
**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY**
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# THE RESPONSE TO POETRY

## A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE AESTHETICS

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*A Study in Comparative Aesthetics*

*By*
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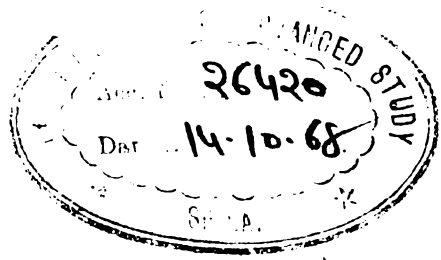




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To

Mother and Father

# PREFACE

THE PRESENT WORK is substantially the same as my doctoral dissertation submitted to Banaras Hindu University in 1964. I am grateful to Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University, and Prof. Newton P. Stallknecht, Indiana University, USA, for the encouragement they gave by recommending the award of Ph.D.

Dr. C. Narayana Menon, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, was my supervisor. He is a kind man, but a stern critic. As a guide he was less interested in teaching me what I should think than in showing me how to think. I have greatly benefited from his amazing erudition and critical acumen. His suggestions have enabled me to make the work more compact than it might have been otherwise. My association with him has been an education of my sensibility. My gratitude to him can never find adequate expression.

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G. B. MOHAN

*Berlin,*
*25 March 1967*

# SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Vowels | : | a ā i ī u ū ṛ e ai o au |
| Anusvara | : | ṁ |
| Visarga | : | ḥ |
| Consonants | : | |
| gutturals | | k kh g gh ṅ |
| palatals | | c ch j jh ñ |
| cerebrals | | ṭ ṭh ḍ ḍh ṇ |
| dentals | | t th d dh n |
| labials | | p ph b bh m |
| Semivowels | | y r l v |
| Sibilants | | ś Palatal sibilant—soft<br>ṣ Cerebral sibilant—as in 'shun'<br>s as in 'sun' |
| Aspirate | | h |

# CONTENTS

# CHAPTER I

## *Introduction*

IT IS MY ENDEAVOUR to explore certain areas of intersection between the Indian and Western aesthetic theories on the response to poetry. I hope that the exploration will shed considerable light on some significant aesthetic problems by bringing out hitherto unsuspected affinities. The central idea underlying the present study is that the Indian concept of *rasa,* interpreted dialectically, that is, as one which unites and integrates opposites, solves some of the outstanding aesthetic problems discussed in the West.

The eminent French Indologist Louis Renou says that the peculiarity of Indian ideas and their intimate relationship with Brahmanic speculations

> do not make the comparative method easy to apply, whether its purpose is to trace influence or to reveal a common foundation or simply to discover convergent tendencies. Of all branches of learning which stem from the genius of India few are as profoundly Indian as aesthetics.[1]

Despite the admitted 'Indianness' of Indian aesthetics the consequent difficulties in the way of a student of comparative aesthetics are not insuperable. There is no question of tracing influences because the paths of speculation in India and the West did not cut across each other in the past. There is no evidence to show that the ancient Indian thinkers were influenced by Plato and Aristotle or the other way. But it is not impossible to reveal affinities and parallelisms and complementary doctrines. If poetry transcends national boundaries, aesthetics cannot remain confined within them.

A body of aesthetic and critical doctrines deals with three phenomena: the creative experience of the artist, the work

of art, and the aesthetic response of the connoisseur. Sometimes the generalisations of critics acquire 'legislative' status and then they degenerate into hard-and-fast 'rules'. The Renaissance 'rule' about the three dramatic unities and the ancient Indian rhetorical prescriptions for aspiring poets may be cited as examples. Such 'rules' are bound to vary from time to time and from place to place. They cannot, however, circumscribe genius; nor do they have universal validity.

Comparative study in this area will not be fruitful. On the contrary, generalisations about aesthetic experience show striking affinities. We find that sustained thinking about experience in different parts of the world has led to similar, sometimes even identical, conclusions. This is a realm in which comparative study of theories is certain to yield valuable results. It will bring about a healthy 'cross-fertilisation of ideas', as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says.[2] We have to adopt an objective and critical attitude to our cultural heritage with the sole aim of synthesizing the most valuable elements in it with the equally valuable elements of other cultures so that we may lay a firm foundation of an integrated world cultural outlook.

A recent recognition of the validity and usefulness of comparative studies in aesthetic theories has come from René Wellek, himself a brilliant practitioner of comparative criticism. In an article published in *The Times Literary Supplement*[3] he points out that ideally comparative studies should include the aesthetic theories of the Orient also. Dr. Thomas Munro's *Oriental Aesthetics*[4] is born of the same conviction. Distinguished scholars like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Kanti Chandra Pandey, Pravas Jivan Chaudhury, V. Raghavan, Nagendra, K. Krishnamoorthy and Joseph Mundassery are among those who have done valuable work in the field. While expressing my obligations to them I believe that, in the present work, I have enriched the field by bringing greater clarity to the discussion of some vital aesthetic concepts like *alaukika* (non-ordinary), *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* (transpersonalisation), and *śānta* (serenity). I also

believe that I have reconciled and synthesized certain inconsistencies and contradictions found in the writings of different writers.

Comparison can be made in two ways. We may take up two important thinkers like Bharata and Aristotle or Kant and Abhinavagupta and work on parallelisms and contrasts in their theories with a view to integrating them in a single philosophical framework. The other, the more profitable, method is to take up specific concepts and problems and find out how aestheticians in India and the West have tackled them, with what success, and whether a synthesis of their theories can be achieved at a more satisfactory level. I have followed the second method.

To what extent can we detach a thinker's aesthetic conclusions from his general philosophical outlook? When we try to accommodate a heterogeneous mass of material within a consistently worked out conceptual framework we must guard against indiscriminate eclecticism. Thomas Munro says:

> Many important ideas from the past come to us in the clusters, as parts of closely interwoven systems. It is always possible to separate them; to reject some and accept others, combining the latter with new, original discoveries and formulations.[5]

Without such a flexible attitude we cannot go far enough in comparative studies. We may safely separate parts of a thinker's aesthetic theories without distorting their meanings. For example, we can very well appreciate the interdependence of Kant's concepts of 'disinterested satisfaction' and 'universality of taste' without adopting his basic philosophical position or his aesthetic formalism. Our acceptance of T. S. Eliot's idea of 'objective correlative' does not oblige us to share his Anglo-Catholicism or royalism. In the course of several centuries Indian aesthetics accumulated much mystical dross and today it is possible and necessary to assimilate the healthy and valuable elements in our tradition while rejecting the worn-out, spurious and dated theories. The 'all-or-nothing' attitude of some modern critics

who insist that the acceptance of the theory of *rasa* implies the adoption of non-dualistic Vedānta is, to say the least, unphilosophical.

I have made the exposition of the concept of *rasa* my starting point because the theory of *rasa* as formulated by Bharata (1st century A.D.) and enriched by Ānandavardhana (9th century) and Abhinavagupta (10th century) constitutes the central tradition in Indian aesthetics. Poetry is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which cuts across many levels of existence; *rasa* is a comprehensive concept which keeps all these dimensions and levels simultaneously in view. It has been observed that Bharata's *rasa* theory was objective, that is, it dealt with the production of *rasa* as an apprehensible element of drama enacted on the stage. Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta are said to have made the objective *rasa* subjective by equating it with aesthetic experience whose nature is delight (*ānanda*).[6] The fact is, Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta 'constructively interpreted' (to use a phrase of Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya) Bharata by bringing out the potentialities inherent in his concepts, thus advancing the theory. In the history of Indian poetics we find attempts on the part of thinkers to emphasise aspects of poetry like *alaṁkāra* (figure of speech), *rīti* (style), *vakrokti* (oblique expression), etc., at the cost of other equally or more important aspects. But when Ānandavardhana, the great syncretist, established the doctrine of suggestion (*dhvani*) in his *Dhvanyāloka*, the theory of *rasa* became comprehensive enough to take all other aesthetic categories in its fold. By writing two exhaustive commentaries called *Abhinavabhāratī* (on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*),[7] and *'Locana'* on *Dhvanyāloka*, Abhinavagupta synthesized all the earlier doctrines and established once and for all the main tenets of Indian aesthetics. It must be remembered that most of the theories evolved and developed in the course of polemical clashes with others. But basing ourselves on the insights of Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta we are justified in considering the entire body of Indian aesthetics to be an organic theory, each concept having its deserved place

in the system. The concepts and categories should not be discussed as rivals militating against one another but as complements mutually enriching.

Difficulties in aesthetics are caused not only by the inherent complexities of the aesthetic processes but also by the posing of wrong questions. Mathematicians know well that problems wrongly posed have no answers. In aesthetics the problem why tragedy delights has been tenaciously pursuing Western critics. The fact is that tragedy does not give us any delight which is qualitatively different from that evoked by other genres. The assumption behind the question—that there is a straight relation between the emotion depicted in a work and the emotion evoked in the reader—is fallacious. It ignores the fact that a poem is a stylised pattern of forms. Without determining the ontological status of a poem we cannot expose the spuriousness of this problem. Therefore, in CHAPTER III I have discussed the Indian concept of *alaukika* (non-ordinary). I have shown that this concept rescues us from the morass of naturalism by fixing the *sui generis* mode in which the poem exists and by differentiating between emotions as they are experienced in ordinary life and as they are perceived and relished in poetry. I have proved the untenability of the extreme positions of the naturalists like John Dewey and I. A. Richards and of the isolationists like Kant and the modern formalists. The concept of *alaukika* steers a middle path by upholding the *sui generis* status of aesthetic experience and at the same time, by linking it with the vital emotional centre of human life.

The concept of *alaukika* is intimately related to the idea of transpersonalisation; so I have next discussed the Western theories of 'disinterestedness', 'psychical distance', 'impersonality', etc., in the light of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* (transpersonalisation) which is a pivotal concept in the theory of *rasa*. The concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* encompasses the processes of objectification, concretisation and universalisation. To embody his vision in a verbal complex of images and symbols the poet snaps its connections with his practical egoistic

interests and elevates it to the level of collective human experience. Poetry reconciles the apparent opposition between the individual and the collective by enabling the reader to transcend the narrow confines of his egoistic interests and to realise his unity with the collective human sensibility. This factor acquired mystical overtones in the writings of some thinkers. But my interpretation does not deny that the individual's sentient personality is the centre of creation and response. In aesthetic experience the individual personality is not dissolved but is lifted up so that it throbs in unison with the heart-beat of all humanity. *Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* also reconciles the ideas of detachment and participation. The Sanskrit figure of *carvaṇa* (chewing) refers to the active process of the reader's imaginative reconstruction of the poet's creative experience. Aesthetic detachment is not dry unemotional indifference; on the contrary, it is a condition for *nimagnatā* or *tanmayībhavana*, the complete fusion of the self with the life of the poem. There is a misconception shared by some writers on Indian aesthetics that the process of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* makes the reader apprehend the poetic emotions in the form of abstract 'universal generic essences'. I have cleared the misconception by pointing out that poetic emotions are concrete and at the same time universal. Psychology deals with abstract emotions; poetry creates images of concrete emotions.

According to the theory of *rasa*, aesthetic experience reconciles another pair of opposites: tension and serenity. The Sanskrit saying *nāṭakāntam kavitvam* (the end of all poetry is drama) implies that the highest poetry is dramatic in structure with the inner progress effected by struggling contradictions. The conclusions of the New Critics in England and America with their ideas of the dramatistic structure of poetry, irony, tension and paradox, have been, to some extent, anticipated in this saying. A poem, even a short lyric, shows the development of a mood or an action and all development is the result of the interaction of conflicting forces. In CHAPTER V I have shown how the concept of *śānta rasa* reconciles conflicting forces in aesthetic

experience. Hitherto, writers on Indian aesthetics have confined themselves to the consideration of the historical aspects of the question whether *śānta* should be recognised as a *rasa* or not. A synthesis of all the *rasas* in the light of Abhinavagupta's treatment of the problem has received only scant attention. I have aimed at such a synthesis. To equate *śānta* with the cessation of all conflict and tension is to narrow the concept dogmatically and rob it of its richness and depth of meaning. Which particular emotion must be named as the *sthāyibhāva* of *śānta* is beside the point. As *śānta* is the *mahārasa* (the great basic *rasa*) its *sthāyibhāva* is the very source and centre of all emotions. The different and opposite emotions struggle against one another on the stage of the self; but as they do not seek an outlet there is no disturbance in consciousness. Thus we find that we have both excitement and tranquillity in aesthetic experience. *Śānta* can be interpreted in Nietzchean terms. In *rasa* the cool light of order and serenity symbolised by Apollo and the abandon of emotional orgy represented by Dionysus are harmoniously blended. The passionate involvement results from our total fusion with the aesthetic configuration which evokes an interplay of emotions in our heart; the serene detachment is the effect of the order and harmony of the form of the work of art.

CHAPTER VI aims at the working out of an adequate idea of the 'ideal reader' in the light of the concept of *sahṛdaya* (one whose sensibility is like that of the poet). I have discussed the obstacles to aesthetic experience in the light of the ideas of Abhinavagupta and I. A. Richards on the subject. Unless we can distinguish between spurious and genuine aesthetic responses the refinement of our sensibility cannot be achieved. While considering the value of aesthetic experience in CHAPTER VII I have again steered a middle path between the crude moralism of Plato and Tolstoy and the irresponsible amoralism of the aesthetes. The Indian thinking on the subject is neither systematic nor very illuminating; but here and there we find valuable and suggestive clues.

# *NOTES AND REFERENCES*

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

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2. *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,* ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York, 1952), p. 13.
3. René Wellek, 'Some Principles of Criticism', *The Times Literary Supplement*: The Critical Moment, 26 July 1963, p. 549.
4. *Oriental Aesthetics* (Cleveland, 1965).
5. 'Oriental Traditions in Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 24, No. 1, Fall 1965, p. 6.
6. Surendra Barlinge, *Soundarya-Tattva aur Kavya-Siddhanta* (Delhi, 1963), p. 76.
7. All citations from the *Nāṭyaśāstra,* unless otherwise specified, are from the edition published by Oriental Institute, Baroda, ed. Ramakrishna Kavi. Second revised edition, 1956, is critically edited by K. S. Ramaswami Sastri. All references to *Abhinavabhāratī* also are to this edition.

CHAPTER II

# *Rasa as Aesthetic Experience*

## *The Word Rasa and Its Meanings*

THE WORD *rasa* has a bewildering variety of meanings. In different periods new meanings evolved out of earlier meanings and in different disciplines the word acquired different connotations. The meanings range from the alcoholic *soma*-juice to the metaphysical Absolute, the Brahman. In the Vedic Age, when the ebullient primitive spirit of the Aryan race was awakening to the splendours and glories of Nature, the word referred to concrete objects: *rasa* meant water, milk, *soma*-juice, etc. Gradually 'flavour', 'taste', and 'tasting' were associated with the meaning of the word. In the Upaniṣadic Age, when the intellectual sophistication of the race had reached unprecedented and perhaps unsurpassed heights, the concrete evolved into the abstract and *rasa* became the essence, the essence of everything, the essence of the universe itself. The sages even declared that *rasa* is Brahman.[1] In dramaturgy and poetics the word *rasa* is used with multidimensional connotations which comprehend the entire poetic process. The theory of *rasa* is primarily audience-oriented and the centre of much discussion in the theory is the reader's aesthetic experience. But we should bear in mind that the word denotes, apart from reader experience, the creative experience of the poet and the essence of the qualities which make a poem what it is.

John Dewey has said:

> We have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words

'artistic' and 'aesthetic'. Since 'artistic' refers primarily to the act of production and 'aesthetic' to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate.[2]

*Rasa* is a word which designates both the processes. The poet creates and the reader recreates. The poet transmutes his experience into a rhythmic verbal pattern of sensuous images and dynamic characters and the reader, in his turn, translates the pattern into a relishable experience which fuses all the sensuous, emotional and intellectual content of the pattern. The rhythmic verbal pattern functions as a conveyor belt revolving round the creative experience of the poet and the aesthetic experience of the reader and thus achieving a synthesis of the poet and the reader. The legend about the incident which occasioned the composition of the epic *Rāmāyaṇā* is instructive. When the sage Vālmīki saw one of the *krauñca* pair shot dead by a hunter he was overcome by sorrow. But his sorrow was transformed into infinite compassion for human suffering. This was an occasion for his creative imagination to start conjuring up forms, images and characters. His heart overflowed with creative compassion which was different from his personal sorrow.[3] The creative experience occasioned by the contemplation of the sorrowful incident issued forth in the epic *Rāmāyaṇā*, Vālmīki, whose heart was full of *karuṇa rasa* infused it into his poem. Unless the poet himself is suffused with *rasa* he cannot infuse it into his work.[4] It is evident that this *rasa* of the poet, which is a contemplative creative experience and not a personal emotion, is the root of the poetic process.

The essential quality of the verbal pattern created by the poet also is called *rasa*. It is this essential quality produced by the various ingredients of the poem like image, character, metre and such other rhetorical devices which is relished by the reader. In this context *rasa* is not an experienece in the mind of a sentient being, but the objective relishable quality found in the embodiment of a creative experience. Indian aestheticians speak of *rasavat kāvya* (poem with *rasa*). Ānandavardhana devotes much space to the discus-

sion of the conflict between different *rasas* and of the necessity to observe *aucitya* (propriety) in delineating the predominant *rasa*[5]. *Rasa* has been defined as the very soul of poetry. It is the dominant element in a poem. It is the fundamental principle which organises all the rhetorical ingredients of a poem. In his *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata is primarily concerned with the production of *rasa* on the stage. Without *rasa* the meanings and elements of a poem or a drama will not 'function', will not come to life.[6]

The third sense of *rasa* with which I am concerned in the present work, is the aesthetic experience of the reader. Attempts to define beauty have not produced very convincing results because by its very nature it yields only to a circular definition if we forget the intimate relation between the subject and object in its apprehension. The Indian theorists were not entangled in a futile discussion of the subjectivity or objectivity of beauty partly because their term *rasa* is an all-inclusive one. It denotes: (1) the creative experience of the poet; (2) the essential totality of the qualities of a poem; and, (3) the reader's aesthetic experience when he enjoys the poem. The propounders of the theory of *rasa* had a comprehensive vision of the continuity of the poetic process. They synthesized all the factors involved in the creation and enjoyment of poetry under the principle of *rasa*. This synthesis is a praiseworthy achievement of the theory. The continuity of the poetic process is illustrated most aptly in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* with the help of the seed-tree-fruit analogy: 'Just as the tree grows from the seed, and flowers and fruits grow from the tree, so the *rasas* are the root of all the *bhāvas*.'[7] The *rasa* of the poet is the seed at the root of the poem. This seed-experience, which is not a personal emotion but a transpersonal contemplative state of mind, issues forth in the form of a poem. The poet and the reader are alike in their sensibility. The aesthetic experience of the reader is the fruit.[8] Thus we find that to the Indian theorists *rasa* is both objective and subjective in the sense that it is the basic principle which underlies the continuity of the poetic process from the point of the

initial spark of inspiration in the poet through the creation of his poem to the appreciation by the reader which culminates in a unique and delightful experience.

*The Rasa-sutra*

Defining the drama Bharata says that it is an imitation of the affairs of the world and that it is rich in the portrayal of many states and situations.[9] In what sense Bharata used the word *anukaraṇa* (imitation) need not detain us here (it has a specialised meaning as Aristotle's 'mimesis' has); what is relevant to our purpose is the conception that the drama is a rendering of the affairs of the world, i.e., human actions, situations and emotions. How are these actions, situations and emotions rendered in a work of literature and with what effect on the reader? Bharata's famous definition of *rasa* says: '*Rasa* is realized by the union of *vibhāva, anubhāva,* and *vyabhicāri bhāva.*'[10] This definition is so cryptic that, not surprisingly, it gave rise to a great deal of controversy. Every later theorist tried to interpret the definition in his own way in the light of his philosophy. The greatest controversy was centred on the interpretation of *saṁyoga* and *niṣpatti* which I have rendered as 'union' and 'realisation' respectively. The 'union' referred to in the definition is not a union among *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *vyabhicāri bhāva;* it is the fusion of these elements with the *sthāyibhāva,* the permanent emotion. In order to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of this definition it is necessary to establish the exact meaning of the terms employed therein. Let us begin with '*bhāvas*'.

