge the gap in the interest of integrated living. For our response to words is inseparable from our response to life. As Emerson put it: 'The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language' ('Nature').

Look at the cliches that one uses daily and how they came between the individual and the world in which he lives, by blocking transmission of experience from the one to the other, by impairing cognition. We read in daily papers of the breakdown of communication here and there but the worst breakdown of communication is when words fail to do their duty by us*. Consider the havoc done by cliches—say, 'standard of living' which focuses our attention on things like *per capita* income and cost of living index and diverts attention from the quality and texture of living of the standard man to mere material well-being which has made us sub-standard men and coarsened our lives at all levels regardless of the social class to which we belong—this is inevitable when we are exposed to such external stimuli as the radio, the television, the thrillers and the yellow press all of which have overshadowed good books, good music, good painting. We in this country have not yet realised the pernicious effects of advertisements which thrive on the abuse of language, the seeds of which were sown by the English teacher in school and college when he emphasised the 'mechanics' of language, exhorted students to cultivate a good 'style' and who must therefore take a fair measure of responsibility for the 'dissociation of sensibility' among his pupils—a phrase which should lead us to a consideration of the critical jargon for, Literary Criticism too like the behavioral sciences, has contributed its full quota of jargon and thus conditioned our responses while attempting to combat stock responses. So much of criticism is hardly anything but false persuasion. But this recognises the need for criticism to criticise criticism. There's nothing to laugh at here as all human institutions must continually renew and revitalize themselves: Break the word and free the thought; break the thought and free the thing. This is a perennial process.

* Even a stormy petrel like Mr V. K. Krishna Menon recently remarked in connection with the Rann of Kutch that Pakistan had waged war against India but we in this country don't call men and things by their true and proper names and we thus shelve problems that cry for solution.

In this process the teacher has as important a role to play as the poet and the critic, but then a teacher of literature *is* a critic of literature even when he doesn't write. May I in this connection quote two paragraphs from a talk I once gave on 'Language and Literature' as it may help to bring out my kind of preoccupation with language as different from the British Council's and that of the Central Institute of English:

" 'Think of me as one who loved not wisely but too well'.

'My God! what language! ejaculated an Oxford-educated Professor-friend of mine. I may add this Professor was fighting hard to give a linguistic bias to English teaching in our colleges. I wonder if the learned professor would have liked his pupil to say (in self-justification) to the father of his girl-friend whose neck he has wrung 'Think of me as one. . . .'. Perhaps the tragedy might have been averted had the Professor drawn his devoted pupil's attention to the egotistic sublime of the self-centred hero in the play! Mr Eliot spoke the truth when he said that in Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* the language is refined but the sentiment is crude. How often have we not heard social reformers declaim from public platforms that we are all mute Miltons and silent Cromwells and (implicitly, that is, if any of them has a modicum of modesty left in them) if only they are voted to power there would be hundreds of *Paradise Losts*! Heaven help us! The influence of one *Paradise Lost* has been doubtful enough, if not pernicious! Besides, if only our reformers and their followers leave us to ourselves, we may try as best we can to inherit the earth, while allowing them to tread the primrose-path to paradise. However, it's against such polite meaningless words and greetings where no kindness is that we have to guard ourselves against. I would ask the advocates of linguistic bias to tell me whether when I am explaining Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar* I should ask my students to learn to emulate the example of Antony and address their audience as 'Friends, Indians, Countrymen' or whether I should not point out Shakespeare's undoubted disapproval of the vicious rhetoric of the demagogue and commend it for their consideration. From the point of view of language alone there is nothing wrong with Friends, Romans, Countrymen while I submit that an honest man would have been content with either friends or countrymen. Let us teach

language by all means but let us teach the students to know the language of dishonesty when they hear it. Language after all is not an end in itself; it is a means of promoting human welfare and let us not therefore forget to tell our students in the English class that it is an opportunist's use of language; and that when Shelley says 'I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed' it is a sentimentalist's use of language: for if Antony is deceiving others Shelley is deceiving himself. I would like to put my pupils on their guard against both. I am anxious that in our desire to achieve efficiency with our tools we should not forget the educational ideal or the student for whom these are intended.

Like my friends, the advocates of language, I too concern myself with language, with the behaviour of words, the romance of words, the use of words in various contexts; I ask them whether I must not comment, for example, on the word *alien* when Keats tells us how sad Ruth stood weeping amidst 'alien corn'. Doesn't *alien* create what it conveys? It conveys a negative meaning which is *not of us, not belonging to us, not being protected, not befriended,* so on and so forth. I wonder whether the American Government which is spending millions of dollars to win the friendship of the peoples of the world and is inviting students, scholars and statesmen to visit their country at their cost would have allowed its officers to call these friendly visitors 'aliens' at the Passport Office had the English teacher in American Schools paid proper attention to the use of words and if this is done by the English teacher it wouldn't at all matter what name you would give to his teaching: *language* or *literature.* Let us sensitize the student to all that the word stands for, for a great writer always exploits all the resources, the full possibilities of language and only when we understand this can we be said to have imparted a language bias to our teaching and not by 'parsing' or 'analysis' or the other 'mechanics' of language.