*The Bhāvas*

Bharata says that the drama renders the *bhāvas* of all the three worlds.[11] Here, evidently, he means states and things existing, and emotions. The *bhāvas* bring into being (*bhāvayanti*) *rasa* which is the *kāvyārtha* (the end or meaning of the poem).[12] It is the functional aspect of the word *bhāva* which is emphasised. *Bhāvayanti* means 'to bring into being' and 'to make pervade'. The creative ex-

perience of the poet (*kaverantargatam bhāvam*) is objectively realised in the poem. By extension, we can also say, that *bhāvas* are those elements which make the essence of poetry, *rasa,* pervade the heart of the reader. In this sense *bhāva* includes *sthāyi, vibhāva, anubhāva, vyabhicāri,* and *sāttvik bhāvas.*[13] Though Bharata's emphasis was on the functional aspect of the world, he seems to have realised that, in the last analysis, it is the mental states rendered in a poem which manifest its essence and that the characters and their actions (the *vibhāvas* and the *anubhāvas*) are only the vehicles of the mental states. He himself contracted the meaning by speaking of the *bhāvas* as though they included only the three varieties: eight *sthāyins,* thirtythree *vyabhicārins* and eight *sāttvik bhāvas.* They are the fortynine *bhāvas* capable of manifesting the *rasa* of the poem.[14]

A point which we must bear in mind in this connection is the distinction between the dramatic or poetic *bhāvas* and the personal emotions and feelings experienced in ordinary life.[15] The central problem faced by Bharata was that of giving practical instructions to all those concerned with the production of drama as to how certain recurrent and universal states and situations in which human beings find themselves could be represented on the stage. In his list of *bhāvas* we find dream, sleep, and death which cannot be described as emotions. But we cannot ignore the intimate relation between even these states like death and sleep and emotional situations. As emotions and moods most of the *bhāvas* have their equivalents in ordinary life. On the one hand, *bhāvas* mean all the elements having the energy or power to manifest *rasa;* on the other, they stand for emotions and moods.

*The Sthāyibhāvas*

Though the term *sthāyi* does not figure in Bharata's definition, for a correct understanding of the theory of *rasa,* it is necessary for us to elucidate the concept. The word figures in Bharata's explanation of the *rasa-sūtra.* The

*sthāyibhāvas* are of the nature of *vāsanā* or *saṁskāra*. Every human being is born with a set of instinctual propensities inherited from earlier generations, and deposited on the bed of his consciousness. M. Hiriyanna says:

> Every deed we do has a double result. It not only produces the particular result which it was intended to produce, but also tends to establish in us a habit favourable to the repetition of the same deed in future. This habit is termed *saṁskāra*.[16]

S. N. Das Gupta makes a subtle distinction between *vāsanā* and *saṁskāra*:

> [*Saṁskāra*] means the impressions (which exist subconsciously in the minds) of the objects experienced. All our experiences whether cognitive, emotional or conative exist in a subconscious state and may under suitable conditions be reproduced as memory (*smṛti*). The word *vāsanā* (*Yogasūtra* IV, 24) seems to be a later word.... It comes from the root *'vas'* to stay. It is often loosely used in the sense of *saṁskāra*.... But *vāsanā* generally refers to the tendencies of the past lives most of which lie dormant in the mind. Only those appear which find scope in this life. But *saṁskarās* are the subconscious states which are being constantly generated by experience. *Vāsanās* are innate *saṁskarās* not acquired in this life.[17]

These *saṁskāras* and *vāsanās* are organised around what we call emotions. Emotions are related to typical, recurrent and universal situations and generate definable modes of conduct. They are called *sthāyi* (permanent), because they always remain embedded in human organism.[18] It is generally agreed that there are nine such emotions possessed by all human beings:

> In fact, on the basis of the principle that all beings 'hate to be in contact with pain and are eager to taste pleasure,' every one is pervaded by sexual desires (Delight); believes himself superior to others, whom he is thus led to deride (Laughter); grieves when he is forced to part from what he loves (Sorrow); gets angry against the causes of such separation (Anger); gets frightened when he finds himself powerless (Fear); but still is desirous of overcoming the danger which threatens him (Heroism);

> is attacked, when judging a thing to be displeasing, by a sense of revulsion directed just towards this ugly object (Disgust); wonders at the sight of extraordinary deeds done by himself or others (Astonishment); and, lastly, is desirous of abandoning certain things (Serenity).[19]

I am not interested in verifying whether such a classification corresponds with the latest findings in psychology. I want only to point out that the Indian aestheticians conceived these emotions as being the permanent foci directing the psychic energy in various channels. It is true that in some men some emotions predominate and in others certain other emotions; but all are capable of experiencing these emotional states. In poetic experience the latent emotional traces are aroused. As the elements of a poem do not impinge on our egoistic interests, the emotional states aroused by them acquire the status of free emotions. They are not tied to our ego. They are evoked in our consciousness which acquires transpersonal orientation. The experience transcends the pleasure-pain feeling component which is invariably present in all emotional experiences of everyday life.

The concept of *sthāyin* is relevant also from the point of view of the structure of a poem. In every poem of some length, however complex it may be, a single emotion will predominate over others. Usually this emotion will be associated with the attitudes and destiny of the hero. It is this predominant emotion which gives structural unity to the whole composition by recurring again and again and by binding the other elements in an organic whole. Jagannātha says that it is because this emotion pervades, dominates and unifies the entire work it is called permanent (*sthāyi*).[20] This idea is the same as formulated by Stephen C. Pepper in the following passage:

> Now, the principle of dominant emotion is the selection, for the single work of art or section of a work, of stimuli belonging to one emotional scheme of action patterns. The specific quality of that emotion will then be echoed and re-echoed through all parts of the work; and all details diverse in other respects as they may be, become orga-

nised and unified through the single emotion evoked by them. Furthermore the expressive power of each detail becomes intensified by the repeated evoking of the same emotion.[21]

*The Vyabhicāri Bhāvas*

Apart from these clearly organised dominant emotions there are innumerable transient moods and mental states which accompany them in any experience. They do not attain the intensity of emotions; nor do they last long. They do not have any independent status. They are concomitant moods which rise with the well-defined emotions and subside with them. In short, they are weak, mild, temporary and dependent. But the permanent emotions cannot be expressed in poetry without depicting these moods. The *sthāyins* are very subtle; they manifest themselves through these moods. Love is manifested in the agent's longing or joy or bashfulness. One of the reasons why Bharata did not include *sthāyi* in his definition of *rasa* may be that *sthāyi* being subtle cannot be directly expressed and can only be indirectly depicted with the help of the *vyabhicārins*. These transitory moods in poetry and their relation to the permanent or dominant emotion are compared to the beads on a thread. Themselves varied they reinforce the colour pattern of the thread.[22] They cannot be labelled satisfactorily as there are innumerable shades and combinations. Bharata has mentioned thirtythree such *bhāvas*. His list includes sleep, disease and death which cannot be described as moods. But we should remember that in listing the *bhāvas* Bharata's intention was not to exhaust the moods but only to give practical instructions to the producers and the actors as to how real life situations could be represented on the stage.

*The Vibhāva and the Anubhāva*

Emotions and moods can be expressed in poetry only through images, characters, and their actions. In real life some stimuli are necessary to cause the emotions to rise in

our heart. These stimuli may be material, existing in the environment, or ideal, existing in the mind itself. These human and environmental stimuli, when described in a poem, are called *vibhāvas*. *Vibhāva* is considered to be synonymous with 'cause' but there is an important difference between the two. The following passage from Dewey brings out exactly this difference: 'In the direct outburst, an objective situation is the stimulus, the cause of the emotion. In the poem, objective material becomes the content and matter of the emotion, not just its evocative occasion.'[23] The term is translated as 'determinants' because these *vibhāvas* determine the emotions and moods to be aroused in the reader. They can be described as the 'objective correlatives' in the poem. They are called *vibhāvas* because they make emotions known to us in a special way.[24] In the final analysis a poet's success in evoking emotions will depend on his ability to arrange the *vibhāvas* properly.

*Anubhāvas* are those effects which are found on the characters consequent upon their emotional agitations. Anger causes blood to rush into the face, and the agent may curse or strike the victim of his anger. The *anubhāvas* are so called because what is represented is made to be felt, experienced (*anubhāvayati*) by us.[25] They make it possible for our self to immerse in the emotions evoked. This process of immersion is called *anubhāvanam* and that which causes this process is called *anubhāva*.[26] In short, they are the signs of emotions in the characters. Some of the consequents (*anubhāvas*) may be deliberate (e.g., cursing, thrashing); others may be involuntary (blushing, sweating, etc.). The latter have a special technical term: *sāttvik bhāvas*. *Sattva* is the internal character or the inner essence of mind. Bharata felt that to create an impression of verisimilitude the actors must enact sweating, blushing, etc., on the stage. That is possible only when the action concentrates. These involuntary consequents are intimately related to moods and emotions; therefore they are considered to be of the nature of *vyabhicāri bhāvas*. Thus the *sāttvik bhāvas* have a dual character: they can be subsumed under

both *anubhāvas* (consequents) and *vyabhicārins* (transient moods).

*Meaning and Aesthetic Experience*

In poetry the *vibhāvas* and other elements have their existence as words. Poetry is the most complex and valuable of all the arts. The complexity and value partly arise from the unique qualities of its mode of using language to achieve its effects. Poetry uses all the resources of words, including their sound value, to the fullest extent possible. It is this exploitation of the multiple resources of words and their meanings that accounts for the subtlety, complexity and depth of poetic experience. No other art can rival poetry in its ability to invest human experience with significance; no other art can so efficiently suggest subtle emotional nuances. The theory of *dhvani* (suggestion) was incorporated into the theory of *rasa* to explain the relation between the meaning of words and poetic experience.

If the theory of *rasa* explains the nature of aesthetic experience and its ingredients, the theory of *dhvani* (suggestion) explains the means adopted by the poetic language to achieve its ends. In other words, if the theory of *rasa* is about what poetry does to us, the theory of *dhvani* is about how poetry does that. This theory elucidated *rasa* from the semantic point of view and took in its fold all the earlier concepts like *alaṁkāra*, *rīti*, *guṇa*, etc. It gave Indian aesthetics an entirely new orientation. True to the tradition of the Indian genius this theory attempted successfully a long needed synthesis of many earlier doctrines which moved only on the fringes of the poetic realm and which very often becomes subjects of futile controversy among writers who mistook the contributory factors of poetry for its very soul. After the learned and powerful exposition of this theory in Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* it once and for all settled the path to be followed in literary criticism.

The theory of meaning is a highly developed department of Indian philosophy. The concept of *dhvani* evolved out of the grammatical and logical discussions of the relation

between word and meaning. It developed hair-splitting distinctions and a highly sophisticated technical terminology. It is not necessary for us to go into the details of this theory. I shall give an outline of the theory of *dhvani* with a view to show the link between meaning in poetry and poetic experience.[27]

Words have three types of meaning. A word has a primary literal meaning fixed arbitrarily by convention. A word also has a secondary meaning which is derived from the context in which it is used. Apart from these primary and secondary meanings a tertiary meaning also may operate. The tertiary meaning is suggested by the primary or secondary meanings. Beauty in poetry consists in the predominance of the suggested tertiary meaning over the primary referential and the secondary contextual meanings. It may appear paradoxical that the essence of poetry is not what is directly expressed but what is indirectly suggested. All poets find out directions by indirections. They resort to metaphor, paradox, hyperbole and other figures of speech because the direct and straight way of expression is not adequate to objectify their experience. The suggested meaning cannot be considered to be the sum total of the component parts of the primary and secondary meanings. It is certainly based on these meanings; but it also transcends them. It is like the loveliness of a beautiful woman which is not the total of the beauty of the separate limbs and features but something transcending them though based on and projected by them.[28] *Rasa* in a poem is a qualitatively new product arising from a combination of *vibhāvas,* etc. *Rasa* is not in any one of the ingredients but a product of their proper functioning. We can say that it is a quality which appears when the *vibhāvas,* etc., begin to function.

No doubt, the suggested meaning will not become comprehensible if the referential and contextual meanings do not function. But in poetry the latter must be taken as a means to an end. Just as a man interested in perceiving objects in the dark secures a lamp as a means to realise his end, so also one who is interested in perceiving the sug-

gested meaning shows interest in the primary referential meaning.[29] It must be noted, however, that the means-end relationship of primary and suggested meanings in poetry has a peculiarity. As the lamp analogy makes it clear, in poetry means and ends coexist. Once the lamp is removed we cease to perceive the objects. We secure a lamp not to look at it but to look at other objects in its light. In the same way we understand the primary meaning of words in a poem not to rest on it but to relish the suggested meaning. The primary meanings of words are fixed by convention; but the suggested meanings are accessible only to men with trained poetic sensibility. A person may be a competent grammarian or a lexicographer; but if he lacks poetic sensibility the suggested meaning will elude him.[30]

What this tertiary power of words suggest in poetry is nothing but *rasa*. By its very nature *rasa* can only be suggested. It cannot be explicitly stated. To express Macbeth's sense of tragic frustration Shakespeare does not make him explicitly state his mood; he makes his hero say that life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing. When the sage Añgira made the proposal of marriage between Uma and Śiva the young maiden hung her head down and began counting the petals of lotus. Kalidasa does not say Uma was bashful. It is because poetry depends on the suggestive power of words that it cannot be paraphrased or translated in the same language. The wealth of emotional suggestions contained by lines like 'To be or not to be...' and 'Put out the light and then put out the light...' cannot be evoked by another set of English words.

All poetry is suggestive; but all suggestion is not poetry. In ordinary language suggestion can be a means of making the hearer infer some meaning not fixed by convention. 'It is getting dark' may be an instruction to put on the light. But such suggested meanings can be translated in words with conventional meanings. The differentia of poetic language is its use to communicate impersonal mental states. It may seem to refer to objects and ideas and indicate patterns of

behaviour; but ultimately it aims at making you relish certain mental states. The poet may suggest only the rise or fall of a mood; he may suggest an object or a figure of speech. But the suggestion of moods, objects and figures of speech will ultimately terminate in the experience of *rasa*. Like *rasa*, *dhvani* also is a comprehensive concept. It stands for the suggesting words, the suggested meanings, the function of suggestion, the suggested experience and the poem which suggests. In poetry meanings are grasped as symbols of a complex experience. When we relish poetry we apprehend meanings in terms of experience. *Rasadhvani* (the suggestion of *rasa*, or the suggested *rasa*) is the soul of poetry.

*The Number of Rasas*

*Rasa* is so called because it is relished.[31] It is another name for the reposeful consciousness established when our self rests on the aesthetic configuration. In this sense *rasa* is the *mahārasa* (the great or basic *rasa*).[32] But it has been the practice of Indian critics to classify the experience according to the *sthāyin* (permanent emotion) evoked by the particular set of determining factors like the *vibhāvas*, etc. The *vibhāvas* determine and control the emotional content of the poem and the emotional response in the reader. Lear and Falstaff do not evoke same emotions though both become objects of our delightful contemplation. According to Bharata there are only eight *sthāyins*. They are love (*rati*), laughter (*hāsa*), anger (*krodha*), heroism (*vira*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*juguptsa*), and wonder (*vismaya*). The corresponding eight *rasas* are the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), the comic (*hāsya*), the pathetic (*karuṇa*), the furious (*raudra*), the heroic (*vīra*), the terrible (*bhayānaka*), the odious (*bībhatsa*), and the marvellous (*adbhuta*). Śānta (serenity) was added later. Abhinavagupta accepted only these nine *rasas* because only the *sthāyins* of these nine *rasas* are related to the four *puruṣārthas* (ends of human life).[33] There were periodical attempts to enlarge the list. No sanctity was attached to the number prescribed by Bharata even though the majority of the traditionalists consider that nine

*rasas* are enough to cope with the infinite variety of literary productions.[34]

The division of aesthetic experience into eight or nine or more *rasas* is not of any consequence today from the point of view of comparative aesthetics, though it is of some use in practical criticism. But even in the field of practical criticism this division merely enables us to label the content of poems. A critic does not stop there. He has to bring out the essential individuality of the emotional pattern of the poems. Here the traditional division can be only of superficial value. Related to this is the vexed question whether the transient moods (*vyabhicārins*) also attain to the state of *rasa*. Considering the fact that all these moods are in one way or another related to this or that *sthāyin* we may say that they can also attain the state of *rasa*. States like anxiety and bashfulness can be portrayed only in the larger background of some permanent emotion, though the readers may have to supply the essentials of such a background. Rudraṭa was a theorist who realised early the futility of the attempt to fix the number of *rasas*. According to him any emotion or mood, even the subtlest nuance of an emotion, can become *rasa* if it is portrayed and apprehended in poetry as relishable.[35] In this sense *rasas* are not eight or nine or twelve but infinite.

On the other hand, there were also interesting attempts to synthesize all *rasas* into a single *rasa*. Most of these attempts were motivated by a desire to reduce all mental states in poetic response to a single basic emotion. For instance Bhavabhūti, the dramatist, considered that *karuṇa* (the pathetic) is the only *rasa* which undergoes, according to the situations, various transformations as water assumes various forms like whirlpools, bubbles, ripples and waves.[36] It is true that the above idea is expressed by a character in his play *Uttararāmacarita* and therefore, to what extent this reflects the dramatist's aesthetic convictions may be disputed. However, considering the general poetic temperament of Bhavabhūti, which is essentially tragic, we may take it as his attempt, albeit a cursory one, at a *rasa* syn-

thesis. There was another attempt to reduce all aesthetic responses to one basic experience of wonder.[37] Bhoja, in his *Śṛñgāraprakāśa* asserts that there is only one *rasa, śṛñgāra* (love), and establishes a peculiar if original relation between ego and *rasa.*[38] He argues that *rasa* is made enjoyable by the ultimate reality which is *ahaṁkāra* or the sense of 'I' in man. This 'I' is identified with a man's personality and culture. As this ego consciousness is the fundamental basis of all our delights, he calls it *rasa.* This transcendental indivisible *rasa* is described by him as *śṛñgāra* because it takes man to the peak of perfection. The most valuable synthesis was achieved by Abhinavagupta. Basing himself on some *Nāṭyaśāstra* verses whose authenticity is controversial, he argued that *śānta* (serenity) is the basic *rasa* and that all other *rasas* are only different forms which *śānta* assumes. In the context of Richards's doctrine of the equilibrium of impulses in aesthetic experience Abhinavagupta's synthesis is particularly illuminating. I do not wish to say anything more on the concept of *śānta* at present as it will be discussed in CHAPTER V.

*The Realisation of Rasa*

Now we may go back to the *rasa-sūtra* and try to elucidate the process of *rasa*-realisation. The *rasa-sūtra* may be interpreted both objectively and subjectively. Objectively interpreted it will refer to the process of realising *rasa* (the essential totality of the aesthetic qualities) in the poem or on the stage. Subjectively interpreted it will refer to the reader's realisation of *rasa* (aesthetic experience). We are concerned with the latter process. A competent reader is expected to have (i) a large fund of experience, and (ii) a trained sensibility. He must be an able observer capable of making appropriate deductions from the interactions of images and characters in the poem. Experiences leave subtle impressions in our consciousness. What a reader gains from a poem will partly depend upon the clarity and variety of these subtle impressions. The reader's *pratibhā* (poetic sensibility), his susceptibility and

sensitivity to thought-emotion complexes, gets strengthened by its repeated and discrimating exercise. As a result it becomes 'mirror-like'; even the subtlest and most minute emotional nuances and shades suggested in the poem are reflected exactly in the reader's heart and a perfect identification (*tanmayībhavana*) takes place between the reader's sensibility and the basic mental state realised in the poem.[39]

Human experience in its infinite variety is the raw material of poetry. The poet selects an area of human experience, combines and recombines the component elements of that part of experience and fashions a pattern out of them. A poem is not a direct outpouring of the poet; it is an arrangement of words evoking sensuous images and through them ideas of certain characters and their states of mind. All the images and characters are unified by a single dominant emotional quality and a host of transient moods contribute to the impression of the dominant emotion. The poet does not describe emotional states; he suggests them by describing the actions and behaviour of the characters. He resorts to figures of speech, rhyme, rhythm, symbolisation and other rhetorical devices to objectify his experience. Once he objectifies his experience by concretely embodying it in an adequately individualised pattern of imagery it becomes universal. It becomes accessible to anybody who can translate the imagery into corresponding emotional states. Words in poetry are charged with meanings which unfold in the minds of the reader as emotional states. When the poet wants to suggest the emotional states of Pārvatī as she listened to the marriage proposal from Śiva he does not say that she was shy, but that she started counting the petals of the lotus which she held in her hand. It is as if the mood of maidenly bashfulness is incarnated in Kalidasa's verse and we perceive it directly. Such a mood has no spatial or temporal limitations because it is personally and empirically connected with none in the world. It is objectified, individualised and also universalised.

I mentioned that the two words *saṁyoga* and *niṣpatti* in

the *rasa-sūtra* have been variously interpreted. Without going into the details of the controversy over the two words, we may explain them in the following way: when we read a poem we first reconstruct the meanings of the words in the form of images and characters. These images and characters are vehicles of emotions and moods and therefore they evoke the latent emotional traces in the reader. As the *vibhāvas,* etc., are objectified, individualised and universalised, the emotional states evoked in the reader snap their connection with his ego and are contemplated. The *saṁyoga* (*saṁyak yogam*—proper union) in the *sūtra* refers to the organic fusion of all the elements in the poem and to the fusion between the aesthetic focus and the reader. The *vibhāvas,* etc., reacting upon the sensibility of the reader, manifest the permanent emotional states which become objects of reader's contemplation. The manifestation and the concurrent delightful contemplation of permanent emotions are indicated by the word *niṣpatti. Rasa* is the relishing of the contemplated *sthāyins.* It is an autonomous activity in the sense that it is correlated neither with the past nor with the future. It lasts only as long as the tasting of the *vibhāvas* lasts. Abhinavagupta compares aesthetic experience to the perception of 'the magic flower' (*adbhuta-puṣpa*), in the sense that the esence of both is solely the present.[40] He does not mean that *rasa* has no temporal dimensions; he merely denies its continuity with ordinary personal interests of our everyday life.

# NOTES AND REFERENCES

## CHAPTER II: *RASA* AS AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

1. Raso vai sah, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* II, 7.
2. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, 1934), p. 46.
3. *Dhvanyāloka Locana*: all passages quoted from *Dhvanyāloka* and *Locana* are from *Dhvanyāloka with Locana and Bālapriyā Commentaries,* ed. Pattabhirama Sastri (Banaras, 1940): na tu muneḥ śokaḥiti mantavyam, p. 86; karuṇarasa rūpatāṁ laukikaśoka vyatiriktam, p. 86.
4. *Dhvanyāloka,* III, after verse 42, p. 498: sṛṅgārī cet kaviḥ kāvye jātaṁ rasamayaṁ jagat/sa eva vītarāgaścet nīrasaṁ sarvameva tat.
5. *Dhvanyāloka,* III, 7 ff, p. 323 ff.
6. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VI, prose following verse 31, p. 272.
7. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VI, 38, p. 294. yathā bījādbhavet vṛkṣo vṛkṣāt puṣpaṁ phalam yathā/tathā mūlaṁ rasaḥ sarve tebhyo bhāvāḥ vyavasthitāḥ.
8. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 294, mūlaṁ bījasthāniyāt kavigato rasaḥ/kaviṛhi sāmājikatulya eva/...tato vṛkṣasthānīyaṁ kāvyam/tatra puṣpādisthānīyo 'bhinayādi naṭavyāpāraḥ/tatra phalasthānīyaḥ sāmājikarasasvadaḥ/tena rasamayam eva viśvam.
9. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* I, 112, p. 40. nānābhāvopasampannam nānāvasthāntarātmakam/lokavṛttānukaraṇam nāṭyametanmayā kṛtam.
10. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VI, prose following verse 31, p. 272: vibhāvanubhāva vyabhicārisaṁyogād rasaniṣpattiḥ.
11. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* I, 107, p. 35: trailokyasyāsya sarvasya nāṭyam bhāvānukīrtanam. In Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary we find the following meanings for the word '*bhāva*': becoming, being, existing, state of being anything. He adds that in poetics the

word means 'emotion'. A. B. Keith in his *Sanskrit Drama* translates it as 'feeling'. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has 'mood' for it. Manmohan Ghosh, along with Haas, prefers the word 'state'.

12. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VI, 34, p. 293. nānābhinayasaṁbaddhaṁ bhāvayanti rasānimān/yasmāt tasmādamī bhāvā vijñeyā nāṭyayoktṛbhiḥ. Also, p. 342: vāgaṅgasattvopetān kāvyārthān bhāvayantīti bhāvā...
13. nānāprakāraiṛbhāvaiḥ sthāyivyabhicāri vibhāvādibhiḥ *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 38. Also see pp. 290, 318 and 321 for such a broad interpretation of the term.
14. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VII, prose following verse 6, p. 348. *Abhinavabhāratī,* pp. 342-3.
15. G. T. Deshpande in his *Bhāraṭīya Sāhitya Śāstra* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 254-8, and D. K. Bedekar in his article on *Rasa* in *Alocana,* No. 3, pp. 64-68, have argued against equating *bhāvas* with emotions.
16. M. Hiriyanna, *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy* (Mysore, 1952), p. 17.
17. S. N. Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy,* Vol. I (Cambridge, 1922), p. 263.
18. Strictly speaking the English equivalent of *sthāyin* must be 'sentiment' as it is used in psychology, and not 'emotion'. Unfortunately 'sentiment' has been widely used for *'rasa'* by many modern Indian writers Cf. I. A. Richards, 'A Sentiment in his (in the psychologist's) terminology is not an experience in the way that an emotion, a pain, the sight of something, an image, and a thought are experiences. It is not a momentary thing but a more or less permanent arrangement in the mind: a group of tendencies towards certain thoughts and emotions organised around a central object... A sentiment, in brief, is a persisting, organised system of dispositions' (*Practical Criticism,* London, 1954, p. 260).
19. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 282, Gnoli's translation; see Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Rome, 1956), p. 91.
20. *Rasagaṅgādhara,* ed. Badarinath Jha and Madanmohan Jha (Banaras, 1955), p. 126. tatra ā prabandhaṁ sthiratvādamīṣām bhāvānāṁ sthāyitvam.
21. Stephen C. Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality* (New York,

1937); Selection in *The Problems of Aesthetics,* eds. Eliseo Vivas and Murry Krieger (New York, 1953), p. 384.

22. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 283.

23. Dewey, op. cit., p. 69.

24. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VIII, prose following verse 3, p. 346. The existential status of *vibhāvas* is discussed in the next chapter.

25. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* Vol, 5, p. 347.

26. *Dhvanyāloka Locana,* p. 156: tac cittavṛttitanmayībhavanameva hi anubhāvanam.

27. In the west the discussion of poetry from the semantic point of view is of recent origin. I. A. Richards' insistence that only the emotive meanings of words are employed in poetry, though oversimplified, has affinity with the theory of *dhvani.* He says: 'Usually references are involved as *conditions* for, or stages in, the ensuing development of attitudes, yet it is still the attitudes not the references which are important' (*Principles of Literary Criticism,* London, 1960, p. 267). A fruitful comparison can be made between the doctrine of *dhvani* on the one hand and the ideas of the 19th century French Symbolists, L. Abercrombie, E. M. W. Tillyard, William Empson and others on the other hand. There are some interesting comments on the role of suggestion in the language of poetry in Monreo C. Beardsley's *Aesthetics,* (New York, 1958), pp. 123-9, 138-9.

28. *Dhvanyāloka,* I, 4: pratīyamānaṁ punaranyadeva/ vastu asti vāṇīṣu mahākavīnām/ yat tat prasiddāvayavātiriktam/ vibhāti lāvanyam invāṅganāsu.

29. *Dhvanyāloka,* I, 9. ālokārthi yathā dīpaśikhāyām yatnavāñ janaḥ/tad upāyatayā tadvadarthe vācye tadadṛtaḥ.

30. *Dhvanyāloka,* I, 7. śabdārthaśāsanajñānamātreṇaiva na vedyate/vedyate sa tu kāvyārthatattvajñaireva kevalam.

31. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* VI, prose following verse 31, p. 288. rasa iti ka padārthaḥ ucyate āsvādyatvāt.

32. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 267.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
34. For a discussion of *bhakti* and *vātsalya,* see Nagendranath Sharma Chaudhury, *Kāvya Tattva Samīkṣa* (Delhi, 1959), pp. 228-50. Also see Nagendra, *Rasasiddhānta* (Delhi, 1964), pp. 262-4.
35. *Kāvyālaṁkāra,* XII, 4. rasanādrasatvameṣāṁ madhurādīnām evoktam acāraiḥ/nirvedādiṣvapi tannikāmamastīti te'pi rasāḥ. Quoted by G. T. Deshpande, *Bhāraṭīya Sāhitya Śāstra,* p. 114.
36. *Uttararāmacharita,* III, 47. eko rasaḥ karuṇa eva nimittabhedād bhinnaḥ pṛthak pṛthak iva āśrayate vivartān/āvartabudbudatarañgamayān vikārān ambho yathā salilam eva hi tatsamastam.
37. The reference to this synthesis is available in Viswanatha's *Sāhityadarpana,* ed. Satyavrat Singh (Banaras, 1963), p. 106.
38. V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras, 1963), pp. 450-51.
39. *Dhvanyāloka Locana,* pp. 38-9; yeṣāṁ kāvyanuśīlanābhyasavaśād viśadībhūte manomukure varnanayīyatanmayībhavanayogyatā te svahṛdaya-saṁvādabhājaḥ sahṛdayāḥ.
40. *Dhvanyāloka Locana,* p. 160: iha tu vibhāvādicarvaṇādbhutapuṣpavat tatkālasāraivodita na tu pūrvāparakalānubandhinī.

# CHAPTER III

# *The Mode of Aesthetic Experience*

ONCE Thomas Mann and a friend came out of a movie weeping copiously. We should imagine that the film was a very 'moving' work of art. But Mann narrates the incident in support of his view that films are not works of art. He said: 'Art is a cold sphere.'[1] This statement raises important problems about the nature of aesthetic experience and its relation to emotions. All experiences are processes of mutual interaction between organism and environment. No experience occurs in total isolation from environment. In this sense all experiences have continuity. But within this continuity differentiations can be made on the basis of the nature of the particular bit of environment impinging on the mind and the specific mode of perception and interaction. To determine whether aesthetic experience has a special mode, it is necessary to clarify our ideas about the ontological status of work of art, for instance, a poem. After determining the mode of existence of a poem in the light of the Indian concept of *alaukika,* I shall discuss what I call the 'naturalism' of I. A. Richards and John Dewey who insist on the continuity of aesthetic experience with ordinary experience, and the 'isolationism' of Kant and the modern formalists who deny the role of emotions in art. Lastly, I shall expound the Indian concept of *alaukika* and expose the fallacy involved in the question, how tragedy delights.

## *The Mode of Existence of a Poem*

Does a poem have any special ontological status as dis-

tinct from that of the common objects of perception? René Wellek has analysed most of the usual and unusual answers to this question and finds them unsatisfactory.[2] A poem is not identical with the printed black impression because printing is only a way of recording the poem which exists outside of the printed matter. Neither is the poem identical with the sequence of sounds uttered by a reader because the reading of a poem is merely a 'performance'. The poem is neither the author's experience, because it is a thing of the past; nor is it a single reader's experience, because every reader adds some extraneous and instantaneous elements to the poem. Wellek believes that a poem exists as a 'potential cause of experience'.[3] He wants us to conceive of a poem as a set of norms and standards realised—always partially—in the experience of individual readers.[4] A poem's system of norms is made of the sound structure, the implied units of meaning, and the world of objects to which the meanings refer. There are variations in the experiential realisation of a poem by individual readers; but the basic identity of the structure of norms remains unchanged.

> The work of art, then, appears as an object of knowledge *sui generis* which has a special ontological status. It is neither real (like a statue) nor mental (like the experience of light or pain) nor ideal (like a triangle). It is a system of norms of ideal concepts which are intersubjective. They must be assumed to exist in collective ideology, changing with it, accessible only through individual mental experiences based on the sound-structure of its sentences.[5]

Now, this conclusion of Wellek is not wholly free from difficulties and obscurities. I doubt whether he has made his 'system of norms of ideal concepts which are intersubjective' sufficiently clear. What is important for us, however, is his statement that a poem has a special ontological status and that our perception of it is *sui generis*.

The Indian theorists believe that the *vibhāvas* are *alaukika*, non-ordinary. As I have pointed out earlier, *vibhāvas* are the vehicles of feelings, the 'objective correlatives.' Every poem, even a short lyric, is about a situation and the

reaction of a character—or the poet as dramatist speaker—to that situation. In ordinary life our attitude to all objects and persons can be described in terms of attraction, repulsion or indifference. Men and things directly or indirectly impinge on our life and our practical interests. A person, in ordinary life has *arthakriyā*, causal efficiency. *Arthakriyā* means the ability to produce practical effects.[6] Only when a person has causal efficiency can he be said to have real existence. A character in a poem does not have the real existence of ordinary men because he does not have this ability of *arthakriyā*. He does not impinge on our egoistic interests. Our attitudes of attraction, repulsion, and indifference are transcended when we contemplate a character like Macbeth. We are not concerned with the fact of Macbeth's historicity; even if he had an historical existence it is irrelevant to our appreciation of the play. Such characters and their actions exist merely to be imaginatively perceived and entertained by us. Susanne K. Langer calls a work of art a 'virtual entity': 'Anything that exists only for perception, and plays no ordinary part in nature as common objects do, is virtual entity.'[7] A 'virtual entity' is estranged from actuality:

> Every real work of art has a tendency to appear thus dissociated from its mundane environment. The most immediate impression it creates is one of 'otherness' from reality—the impression of an illusion enfolding the thing, action, statement, or flow of sound that constitutes the work.[8]

The non-ordinary mode in which a work of art exists has been recognised by many theorists including Alexander and Beardsley. According to Beardsley aesthetic objects are 'so to speak *objects manqués*. There is something—lacking in them that keeps them from being quite real, from achieving the full status of things—or, better, that prevents the question of reality from arising.'[9] Alexander prefers Schiller's word *schein*, 'semblance', to describe the specific status of the work of art. His position is set forth in the following statements:

> The work of art asks not to be believed as we believe in things of the practical world in which we live, submitting ourselves to it.
>
> We create an autonomous world, a blending of the physical with ourselves, and therefore a new reality within the so called real world; neither believed or disbelieved but entertained and therefore not acted upon.[10]

From the above presentation it is clear that Wellek, the Indian theorists, Susanne K. Langer, Beardsley and Alexander are agreed on the non-ordinary ontological status of a work of art. The relation between the perceptual field and the material medium on which the former is dependent varies in the different arts. Croceans would believe that a work of art exists purely in imagination. Collingwood goes to the extent of asserting that a work of art is an 'imaginary thing' and that the 'real' work of art is only a means by which the readers can reconstruct for themselves.[11] We are not justified in adopting a wholly subjectivistic position by believing that a poem exists as an 'imaginary' experience. This would entail the absurd conclusion that the structural identity of a poem as a linguistic construct can never be established. Though we do not identify a statue or a painting (as a work of art) with the physical properties of its medium, we are prepared to concede that without the material basis the art objects will not exist for appreciation by the community. In the case of poetry no such simple solution seems possible. When we read a poem our attention is concentrated not on the black impression on the paper but on the reverberations of meanings evoked in us. We are really concerned with patterns of sound conventionally invested with meanings. Good poetry adds new dimensions to the meanings of words by charging them with emotional and intellectual associations of great human significance.

In India there was a controversy over the relative importance of words and meanings. Does a poem exist as a system of words or as a system of meanings or as *rasa*? It was the reflection in poetics of the soul-body dichotomy in

philosophy. Bhāmaha defined literature as the union of words and meanings.[12] This is an inane definition till we clarify the special aesthetic context of the 'union' (*sahitau*). As such, Bhāmaha's definition is unilluminating because without union of word and meaning all language will be mere gibberish. Later there were intensive searches in different directions to find the differentia of the particular union of words and meanings in poetry. This unique union consists in the sensuous and symbolic qualities of words and meanings, the images and associations evoked by them and all the constituents competing and interacting in a fruitful tension suggesting *rasa*.[13] Panditarāja Jagannātha, after showing up the inadequacy of many definitions of a poem, emphasises the aspect of poetry as a structure of words, though his definition includes meanings, and delight giving meanings at that.[14]

In poetry words and meanings harmoniously coexist. Language in poetry is not means to an end like conveying information or issuing instructions. We know that in a good poem each word is inevitable and irreplaceable. When we say that a poem is an organic unity we mean that the nexus of the meanings of the words lies within it, making it autonomous and self-sufficient. In non-poetic use, language leads you away from itself; in poetry language pulls you towards itself. Poetry dissolves the means-end conflict. Paul Valery has drawn an interesting analogy to explain the difference between poetry and prose, which we might take to be the difference between imaginative language and non-imaginative language:

> Walking, like prose, aims at the attainment of a perfectly definite objective. It is an activity directed towards reaching a specific end. Dancing consists in a means of actions, but their objective lies within themselves. It leads nowhere. It does envisage an end, but this end exists only as an ideal state of mind.... [A] poem is designed expressly to be reborn from its ashes, to become once more what it has just succeeded in being.[15]

Evidently, the idea that a poem exists merely as a system

of meanings is unsatisfactory because a newspaper editorial also exists as a system of meanings. To indicate the special status of a poem we may use Alexander's phrase 'reality within reality' or Valery's 'language within language'. Poetry is imposing a formal pattern on language or, if it sounds too mechanical, we may say that poetry is carving out of language a formal pattern as a sculptor carves out of marble a statue. If marble exists outside the individual's mind in the material world, language exists outside the individual mind in a culture of a society.

Falstaff is an imaginary character; but *Henry IV* is not an imaginary play. In aesthetic theory the reality of the former is irrelevant; the reality of the latter is undisputed. Falstaff is imaginary but not in the sense of a quaint apparition in a dream; because the dream is a private experience whose authenticity is unverifiable and whose meaning, if it has any, is again private. But Falstaff has a structural identity available to all. He exists in the autonomous world of poetry and is accessible to anyone who can realise the system of meanings embodied in the play *Henry IV*.

The upshot of the above discussion is that if we ignore the multidimensional nature of poetry and go in search of simplified either/or type of answers, we are unlikely to arrive at truth. The question whether a poem exists as sounds, or words, or in the poet's mind, or in the reader's mind can have only one satisfactory answer, that is, that a poem exists as all these at once. If it is impossible for us to establish the locus of life in the heart or brain or in the stomach it is equally impossible to nail the poem to words or to meanings or to subjective experiences. A poem exists in different strata simultaneously. The verbal substructure of a poem shares its reality with other verbal patterns in language; but the autonomous world created by the substructure defies our ideas about reality or illusion. The logical status of its existence cannot be subsumed in the usual categories; hence the Indian theorists call it *alaukika*, non-ordinary.

*Aesthetic Experience and Ordinary Experience*

## The Naturalists

### I. A. Richards

I. A. Richards categorically denies any qualitative difference between aesthetic experience and ordinary life experiences. He has built up a theory of value which has no necessity to distinguish between them to evaluate them. His value theory is quantitative, i.e., the larger the number of impulses are coordinated in an experience the more it is valuable. Poetic experience is more valuable than that of eating cherries simply because it coordinates a greater number of impulses. He tries to explode the assumption that there is a distinct kind of mental activity present in aesthetic experiences. The very title of the second chapter of his book *Principles of Literary Criticism*—'The Phantom Aesthetic State'—makes his intention clear. He considers that this assumption is 'a legacy from the days of abstract investigation into the Good, the Beautiful and the True.'[16] No doubt that an exaggeration of this distinction has led some thinkers to associate it with supra-mundane and extra-sensory experiences. Richards rendered a signal service to the discussion of the problem by lifting it out of the quagmire of pseudo-mysticism and transcendental jargon into which it was pushed by idealists and the aesthetes. The aesthetes denied any kind of relation between art and life. In combating their wrong notions Richards went to the other extreme of denying any distinctive quality which differentiates aesthetic experience from ordinary experience.

A. C. Bradley, in his famous inaugural lecture 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake' said that poetry is not a part or copy of the real world but 'a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous.'[17] Richards hotly contests this view because he thinks that this way of formulating the problem introduces a severance between poetry, and life in opposition to it. 'The world of poetry has in no sense any different reality from the rest of the world and it has no special laws and no other-

worldly peculiarities'.[18] In another place he says: 'When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike what we are doing on our way to the Gallery or when we dressed in the morning.'[19] Despite the clarity and audacity it can be shown that Richards is not able to maintain his position without compromises. He admits that aesthetic experiences are different from non-aesthetic experiences by virtue of the difference in 'the connections between their constituents' and that they are 'a further development' and 'a finer organisation' of ordinary experience.[20] Even if one accepts his quantitative evaluation of experiences it can be argued that a quantitative increase leads to a qualitative change in experience. There is, of course, no way of knowing how many impulses are at work when we dress in the morning and how many when we read *Hamlet*. But if the number increases and the organisation goes on growing finer and finer a point may come when the entire consciousness gets a qualitatively different orientation.

Though it would appear that his theory of synaesthesis—the experience of equilibrium of impulses—does demarcate a special aesthetic realm within the wider context of man's total field of experience, the inference is negated by his two statements. He believes that synaesthesis can be brought about by non-poetic, non-artistic objects also. He also refuses to relate synaesthesis to the objective pattern and qualities of the work of art.[21] Apart from giving rise to pure impressionism and subjectivism in critical practice this theory makes poetry replaceable. It is ironical that the arguments of Richards, who proceeds from a healthy regard for poetry's place in human civilisation, should negate the differentiating qualities and values of poetic experience and thus make poetry replaceable and dispensable.

Implicit modifications of Richards's explicit thesis are available here and there in his writings. He recognises the fact that certain characteristics of aesthetic experience like impersonality, disinterestedness, and detachment are of special service in promoting aesthetic communication,

though they have nothing to do with the value of what is communicated.[22] He also recognises a readjustment of our impulses brought about by our change in our awareness of objects.

> The tree impulses which are aroused have to adjust themselves to their new setting of other impulses due to our awareness that it is a *picture* which we are looking at.[23]
>
> To take another obvious example, the description of the theatrical presentation of a murder has a different effect upon us from that which would be produced by most actual murders if they took place before us.[24]

Here also Richards implicitly admits that the reality of the world of art is not the same as that of the real world. Our awareness of the 'framing' of the work of art is accompanied by a qualitatively new orientation of impulses which has to be isolated from 'the accidents and irrelevancies of everyday existence'.[25] Richards's main explicit contention loses much of its force when considered in the context of these modifications which are cautious but which have farreaching consequences.