I submit the time spent on sensitizing the student to the words on the printed page as to the spoken word is no loss of time. For the word has such potency, such magical power that a poet like W. B. Yeats could say:

'Words alone are certain good'."

When criticism wins attention to language as 'the poetic testament of the genius of a people' culture will take care of itself.

ON THE ABUSE OF CRITICISM

R. K. NARAYAN

MY EXPERIENCE of the critical world is limited to memories of colleges and examinations. The critic was more useful than the poet or the playwright whom we were supposed to be studying. I often wondered why Shakespeare's tragedies were ever prescribed while all that one needed was a library copy of Bradley. The play seemed to be a *meaningless interruption* in the study of Bradley—all the trouble one took to unravel the sense of blank verse and all the trouble of relating that sense to the main theme was unnecessary. One wondered why any one took the trouble to teach the original while one's mind wandered instead of proceeding to dictate passages from Bradley straightaway. I generally read the footnotes and appendices in Verity, discretely steering away from the passages in mid-page and I may say I did not do too badly in the examination; except on two occasions I never failed in English in whatever else I might have been deficient. Verity, Bradley and a host of others, good, bad and indifferent critics and annotators—meant a great deal to us. One mugged up their sentences and repeated them like a tape-recorder and got through one's trials. One sometimes sounded profound and scholarly, while passing the currency of critical jargon. Could Shakespeare have contemplated humanity in the light of the transmigration of souls, we asked authoritatively and went on to provide the right answers referring to Goneril and Regan, and quoting lines in support of their thesis. We felt indebted to the critic for supplying us mark-winning points. We could not have extracted all these grand notions, directly, unaided even if we had read *Lear* a hundred times over. We could also with casual ease, utter phrases such as Pity and Terror and Catharsis. We might have sounded grand and wise, but all that wisdom was just vocal-chord deep, and we prattled thus and thus, strutted our year or two in the college, and were heard of no more. On the same basis we cultivated our knowledge of a great many poets, essayists and dramatists and novelists, from Chaucer to Hardy. It never occurred to any one for a moment

that the original writing could possess any value by itself except as a peg to hang on a critic's views. There were of course rare moments when one was surprised and stirred by the direct impact of an author when an unexpectedly inspired delivery of a passage was to be heard at a college drama; or when we had the good fortune to have Professor Rollo to teach us. He dictated elaborate notes at some point, no doubt, but he first gave us a reading of the original which would fascinate and thrill; but, alas, his hour would be all-too-brief, and we did not see him again for a week, or for a longer time if he had other engagements as the Principal of the College. Normally the gloss and brilliance of a poet or the dramatist was sicklied over with the dullness engendered in a general run-of-the-mill teaching. We had one particular teacher of literature, a Scot, so shy that he always looked at his own shoes while lecturing; perhaps he had been told that Indians resented being looked at. And although he taught us for three years we never got a full glimpse of his face; not only that we never understood a word of his teaching as he spoke with a peculiar local accent, which proved just incomprehensible. Often we thought he had been lecturing on Euripides, when he probably was telling us about the Lake Poets. It did not make any difference to us as we depended on the brief notes in the critical editions for attaining our academic *mukti*.

After all this experience, there came a time in one's life when one had to ask what is the role of a critic? At one stage he seemed to be an intermediary between the composition of a dead writer and a living student. How was he qualified to perform this task? No one can say. He may assume this role for no better reason than that he has sufficient self-esteem to thrust himself forward, or enough jargon to sound convincing. He may be a pretender or a priest, a usurper or a megalomaniac out to establish his rule and authority; or he may be a genuine enthusiast, thirsting to communicate his joy of discovery. A critic who is overwhelmed by his subject sometimes misfires. When I read Francis Thomson's essay on Shelley, I felt I could never bear to read such a syrupy, gold-dusted, angel of a poet; or *Sesame and Lilies*, by Ruskin. I read through his recommendations for study with awe and despair. If one followed Ruskin's advice, one would take two hundred years to get any poem. So much for my experience as a reader. I have the doubtful fortune to be a writer too—and

that means, I encountered the critic again in another capacity. On the whole as a writer I have no complaint against critics; they have always been most favourable to me, and in my thirty-year collection of review-cuttings, unfavourable reviews are very few. When my first book came out in 1935 I scanned the review column with the greatest excitement: it was amusing to view myself as I appeared to the critics: I seemed to lose my identity: the story I wrote not only assumed a public dress and deportment; but seemed to have a life all its own. It was a separate entity creating its own significance. At first it was rather startling to see what the critics read into a story of mine, but gradually it occurred to me that perhaps they were right and I was wrong. A book has an intensely personal relationship to the author only up to a certain stage. Once it has started to breathe it acquires a personality and movement all its own. And then I become as much a stranger to it as my neighbour; soon its contents are also forgotten by me. I think a merciful Providence has made an automatic arrangement whereby the author's mind keeps performing the important task of forgetting the past book: otherwise it would be impossible to go on writing. This element of detachment from one's work is something that must be recognised by the reader or the critic, and that would avoid a great deal of embarrassment for the author. I feel quite tongue-tied and try to change the subject when any one attempts to put searching questions to me on my own work. It is no use asking me what I had in mind when I wrote such and such or what influence in my life was responsible for such and such a book. All that I am interested in while writing a novel is to follow a set of characters in their background, their aspirations, achievements, frustrations, and fulfilments. I would not be able to go on with my work day by day if ever I stopped to question my method or motives or become analytical. I write because certain characters and themes have become obsessive, and I explore through actual writing day after day where it is going to lead me. At the end of this task, which may last months, a process of de-possession occurs very gradually until I am oppressed by the next idea. I am at pains to explain all this because, of late, I note that thesis writers in various parts of the world are on the prowl; and send me letters, sometimes a thousand-word long, demanding biography, bibliography, statements and explanations. If I answered all the questions I would have no time to write anything