## JOHN DEWEY

In a brilliant passage at the beginning of his book *Art as Experience* Dewey enumerates the principal social causes which tempted philosophers to effect and perpetuate a chasm between ordinary life experiences and aesthetic experience. Museums segregate art from temples and such other communal places. Nationalism, capitalism, economic cosmopolitanism, the impersonality of a world market, mass production—all these promote a kind of perverse aesthetic individualism and the idea that art experience is something esoteric, and aloof and isolated from common life. Dewey outright rejects this isolationism and tries to establish that art experience is continuous with ordinary life. The similarity of his ideas with those of I. A. Richards is marked. As I. A. Richards believes that aesthetic experiences are only 'a further development' and 'a finer organisation' of ordinary experiences, Dewey maintains that works of art

merely 'accentuate and idealise qualities found in ordinary life'.[26]

> Because experience is the fulfilment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in a germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is aesthetic experience.[27]

Dewey thinks that normal experience is prevented from running its course to fulfilment by extraneous interruption and inner lethargy. When the material expressed runs its course to fulfilment and when it is 'integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience',[28] it is called *an* experience. *An* experience is 'complete in itself standing out because marked out from what went before and what came after.'[29] According to Dewey *an* experience of thinking has its own aesthetic quality; the experience of successful politicians like Caesar and Napoleon has also aesthetic quality.[30] This aesthetic quality which gives to *an* experience roundness and unity is emotional. There are no separate things called emotions in human experience. 'In fact emotions are qualities, when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes.'[31] Dewey's conclusion is simply that

> [The] aesthetic is no intruder in experience from without, whether by way of idle luxury or transcendental ideality, but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience.[32]

From the above paragraphs it is clear that Dewey is an uncompromising opponent of any theory which tries to isolate aesthetic experience from the general stream of human life. But it is necessary to point out an element of contradiction in his theory. He does not hesitate to differentiate between the humdrum experiences of ordinary life and *an* experience which has completeness, roundness and unity. To admit that aesthetic experience is *an* experience is to demarcate it from ordinary experiences. Sometimes Dewey wants us to believe that he uses the word 'aesthetic' adjectively, i.e., to qualify a phase of ordinary experience.[33]

He talks as if aethetic experience is only ordinary experience coloured by this aesthetic quality. He complicates the problem by stating that what gives an aesthetic experience its peculiar unity is only its emotional quality. But we know that emotions are frequent occurrences in our life. By themselves they cannot give unity and completeness to aesthetic experience.

It is interesting to observe that Dewey makes a distinction between emotion which is a part of our daily life and emotion as felt in aesthetic experience though such a distinction runs counter to the general tenor of his thesis. In the chapter entitled 'The Act of Expression', he says that 'a person overwhelmed by emotion is thereby incapacitated for expressing it'.[34] He admits that artistic expression is not a 'direct emission of an emotion'.[35] The fact is that when we actively respond to the emotional situations depicted in a poem, we not only feel those emotions but also contemplate them. Dewey blames Kant for using the word 'contemplation' to describe art experience because he thinks that it is inept to suggest the excitement and passionate absorption which one feels while responding to poetry. No doubt, in ordinary parlance, the word has the connotations of inaction and mental passivity. But in aesthetics the word is used only to differentiate the attitude from the practical one. Dewey himself later concedes that the response to art is 'not practical, *if* by "practical" is meant an action undertaken for a specialised end outside the perception or for some external consequences.'[36] When we consider his contention about the continuity of art experience with the ordinary life experiences in the light of the above qualifications we find that it loses much of its force.

## The Isolationists

### KANT

In a sense Kant can be considered the father of formalism in modern aesthetics. His aesthetic theory was not derived from an empirical study of aesthetic phenomena. It was

designed to bridge the gulf between the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding. Kant's formalism is the logical consequence of two of his doctrines: (i) his partial definition of beauty as 'purposiveness without purpose'; (ii) his distinction between 'free' or 'pure' or 'adherent' beauty.

The third moment of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* contains the statement that beauty is 'the form of purposiveness in an object so far as it is perceived apart from the presentation of a purpose'.[37] For instance, a flower or a landscape has no purpose in the sense that it is not there to make you appreciate its beauty; but it *serves* a purpose: it establishes, by virtue of its form, a free harmony between imagination which synthesises sense-data and understanding which conceptualises knowledge. The beautiful establishes this harmony merely by its form. 'The sole foundation of the judgment of Taste is the form of an object.'[38] Forgetting that to the extent we are able to use the knowledge of reality to change it, it is real knowledge, Kant declared that noumena in themselves are unknowable and thus caused the breach between phenomenon and noumenon. In the same way, in aesthetics, by rejecting content as irrelevant to aesthetic experience he caused a chasm between form and content which, in reality, constitute an inseparable unity both in creation and appreciation.

Kant says that the aesthetic interest is unconcerned with the sensuousness of the appeal of the beautiful objects; it is concerned only with patterns or forms independent of the concepts of purpose, motive, perfection, etc. Thus a landscape is beautiful not by virtue of its green grass, multicoloured foliage and flowers but merely by virtue of the arrangement, patterns, and shapes of grass, trees, flowers, etc. The fact is that we cannot conceive the shape or structure of a work of art apart from the sensuous material out of which it is created. There is no harmony without sound; there is no shape without substance. It may be that when we contemplate an arabesque or a sea shell we concentrate only on the form; but when this principle is applied to the

major arts, particularly poetry, it breaks down. In poetry, form and content interpenetrate and, attention on the form alone, even if it is possible, will only result in emasculating our aesthetic experience of a richness which is available when we contemplate a poem as an organic whole. As Barrows Dunham has pointed out, 'Kant's theory amounts to a restricting of aesthetic experience to the enjoyment of a disembodied ghost.'[39]

Kant himself must have felt that his definition was too restrictive in practice. Therefore he distinguishes between 'free' or 'pure' beauty and 'dependent' or 'adherent' beauty: 'There are two kinds of beauty; free beauty or beauty which is merely dependent. The first presupposes no concept of what the object should be; the second does presuppose such a concept and, with it, an answering perfection of the object.'[40] We should expect that after making these two divisions, Kant would place 'pure beauty' on a higher pedestal. This would have led to the absurd conclusion that *Macbeth* is impure because of Shakespeare's preoccupation with concepts like ambition, crime, retribution, etc. Such a theory disables literary criticism because literature is not concerned with mere texture of words or the harmony of the sound-patterns; it is, above all, concerned with human values. But we find that Kant's moral nature compels him to declare unhesitatingly that poetry which has adherent beauty is richer spiritually than pure forms of beauty because it gives form to aesthetical ideas. By aesthetical ideas Kant means those intellectual reverberations in the mind which cannot be accurately reproduced in discursive prose.

Kant's exclusion of emotion from aesthetic experience leads to barren formalism. He categorically asserts that emotion and charm vitiate taste and are totally irrelevant to aesthetic experience.

> Emotion—a sensation where an agreeable feeling is produced merely by means of a momentary check followed by a more powerful outpouring of the vital force—is quite foreign to beauty.[41]

> Taste that requires an added element of charm and emotion for its delight, not to speak of adopting this as measure of its approval, has not yet emerged from barbarianism.[42]

It is true that Kant speaks of aesthetic feeling but this feeling is only 'pleasure', the state of the subject when he enjoys a work of art but has nothing to do with the interplay of various emotions in his mind when he reads a poem rich in emotional and spiritual content. The nature of the emotion which we feel when we read a poem must be investigated, no doubt. Whether its nature is the same as that of the emotion which we feel in our practical day-to-day experiences or a transformed state though organised by the same components which enter our real life emotions—these things require clarification because on this hinge many important aesthetic problems. It might be that Kant wanted to check the rising tide of sentimental emotionalism which identified beauty with anything that roused emotions. Sentimental emotionalism certainly cannot serve as a sound basis for rational and coherent system of aesthetics. But in counteracting the vagueness of such romantic emotionalism which equates aesthetic experience with mere gush Kant threw the baby along with the bath-water. Mere disembodied form abstracted from sensuous and emotional experiences and meanings is like the grin of the Cheshire cat which exists only in the wonderland of psuedo-mystical aesthetics.

## CLIVE BELL

In our own century this kind of aesthetic formalism found its staunchest exponents in Clive Bell and Roger Fry. When they regard our responses to work of art as distinct from our responses to non-artistic situations we may agree with them. But their esoteric formalism goes further than this point and declares:

> The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions.[43]

The second part of the above statement represents the absurd extreme limit of formalism. It contains the startling idea that life is irrelevant to art.

Bell and Fry do not repudiate the role of emotion in art. But their emotion is a peculiar and exclusive aesthetic emotion: 'The starting point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion.'[44] This peculiar emotion is evoked by works of art which have 'significant form'. 'Significant form' is the quality common to all works of art. It results from a particular combination of lines, colours, sounds, etc. Bell's definition, as has been pointed out by his critics, does not escape from circularity: significant form is that form which evokes the unique aesthetic emotion and the unique aesthetic emotion is that which is evoked by significant form. The only way to escape from this vicious circularity is to relate the 'significance' to life as lived by human beings. But this is precisely what Bell refuses to do. According to Bell the intense and peculiar significance of the world of art is unrelated to the significance of life.[45] Significance is always a matter of value judgment. When artistic significance is cut off and isolated from significance in life we have no means of evaluating works of art. Bell's reduction of the complexities of aesthetic experience to a single special aesthetic emotion cannot account for the variety of elements which enter art. There is no scope for internal differentiation within this aesthetic emotion. Such an absolutist position incapacitates and, in fact, invalidates all practical criticism.

It should be remembered, however, that Bell and Fry formulated their theories in the context of the graphic arts which had already shown tendencies towards abstraction and avoidance of representational elements. The advocates of 'pure poetry' and 'musical concept of poetry' reflect this extreme formalism in the field of literature. The absolutist position of Bell contradicts the experience derived from literature; therefore he regards literature as an impure art. 'We all agree that there is in literature an immense amount of stuff which is not purely aesthetic, which is cognitive

and suggestive, which an intelligent bourgeois can understand as well as anyone else.'[46] The assumption that some arts are pure because of their freedom from the preoccupations of facts and ideas of life and other arts are impure because of the intrusion of life values in the exclusive realm of art is the characteristic reaction of persons who are incapable of integrating their experiences in a solid framework of unified sensibility. By repudiating the relevance of the vital context of lived experience, formalism emasculates art and leaves too many loose ends in aesthetic theory.

*Emotion and Aesthetic Experience*

Considering the fact that the word emotion frequently and universally figures in discussions of poetry and poetic experience it is necessary to define exactly its role and nature in the poetic response. As a convenient starting-point I shall use Laurence Lerner's classification of theories about the role of emotion in poetic experience.[47] According to him, theoretically, we have five possibilities:

(1) Reading a poem we experience the aesthetic emotion alone.
(2) We experience the 'material' passion (real life emotions) alone.
(3) We experience the aesthetic emotion plus the material passion as it is.
(4) We experience the aesthetic emotion plus a special version of the material passion.
(5) We experience a special version of the material passion and nothing else.

Let us see whether the theory of *rasa* can be submerged under any of the foregoing alternatives. As has been pointed out earlier, the Indian theory makes a clear distinction between ordinary life emotions and the emotional content of aesthetic experience. Bharata's commentator Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa confused the two and led the discussion into a

wrong track for a long time. He thought that when the ordinary life emotions were intensified (*upacit*) by the characters and situations in a poem they attained the state of *rasa*.[48] He did not care to verify the truth of their theory by referring it to the actual experience of poetry and drama. An emotion like anger, for instance, when intensified, only drives the subject to madness; it does not give him aesthetic delight. Their error resulted from establishing a crude and direct continuity between life and poetry, forgetting the mode in which the *vibhāvas* exist. *Rasa* is different from *sthāyin*.[49] It is true that Bharata sometimes says that *sthāyin* becomes *rasa;* but it is only due to analogy.[50] When the *vibhāvas*, etc., bring the *sthāyins* forth the latter lose their relations with the ego and therefore become impersonal. *Rasa* is the tasting of these impersonal *sthāyins*.

This distinction was not unknown in the west though its full significance has not been realised satisfactorily till recent times. Samuel Alexander makes a distinction between 'material passion' and 'formal passion'.[51] Cecil Day Lewis distinguishes between 'human emotion' and 'poetic passion'.[52] Isabel C. Hungerland in her book *Poetic Discourse* says that literature evokes emotions, but they are different from the real life emotions. 'They are spectator emotions, not participator emotions.'[53] Collingwood describes the peculiarity of the emotions in aesthetic experience in the following words:

> At the level of imaginative experience, the crude emotion of the psychical level is translated into idealised emotion or the so-called aesthetic emotion, which is thus not an emotion pre-existing to the expression of it, but the emotional charge on the experience of expressing a given emotion, felt as a new colouring which that emotion receives in being expressed.[54]

W. B. Yeats admits that this poetic emotion 'has nothing to do with action or desire'.[55]

An emotion is a disturbance, an agitation in the consciousness which tends to issue in action. The word is derived from the Latin prefix 'e' and the root 'moveo', and it means

to stir and move out. In aesthetic experience emotions do stir in and agitate our mind, but they do not 'move out' in the form of action. When we respond to poetry the emotional states are not simply undergone and suffered; they are perceived and 'tasted'. The Sanskrit words to describe this process are *carvaṇa* which means masticating and *rasana* which means tasting. These words refer to the imginative reconstruction of the meanings and identity of the poem by the reader and to his active enjoyment of the emotions even while they reverberate in his heart. In ordinary life we can control and even destroy an emotion by concentrating our attention on it. A detached contemplative mood is an enemy to the emotional disturbances in the mind. But in poetic experience, when we 'distance' the depicted emotions, they do not disappear; on the contrary we see them clearly and taste their individual flavours. The liberative function of poetry is partly an outcome of this peculiar nature of poetic experience. Once we are able to formulate and precisely define emotions and acquaint ourselves with their nature and internal differentiations we gain a kind of mastery over them. Poetic experience frees us from being a slave to emotions which are generally chaotic, discordant, powerful and blind. This is one of the meanings of the saying that poetry makes our insight into life keener.

Now, I think, we can go back to Lerner's classification referred to at the beginning of this section and see where the theory of *rasa* fits in. It is clear that the theory of *rasa* does not recognise any special 'aesthetic emotion'. It talks of eight or nine *sthāyins* which lie permanently embedded in the human psyche to be awakened by appropriate characters and situations. The 'aesthetic emotion' is certainly not one of them. The feeling of delight which accompanies all aesthetic experiences cannot be called an emotion. The Indian theory does not believe that we experience only life emotions—'the material passions'—at the time of reading poetry. It raises the entire experience to the plane of *alaukikatva*, non-ordinariness, and insists that the intrusion of one's own personal material passions will only mar the

poetic experience. Lerner's fifth view that what we experience is 'a special version of the material passion' is nearest to the Indian theory. The 'speciality' of the 'special version' is caused by the peculiar ontological status of a poem which transpersonalises the emotional experience.

### 'Alaukika' *and Susanne K. Langer's Ideas*

In the light of the above discussion we may conclude that the naturalistic and isolationalist theories fail to do justice to the uniqueness of aesthetic experience. The former blurs the demarcation line between aesthetic experience and ordinary experiences in its justified effort to integrate art with life; the latter creates a chasm between life and art by denying any role to emotion in aesthetic experience. What we need is theory which is free from the dogmatic either/or approach and which will establish the uniqueness of aesthetic experience without cutting it off from the vital emotions of human life. I believe the concept of *alaukika* helps us formulate such a theory. It strikes a middle path and reconciles the extremes of isolationalism and naturalism.

Why do we call aesthetic perception non-ordinary (*alaukika*)? Because it cannot be subsumed under any one of the modes of perception common in ordinary life. In the words of Abhinavagupta:

> With regard to the personages moving on the stage, one has neither the idea of being concerned with reality, nor of being concerned with a similitude—as in the case of two similar things—nor with an illusion, as when a piece of mother-of-pearl reminds one of a piece of silver—, nor with a super-imposition as when wrong knowledge follows the denying of the right—, nor with an ascertainment—as when one says, 'this peasant is a cow' (i.e., is as foolish as a cow)—, nor with a comparison—as between a face and the moon—, nor with a copy—as in the case of a painted image—, nor with an imitation—as in the case of masters and disciples, who seek to explain the scriptures in the same way—nor with a sudden apparition—as in magic—, nor with a skilfully conjured-up apparition—as in a sleight-of-hand, etc. In all these cases,

> that which emerges does not appear, in fact, in a generalized form, and therefore, the subject does not actively share in what he sees. In consequences, the tasting of *Rasa* does not take place.[56]

Susanne K. Langer's theory of art as 'vital life' bears close affinity with the Indian concept of *alaukika*. A poem, according to her, is a non-discursive symbolic form: 'The feeling expressed by this form is neither his, nor his hero's, nor ours. It is the meaning of the symbol.'[57] It is interesting to compare Mammaṭa's statement on the same subject. He also says that the emotions expressed by the poem have no specific relation with any particular individual. They are independent of specifications such as concern or indifference.[58] Differentiating between ordinary experiences and poetic experience Susanne K. Langer says that the former are fragmentary, transient and often indefinite but 'the poet's business is to create the appearance of "experiences", the semblance of events lived and felt, and to organize them so they constitute a purely and completely experienced reality, a piece of *virtual life*.'[59] The source of the subject-matter of poetry does not alter the nature of poetry as virtual experience. The poet may choose the subject-matter of his poem from some mythology or from his personal experiences. But this factor is irrelevant so far as the status of poetic experience is concerned. 'There is no trafficking with actualities in poetry, no matter how much the creator of the semblance has drawn on his own feelings, his deepest convictions, his memories and secret wishes.'[60] It is this obvious affinity with the spirit behind the Indian theory which makes her pay the following tribute:

> Some of the Hindu critics, although they subordinate and even deprecate dramatic art in favour of the literary elements it involves, understand much better than their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotion in the theatre, which our writers so freely and banefully confuse: the feelings experienced by the actor, those experienced by the spectators, those presented as undergone by characters in the play, and finally the feeling that shines through the play itself—the vital feelings of the piece.

> This last they call *rasa;* it is a state of emotional knowledge, which comes only to those who have long studied and contemplated poetry.[61]

Some of the supporters and opponents of the theory of *rasa* have tried to interpret the word *alaukika* in a quasi-mystical manner. *Alaukika,* in the context of poetics, has nothing to do with supernaturalism or mysticism. It does not mean 'otherwordly'. The prefix *'a'* in *alaukika* has the meaning of 'being similar and yet different'. We do not experience a different species of emotion. The emotions which are aroused in the poetic experience resemble the emotions in real life; but at the same time they are different in the sense that, while emotions in real life tend to issue in action, in poetic experience they are entertained without any such tendency and are 'tasted'. The dialectical unity of resemblance to and difference from ordinary experiences is best expressed by Viśvanātha who says that when we contemplate dramatic characters we have the feeling: 'It relates to some other and yet not quite the some other, it concerns me and yet does not concern me.'[62] It is because such a feeling is never experienced in ordinary life that poetic experience is considered non-ordinary (*alaukika*).

*The Paradox of 'Tragic Delight'*

When we remind ourselves of the volume and ultimate futility of the discussions on the apparently paradoxical delight we get from the artistic portrayal of suffering we can clarify our point of view further. The question why tragedy delights arises from certain fallacious assumptions about the nature and function of poetry. It plagues all those who are victims of what I call the naturalistic fallacy, i.e., the belief that the function of poetry is to incite real life emotions in the reader. It began with Plato and his notion of poetry feeding and watering the passions. Aristotle's use of the term 'catharsis' to describe the emotional effect of tragedy has been explicated in a wide variety of ways. Escape from the insipid torpor of everyday existence into the excitement, awareness of the fictional framework, spirit

of total resignation to fate, assertion of the will to live, the sense of reconciliation with the idea of eternal justice, satisfaction of sadistic and masochistic urges—these are some of the philosophical explanations of tragic delight.[63]

Among the Indian theorists some maintain that all *rasas* give delight and others that only some evoke delight.[64] Daṇḍin, Vāmana, Lollaṭa, Rāmcandra, Gunacandra are prominent among those who accept the latter view. The theorists of the Central Tradition consider that such a view is untenable, our experience contradicts it. As Deshpande has pointed out, the view that some *rasas* give delight and others give sorrow is the inevitable conclusion of the argument that *rasa* is nothing but intensified (*upacit*) *sthāyins*.[65] Abhinavagupta starts from the premise that the emotions evoked in poetic experience are non-ordinary and transpersonal and therefore there is no question of sorrow. 'Drama always gives delight to the spectators, never sorrow.'[66] Bharatamuni devised music and dance to remove such personal feelings which may arise in the minds of untrained and uncultured spectators.[67] The question why the depiction of suffering causes delight is irrelevant.[68] Sorrow is a symptom of agitation of the mind. In aesthetic experience there is a sense of rest, composure (*viśrānti*). The feelings of sorrow, fear, disgust, wonder, etc., are merely colourations (*anurañjanā*), or resonance of the transpersonal feelings which are the stuff of poetry.[69]

We have had any number of explanations of this paradoxical phenomenon of tragic delight. But none of them seems to be satisfactory. The reason is that the question is based on a fallacy and therefore cannot have a satisfactory or correct answer. The fallacy is that there is a direct straight line relation between what is depicted in the poem and what is felt by the reader. We know that even in life there is no such straight line relation. Sufferings of personal enemies and enemy nations do not cause perverse delight only in those rare men of compassion. We are coldly indifferent to much suffering except when it obstructs our attempts at the gratification of desires. In life some emo-

tions are pleasant, others unpleasant. We want to extend the range of pleasurable emotions like love and shrink away from the unpleasant ones like fear. But in poetry all our emotional reactions are strictly controlled by the aesthetic focus—the poem—which has non-ordinary existential status. The quality of our response is not determined by the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the emotions depicted but by the stylised and formalised object which has crystallised emotions and made them part of its structure. There is no question of our moving towards or away from these objects because they are not meant to help or hinder the gratification of our desires by arousing pleasant or unpleasant emotions. The elements in the structure of tragedy, the human significance with which those elements are invested, the vision of the tragic artist—all of them might be different from and even superior to other genres of literatures. In descriptive and evaluative criticism these topics can be profitably discussed. In aesthetics, when we discuss the qualities of aesthetic experience, the distinctions among genres lose their validity. As poetry, tragedy does not give us any delightful experience which is qualitatively different from that given by other genres. As poetry, tragedy delights us in the same way as any other literary genre, namely, by enabling us to feel the texture of emotional patterns and simultaneously understand their human significance. Therefore the question why tragedy delights is identical with why comedy delights or why poetry delights.

# *NOTES AND REFERENCES*

## CHAPTER III: THE MODE OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

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2. René Wellek, 'The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art', *Critiques and Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York, 1949), pp. 210-23.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
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6. *Abhinavabhāratī*, pp. 35-6.
7. Susanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art* (New York, 1957), p. 5.
8. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), p. 45. Also see, 'Art and Feeling' by Otto Baensch where he says: 'The work of art must be an object existing for itself, separated out from the rest of the world of objects. It must exclude all other objects. It must have a frame within which the separated feeling moves about as in a container. This is what has been called the self-sufficiency of the work of art, which was what inspired Schiller's speculations on freedom in pure appearance' (*Reflections on Art*, ed. Susanne K. Langer, p. 24).
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12. śabdārtha sahitau kāvyam—*Kāvyālaṁkara*, I, 16.
13. tasmād etayoḥ śabdārthayoḥ yathā svam yasyāṁ svasaṁpatsāmagrīsamudāyaḥ sahṛdaya hṛdayāhlāda-kārī parasparaspardhayā parisphurati, sā kācid eva vākya vinyāsa saṁpat sāhitya, vyapadesabhāg bhavati—Kuntaka, *Vakroktijīvitam*, quoted by V. Raghavan, *Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, p. 100.
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23. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
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27. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
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63. See S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (New York, 1953); F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy* (New York, 1962); P. K. Guha, *Tragic Relief* (London, 1932).
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66. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 289. Sāmājikānām hi harṣaikaphalaṁ nāṭyaṁ na Śokādiphalam.
67. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 291. svagatakrodhaśokādisaṅkaṭahṛdayagranthi-bhañjanāya gītādiprakriyā ca muninā viracitā.
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# CHAPTER IV

## *Transpersonalisation in Aesthetic Experience*

ANY NUMBER of instances can be cited from the history of criticism which indicate the whimsicality of literary taste. Each age in the history of a particular civilisation has its own cultural and spiritual needs. It evaluates its literary heritage to suit those specific needs. It elevates some writers and downgrades others. Eccentricitics of critical judgement are also not unknown. Even the greatest and most universal writers have been subjected to virulent attacks. The writings of Voltaire and Tolstoy on Shakespeare can be cited as instances. Men are of different natures, and the degree of the intensity of their response to poems will be conditioned by the emotional-intellectual complex resulting from their different hereditary and environmental influences. But the capacity of human mind to experience a wide variety of feelings really and imaginatively is infinite. A mature reader who has experienced or observed keenly real life situations of sufficient breadth can respond imaginatively to any human situation. Communication between the poet and the reader is possible and effective only when there is a common ground where they can meet. The substratum of social collective emotions provides them with such a common ground. Christopher Caudwell, C. G. Jung, and F. R. Leavis, though their respective philosophical positions are wide apart, agree on the social, collective, and impersonal nature of this common emotional ground. Caudwell considers that 'this world of art is the world of social emotion—of words and images which have gathered as a result of the life experiences of all, emotional associations

common to all.'[1] Jung believes that during artistic creation and appreciation we return 'to that level of experience at which it is man who lives, and not the individual, and at which the weal or woe of the single human being does not count but only human existence. This is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, but none the less profoundly moves us each and all.'[2] According to Leavis, 'tragedy [in our context what is true of tragedy is true of all poetry] establishes a kind of 'profound impersonality in which experience matters, not because it is mine—because it is to me it belongs or happens, or because it subserves or issues in purpose or will, but because it is what it is, the "mine" mattering only in so far as the individual sentience is the indispensable focus of experience.'[3]

There is a common misapprehension shared by many that romantic poetry is 'subjective' and introvert in the sense that the poet sings about his personal experience, and that classical poetry is 'objective' and extrovert in the sense that it is about everything except the poet's own experiences.[4] I am not for banishing the words 'romantic' and 'classical' from the vocabulary of criticism; but I believe that no useful purpose will be served by associating the 'subjective-obective' pair of contraries to those words. The fact is that all poetry, even the effusion of most intensely personal feelings, is objective: the poet has to objectify feelings in terms of images, characters, situations, etc. The personal experiences of the poet can be the subject-matter of the poet; but, unless he renders them concretely by creating images and characters—the 'objective correlatives' of the *vibhāvas*—they will remain just what they are. The poet objectifies experiences by transpersonalising them. The process of transpersonalisation[5] means the elevation of the consciousness of the poet and the reader from the plane of their private everyday practical world to the plane of collective human emotion where poetry is created and enjoyed. In India this process is called *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. In this chapter I intend to discuss the theory of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* and certain parallel theories in the west formulated around

the concepts like 'disinterested satisfaction,' 'detached contemplation', 'psychical distance' and 'impersonality'.

*Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*

The concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* evolved as a by-product of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's discussion of the differentia of the poetic use of language. Poetry and philosophical treatises are structures made of words; but the effects on the listeners are different. To account for the difference Bhaṭṭanāyaka attributed two additional special functions to the language of poetry.[6] *Abhidhā,* denotation, is the power which all words have in all contexts. But in poetic language *abhidhā* functions conjointly with the additional special functions which he calls *bhāvakatva* and *bhojakatva.* The power of *bhāvakatva* achieves the *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* of the *vibhāvas;* that is, it removes all personal relations and associations from the characters and their emotions and gives them a special ontological status (which we discussed in the last chapter). This power of *bhāvakatva* operates through the *guṇas* (the poetic excellences), figures of speech and other rhetorical devices, indirect evocative technique, etc.; when a play is staged, acting contributes to this power of *bhāvakatva.* It is the power of 'framing' or 'distancing' the poem or drama which lifts it above the plane of ordinary reality and persuades the reader to apprehend the characters and situations and images in the non-ordinary way. This is not different from the idea of Welleck and Warren when they say: 'Art imposes some kind of framework which takes the statement of the work out of the world of reality.'[7] The process of *bhoga* is the enjoyment of emotions which appear in transpersonalised mode.

Though Bhaṭṭanāyaka's special terminology was repudiated by later aestheticians, yet most of them, including Abhinavagupta, accepted, refined, and elaborated upon the concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa.* It became a pivotal doctrine in the theory of *rasa.* This concept embraces, just as *rasa,* all the three factors in aesthetics: the poet's creative experience, the poem, and the reader's response. The starting point of

the poet's creation may be a personal experience or a personal vision, or an experience which happened to other people. But the process of creation involves a snapping of the relation between his ego and the emotions. Once the interests of the ego are kept in the background and prevented from intruding in the process of artistic creation the emotions can be objectified in terms of the universally accessible patterns of images and symbols. Whatever may be the origin of the experience giving birth to a poem, once a poem is created in a finished form, it becomes transpersonal, it breaks its ties with the poet. It is potentially everybody's experience. In our response to the poem we are able to transcend our ego precisely because the poem exists as an entity independent of the egoistic interests of the poet or anybody else.

Indian aestheticians, generally, are of the opinion that poets should not handle contemporary themes. Because, it is very difficult for the poet to distance his theme from his immediate personal interests. The subject-matter of most of the ancient Indian works of literature is taken from the epics written in the remote past. The events and attitudes of a particular period take some time to settle down in a pattern to be placed in a meaningful perspective. The pattern which emerges out of the present cannot be adequately clear for a truthful portrayal. The ancients put it in their own way: contemporary subject-matter is not permissible because *karma,* actions, and their *phala,* results, cannot be shown in their causal chain.[8] We know that a writer violates the internal necessity of the sequence of events in a work of literature only at his peril. We are reminded of Coleridge's criterion of great poetry, namely, its objectivity:

> A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power.[9]

It must be made clear that the theory of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* does not necessarily compel the poet to abandon personal and contemporary subject-matters. It only insists on the necessity to detach his ego from the experience so that he can objectively embody it in the poem, or, in other words, make the poem 'inhere' it.

In what sense do we say that a character and his emotions in a poem are transpersonal? A person is said possess real individuality only when he is *vartamāna,* contemporaneous. Real individuality (*svalakṣaṇya*) is possessed only by those who are animated by *arthakriyā*, causal efficiency, the power to produce effects in our practical life.[10] A character has no such real individuality; it has a special *alaukika* status as a configuration of meanings. It does not raise the question of reality or unreality. It transcends the specifications of space and time. Commenting on the response evoked by Duṣyanta's description of the flight of the frightened antelope (*Śākuntalam,* I. ii) Abhinavagupta says that what appears there is fear uncircumscribed by time and space. This perception is different from the ordinary perceptions of fear ('I am afraid, he my enemy, my friend, anybody—is afraid') because the latter are affected by pain, pleasure, etc. Aesthetic experience consists of direct perception (*sākṣātkāra*), which requires that the mind must be concentrated (*ekāgra*) and free from all obstacles (*vighna*). The intrusion of egoistic interests and feelings is one of the obstacles. The emotion of fear mentioned above may be said to enter directly into our hearts to vibrate and dance before our eyes.[11] Thus the emotions embodied in poetry do not have spatial and temporal determinations; they are perceived not as part of the practical life of actual persons; they are perceived in the transpersonalised form.

In ordinary life we cannot react to the emotions of other men except and with reference to our personal interests. Such reactions are absent from aesthetic experience. It has been widely observed that a character like Hamlet is more 'real' to us than our most intimate friend. This apparent paradox is true because Hamlet as created by Shakespeare

is a complete being whose essential inner life is revealed to us concretely. We can have a full and round view of Hamlet because, in the perception of such a character, our view is not clouded by our egoistic interests. In all our dealings with the objects and people in the world the centre of our interest is our ego with its desires and aversions. This fact prevents us from completely understanding another person's inner life. The fragmentary nature of our knowledge about real persons is the result of our inability to transcend our ego in the transactions of everyday life. In aesthetic experience the centre shifts from the ego to the poetic focus and thus our response becomes transpersonal. Aesthetic experience is directly correlated neither with the past nor with the future.[12] A poem is not a leaf from the autobiography of the poet; it is an objectification of collectively sharable human experience. In this way, the doctrine of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* raises the entire aesthetic process from the creation of a poem to the reader's response to the transpersonal level.

The concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* does not imply that we de-individualise and departicularise the characters and their emotions. We do not apprehend the poetic emotions in the form of some vague, abstract, and generalised 'universal essences'. The idea that we apprehend Sītā not as a highly individualised woman but simply as the generic essence of being a wife is an absurd one.[13] *Rasa* is 'manifested' by poetic language. The Sanskrit word used is *abhivyakti;* the word itself implies the connotation of individual (*vyakti*). The perception of *rasa* is always an individualised perception. The confusion has resulted partly, from translating *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* as 'generalisation'. The antithetical concepts involved in the doctrine are not 'general' and 'particular', but 'personal' and 'transpersonal'. Without individualisation and concreteness an image or a character cannot have vividness and vitality, it cannot 'vibrate and dance before our eyes' and will leave no clear impression on the mind of the reader.[14]

*Kant: 'Disinterested Satisfaction'*

The removal of the aesthetic object from the practical causal chain of events of ordinary life was vaguely felt by St. Thomas Aquinas who said that beauty gave rise to an experience of 'reposeful contemplation'.[15] It was also noticed by the 18th century British aestheticians like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson from whom Kant derived so much of his system.[16] It was Kant, however, who gave it a firm philosophical foundation.

According to Kant, the beautiful is the object of disinterested satisfaction. He uses the phrase 'disinterested satisfaction' not because he was impervious to the moral implications of aesthetic experience, but because he wanted to demarcate the realm of taste from extra-aesthetic considerations. He abstracts aesthetic experience from individual eccentric sensuous preferences, utilitarian ends and egoistic prejudices and desires. 'Every interest vitiates the judgment of taste and robs of its impartiality.'[17] By 'interest' he means the pleasure in the 'existence' of the object. In aesthetic response we are concerned only with the 'representation' of the object. As long as our private interests agitate our mind there will be craving for possession which is inimical to the contemplative mood.

This recognition of the disinterestedness of aesthetic experience led Kant to formulate his doctrine of the 'subjective universality of taste'. Once the experience has been abstracted from all that is private and personal and declared disinterested it becomes a theoretical necessity to uphold its universal validity. Gilbert and Kuhn say: 'An object that pleases me impersonally, pleases me as a member of humanity and not as a unique individual.'[18] The English empircist-sensationist school tended to identify beauty with what is agreeable and pleasurable to the senses thereby reducing aesthetics to the study of mere eccentric preferences. Kant repudiated this notion arguing that, in that case taste cannot be a universal principle because 'pleasantness' is wholly a subjective feeling. Kant establish-

ed his doctrine of the universality of taste by postulating an aesthetic common sense in all men. The aesthetic state consists, in Kantian terminology, in a harmonious interplay of the faculties of imagination and understanding and as these two faculties are there in every human being (without which perception and knowledge are impossible) we have to suppose the possibility of a common ideal norm and thus taste can claim universal validity. Kant's own words are given below:

> Since the delight is not based on any inclination of the Subject (or on any other deliberate interest) but the Subject feels himself completely *free* in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be a party. Hence he must regard it as resting on what he may also presuppose in every other person; and therefore he must believe that he has reason for demanding a similar delight from every one.[19]

We know that in practice we do not always find such universal agreement in the judgment of specific works of art. But, as aesthetic experience is disinterested, and as the peculiar emotional eccentricities of the subject are irrelevant to the experience, we can, along with Kant, legitimately claim that beauty operates in the common ground between the individual and humanity and hence its universal appeal.

*Bullough: 'Psychical Distance'*

Edward Bullough felt that terms like 'detachment' and 'disinterestedness' are closed static concepts which do not take into account the plasticity and variability of aesthetic experience. He used the term 'psychical distance' to denote what we call the transpersonal state of consciousness. Psychical distance is a unique kind of mental process which is sustained in order to contemplate and relish the art object. Distance is produced in the first instance by putting the work of art 'out of gear with our practical actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends.'[20] This is the negative side. The positive

side is the elaboration of this experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of distance; it consists in looking at the art work 'objectively', 'by permitting only such reactions on our part as emphasize the "objective" features of the experience, and by interpreting even our "subjective" affections not as modes of our being but rather as characteristics of the phenomenon.'[21] We are reminded of Kant who observed that 'He [the connoisseur] judges not merely for himself but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things.'[22]

Bullough does not want to use the term 'impersonality' because, to him, it connotes coldness, absence of emotions and merely intellectual attention. Distance admits of degree and varies according to the nature of the object and according to the individual's capacity for maintaining a greater or lesser degree of it in the face of different objects and of different arts. If the artist crosses certain limits of propriety the spectator or reader cannot sustain proper distance. Bullough wants 'utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance'.[23] Extreme naturalism often threatens the maintenance of proper distance. Explicit references to sexual matters, organic affections, highly controversial and hotly debated public issues tend to provoke only amusement or hostility.[24] The Indian traditional theatre does not allow the representation of killing, kissing, embrace, etc., precisely for this reason.

*T. S. Eliot: 'Impersonality'*

T. S. Eliot is a prominent modern critic who has unreservedly subscribed to the doctrine of impersonality. It is evident that it is his classical predilections and traditionalist attitudes which led him to this doctrine. He mistrusted the romantic theory that poetry is an effusion of the eccentric poet's personal feelings. The essence of classicism is the acceptance of a body of ideas and a system of values which lie outside of one's individual self. It is true that the tradition which he chose, or, rather, he fashioned for himself is a reactionary scheme of values with religious and fascist

overtones. It is also true that he employed this tradition to stem the tide of intellectual and social progress. But his doctrine of impersonality reveals an aspect of the truth about the aesthetic process particularly when we discuss it in the light of the affinity which it bears to the concepts of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, 'distinterestedness' and 'universality'.

Eliot derived his ideas mostly from T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and Remy de Gourmont—all of whom insist on the impersonality of art. Eliot's frequent shifting of ground, his hesitancy and reservations, and the arguments which advance 'crabwise'[25] make it impossible to formulate his theory with a desirable degree of precision. Nevertheless there are certain statements in his writings which are sufficiently categorical for our purpose.

Eliot starts from the position that aesthetic experience is qualitatively different from ordinary experience. 'The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art.'[26] Some of his explicit statements on impersonality are given below:

> The end of enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the object as really is...[27]
>
> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.[28]
>
> The emotion of art is impersonal.[29]

In his influential essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' Eliot declares that the suffering man must be separated from the creating poet. It must be made clear that Eliot is not proposing some kind of 'ivory tower' aesthetics. He does not mean that the sufferings of the poet as a man are totally irrelevant to him as a poet; he only maintains that in the act of creation the personal sufferings undergo a transmutation. The separating and distancing of the hazy, incoherent, fleeting experiences from the poet's critical and creative intelligence is necessary to valuate them, to invest them with universal significance and to integrate them into

meaningful organic wholes. The poet has to 'fabricate something permanent and holy out of his personal animal feelings.'[30] He has also said: 'Shakespeare, too, was occupied with the struggle—which alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal...'[31]

Vincent Buckley, in his *Poetry and Morality* states, unjustifiably I think, that when Eliot talks of impersonality he means poetry to be 'a form through which we can escape the pressure, the actuality, of our emotions.'[32] Donald Davie approves of the criticism levelled against Eliot for advancing the proposition that the quality of a poem has nothing to do with the 'richness or poverty of the artists' emotional life and times when he is not composing.'[33] Eliot does not mean any such thing. Eliot's poet does have a personality and emotions to escape from. He only wants that the poet's particular experience must be united with a general truth.[34] This is not possible without abstracting the experience from the individual consciousness where it occurs and without discovering or inventing suitable correlatives which will make it at once impersonal. The fact is that when Eliot was talking about poetry being an escape from emotion and personality he only meant that the poet should subordinate the eccentricities of his personal ideas and emotions to the centrality of European literary and intellectual tradition. 'Escape' is, no doubt, an unhappy word; the poet does not escape into a vacuum or a cloud-cuckoo land; he enters the European mind and enriches it. 'To transcend' is perhaps a better expression. Eliot is clearer in the following passage: '[The greatest art] is impersonal in the sense that personal emotion, personal experience is extended and completed in something impersonal, not in the sense of something divorced from personal experience and passion.'[35]

Some other ideas of Eliot reinforce his doctrine of impersonality. For instance, his ideas of 'objective correlative' and dramatistic form of poetry would oblige the poet to render experiences dramatically by creating characters and

situations. His idea of the poet as a medium which amalgamates disparate experiences under the high pressure of creative intensity, though it contains echoes of Platonic inspirational theory of poetic creation, is a complementary doctrine which strengthens his theory of impersonality.

*I. A. Richards: 'Synaesthesis'*

As I pointed out in the last chapter, though I. A. Richards stresses the continuity of poetic experience with ordinary life experiences of the street or hillside, yet he cannot help making a differentiation between them. While our personal experiences rise and die within our own bosoms, poetic experience is communicable and sharable. 'It may be experienced by many minds only with slight variations.'[36] Once he adopts this position he is compelled to recognise the need to 'frame' the work of literature.