else and should deserve perhaps a Doctorate myself. There is no use seeking answers from me; I avoid the reading of any writing on my writing, as I try hard to keep myself from becoming self-conscious; I consider self-consciousness would be death of any writing. From this point of view I very much wish that universities would make it a rule that a thesis should be written only on a dead author; the living one could mislead and be misled.

APPENDIX

A REPORT ON THE MYSORE SEMINAR ON WESTERN AND INDIAN APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

DAVID MCCUTCHION

I

SANSKRIT poetics have never received the acclaim accorded in the West to ancient Indian religion, philosophy, art and literature. Consequently even in India today the theories of Sanskrit literary criticism have been largely confined to courses of Sanskrit, and had little influence on Modern Indian studies. General opinion holds that Sanskrit poetics consists of little more than pettifogging rules and minute classifications of rhetorical figures. Even Dr S. K. De, who has done so much to create interest in this field beyond the narrow range of Sanskrit specialization, confesses that the study of *Alamkara-Sastra* is like reading the index of a book instead of the book itself.

All the more interest therefore attaches to a recent Seminar at Mysore University (1-7 June, 1965), which sought to investigate the possible relevance of Sanskrit theories to modern literary interests, and to accommodate Sanskrit with Western aesthetic theories in a joint approach. As the organizer, Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah, Head of the Post-graduate English Department, put it in his opening address: 'This Seminar is conceived as the attempt to forge links with a past with which today we have lost all vital connection'. Why seek enlightenment from Aristotle when our own theorists have given us *rasanubhava*?—joy is nearer to our hearts than purgation! There was no question of abandoning all that had been learnt from the West, but of integrating it with our own traditions. And Professor Narasimhaiah concluded by indicating various points of contact, as in Arnold's theory of detachment, or Eliot's idea of the extinction of personality in poetic utterance.

The Seminar first raised the fundamental question whether universal standards are at all possible. Yes, declared Dr Mulk Raj Anand in the opening paper—firstly because of universal humanness ('the genes which are the pooled energies of life are similar in character'), and secondly because of universal evolution.

In all societies there is the same progression from man the victim of fate to man the maker of his destiny. Writers must accept this progression: 'sensitive spirits' may regret the machine age, but the 'more positive humanists . . . wished to master the age of mechanisation to love every individual intimately, to honour and worship the people'. Just as cultural chauvinism must give way to world culture, so defeatism must be replaced by vision, even though this may bring the writer into conflict with 'those societies which live by custom and dead habit'. He becomes a rebel and 'inspires, by his new vision of the land after his heart's desire, all those who have not dared to look beyond their noses'. The critic must ally himself with vision—in fact he is the 'perfector of vision'.

In the discussion that followed, Professor Lal (St Xavier's, Calcutta) immediately raised the key question: how do you define 'humanness'? Dr Anand reaffirmed: 'man in all his weaknesses and strength', but it was never made clear how this could constitute a universal criterion—defeatism, for example is as human as progressivism—so that although Dr Anand explicitly classified 'doctrinaire criticism' as 'misleading', he nevertheless appeared to be committed to some kind of doctrine. Further objections stressed the personal element in response: as Professor Ramaswami (Presidency, Madras) put it, the rational agnostic may find the *Ramayana* a 'mass of extravagance', whereas to the Hindu believer it is a beautiful embodiment of the spirit of worship. So how do we decide who is right? demanded Professor Lal, and Dr Anand replied: 'Corroboration'. But 'universal' does not mean 'unanimous', objected Dr Krishna Vaid (Punjab) —it refers to those qualities which lift a work above local interest. He proposed Prem Chand's *Godan* as an example; is it good by universal standards? Yes, affirmed Dr Anand, for it has 'a certain maturity, the depths are stirred, the humanness of the characters rises above the local conditions of U.P.' Professor Lal on the other hand, who had translated it into English in collaboration with Jai Ratan, declared that they had found it 'repetitive and diffuse' for all its humanness. Dr Anand replied that content achieved its own form, and that if a work is 'intensely human, sensitive', it will be great in spite of 'mistakes'. And so universal standards gave way to personal affirmation. Let us admit, concluded Dr Sisir Ghose (Visva-Bharati) that the perfect

critic is a hypothesis, and universal standards are a hypothesis, and what we really have are fallible human beings with multiple purposes.

This more or less was the position taken up by the following paper. Mr D. J. McCutchion (Jadavpur) argued that critical appreciation is not bound though it may well be influenced by religion, country and tradition. There *is* a universal humanness transcending cultural frontiers, but people differ personally, creating a variety of needs and tastes, and there is no criterion by which we may elevate a particular taste to the universal. Mr McCutchion saw changing styles (Renaissance—Classicism—Romanticism—Realism, etc.) not so much in terms of progressive evolution as of the 'dynamics of renewal'—a literary rather than a social process. He suggested that the difference between his own and Dr Anand's position was an example of the way beliefs in fact do modify critical approaches. Having shown how religion may affect judgment (Eliot, Claudel, Kierkegaard), he raised the question whether the reader is bound to share the beliefs of an author. Is it true, as Richards says, that *The Divine Comedy* is obsolescent for all but 'adequately equipped readers who can imaginatively reproduce the world outlook of Aquinas, and certain attitudes to women and to chastity, which are even more inaccessible' (*Principles*, p. 222)? The key word here is 'imaginatively'. Mr McCutchion argued that the imaginative world of moral 'acceptables' for any single reader is far wider than the actual world in which he must live his moral choices. But not infinitely wider. For we *are* morally engaged in the aesthetic experience (of literature at any rate), and Mr McCutchion indicated limits to what he personally could accept, e.g., a poem celebrating the Nazi gassing of the Jews 'however marvellously structured'. Each man must realize for himself these limits ('I can tolerate dacoits as heroes but not fascists').

But Mr McCutchion, quoting Eliot, warned against confusing the moral with the literary worth of a piece of writing. To say a poem is 'transcendental' or 'life-affirming' tells us nothing about its literary qualities (e.g. Poe and Baudelaire following the same stated theories). And although we may argue about moral values (whether life-affirming is preferable to life-denying poetry), we can only intuit the purely aesthetic, and if others do not respond attempts to prove 'the wonderful quality of a line like "That

dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea" can be little more than emotive persuasion'. Nevertheless we do wish to persuade others, and in the process inevitably elevate our preferences to universal standards. Finally Mr McCutchion attempted to distinguish more from less valid approaches, e.g., partisan approaches (Marxist, Aurobindian), or intrinsically limited (e.g. 18th century to Shakespeare), from those which combine both the wider preoccupations and taste of the age with appreciation of the author's unique contribution.

Mr McCutchion was immediately taken to task for attempting to maintain incompatible positions: on the one hand that literary worth is aesthetic and a work must only be appreciated for its 'intrinsic purposes', on the other that moral criteria condition judgment and a work must be related to the preoccupations of the age. What do you mean by 'intrinsic purposes'? demanded Professor Lal. Is 'greatness' extra-literary then? queried Professor Ramaswami. It was suggested that evil and aesthetic form were incompatible—that a person capable of celebrating the gassing of Jews would be incapable of writing a poem. But Professor Ramaswami thought this was a matter of cultural relativism: evils differ, but patriotism may be sympathised with universally. In his attempt to distinguish valid from less valid approaches, Mr McCutchion had quoted F. R. Leavis ('The business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiar completeness of response and to observe a peculiarly strict relevance in developing his responses into commentary'), which prompted Professor Narasimhaiah to wonder: 'Relevance to what?' 'Relevance to what is in the work,' replied Mr McCutchion. 'But that's not enough!' protested Professor Narasimhaiah, remembering all those exterior criteria by which Dr Leavis dismissed so much that he considered insignificant or irresponsible. Indeed a certain theoretical ambiguity seemed to be revealed here, which enabled Mr Narayanachar (Karnatak) in a subsequent paper to create a sensation by characterising the standpoint of Dr Leavis as that of Arts for Art's sake! (Professor Narasimhaiah, an old student of Dr Leavis, lost a little of his chairman's poise in setting him right on this).

The question whether a work of art exists autonomously and may be judged by standards outside the culture which produced it, was further discussed by two more papers from Calcutta

towards the end of the Seminar. Dr Naresh Guha (Jadavpur) raised the Indian dilemma forcefully: ' Our question is, we who have read Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Scott and Dickens on the one hand, and Henry Morley, Leslie Stephen, W. J. Courthope, Edmund Gosse, John Aldington Symonds, Arthur Symons and George Saintsbury on the other, how can we evaluate our own literature?' Quoting the case of Bankimchandra who lamented the fact that 'pure Bengali' poets are no longer possible, Dr Guha went on to show how a strange split in the literary consciousness arose whereby two independent sets of criteria operated: one set preferred a work for its 'literary excellence', the other for the values it enshrined. Thus Rabindranath stated his preference for *Sakuntala*, but really believed that Shakespeare was a greater Master than Kalidasa. But does a Hindu or a Chinaman have to 'get infected by the values and ways of life of a Dante or a Milton or Eliot and then function as a critic? Alternatively: 'How can a critic who values only the classical genres of Western drama react favourably to a Sanskrit or a Japanese Noh drama? Clearly we have to rid ourselves of exterior preconceptions and criteria, whether moral or formal.' Thus Dr Guha came down strongly in favour of regarding poems, plays, etc., as 'autonomous, self-sufficient artefacts': the work determines its own values and form. So much for 'all those good people, though really simpletons, who hunt for morals in poetry' (as Dhananjaya says). Literature is to be enjoyed for *what it is:* organization, form. 'There is nothing, including ethical and didactic ideas, that cannot enter into such an organization'—but these are mere bricks, which cannot be discussed in relation to any context of values outside the work. So 'the final evaluation should depend not upon its conformity to some allegedly "mature" view of life, but on the noble complexity of its organization'.