> When we experience it, or attempt to, we must preserve it from contamination, from the iruptions of personal peculiarities. We must keep the poem undisturbed by these or we fail to read it and have some other experience instead. For these reasons we establish a severance, we draw a boundary between the poem and what is not the poem in our experience.[37]

Richards's theory of synaesthesis involves inevitably the corollary of impersonality. The equilibrium and harmony established during poetic experience make us feel impersonal and detached because our 'interests are not canalized in any particular direction'.[38] The systematisation of impulses in poetic experience 'makes the emotion assume a more general character and we find that correspondingly our attitude has become impersonal.'[39] This attitude of detachment and impersonality, however, does not result in any passivity, indifference or spiritual indolence. The tremendous spiritual vitality felt by us in aesthetic experiences should disprove this notion. The process makes us more alive and deepens our awareness. The more the impulses, the greater is the involvement of entire essential being; the higher the organisation, the greater is the value of the

experience. In this sense, Richards states, 'to say that we are *impersonal* is merely a curious way of saying that our personality is more *completely* involved'.[40]

*Transpersonalisation Is Not Dehumanisation*

It is necessary to guard against the danger of making the concepts of detachment, distance, impersonality, etc., rigid and petrified, robbing art of all its human interest. Transpersonal response does not at all mean cold and unemotional response. Emotions are present in greater or lesser intensity in every genuine aesthetic response. Though the emotions are evoked in the framework of detachment they retain all their human qualities. Misunderstanding of the true import of these concepts and misreading of the actual nature of aesthetic experience have led some critics to question the human basis of art itself. The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset thinks that the predominantly aesthetic element in a work of art has nothing to do with human attitudes.[41] He condemns all music and literature produced in the nineteenth century for being profoundly and intensely interested in human realities. His theory of pure art, highly stylised art, where the human element will be 'so scanty that it will be hardly visible'[42] leads him to a perverse snob view that in future art will be 'for the artists and not for the masses of the people. It will be an art of caste and not democratic art.'[43] Andre Malraux says: 'Art must not, if it wants to come to life again, impose any cultural idea upon us, because everything humanistic must be excluded from the start.'[44] Such ideas are a symptom of the artists' alienation from society. Only those artists and theorists who do not receive the vitalising flow of inspiration from the social life as lived by men and women of flesh and blood are capable of negating the human content of art.

Stylisation and dehumanisation are not synonymous. Stylisation is not just the accentuation of the conventional and artificial non-realistic or non-representational aspects of art. The European ballet and the Indian Kathakali are highly stylised art-forms; but they are not, for that reason,

dehumanised. The fact is, that stylisation is not merely an element of art, but the very condition of art. All art is stylised. In art, as in life, tendencies can be carried to extreme limits; and when they cross the limits they become their opposites. The naturalist drama has reached a blind alley because it confused art with life and ignored the inevitable requirements of form. The advocates of dehumanisation fail to take into account the undeniable fact that the content of all art—that which is formed—is nothing but human experience in its infinite and inexhaustible variety of crude and subtle permutations and combinations of emotions. The theories of the 'dehumanists' and the naturalists ignore the dialectical interpenetration of form and content in art and hence their theories cross each other out.

*'Empathy' and Participation*

The concept of 'empathy' originated in Germany in the writings of Herder and Lotze. 'Empathy' is the English rendering of the German *einfuhlung* which means 'feeling into'. Though the empathy theory is not a comprehensive and self-complete explanation of aesthetic experience, yet it is partially correct in describing an aspect of our emotional response. The theory as formulated by Theodore Lipps and Vernon Lee tries to explain a peculiar fact in the process of perception. What happens when we see a mountain 'rising'? All the rising, past and future, personally experienced or observed or merely imagined are united together in our mind constituting a composite photograph whence all differences are eliminated and wherein all similarities are fused and intensified. This universally applicable general idea of rising gets transferred to the mountain together with the feelings involved in our present acts of raising or rising when looking at the mountain.[45]

We find that this kind of empathy, particularly in its physiological aspects, is involved in the perception of many acts. When we witness an acrobatic feat, even when somebody is lifting a heavy stone, we experience a tautening of our muscles and veins. By itself it cannot be the differentia

of aesthetic experience. The crux of the problem is the intriguing paradox that though a work of art is insentient, though it is we who feel the emotions, we conceive the insentient work as having the emotions. There is an objective focus for the experience to be centred on, but what is enjoyed by the reader is the interplay of his own emotions aroused in his heart. Abhinavagupta says: 'What is enjoyed is our own consciousness whose nature is unmixed delight.'[46] Wilhelm Worringer makes a parallel statement: 'We enjoy ourselves in the form of a work of art. Esthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment.'[47] 'Objectified self-enjoyment' cannot be self-indulgence in one's own personal emotions. Abhinavagupta uses the words *tanmayībhavana,* identification, *nimagnatā,* immersion, to point out the complete fusion between the object and subject in aesthetic experience. Theodore Lipps makes an entirely acceptable observation: 'Empathy is the fact that the antithesis between myself and the object disappears, or rather does not yet exist.'[48] Aesthetic experience is a total response. The Sanskrit word *carvaṇa,* 'chewing', used widely in aesthetic contexts, denotes that aesthetic experience is not passive receptivity, but active conscious participation in the experience realised in the work of art. *'Carvaṇa* is the very life of *rasa.'*[49] The peculiarity of aesthetic experience is that such an intensely active participation and such a total response are not possible without transcending our personality. Evidently, if we refuse to get out of the narrow cage of our ego we shall not able to get into the life of the poem. To the extent that the empathists do not recognise any detachment or impersonality their theory is different from the Indian doctrine of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa;* but the Indian doctrine would accommodate empathy within the general context of impersonality.

*Identification with the Hero*

In India the conception of fusion between the poem and the reader was sometimes narrowly interpreted to mean the reader's identification with the hero. Generally speaking,

the advocates of such an interpretation believe that in poetic or dramatic response the reader identifies himself with the protagonist and undergoes his emotional experiences. Abhinavagupta's teacher Bhaṭṭatauta says: 'The poet, the hero, and the reader—all have the same experience.'[50] Ramachandra Shukla has even asserted that when we cannot establish *tādātmya*, identification, with the *āśraya*, the hero, for instance in the case of an evil character, our experience is, of necessity, of a lower order.[51] Such an interpretation simplifies the meaning of *tanmayībhavana*, identification, and *nimagnatā*, immersion.

A wide variety of reactions are possible towards different characters in a poem or a novel. Thomas Munro gives a fair description of the variety of attitudes possible:

> In experiencing a story, one can identify with a certain character throughout, or with different characters successively. What one does in this respect depends in part on the artist's devices, and in part on one's own attitudes. A sophisticated, cynical reader is apt to tire quickly of feeling for the hero of an Alger story all the sympathy and hope the author intended. He may detach himself and read on (if at all) in a spirit of amusement or critical evaluation. Likewise the extent to which one can enjoy identifying with a cruel, stupid, vicious person, a tragic sufferer or hopeless failure, depends to a large extent on one's own personality, including its unconscious phases.[52]

Such a flexible attitude will enable us to be free from the misunderstanding created by writers like Bhaṭṭatauta and Ramachandra Shukla. I shall advance some reasons why a narrow interpretation of the concept of identification is not admissible.

(i) Whenever a Hamlet or a Macbeth expresses a sentiment symbolising certain recurring patterns of human experience which have universal significance, there is, no doubt, a momentary identification with him. Here, identification only means that we see the world, for the moment, with the thought-emotion complex of the character. But such identification cannot be sustained throughout the play because, if it happens we shall be able to respond fully to

the complexities of the situation, being limited by our desire to react only as the hero reacts. The organic unity of a literary work precludes such identification.

(ii) In poetic or dramatic experience we make implicit value judgments about the characters and incidents represented because without it corresponding attitudes will not be evoked in us. When we identify ourselves with the hero we can only see the action through his eyes whereas the poet wants us to see it through *his* (poet's) eyes. The hero, though very important, cannot be equated with the total aesthetic configuration. Proper value judgments are possible only when we are aware of all the aspects of a situation; the hero has access only to some of them. Criticising R. S. Crane and Elder Olson for their simplified view of the emotional reactions to poetry John Holloway says:

> There is no simple sense in which our desires are frustrated when Desdemona is killed or Oedipus found out, or satisfied when the traitor Macbeth is beheaded. We do not 'side with' Lear in that we 'wish good' to him in the shape of military victory or the rescue of Cordelia; so far as these things go, our sympathy for the characters somehow co-exists with a detachment in which we accept —no, more than that, we demand—whatever is brought by the 'fable' in its entirety. Our emotions of concern for the individual characters help to make possible other and more important emotions, those which come directly through comprehension and contemplation; as we grasp the total reality which is the tide of events carried through to its finality.[53]

(iii) I. A. Richards and other practitioners of New Criticism consider 'irony' to be a mark of good poetry. Irony, in their sense, is the result of the poet's awareness of the validity of experiences different from and even opposite to those directly rendered in the poem and of his attempt to include them in its structure. If we are one with the hero or the 'persona' we cannot see the ironical implications of the situation. Unless the reader keeps his distance from the different possibilities he cannot realise the implications of the complex experience embodied in the poem with adequate clarity.

(iv) Identification often leads to unjustifiable emotionalism in the spectator. This happens especially with adolescents and untrained immature readers who consider a poem or a novel an occasion to indulge in personal reveries which are irrelevant to the situations portrayed. The vice of sentimentality in literature is not only the result of a poor artistic mastery of the poet over his material but also the result of a wrong kind of loose emotionalist response on the part of the reader.

(v) Identification with a comic hero is not possible because the essence of his comicality is his abnormality or eccentricity. In what sense can we say that we identify ourselves with Ben Johnson's rogue-heroes? To insist that poetic experience is necessarily inferior when identification with the hero does not take place is to imply that a play like *Richard III* is inferior to any sentimental melodrama.

The conclusion is that though momentary identification takes place with the hero or some other characters, depending on the rhetorical devices employed by the poet and his intentions, we never lose the sense of detachment. Aristotle's 'pity' involves some distance from the hero. *Tanmayībhavana,* identification, takes place not between the reader and the hero but between the reader and the total poem. In other words, while reading poetry or drama we become one with the poet's attitudes and experience. We see not as the hero sees but as the poet sees. Thus identification with the characters is momentary and conditional whereas detachment from them is permanent and absolute.

Our concept of poetic expeerience as transpersonal embraces the doctrines of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, 'disinterested satisfaction', 'psychical distance' and 'impersonality'. It does not deny the concreteness and individuality of experience evoked by different poems. Neither does it deny that the individual sentient person is the centre of creation and response. Sometimes the idea of impersonal creation and experience is interpreted with heavy mystical overtones. As against any mystical and irrational interpretation which claims that the writer is in contact with the Impersonal Absolute at the

time of creation we have to insist that the writer only objectifies his experience in the forms of universally accessible images and symbols. The concept does not carry any sense of social irresponsibility.

Keats's concepts of 'negative capability' and poetic personality also imply the recognition of the necessity to distance the emotions and thus transpersonalise them in poetic creation and response. Keats talks of the necessity to negate one's own identity and lose one's self in something larger than one's self, i.e., reality with all its uncertainties and perplexities. 'A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity... Beneath (the daylight world) is the poet's real world, where his experiences of actual and factual living, freed from the control of time and place, combine and transform themselves into new kinships and patterns.'[55]

The concept of transpersonalisation reconciles the opposition between detachment and participation. In fact the detachment of our spiritual centre from the interests of the 'daylight world' is a condition for our participation in the life of the poem. Aesthetic experience is a universally repeatable process precisely because it is transpersonal. All human beings are endowed with the same *vāsana*, latent impressions, which are *anādi*, beginningless.[56] 'The *saṁsāra* is beginningless and every man, before being that which he actually is, has been all other beings as well.'[57] To put it in modern terminology, each individual, being a part of the human collective, has all its attributes, at least potentially. All feelings aroused in aesthetic experience have a centre in a living individual; but this fact alone does not make them personal because they are not based on private interests and desires. As Caudwell says: '...the "I" of poetry is the "I" common to all associated men's emotional words.'[58] Our concept of transpersonalisation does not totally ignore the personal spiritual centre; it only emphasises that during aesthetic experience this centre spreads towards and merges with the circle of the human collective. The personal centre is not annihilated but transformed.

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## CHAPTER IV : TRANSPERSONALISATION IN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

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misinterpreted certain aspects of the doctrine of *Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, he correctly pointed out the need to individualise images and characters. See his *Rasa-mīmāṁsā* (Banaras, 1950), p. 310. Cf. John Dewey: 'The aesthetic portrayal of grief manifests the grief of a particular individual in connection with a particular event. It is *that* state of sorrow which is depicted, not depression unattached' (*Art as Experience*, p. 91). Also Collingwood: 'To describe a thing is to call it a thing of such and such kind: to bring it under conception, to classify it. Expression, on the contrary individualizes. The anger which I feel here and now, with a certain person, for a cause, is no doubt an instance of anger, and in describing it as anger one is letting truth about it; but it is more than mere anger: it is a peculiar anger, not quite like any anger I shall ever feel again...fully expressing means expressing all its peculiarities' (*Principles of Art*, p. 112).

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CHAPTER V

# *The Union of Opposites in Aesthetic Experience*

THE GREATEST contribution of the Romantic school of criticism, with Coleridge as its most authoritative spokesman in English, was the idea that poetic imagination works by unifying the disparate and conflicting elements of our experience. Before Coleridge, the German Romantics like August Wilhelm Schlegel, Adam Muller and Karl Solger had theorised about the union of opposites in the aesthetic context. The name of Adam Müller needs particular mention because he was one of the earliest theorists who stated that all opposites were united in poetry. According to him the work of art is a contradictory identity; it is both soul and body, form and matter. The artist stands where freedom and necessity, idealism and realism, and art and nature unite.[1]

Many critics have tried to explode the myth of Coleridge as a fountainhead of original ideas by producing irrefutable evidence to prove his plagiarism and heavy borrowing from the German thinkers. We should be more concerned with understanding truth than with distributing prizes for originality. Coleridge himself considered truth as a 'divine ventriloquist': 'I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible.'[2] In fact the principle of the polarity and dialectical union of opposites goes back to Heraclitus. He early recognised that, "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony'.[3] The aesthetic application of this dialectical notion can be found, though in a rudimentary manner,

in Aristotle's concept of opposite emotions like pity and fear evoking catharsis. The theory of *rasa* also reconciles many opposites like 'universal—individual', 'detachment—participation', 'unity—variety' and 'excitement—serenity'. In this chapter I propose to bring out the importance of the concept of *śānta rasa* by discussing how it reconciles some pairs of opposites.

*Imagination as the Great Reconciler*

Coleridge believed that art was a reconciler of nature, the objective principle, and man, the subjective principle. These two antithetical principles are reconciled under his monistic principle which he calls the 'infinite I AM'. His distinction between the primary Imagination and the secondary Imagination is not one of kind but one of degree. Both are synthetic and creative. The primary Imagination imposes a pattern on the sense-data. It is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception.' The secondary Imagination self-consciously evolves a pattern out of the material shaped by the primary Imagination. He calls the second an echo of the first—which does injustice to the qualities which he ascribes to the secondary Imagination. The secondary Imagination struggles with all its vitality to unify, integrate and synthesise the discordant and disparate elements in our experience:

> This power [Imagination] reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.[4]

This doctrine has been taken over by I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot in their theories of poetry. Coleridge's concept of

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# *The Union of Opposites in Aesthetic Experience*

THE GREATEST contribution of the Romantic school of criticism, with Coleridge as its most authoritative spokesman in English, was the idea that poetic imagination works by unifying the disparate and conflicting elements of our experience. Before Coleridge, the German Romantics like August Wilhelm Schlegel, Adam Muller and Karl Solger had theorised about the union of opposites in the aesthetic context. The name of Adam Müller needs particular mention because he was one of the earliest theorists who stated that all opposites were united in poetry. According to him the work of art is a contradictory identity; it is both soul and body, form and matter. The artist stands where freedom and necessity, idealism and realism, and art and nature unite.[1]

Many critics have tried to explode the myth of Coleridge as a fountainhead of original ideas by producing irrefutable evidence to prove his plagiarism and heavy borrowing from the German thinkers. We should be more concerned with understanding truth than with distributing prizes for originality. Coleridge himself considered truth as a 'divine ventriloquist': 'I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible.'[2] In fact the principle of the polarity and dialectical union of opposites goes back to Heraclitus. He early recognised that, "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony'.[3] The aesthetic application of this dialectical notion can be found, though in a rudimentary manner,

in Aristotle's concept of opposite emotions like pity and fear evoking catharsis. The theory of *rasa* also reconciles many opposites like 'universal—individual', 'detachment—participation', 'unity—variety' and 'excitement—serenity'. In this chapter I propose to bring out the importance of the concept of *śānta rasa* by discussing how it reconciles some pairs of opposites.

*Imagination as the Great Reconciler*

Coleridge believed that art was a reconciler of nature, the objective principle, and man, the subjective principle. These two antithetical principles are reconciled under his monistic principle which he calls the 'infinite I AM'. His distinction between the primary Imagination and the secondary Imagination is not one of kind but one of degree. Both are synthetic and creative. The primary Imagination imposes a pattern on the sense-data. It is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception.' The secondary Imagination self-consciously evolves a pattern out of the material shaped by the primary Imagination. He calls the second an echo of the first—which does injustice to the qualities which he ascribes to the secondary Imagination. The secondary Imagination struggles with all its vitality to unify, integrate and synthesise the discordant and disparate elements in our experience:

> This power [Imagination] reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.[4]

This doctrine has been taken over by I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot in their theories of poetry. Coleridge's concept of

the Imagination as a synthesising agent and his consideration of a work of art as an organic unity are interrelated. Like most aesthetic terms Coleridge's doctrine is both descriptive and normative. It enables the critic not only to describe aesthetic experience but also to fix the relative worth of poems. The greatness of a poem is proportionate to the amount of heterogeneous material fused into an organic whole and the degree of unity which it has achieved. The New Critics, with I. A. Richards at their head, consider 'inclusive' poetry to be great because of its 'invulnerability to irony'. The 'inclusive' poems are those which contain within themselves the awareness of the possibilities of different and even opposed experiences and which can, therefore, without any damage, bear ironic contemplation.

> Irony in this sense consists in the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses; that is why poetry which is exposed to it is not of the highest order, and why irony itself is so constantly a characteristic of poetry which is.[5]

T. S. Eliot's definition of 'wit' resembles Richards's definition of 'irony'. He says: '[Wit] involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.'[6] Distinguishing between a poet's mind and an ordinary man's mind he says: 'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary.'[7] Now let us see how certain pairs of opposites are united in poetry.

### *The Universal and the Individual*

Opposites in reality presuppose the existence of each other. The complementary nature of opposites must never be lost sight of. The individual and the social collective are two such complementary opposites. The consciousness of an individual acquires its proper human form and shape in the course of its living in society. We are able to communicate our emotions to others because of the existence of a com-

mon emotional world. Emotions do not exist as independent concepts unrelated to real life situations. They are always attached to concrete objects and situations. Therefore when a poet wants to express emotions in poetry, he has inevitably to depict objects and situations. He may think that he expresses his inmost subjective experiences. But as soon as he embodies his experience in terms of images he makes the subjective experience objective, accessible to all and therefore universal. What makes poetry universal is the objectivity of the images it contains.

The images in poetry are concrete and specific. The particular experience of a poet embodied in a poem is unique; the specificity and concreteness of his images are the evidence of the uniqueness of his experience and the originality of his expression. But this uniqueness is not just oddity or eccentricity. The poet sings for all mankind. Mere eccentricity cannot be converted into communicable symbols. *Finnegan's Wake* is impressive; but it remains a literary curio. The 'I' in a lyric apparently stands for the poet or a persona created by the poet; but it really stands for the whole human society. When Shelley cries 'I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!' we do not pity him with a complacent air of superiority; we also cry along with him. The lyric is supposed to be the most 'subjective' form of poetry; but it does not prevent it from being universal. We can substitute 'we' for the 'I' of the lyric without damaging its meaning.

The interpenetration of the universal and the individual can be illustrated by considering literary characters as 'types'. Classicism and Romanticism should not be taken as mutually exclusive theories of art. They only emphasise different aspects of the aesthetic process. They are two extreme points between which poetic theory oscillates in different historical periods. If Classicism stresses the universal aspect of literary creations, Romanticism pays greatest attention to their specific and individual aspects. W. K. Wimsatt's paper 'The structure of the "Concrete Universal" in Literature'[8] contains a good discussion of the present problem. As he points out the extreme neo-classicists and

the extreme romanticists emphasised only one aspect and ignored the other. For instance, Doctor Johnson says:

> [Shakespeare's] characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions; they are genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.[9]

Bergson maintains the other extreme position:

> Hence it follows that art always aims at what is *individual*. What the artist fixes on his canvas is something he has seen at a certain spot, on a certain day, at a certain hour, with a colouring that will never be seen again. What the poet sings of is a certain mood which was his, and his alone, and which will never return.... Nothing could be more unique than the character of Hamlet. Though he may resemble other men in some respects, it is clearly not on that account that he interests us most.[10]

As Wimsatt points out in his paper, the extreme romantic position of particularity will lead to 'individuality', 'originality', the 'idiosyncratic and the unintelligible'; and the extreme neo-classical position will lead to 'platitude', the 'average human form', 'some kind of average'.[11]

The truth lies in the middle of these extreme positions. The extreme positions can be reconciled only by formulating a dialectical and flexible concept of the 'type' in literature. Aristotle did not fail to grapple with this problem. He used the word 'mimesis' to denote not the exact reproduction of individuals but the idealised representation of the universal potentialities and possibilities in human character. The photographic naturalistic reproduction of an individual with his idiosyncrasies exaggerated will not make a convincing character in literature. Poetry is not reverie. Poetry has form; reverie lacks it. Form is based upon con-

ventions and traditions which a society has inherited. A mood which a poet feels is specific and individual; but when he expresses that mood he will have to search for universally realisable qualities of the verbal medium. In his paper, 'Artistic Object and Enjoyment', Pravas Jivan Chaudhury says:

> The successful artist does not rest content with the specific images; quick and vivid in their presentational immediacy but seeks to discover some generic signs, meanings and values with which this experience may be shot through and by virtue of which it may be considered as a sharable and intelligible aesthetic experience.[12]

The secret of poetic creation consists in investing the individual bit of reality with universal significance. We are interested not only in observing how different a character is from us, but also in seeing how far he shares with us the common stuff of humanity.