To this the objection was immediately raised that mere complexity is not permanently satisfying: it would lead to the pursuit of more and more novel forms of complexity like the pursuit of the 'strange' in Art for Art's sake ending up in fetichism and bizarrerie. And what did Dr Guha mean by a 'noble' complexity? Is it a nobility intrinsic only to the work or is it a moral consideration 'simplemindedly' slipping in through the back door? Dr Guha explained that by complexity he did not mean complexity

for its own sake but for the nobility of the structure. And by nobility he meant an ordering of the outstanding questions of human life—but not from any particular viewpoint (Christian or otherwise). The ordering is important, not the answer given. In the ensuing discussion it was doubted whether a reader could so easily approach a work free from prejudice and preconception. Professor Amalendu Bose gave the example of a N.W. Frontier audience who clapped the murder of Desdemona—they thought that was the right way to deal with such a woman! How can we condemn a Marxist critic who praises a Marxist work?—the way of life of a whole people is involved here: this was the 'honest doubt' of Professor Narasimhaiah. But as Professor Ramaswami swiftly rejoined loyalty to life and loyalty to Marx are not necessarily the same—and Dr Guha elaborated the point. The Seminar finally agreed with Professor Kantak (Baroda) that a certain acceptance of the context of a work (implying race and milieu) was necessary for understanding but Professor Narasimhaiah added that this context must be assimilated into a wider scheme of things—a sense of the whole history and destiny of man as Richards has it.

This position was taken up the following afternoon by Dr Amalendu Bose (Calcutta), who agreed that literary criticism and literary history are interdependent. After reviewing the development of literary criticism from abuse and fault-finding to disciplined evaluation, Dr Bose came out strongly for the moral role of the critic and teacher ('an agent properly qualified to help other men grow into better and healthier men'). But although insisting on the historical perspective, Dr Bose specifically opposed any subordinating of literature to processes other than literary (as in Hegel, Carlyle, Marx). Literary history will trace the development of themes, attitudes, genres, etc., and also of language (Elizabethan variety, Victorian bulbousness), so as to perceive but not impose a pattern. In value judgment and historical sense lies the discipline of the critic: 'Without the historical sense, criticism becomes irresponsible, wishful, impressionistic, opinionative; without value-judgment, history becomes what an English father, one Francis Osborne, described in a letter to his son in 1956 as 'lumber and formes'. Professor Ramaswami raised the objection that our understanding of the past is false, conditioned by what we desire to see there: to the 18th century the Elizabethan Age was

'anarchic', to the Victorians 'spacious', to the moderns 'vital'. Professor Bose agreed there was a good deal of confusion, but hoped that with further research in a few years' time 'a certain amount of objective knowledge will be acquired'. This is necessary: Hamlet's psychology, for instance, is only to be understood in terms of Elizabethan psychology. In reply to another question, he made quite clear his preference for Saintsbury to Croce!

Thus the formalists were becoming increasingly silent, and the moralists increasingly vocal. The shade of Matthew Arnold, which had been hovering about the table from the beginning of the week, became incarnate on the last morning when Professor Narasimhaiah launched into 'Criticism and Culture'. A critic is 'one who cares for the health of the mind'. He therefore cannot confine himself to literature alone: his concern is 'the transformation of the individual and society'. And Professor Narasimhaiah proceeded to prove himself just such a critic by denouncing all the agencies destroying contemporary Indian culture and society—the Institutes of Culture and Government Academies, politicians telling poets to write patriotic epics, centenary and birth celebrations which neglect the work and foster the myth (Tagore reduced to a set of platitudes), wandering saints selecting new Valmikis, students tools of parties, politicians dictating educational decisions (e.g. the 14 language formula for the U.P.S.C. examinations).... How do they get away with it? Because: 'Responsible criticism isn't there'. Why not? Because: 'Power and culture reside in the same caste—today in India it is the politician and the bureaucrat from whom the intellectual takes his cue in intellectual matters'. Somehow we have got to break the spirit of conformism, revive the innate questioning faculty, for criticism is *a way of life*.

This vigorous commitment to a social role mostly drew support from the participants, though not without pointing to the danger that such a critic runs the risk of ending up a politician himself. Professor Lal pointed to the strain which led a Matthiesson to suicide. Dr Vaid referred to French *engagement* and feared that extra-literary commitment led to loss of quality. To Professor Ramaswami the support of a Kamaraj by Madras intellectuals was 'proof of the separation of culture and politics in our society'. Professor Viswanatham (Waltair) declared that faith, not culture, moves mountains—the Christs and Gandhijis are

superior to the Shakespeares and Tagores. 'The peddlars of criticism have done little good to the world'—Arnold was merely supporting the interests of his own minority culture. But Dr Bose pointed out that culture is a totality embracing both Christ and Shakespeare. At this point Professor Damodar Thakur (Patna) felt we were saddling the critic with too great a responsibility; a distinction was necessary between his *direct* responsibility to the work of art and his *indirect* responsibility to wider spheres. Dr Bose and Professor Ramaswami denied this: the mind cannot function compartmentally—the consequence is treason of the intellectuals as in France. A similar compartmentalisation divides the university from the community, added Professor Narasimhaiah. But Professor Kantak and Dr Vaid doubted whether specialisation was altogether avoidable, e.g. in cultivating science or judging the language issue. 'Would you at all distinguish between a critic and an intellectual?' asked Mr McCutchion. 'The intellectual life does not exclude the highest intellect,' rejoined Professor Narasimhaiah.