Poetry achieves its effect by representing the typical elements of human life. By 'typical' we mean those elements which are permanent and universal. Neo-classicism vulgarised this idea by interpreting 'type' as mere average. But poetry does not work through statistical averages and abstract concepts. It works through concrete individual images. A character assumes shape when a number of such individual images are grasped in their dynamic interrelations. A character combines in him certain peculiarities and certain traits representative of humanity. The most satisfactory formulation of the type is presented by George Lukacs. According to Lukacs a type organically synthesizes the particular and the general in characters and in situations:

> What makes a type a type is not its average quality, nor its mere individual being, however profoundly conceived; what makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinates are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibilities latent in them, in extreme presentation of their extremes, rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs.[13]

Hamlet, Falstaff, and Don Quixote are immortal because 'the peaks and limits' of certain universal human qualities are presented in them in combination with highly individualised and concretised qualities. In conclusion we may say that poetry presents the concrete image of a person or situation at the point of intersection between individual idiosyncrasies and universal qualities.

*Poetry as Drama*

We can approach the problem of reconciliation of opposites from another angle. We can consider all poetry as drama and see how it maintains a tension between opposed forces.

In T. S. Eliot's essay, 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' we find the generalisation that, 'All poetry tends towards drama, and all drama towards poetry.'[14] Eliot substantiates his statement by pointing out that Shakespeare wrote his finest poetry in his most dramatic scenes:

> No one ever points to certain plays of Shakespeare as being the most poetic, and to *other* plays as being the most dramatic, and this not by a concurrence of two activities, but by the full expansion of one and the same activity.[15]

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren also say that all poetry involves dramatic organisation.[16] Kenneth Burke has developed a similar theory in his *A Grammar of Motives*.[17] The elevation of 'irony' from its status as a trope to that of a basic structural principle in poetry implies the recognition of the poetic process of subjecting the conflicting incongruities of experience to dramatic fusion.

In Indian poetics there is an eqigram of anonymous origin: *nāṭakāntaṁ kavitvam*. It literally means that the end of poetic power is drama. The usual interpretation of the epigram is that the full poetic powers of a writer are revealed in his drama, or that when a poet is at the zenith of his creative powers he writes drama. Joseph Mundassery, a distinguished Malayalam critic, has, legitimately I think, argued for the interpretation that the highest poetry is

dramatic in structure.[18] The fact that most of the Indian aesthetic doctrines formulated originally in the context of the drama were applied to poetry and other forms of non-dramatic literature shows that fundamentally poetry and drama do not differ. Abhinavagupta has said: 'Poetry is drama itself.'[19]

This is not to reduce all genres to the common literariness of all works. Distinctions between genres are inevitable and useful when we have to describe and evaluate particular poems, plays, and novels. Here I am interested only in pointing out that conflict, movement resulting from it, and its resolution are essential in all works of literature. The conflicts portrayed in the works evoke our emotions and expectations and lead us on to the final moment when the basic tension is resolved.

Drama, everywhere, is of later origin than the epic. The recitations of the ancedotes from the epics by the 'inspired' rhapsodes must have evolved into drama. In ancient India, stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were recited by professional story-tellers called *kathaks*. Their recitations were accompanied by music, dance, and gestures expressing the feelings of characters.[20] The great epics contained innumerable episodes with dramatic potentiality which were later exploited by the classical dramatists. According to Bharata the theme of the earliest drama was the war between the gods and the demons. Aristotle considered that the basic tension in tragedy was created by the pull of the opposite emotions—pity and terror. Hegel thought that the conflict in tragedy was between two equally strong and equally valid ethical claims.[21] In the end, the opposites are reconciled not in the sense that the hero dies, thus putting an end to the action, but in the sense that we are able to have a comprehensive view of the predicament while the hero had only a partial view. Reconciliation is not brought about by happy endings and moral philosophical preachings. It is born out of our awareness that behind the 'self-division' and 'self-waste of spirit' there is nobility and that the very existence of human spirit with its infinite

potentialities is nothing short of a miracle. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, the poet makes a 'perfect round of the broken arcs of the earth'.[23] The fragments of human experience embodied by the characters locked in mortal combat with other men and destiny are pieced together and a meaningful whole is constructed.

'Drama' is derived from the Greek word for 'action'. Tragedy and comedy imitate action. In non-dramatic poetry also what is imitated is action. Even the lyric, usually defined as a poem expressing a single mood, imitates action. 'Action' does not mean only the activities of characters. 'Action' includes attitudes and moods also, because the mood expressed in a lyric is either the starting point or a culmination of a series—however short—of feeling-situations. A poem is a work of art in the temporal mode and therefore it is obliged to show some kind of development within it. And all movement is dialectical, i.e., resulting from the pull of conflicting forces. Dylan Thomas says the following about his way of composing poems:

> ...a poem by myself needs a host of images. I make one image—though 'make' is not the word; I let, perhaps an image be 'made' emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess; let it breed another, let that image contradict the first; make of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all within my imposed formal limits conflict. Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction, and my dialectical method, as I understand it, is a constant building up and breaking down of the images that come out of the central seed, which itself is destructive and constructive at the same time... Out of the inevitable conflict of images—inevitable, because of the creative, recreative, destructive and contradictory nature of the motivating centre, the womb of war—I try to make that momentary peace which is a poem.[24]

The underlying emotional quality of a poem acquires meaning only in the context of a series of imagined situations. In all poems the poet or the implied speaker or the characters find themselves in certain situations. In life there

is no situation without its conflicting polarities. A poem builds up tension by an interplay of these polarities and releases the tension by uniting them in a broad and meaningful framework. A poem's ultimate attitude has to be realised dramatically; it is not enough for it to be stated. Thus a poem progresses through a series of contradictions and juxtapositions until the final complex attitude of the poem is realised. We are again reminded of the fusion between form and content. The content of a poem—which is life situations with conflicts inherent in them—builds up tension in our mind as the poem progresses. But the form of the poem, which has qualities like symmetry and balance, enables us to maintain equilibrium between the evoked emotional polarities.

*Equilibrium*

Ideas of 'repose', 'tranquillity', 'composure', 'serenity', etc., have often recurred in discussions on the nature of aesthetic experience. A recent addition to this particular group of words is I. A. Richards's 'synaesthesis'. Richards later abandoned the term, which he used in *The Foundations of Aesthetics;* but he did not give up the idea. He was profoundly influenced by the Chinese concepts of 'equilibrium' and 'harmony' and applied them in aesthetics. The structure of his psychological theory of value is built on the foundation of these concepts. 'If both Equilibrium and Harmony exist everything will occupy its proper place and all things will be nourished and flourish.'[25] In aesthetic experience, our impulses which are normally conflicting with one another are systematised and organised in a way which eliminates the possibility of any war between them and which establishes equilibrium and harmony among them. Richards uses the word 'impulse' in the most comprehensive way. In common usage the word only means the mental incitement to action. But to Richards it is nothing less than a unit of experience complete with stimulus and response. He has admitted a fundamental weakness of his theory. At the present stage in the development of psychology it

is not possible either to know which are the impulses involved in an aesthetic experience or to find out the precise nature of the organisation.

Many of the ideas of Richards have been repudiated by Eliseo Vivas and D. G. James.[26] But I find his theory of synaesthesis illumines an aspect of aesthetic experience. If poetry is a great reconciler of opposites, it follows that the opposite impulses evoked in our mind are also harmonised.

> The equilibrium of opposed impulses, which we suspect to be the ground-plan of the most valuable aesthetic responses, brings into play far more of our personality than is possible in experience of a more defined emotion. We cease to be orientated in one definite direction; more facets of the mind are exposed and, what is the same thing, more aspects of things are able to affect us.[27]

Richards does not fail to notice that the resulting sense of balance and repose is not a suspension of consciousness. There is no inactivity in the nervous system; there is, in fact, more than usual activity. As this increased activity coordinates the impulses such a balance 'refreshes and never exhausts.'[28]

Now let us see in what form the idea of serenity and composure was formulated by the Indian theorists. *Śānta* means tranquillity, quietude, serenity, composure, the 'peace that passeth understanding'. The concept is discussed here in its two aspects: (i) *śānta* as one of the many *rasas* and (ii) *śānta* as the basic mental state in which all *rasas* are realised and relished.

*Śānta as a Rasa*

The historical aspects of the question whether *śānta* can be admitted to the *rasa* canon are discussed by Dr. V. Raghavan with the thoroughness characteristic of him.[29] I shall offer only some brief remarks on the problem. The controversy is the consequence of the prevalence of divergent traditions about Bharata's opinion on the matter. It is evident from *Abhinavabhāratī* that there existed an 'ancient'

version of *Nāṭyaśastra* which included *śānta* in its list of *rasas*.[30] We cannot also rule out the possibility of the *śānta* passages in Bharata's manual being later interpolations. Dr. Raghavan's guess that the acceptance of this concept might have had something to do with the influence of Buddhism is, no doubt, a shrewd one. But though Abhinavagupta has mentioned the Buddha as the deity of *śānta rasa*, this fact need not entail such a conclusion in view of his interpretation of 'Buddha' as a *jñāni* whose actions are directed towards the welfare of others.[31]

Generally speaking, the dramaturgists argued for the exclusion of *śānta* while the poeticians advocated its inclusion. Some critics like Dhanañjaya and Dhanika put a narrow interpretation on the concept and assert that since *śānta* should imply cessation of all activities and conflicts and since such a state cannot be represented on the stage it cannot be considered to be a *rasa*. This hesitation has a parallel in Plato:

> Now this fretful temper gives scope for a great diversity of dramatic representation, whereas the calm and wise character in its unvarying constancy is not easy to represent, nor when represented in it readily understood especially by a promiscuous gathering in a theatre, since it is foreign to their own habit of mind.[32]

Accounting for the unpopularity of hagiography among the educated readers Aldous Huxley says that it is not surprising because the actions of the saints are 'as monotonously uniform as their thoughts', for in all circumstances they behave selflessly, patiently and with indefatigable charity'.[33] Drama requires conflict of human passions and it will be difficult for a dramatist to represent a protagonist who has attained inner poise by subduing and sublimating his passions. It is not without significance that no great play has been written in the west with Christ as the hero or in the east with the Buddha as the hero, though both of them are, theoretically, ideal protagonists for plays of *śānta rasa*.

Though there is an element of truth in the idea expressed above we are not justified in equating *śānta* with the

cessation of all conflicts and tensions. There is no work in world literature which can rival the *Mahābhārata* in the diversity of conflicts and tensions portrayed. The conflicts in the epic range from individual moral dilemmas to ruinous wars between clans. Despite this Ānandavardhana considered that the *rasa* of the poem is *śānta*. Evidently to him *śānta* was not the absence of conflicts but the reconciliation of conflicts.

*Śānta as the Mahārasa*

If *śānta* is one of the *rasas* how can it, at the same time, be the *mahārasa* or the basic *rasa*. Can we have it both ways? Can we eat the cake and have it? This seemingly legitimate objection ignores a fundamental aspect of Indian aesthetics. Aesthetic and critical terms operate on different levels and the meanings valid on one level should not be transferred to another level arbitrarily. When we consider *śānta* as one of the *rasas* we are in the field of descriptive criticism trying to describe and classify literary works according to the leading motives realised in them. But when we discuss *śānta* as the basic *rasa* we are in the realm of an aesthetic synthesis; we disregard the leading motives of individual poems and conceive of aesthetic experience as an achievement of an equilibrium of conflicting impulses. Therefore the statement that *śānta* is the basic *rasa* and one of the many *rasas* is a paradox; but it is not self-contradictory.

Commenting on the hesitation of some theorists to accept *śānta rasa*, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy says:

> In the first place there is really a disturbance, in the second there is the experience of a peace that cannot be described as an emotion in the sense that fear and love or hate are emotions. It is for this reason that Indian rhetoricians have always hesitated to reckon 'peace' (*śānti*) as a flavour (*rasa*) in one category with the other flavours.[34]

We find that the Central Tradition recognises the *rasa*. The concept of *śānta* as the *mahārasa*, as the basic mental state

in which all aesthetic experiences are realised and relished is a valuable contribution of Abhinavagupta to Indian aesthetics. *Śānta* is the basic nature of all the *rasas* and *bhāvas;* the latter are only changes or modifications brought about in the basic nature; all emotions in aesthetic experience emerge out of *śānta* and are in the end submerged in it.[35] All *rasas* are relished in the form of *śānta,*[36] i.e., in a state of perfect tranquillity born out of the withdrawal of our self from the practical interests of our senses. The term *saṁvidviśrānti* recurs often in the Indian discussions of aesthetic experience.[37] It means the repose of our consciousness. We are immersed in the aesthetic object to the exclusion of everything else. The emotions evoked do not struggle for an outlet in the form of some immediate action. They enact themselves on the stage of our consciousness. When desire is directed to things outside consciousness there is disturbance in the mind. Pain is only another name for the disturbance in consciousness caused by desires and frustrations.[38] Aesthetic experience is free from all such obstacles. In this sense *rasa* is one and indivisible; *śānta* is a state of consciousness devoid of all agitations and disturbances caused by egoistic desires; it is tranquillity itself; it delights in the play of emotions occasioned by the reading of a poem. But differentiation within *śānta* is possible by virtue of the different emotional colourations given by the nature of images and the leading motives of different poems.

It can be seen that the concept of *śānta* as uniting emotional tensions and formal equilibrium has close affinity with the aesthetic theories of Friedrich Nietzsche. He recognises that in beauty contrasts are overcome.[39] According to him in good tragedy the Apollonian and Dionysian elements merge to create a harmony. But he makes Apollo play a subordinate role. Apollo stands for the clear cool light of order and serenity. Dionysus symbolises emotional orgy and wild intoxication. The concept of *śānta* reconciles both these elements. In ordinary experience there is *either* emotional tension *or* passive relaxation. But in asthetic experience we have a fruitful union between tension and

tranquillity. Ernst Cassirer interprets 'catharsis' in a similar way:

> The soul experiences the emotions of pity and fear, but instead of being disturbed and disquieted by them it is brought to a state of rest and peace... The highest intensification of our emotional life is thought of as at the same time giving us a sense of repose.[40]

The content of poetry is Dionysian and its form Apollonian. Hamlet advises the players: 'for in the very torrent, tempest and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness' (*Hamlet*, III, ii). Our apprehension of the meanings of a poem leads to the evocation in our mind of various emotions including opposite ones like pity and fear. Our excitement when we read poetry is caused by this fact. The unity of a poem is constituted by a variety of elements brought together. This variety is guaranteed by the content of poetry, i.e., human experience full of conflicts. The true poet who is not merely 'possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it'[41] imposes a rigorous form on the intractable material. As the *vibhāvas,* the vehicles of mental states have a unique non-ordinary existence, the emotions evoked in us are transpersonal. The emotions 'play' their roles on the stage of our consciousness. They do not come and go haphazardly; their entries, movements and exits are rigorously controlled and disciplined by the formal qualities of the poem. In aesthetic experience, the evocation of emotions coexists with their tasting and with the evaluation of the presented situations. In short, the content of poetry which is the social experience of man with its infinite contradictions, evokes emotions; the poetic form controls, disciplines and 'tempers' the tempestuous emotions. As a poem is an organic synthesis of content and form, poetic experience is a synthesis of tension and tranquillity.

*Rhythm as an Instance of Unity of Opposites*

Rhythm, the unity of growth and decay, rise and fall, is inherent in the pattern of all organic existence. Even in

inorganic nature we find this phenomenon (seasons, waves). Poetic rhythm is conceived by some theorists as merely subjective. For instance, I. A. Richards says that rhythm is merely a mental activity through which we apprehend the sound and meaning in poetry.[42] According to him rhythm and metre exist not in the stimulation but in the response.[43] De Witt Parker also says that rhythm is primarily in the subjective activities of significant listening or uttering and from them it is transferred to the sounds in which they are embodied.[44] On the contrary, Monroe C. Beardsley considers metre and rhythm regional qualities of the poem.[45] This contradiction is part of the futile controversy over the subjectivity or objectivity of beauty. A satisfactory resolution should formulate a unity of the realised qualities of the sounds and meanings *and* the way in which the reader responds to these qualities. Rhythm operates at the point of intersection betweeen the object having certain objectivity analysable patterns of sounds and meanings *and* the subject able to consider them as a framework within which the controlled modulations of feelings are embodied.

In poetry rhythm has two functions: (i) it casts a hypnotic spell on the reader and puts him in a receptive mood; (ii) it provides him with a frame for the rise and fall of emotions. *Laya* (rhythm) enables the reader to achieve complete absorption (*tallīnatā*). In the following passage W. B. Yeats puts his finger on the most essential characteristic of rhythm, the unity of repetition and variation:

> The purpose of rhythm is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us within an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols.[46]

What casts the hypnotic spell over the reader is the principle of repetition. The very word 'verse' is derived from the Latin '*versus*' which means 'turning back'. It involves the repetition of certain sound patterns and units of ideas.

The Sanskrit word for metre, *vṛtta* also suggests *āvartana*, repetition. When certain sound patterns are listened to they leave a *saṁskāra* (trace) in our consciousness, just as any other event in perception, and there is a craving for the repetition of the pattern; when the pattern returns we have a sense of satisfaction. It does not mean that our mind takes pleasure in unvaried repetitions. There must be subtle differences, variations, surprises, disappointments and the return upon the original pattern. Kenneth Burke says:

> A rhythm is a promise which the poet makes to the reader —and in proportion as the reader comes to rely upon this promise, he falls into a state of general surrender which makes him more likely to accept without resistance the rest of the poet's material.[47]

This surrender to the hypnotic spell cast by rhythm shuts off extraneous interruptions and makes the reader keenly sensitive even to the faintest suggestions of the poet.

The variations within the rhythm contribute to the progression of action. Metre is conventionalised rhythm; but two poems written in the same metre may not have the same rhythm. Metre is governed by sound-pattern; rhythm is governed not only by sound-pattern but also by the intricate curves of the emotions and moods which vibrate in the uttered sounds. Rhythm organises the emotions of men and transports them to the state of elemental human existence in which they experience a sense of union with others. Primitive men discovered rhythm in the processes of collective labour.[48] The sense of union with others heightens our consciousness. Christopher Caudwell makes the penetrating observation that the rhythmic apprehension of the embodied social emotions makes the reader sink back into the 'dark vegetative life of the body'.[49] Participation in a programme of good poetry reading will show how rhythm unifies people 'physiologically and emotionally' and how the 'instinctive commonness' of men is realised. Caudwell's own words are given below:

> In emotional introversion [caused by rhythm] men return to the genotype, to the more or less common set of

> instincts in each man which is changed and adapted by outer reality in the course of living.[50]

When we discuss rhythm as a unity of opposites, the opposition involved should not be conceived as merely mechanical. The unity in rhythm is dynamic and dialectical, that is, the thesis itself contains the germ of antithesis. Susanne K. Langer considers waves to be perfectly symbolic of the rhythmic living form:

> Each new comber rolling in is shaped by the undertow flowing back, and in its turn actually hurries the recession of the previous wave by suction. There is no dividing line between the two events. Yet a breaking wave is as definite an event as one could wish to find—a true dynamic *Gestalt*.[51]

To summarise, poetic rhythm is a synthesis of opposites. Stressed and non-stressed syllables, long and short syllables, the rise and fall of emotions are manipulated in intricate patterns by the poet. The principle of repetition intensifies the emotional experience by returning to the same sound-pattern. The principle of variation controls the modulations of emotions and carries the action forward. Its greatest value rests on its ability to take us down to the elemental humanity in us and to help us achieve harmony within our self and with the human environment.