II

It was somewhat paradoxical that a Seminar dedicated to the accommodation of Western and Sanskrit approaches should lead up to this full-throated commitment to the social responsibility of the critic, for this is precisely where the Indian tradition failed. As Professor Narasimhaiah put it: 'Indian poetics does not get down to the uses of poetry'. Nor indeed is it sufficiently *critical.* It is more preoccupied with analysis than judgment, reverence prevents reassessment; the Vedas are treated as the revealed word of God rather than the foundation of a poetic tradition. So too with criticism itself; the followers merely echo the Masters. Romaniero Gnoli, for instance, has even doubted whether after Abhinavagupta the study of aesthetics in India received any further creative stimulus. Professor Narasimhaiah approved T. S. Eliot's call for a periodic review of the past, a revaluation and reordering every hundred years or so to keep the past alive as an inspiration to the present. Because this never happened in India, we are reduced to our present state of 'critical debility'—lacking that historical sense of change which had been stressed by Dr Bose. Ka Naa Subramanyam's paper revealed a similar state of affairs in Tamil literature, which apparently had no criticism

worth the name until 1959! It was therefore not surprising that Sanskrit poetics came out strongest in the fields of general aesthetics and descriptive analysis. Dr Guha was able to enlist full support for his formalist position from the *Alamkara Sastra*, the *Dhvanibadis*, and the *Rasabadis*. Mr K. S. Narayanachar, dealing with the theme of poetry as instruction or delight, showed that the English critics and poets come closest to their Sanskrit brethren when they lay more emphasis on the pleasures than the legislations of poetry, and he insisted that Wordsworth is better to be appreciated in terms of *rasa* than nature-philosophy.

Kuntala in particular was referred to in several papers, for he offers the most striking similarities with modern Western analytic criticism. Professor Thakur drew a parallel between Kuntala's emphasis on 'indirectness' and Empson's on 'ambiguity'. 'Notwithstanding that there is only one word', says the *Vakroktijivitam*, 'many purposes or shades of meaning exist within it'. Where Empson has seven types of ambiguity, Kuntala has six kinds of indirectness. Kuntala contrasts poetic statements with common-life statements in a way which reminds us of Richards' distinction between statements and pseudo-statements, and lays a similar emphasis on tone. For Kuntala as for modern Western critics there can be no separation of content and form: the *alamkaras* are not added on to any poetic 'body'; as Richards says, the ornaments *are* the body. Poetry is thus a shaping, ordering activity—Kuntala is a formalist—and its purpose is delight, not only in organized complexity but in novelty: 'that strange quality of feeling that creates unusual pleasures on account of a very particular newness of use is called ornament in literature'. This emphasis on strangeness, obscurity, he shares with the 20th century rediscoverers of Donne. And in this strange newness lies the creativity or 'growing tip' of poetic energy.

Professor Thakur's paper was not without its own ambiguities. As Professor Lal immediately pointed out, he had referred to *vakrokti* in different places as a 'theory', a 'training of the attention' a 'shaping activity', a 'statement with an inflection', a 'pleasure in linguistic energy', and a 'union of mobility and refinement'. Professor Thakur replied, after some indirection, that *vakrokti* is the imaginative use of language. A later paper by Dr V. N. Dhavale (Poona) covered much the same ground, indicating

how the modern Western concern with *meaning* had been anticipated in a variety of Sanskrit schools.

Dr K. Krishnamoorthy's exposition of the *dhvani* theory also revealed affinities with formalist and 'organic' positions. The poem is *sui generis* with a realised inner meaning over and above its logical meanings, a complex fusion of emotion (*rasa*), imagination (*alamkara*), and thought (*vastu*), without any practical relation to life. But as Dr Krishnamoorthy later insisted in discussion, the *dhvani* theory is not really formalist but expressionist, its chief concern with qualitative not normative analysis. The beauty of poetry lies in its suggestiveness (*dhvani*): 'If the suggested feeling or image or idea becomes subordinate to the beauty of the direct meaning, we get second-rate poetry'. Suggestiveness may be of *rasa*, or of *alamkara*, or of *vastu*, but '*rasa* and *rasa* alone is *dhvani* par excellence'. It is *rasa* that binds the disparate elements into an organic whole. This break with the classificatory *alamkara* schools reminds us of the rejection of prescriptive neo-classicism by the European Romantics. And like the Romantics, Anandavardhana was led to base judgment on subjective feeling. For by his emphasis on *rasa* as the soul of poetry, he was led to the conclusion that poetry could not be communicated to those who do not already feel it. Hence the importance of being a *sahrdaya* or 'one with the temperament of a poet'. Such a concept makes criticism a school of initiation rather than analysis, although as Dr Krishnamoorthy insisted, the *Dhvani* school 'also admits of intellectual analysis to cover every essential aspect of poetic experience'.

Dr Bose was later to contrast the intellectual bias (Aristotle, etc.) of the Western tradition, with Indian emphasis on the heart and '*tanmayibhavana yogyata*, the ability to become one with the artefact, the chameleon-like ability of which Keats wrote.' But the danger of the *sahrdaya* position is that it may very well put an end to criticism and communication, by encouraging a take-it-on-trust mentality or the disdain of 'beyond the pale.' Such self-sufficiency was strikingly illustrated by Professor Ramaswami's paper, an exercise in erudite wit, which saw all art, including that supreme artefact the universe itself, as equally pointless and delightful. For Professor Ramaswami perception was 'untaught and unteachable' imaginative sensibility—that faculty which sent the *rishis* into raptures when they heard Kusa and

Lava singing the *Ramayana*, or achieved 'the matchless facility and felicity of response which my revered *guru*, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi made to things literary'. Neither the *rishis* nor the Sankaracharya went to any university—their only literary principles were 'knowledge of life' enriched by *tapas*. All other principles are 'obsessions', like Dr Johnson's objections to *Lycidas*, and lead straight to authoritarianism. But intuitive perception is a matter of luck—'If you aren't lucky, kneel and pray. If you are still unlucky, kneel and pray again'.

Of course this position is not exclusively Indian, and poets themselves will tend to take the *sahrdaya* line in any country. Mr McCutchion had quoted Ezra Pound: 'You can take a man to Perugia or to Borgo San Sepolcro, but you can't make him prefer one kind of painting to another'. Stendhal said much the same thing. And R. K. Narayan delivered a short address on 'The Abuse of Criticism': according to him critics were no help whatever to writers, misleading to readers, but enjoyed a minor usefulness in enabling students to pass exams without reading the set books. Narayan's humour had some point—unlike Henry James, he found critical self-consciousness inhibiting—but Professor Ramaswami's paper roused protests on all sides: this was betrayal from within. He remained adamant, however: 'The truth is more precious than our jobs', the groundlings understood Shakespeare best.

Another and more characteristically Indian approach was taken by Dr Sisir Ghose of Santiniketan and Pondicherry: true reality is transcendental, life is play. Dr Ghose began by lamenting a lost ideal age when art was a way of life and beauty a path to transcendence. Now 'chaos rules' and art is mere advertisement—'reduced to the level of sensation and opinion'. The only way to bring back beauty is to bring meaning back to life. For this we must turn to Ancient India when 'action, thought, and aesthetics were one'. Here we find a mystical uniting (*yoga*) as opposed to a rational dissecting view of art: knowledge by identity. This experience is open to any race, or any poet, of any nation with 'vision and maturity'. All may dance with Nataraja.

Professor Kantak was the first to 'break the spell', as he said, and point out that Dr Ghose had only been concerned with the aesthetic experience as such, and not with the problem of criticism

at all. Professor Ramaswami thought that Dr Ghose was confusing art and spirituality. The *concept* of Nataraja is marvellous no doubt, remarked Professor Lal, but how are we to decide which particular statue of Nataraja is great art and which mediocre imitation? 'In an age of disintegration, it is better to proceed from the empirical', roundly declared Dr Anand: Tagore was a transcendentalist, but he came to realise that art must also accommodate the earthy, the ugly, and the exuberant energy of an individual's experience. Dr Vaid agreed with Dr Anand that there was little point in recommending an integral aesthetics for a disintegrated society; nor is there a single reference in Sanskrit until the 10th century that an artist can reach the absolute through art. But Dr Ghose, his roots in heaven, firmly declined these earthly recommendations.

The danger of theorizing at this level of abstraction is that contact may be lost with reality. Well might Dr Vaid ask: when was this Indian Golden Age when action, thought, and aesthetic were one? A similar danger is that when discussing Sanskrit and Western poetics, similarities may appear to emerge in verbal description which are not similarities in practice. Thus it may be established that both Western and Sanskrit theorists have been much concerned with 'meaning', or 'ambiguity', or 'impersonality', but there may be a world of difference between the suppositions behind these concerns, the way they were applied, or the judgements they led to. In the discussion which followed Mr Dhavale's paper the point was well made that a poetics of ambiguity which led to poems in which both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* could be read simultaneously, is remote from Empson's conception. Similarly when Dr Krishnamoorthy bravely attempted to apply the *dhvani* theory to English poetry, it was revealed as a descriptive rather than a discriminatory method. All sorts of unspoken assumptions emerge as soon as the attempt is made to apply a theory: the *dhvani* theory would seriously limit understanding of Western drama for instance, as it does not admit involvement in the action (this was revealed in Dr Krishnamoorthy's comments on 'Macbeth'.) Indeed Sanskrit poetics has no word for 'tragedy', which it more or less confuses with pathos (*karunarasa*). The Sanskrit analogy of aesthetic pleasure-in-pain with the pleasure-in-pain of 'the lover's stroke', so memorably expounded by Professor Viswanatham (with apologies to the ladies, thank you!),

is really quite inapplicable to Western tragedy, which is a different kind of *lila* altogether. Similarly *catharsis* is quite inapplicable to Sanskrit drama. It became increasingly plain that it is much easier to accommodate the two traditions at the theoretical than the practical level. A paper which drew particular attention to the dangers of purely theoretical discussion was Professor Lal's examination of *catharsis*, *rasa*, and *objective correlative*. As he bemusedly demonstrated, nobody really knows what these labels mean: they may only acquire meaning—or their inadequacy be revealed—by reference to actual plays.

All the more interesting therefore were those papers which raised practical problems, or looked to actual works for illustration. Professor Kantak prefaced his paper on Eastern and Indian concepts of drama by a warning against 'submerging differences'. He found the origin of Western realistic bias in Aristotle's insistence on an *action* in time and space, although ironically enough Attic drama itself was more lyrical and ritualistic. Indian drama on the other hand imitates 'states, sentiments—the essence, the being', which are eternal. Hence the Western interest in character, and Eastern presentation of the type—'moved out as it were of his native matrix of bestiality'. Hence too the Indian preoccupation with design (*pramana*): the aim is 'spiritual equilibrium'. So tragedy is ruled out and plays end in reunion. This normative, formal bias supported a conventionalism which reached its extreme limit in the Japanese Noh. Acceptance of the Aristotelian standard as a norm has often incapacitated Western critics from understanding Eastern drama. On the other hand the contemporary Western movement away from realism towards 'poetic' and 'absurd' drama may prove a fatal betrayal of Western genius, which is rooted in time. Dr Krishnamoorthy pointed out that although Sanskrit theory laid emphasis on *rasa* and states, in practice there might be emphasis on plot, e.g., *Mudrarakshasa*. Dr Bose wondered whether the Noh could be considered drama at all. Otherwise the Seminar accepted this fundamental contrast between the two traditions, oriented respectively to time and eternity. And as Dandin insists, as Dr Krishnamoorthy reminded us, *sub specie aeternitatis* even Ravana can be a great hero.

Two papers raised interesting practical problems arising out of these fundamental differences. Dr M. G. Krishnamurthi, who teaches Indian literature at the University of Wisconsin,

spoke of the different national assumptions and attitudes we bring to the writings of other countries. He contrasted American and non-American reactions to Hawthorne or Faulkner, and referred to the dispute between Maurice Bewley and F. R. Leavis about Henry James. Judgment is affected because we ask different questions, take different things for granted. Finally Dr Krishnamurthi spoke of his experiences in teaching Kannada poetry (in translation) to American students. In the case of a religious poem, an American student is more likely to respond to the verbal ingenuity (after explanation), and a Hindu to its philosophical rightness. The ensuing discussion largely emphasised that this was only part of a wider problem with a variety of complex factors—personal taste, levels of sensibility, historical change, and above all language. Some critics are parochial, others develop intercultural sympathies. Norman Brown called Tagore 'a second rate Victorian poet repeating clichés', and Professor Narasimhaiah agreed—in translation. But Yeats and Pound had admired these same translations.

Dr Krishna Vaid, a practising Hindi novelist, raised some problems of his craft. The novel is a product of the West and can only be judged in the Western tradition—*not* by theories of *rasa* and *dhvani*. But this leads to a conflict between ancient and modern ideals—the devotees of tradition will not buy his books! A further consequence is subordination to the West, and worse still patronizing encouragement from the West (William Walsh, etc.). The temptations of writing in English with the foreign reader in mind is partly responsible for this. Only by a deeply-felt commitment to *the* contemporary Indian theme ('a tradition-oppressed society in the throes of an unprecedented transmutation') in all its psychological ramifications, may the Indian novelist throw off his bondage and achieve maturity. Ka Naa Subramanyam, as another practitioner, agreed with this analysis, but P. Lal expressed some concern at the imputation of 'foreignness' to Indian writing in English.

The Seminar ended with recommendations for a Literary Criticism syllabus combining Western and Sanskrit poetics. The emphasis was on texts rather than secondary sources, but opposed to exercises in practical criticism. These proposals, like the Seminar itself, were tentative and experimental. A great deal had been achieved so far as agreeing on the desirability

of working in both traditions was concerned, and indicating its feasibility. The Seminar acknowledged the importance of the comparative method in the special Indian situation, and recommended the study of Comparative Aesthetics and Comparative Literature. On the other hand the distinction between poetics (theory of literature) and criticism (evaluation of individual works) was not very clearly maintained. A strong English bias was also noticeable. Messrs Eliot, Richards and Leavis more or less dominated the proceedings; Father Fleury's paper on the later developments of French classicism was marginal; even so important a German theory as that of the sublime in art, offering similarities with the Indian comparison of the art experience with *moksha*, received only passing mention. But the Seminar could not take on too much· the importance of continental European criticism was acknowledged in principle, and indeed also of Persian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. Another problem was the difficulty of making the Sanskrit tradition available in modern terms. Dr Krishnamoorthy of Karnatak University here performed outstanding service, but he was the only Sanskritist at the Seminar—the others were all professors of English. Most Sanskrit pundits move in a closed world, unaware of modern criticism or modern literature. Nevertheless a beginning had been made, the entire proceedings will be published, and it is to be hoped this will prove an inspiration to more such investigation.

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