# *NOTES AND REFERENCES*

## CHAPTER V: THE UNION OF OPPOSITES IN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

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25. From the *Chung Yung*: 'The Doctrine of Equilibrium and Harmony'. Quoted by I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden, James Wood, *The Foundations of Aesthetics* (New York, 1925), p. 14.
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27. *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 251.
28. I. A. Richards and Others, *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, p. 76.
29. V. Raghavan, *The Number of Rasas* (Madras, 1940).
30. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 339. tasmadāsti śānto rasaḥ/ tathā ca cirantanapustakeṣu 'sthāyibhāvan rasatvamupaneṣyāmaḥ' ityanantaraṁ 'śānto nāma śamasthāyibhāvatamakaḥ' ityādi śāntalakṣaṇaṁ paṭhyate/
31. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 299. buddho jinaḥ paropakāraikaparaḥ prabuddho vā/
32. *The Republic of Plato*, tr. F. M. Cornford (Oxford, 1955), p. 329.
33. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London, 1958), p. 58.
34. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'Saṁvega', *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought* (London, 1946), p. 205.
35. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, VI, pp. 334-5.
bhāvā vikārā ratyādyāḥ śāntastu prakṛtirmataḥ/

vikāraḥ prakṛterjātaḥ punas tatraiva līyate//
svaṁ svaṁ nimittamāsādya śāntādbhāvaḥ pravartate/
punarnimittāpāye ca śānta evopalīyate//

36. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 339. tatra sarvarasānāṁ śānta-prāya evāsvādo/
37. It appears that Bhaṭṭanāyaka used the concept of *saṁvid viśrānti* for the first time. See *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 277.
38. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 282. aviśrāntirupataiva duḥkham/
39. 'The Will to Power.' Quoted from *A Modern Book of Aesthetics,* ed., M. Rader, p. 121.
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46. Quoted from *Poetic Process,* George Whalley, p. 204.
47. Kenneth Burke, *Counter Statement* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 140-41.
48. For the connection between rhythm and labour, see George Thomson, *Marxism and Poetry* (New Delhi, 1954), pp. 13-22.
49. Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality,* p. 245.
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CHAPTER VI

# The Obstacles to Aesthetic Experience

IT IS SAID that Moliére tried the worth of his plays on his cook. If the cook responded with interest, the success of the performance was assured. Every poet hopes that his poems will be read by a set of ideal readers who are competent enough to penetrate into the essential spirit of the poems and to realise fully the quality and intensity of the experience rendered in them. A published poem has its own life and destiny, and the poet has only as much control over it as an archer has over an arrow released from his bow. It may happen that the response is not proper, adequate, and satisfactory as it is governed by a number of factors. Just as there are constant factors in aesthetic experience there are also variable factors. The readers' social environment, the fund of real life experience, psychological temperament, degree of training, accidental influences, philosophical predilections, and emotional inhibitions are some of these variable factors. Aesthetic experience is transpersonal; but it occurs to a personal centre existing in a particular social cultural context and at a particular stage of the agent's life. In this chapter I propose to discuss how some of these variable factors may become obstacles in the realisation of a genuine aesthetic response.

## *The Concept of Sahṛdaya*

There are many to whom the magic casement of poetry remains closed. Even among those who enjoy poetry, owing to several factors, the degree of adequacy with which the experience rendered in the poem is realised varies consi-

derably. The *sahṛdaya* is the ideal reader. Literally, *sahṛdaya* means one whose sensibility is like that of the poet. He is *samānadharma,* of the nature of the poet himself. *Rasika* (one capable of relishing the *rasa* of poetry), and *sumanasaḥ* (one whose mind is clear and concentrated), are two words roughly interchangeable with *sahṛdaya.* The heart of the ideal reader is perfectly attuned to the poet's heart. Even the subtlest and minutest vibrations of the poet's heart embodied in the poem produce sympathetic resonance of the same volume, pitch, and tone in the ideal reader's heart. Only the *sahṛdayas* have the right of access to the spirit of poetry[1] because only they have the proper intellectual and emotional equipment and training. Bharata gives a formidable list of qualifications demanded of an ideal audience of drama.[2] The ideal spectators are men of good character; they are born in noble families; they are learned and desirous of fame and virtue. They are impartial, sufficiently mature, proficient in all the aspects of drama, attentive, honest and are conversant with various disciplines like grammar and prosody. They have a fine sense of the *bhāvas* and the *rasas.* They are experts in debate and can detect flaws and appreciate merits. They have perfect sympathy with the feelings depicted.[3] Bharata himself admits that all these qualities are not known to exist in the same spectator.[4] Real spectators and real readers possess a combination of these various qualities in different proportions.

The *sahṛdaya* has two basic qualifications:

(1) He is a keen observer of situations and feeling-patterns in life and has a sufficient fund of experiences without which he cannot make the necessary inferences from the behaviour of the characters. No one can extract from a poem all the meanings it contains unless he is a keen student of life. The autonomy of poetic experience does not imply that we have nothing to take with us when we go to appreciate a poem. The stuff of poetry being experiences of life, a person ignorant of the relative significance of ex-

periences and values of life cannot be a competent reader. If we go to the poem with an empty mind we shall gain very little. Experience can enrich a person's life and deepen his insight only if he is capable of making a significant whole of the heterogeneous elements. Aldous Huxley has tellingly put it:

> Now experience is not a matter of having actually swum the Hellespont, or danced with dervishes, or slept in a doss house. It is a matter of sensibility and intuition of seeing and hearing the significant things, of paying attention at the right moments, of understanding and coordinating. Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.[5]

There is significant difference between our response to Shakespeare in our boyhood and our adult response to him; this difference is the result of our gaining more life experiences and our stronger coordinating faculty which is a sign of maturity.

(2) The *sahṛdaya* has a mirror-like sensibility cleansed, refined and purified by his constant acquaintance with poetry.[6] The necessity to train our faculty for appreciation cannot be overstressed. Whenever we use our mental faculties for any purpose higher than that of mere animal existence we have to admit the necessity of training. Without this conscious training we are bound to miss much of what is there in a highly complex work of literature and substitute our own private notions and feelings irrelevantly and 'enjoy' the poem in a spurious manner. The response of a trained critical mind is superior to the 'spontaneous' facile experience of an untrained mind, because the former is fuller and more completely relevant than the latter. Unless we exercise rigorous discrimination in discovering the significance of experiential patterns and the textural qualities of a poem we shall be corrupted by the pressure of fashionable critical opinion.

In a fiercely competitive society opportunities to train such a poetic sensibility are certain to diminish. In such societies genuine cultural and spiritual values are some-

times suppressed, sometimes merely tolerated; they are never cultivated and promoted. There is always a lurking fear that a talent to create and appreciate genuine literature may cripple one's capacity to get on in this world where the number of automobiles and television sets is chief criterion to measure social success. The danger is great particularly in the developing nations where a lopsided emphasis on technological education will create a class of educated philistines to whom poetry and push pin will be of equal value. If poetry is appreciated by at least a minority in our country, it is only because the indomitable human spirit asserts itself despite the determined effort of the thoroughly illconceived educational system to smother and kill the spirit of poetry.

The *sahṛdaya* is not just a passive reader. The word *pratibhā* (intuitive talent) is used to denote both the creative imagination of the poet and the receptive poetic sensibility of the competent reader.[7] The *sahṛdaya* not only enjoys the poem but also discusses its merits and faults and formulates the basic principles of poetic creation and appreciation. He is a competent reader, critic and aesthetician all rolled into one. He can be called a 'complete reader' as F. R. Leavis uses the word.

*Diversity of Response*

Discussing the concept of transpersonalisation, I tried to demonstrate that the postulation of a common emotional world and detachment from private interests necessitates the recognition of uniformity of response. But along with uniformity we have to recognise diversity of response. There is no doubt that the spirit of the ancient Greek tragedies is capable of pervading our consciousness when we read them or see them staged; but whether the plays stir us as completely and as deeply as they did the Greek audience is at least an open question. Our experiences are at the same time similar to and different from those of the ancient Greeks. The experiences are similar because the artist worked with instincts and attitudes which are an

inseparable part of the common human emotional world and with values which are of significance for the entire mankind. At the same time the experiences are different because our social cultural environment, psychological traits and the kind of training our sensibility receives are different.

Though all men have at least potentially all the instincts, in some certain instincts will predominate and in others, certain other instincts will be prominent. Their likes, dislikes and perferences depend upon this fact. Young people tend to relish love poems; the learned take interest in intellectual topics, the seekers of wealth are particularly interested in stories about their kind and the contemplatives want to read poems dealing with *moksa,* liberation. Heroic persons take delight in the presentation of *vīra* (the heroic), *bībhatsa* (the disgusting) and *bhayānkara* (the terrible) *rasas.* Women, children and uncultured men take more interest in farce, costumes, etc.[8]

This does not mean that we are inevitably and irrevocably predetermined to like only certain poems and dislike others. We can widen the area of our appreciation by conscious training. Sometimes it so happens that a reader confines his attention to one particular poetic tradition and excludes other traditions with the result that he remains narrow and parochial in his appreciation. Many critics have justly warned against superficial catholicity of taste. The sensibility which is capable of going into the same degree of rapture over *Śākuntalam* and *Naiṣadha* or Dostoievsky and Agatha Christie betrays its lack of subtlety and discrimination. The responses of a persons with such a 'catholic' sensibility are bound to be shallow and spurious. But this cannot be an argument to justify narrowness and exclusiveness of taste. Once we sympathetically understand the literary conventions and cultural traditions within which different poems were written we can appreciate them, though with differing degrees of interest and participation. Recognition of the poetic virtues of Donne need not necessarily create a blind spot in us for Shelley. The type of narrowness decried here is often propagated by

some poet-critics who stress the importance of some poetic virtues which they try to embody in their work at the expense of other qualities which have equal or greater importance. The depth and intensity of a reader's response result partly from the complexity and breadth of his area of familiarity and appreciation.

*Obstacles to Poetic Response*

Anything which hampers the absolute contemplative concentration necessary to enter into the totality of the poem is extraneous to aesthetic response and therefore is *vighna* (obstacle). The following observations are based on a comparison between Abhinavagupta's formulations of *rasa-vighnas*[9] (obstacles to *rasa*) and the ideas of I. A. Richards on the problem set forth in his *Practical Criticism.*[10] Some obstacles flow from the poet's insufficient mastery over the theme and form of the poem and others from the reader's inability to respond to the poem with his total being. We are mainly concerned with the latter. First, I shall give a summary paraphrase of the obstacles as discussed by Abhinavagupta and I. A. Richards.

*Abhinavagupta on the Seven Obstacles*

(1) Improbability of events portrayed. Absence of adequate realisation of the subject-matter, images and characters. Poverty of *pratibhā,* intuitive talent, will prevent the reader from vividly recreating the content of the poem. Without such recreation, complete absorption in the poetic focus is impossible.

(2) Intrusion of spatial and temporal considerations. The absence of 'willing suspension' of spatial and temporal considerations will prevent the reader from transpersonalising his experience. He will apprehend the *bhavas* as related to himself or to others.

(3) Intrusion of personal feelings of pain and pleasure will damage the purity of aesthetic experience.

(4) Defective means of perception: inconsistent characterisation, obscure and unconnected imagery; the inability on the part of the reader to provide the necessary links.

(5) Obscurity: absence of clear aids to visualisation and other ways of immediate perception.

(6) Absence of a clear knowledge of the relative importance of the depicted elements.

(7) Doubts about the proper correlations among the *vibhāvas*, etc.

*Richards on the Difficulties of the Readers*

(1) Inability to make out the plain meanings of the poem including sense, feeling, tone and intention; (2) difficulty in sensuous apprehension; (3) weakness of visual imagination; (4) erratic and irrelevant associations from private life; (5) stock responses; (6) sentimentality; (7) inhibitions; (8) doctrinal adhesions of the reader; (9) implicit or explicit technical presuppositions; (10) general critical preconceptions and the illegitimate expectations bred by theoretical prejudices.

*Weakness of Pratibhā*

In all poetry sensuous imagery is a vital ingredient. The sensuous images function as vehicles of feeling. In some readers the capacity to reproduce imaginatively the patterns of visual and auditory images is weak. Sometimes they cannot capture the individual rhythm of a poem and consequently miss something of the intangible associations based on the rhythm. Dramatic representation on the stage removes this obstacle to some extent. Persons with powerful *pratibhā* (intuitive talent) can adequately realise all the *rasas* and *bhāvas* of a play even in reading. Acting, costumes, music, etc., make the realisation easy for those who do not have this capacity in sufficient measure.[11] On the other hand, it also may happen that to persons with powerful imagination the stage representation is less satisfactory than their reading. The world of the play, when read, seems to be boundless; the suggestions thrown out by the poet can be carried to their farthest limits. In a visual representation he may experience a constriction of imagination. This often happens in films. No film version

of a first rate novel or drama can be as rewarding as its reading. If unheard melodies are sweeter, unfilmed novels are better.

This weakness of imagination is aggravated by the absence of a sufficient fund of life experiences. We respond to a poem at a particular stage in the growth of our personality and the depth of our response is directly proportionate to the wealth of experience and observation which we bring to the appreciation. If the reader has been moving in a narrow grove his responses will lack vitality and variety. He develops only familiar easy stock-responses. He refuses to grow up because he has no experience of the exhilaration of confronting and assimilating challengingly disconcerting new attitudes. As Elizabeth Drew says, 'To the lazy mind the perfect soul-mate is Echo.'[12] He is convinced that a poet's function is only to confirm him in his facile intellectual and emotional habits. Such imaginative lethargy will have a most debilitating influence on the spirit. The only way to overcome this obstacle is by never losing close contact with reality and by constantly exercising and sharpening our powers of observation.

*Intrusion of Personal Feelings*

It often happens that the reader's attention wanders and instead of concentrating on the aesthetic construct he indulges in private reminiscences and reveries. His private memories affect the feeling-tone of the aesthetic experience. When irrelevant they are impurities which vitiate the genuineness of the experience. Abhinavagupta says:

> This obstacle consists in the appearance of other forms of consciousness, due variously to the fear of being abandoned by these sensations of pleasure etc., to concern for their preservation, to a desire to procure other similar sensations, to the desire to get rid of them, give them open expression, hide them, etc.[13]

Henri Delacroix puts it as follows:

> It is very true with many people, aesthetic contemplation deviates into contemplation of themselves. To tell

> their own stories, to evoke in a game of ghosts their own potentialities, to dream of themselves—these are all the pleasures of art for many people. The work from the artist some few of his themes and discover themselves in some one of his characters. The observer or reader takes himself for the hero... We know the adolescent's preference for love poems.[14]

A Hollywood photographer has said that Marylin Monroe's flesh was so photogenic that the camera lens almost 'touched' it. Some spectators might have felt that they touched her flesh—after all, their point of view is that of the camera lens. Such crude titillations caused by oversexed females do not fall within the province of aesthetic experience. The intrusion of personal feelings interfere with the free working of the poem. If the excitation is pleasurable the readers and spectators would want the experience to prolong; if it is painful—as it may happen when such persons read or witness a grim and harrowing tragedy—they would feel intense discomfort. Doctor Johnson could not endure the last scene of *King Lear*.

*Excess of Emotion*

Romanticism and its later decadent form called aestheticism invented a cult of emotion which considered that indulging and luxuriating in 'tender' and 'soft' emotions is a value in itself. Sometimes readers wallow in emotions evoked by poems which specialise in 'melting' them. They forget the fact that it is always the significance of the situation in which the emotion is 'placed' in a poem that is important and not the emotion in itself. Such an excessive and over-facile emotional response which is inappropriate to the objective situation in the poem is called sentimentality. Richards thinks that, 'A person may be said to be sentimental when his emotions are too easily stirred, too light on the trigger.'[15] Condemning such sentimental response Stephen C. Pepper says that this gushing forth of emotion is objectionable on two counts. Firstly, the emotion is often false to the work of art and in that sense a

false emotion. Secondly, a person who wanders with his emotions away from the work of art is not realising fully the event there presented. Pepper adds: 'A man who habitually flies off into emotional ecstasy in the presence of a work of art is likely to lack depth of appreciation, even if the emotion is relevant.'[16] Every genuine aesthetic response is a total response; our entire being is awakened to new spiritual possibilities. Sentimental responses reduce the complexities of the poetic situations to the familiar crude stereotyped formulae. Repeated indulgence in such experiences will have disastrous effect on the readers: their sensibility is stunted; they gradually lose whatever capacity they have of comprehending the complexities of real and imagined situations. Their ability to discriminate between experiences and evaluate them is impaired beyond repair. Just as tears blur our physical vision sentimentality obscures our mental insight.

*Emotional Frigidity*

Another obstacle to a full and genuine aesthetic experience is emotional frigidity which can be called the obverse of sentimental gush. Richards finds a 'widespread general inhibition of all the simpler expansive developments of emotion' among the educated population of England.[17] The failure to evoke appropriate emotions may arise from the association of certain specific emotions with feelings of guilt or shame. It may also arise from the entirely mistaken notion that spiritual strength precludes any emotional response. It is an evidence of virtual denial of the vital springs of life. A cold intellectual response to poetry is a partial response. The Indians of the Classical Age were remarkably free from puritanical emotional inhibitions. The literature of the period shows that they did not let any of their emotional needs starve. The four *puruṣārthas* (the ends of human life) and the four *āśramas* (stages) were devised to satisfy all the legitimate human urges. Owing to a wrong one-sided emphasis on the emotion-negating aspects of certain Indian systems and to the influences of certain

Victorian values which are not yet freed from puritanical prudery, the English-educated Indian intellectual suffers from emotional inhibitions and the resulting moral hypocrisy. His heart slowly dries up and poetry fails to move him. Suppression of emotion is not the same thing as its control and refinement. In life as in poetry there is need to strike a balance between excessive over-facile emotional reactions which blur our insight and cold intellectualism which devitalises our experiences by turning our heart into a wasteland.

*Belief and Poetic Response*

The current discussion in the west of the place of belief in poetic response, among other things, indicates the breaking down of systems of values. When a basic system of doctrines and values is widely believed in by the entire community such a problem does not assume serious importance. There were periods in the development of human civilisation, when the cultivated sections of the people possessed a common cultural and intellectual heritage. The Athens of Pericles, the England of Elizabeth I and the India of Chandragupta II may be cited as examples. Not that there were no stresses or tensions in those periods. But these stresses and tensions had a common tradition within whose framework they could contribute to the cultural fermentation of the period. Sometimes writers tried to invest their subject-matter with new meanings and values which made their readers uncomfortable (as did Euripides in Greece). Such tensions reach great heights during periods of social revolution. In our own times when the moribund and emergent forces are locked in a gigantic world-wide conflict it is natural that the established systems of beliefs and values should explode. It is not only that specific beliefs and values are challenged; the very bases of belief and values are questioned. Each group of interests seeks to salvage its cherished illusions and beliefs from the universal wreckage. The acrimonious debate between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis over the 'Two Cultures' is one

of the many amusing spectacles which confirm the schizophrenia of the western man.

In this century, the culmination of the process of the alienation of man which began with the maturing of the crisis of the capitalist society has made the writer an 'outsider'. The absence of an integrated approach to social reality disintegrates the self. Many writers find themselves outside the main current of mass movements which decide the destinies of peoples all over the world. No wonder that their gods fail. An acute sense of loneliness and isolation haunts them. The modern poet, in Stephen Spender's words, 'is in a cage with bars that are mirrors reflecting only himself, and there is no possibility of entering through the imaginations into the factual realities outside.'[18] At present, when class divisions have assumed universal and explosive proportions, the shattering of the common basis of belief is only inevitable.

Both Eliot and Richards have tried to solve the problem of the place of belief in poetic response, each in his own way. It is difficult to know Eliot's exact position because he frequently shifts his ground and even makes contradictory statements. In his essay on Dante he makes a couple of distinctions. He wants us to separate what Dante believed as a poet from what he believed as a man.[19] He makes another distinction between philosophical *belief* and poetic assent; in this, his position somewhat coincides with that of Richards who makes a distinction between intellectual beliefs and emotional beliefs.[20] In his essay on Goethe he refers to the *Bhagavad Gīta* and says that when he reads that poem he puts himself in the position of a believer.[21] I do not think it proper to consider the *Gīta* as a poem. It is merely a piece of dialogue which is a part of a vast epic; the ideas therein cannot be discussed torn from its context in the *Mahābhārata*. Unless we can show that the meanings and values expressed in the *Gīta* are realised more or less fully in the total poem we should imagine that it is not an organic part of the epic from the structural point of view. For a student of the poetry

of *Mahābhārata,* the ideas of the *Gīta* have only as much value as Tolstoy's ideas on historical processes have for a student of *War and Peace.*

Eliot says that when we read Dante we suspend both belief and disbelief.[22] But he also says that when a reader is in agreement with the philosophy of the poet he enjoys his poetry more.[23] He is unable to enjoy Shelley for the alleged childishness of the latter's beliefs.[24] In his essay on Goethe he makes another distinction between the poet's philosophy and his wisdom.[25] We are supposed to be able to accept the poet's wisdom even if we do not accept his philosophy. But Eliot does not clarify the exact nature of the relation between philosophical beliefs and wisdom. In his Dante essay he says that we are not called upon to believe what Dante believed 'for your belief will not give you a groat's worth more of understanding and appreciation.'[26] But in his note to the same essay we find: 'So I can only conclude that I cannot, in practice, wholly separate my poetic appreciation from my personal beliefs.'[27]

Thus we find that Eliot's ideas on the subject are confusing and contradictory. Let us see whether Richards's solution is acceptable. Richards cuts the Gordian knot by declaring that poetry is 'pseudo-statement'. He introduces in criticism logical positivist notions about the nature of language used in various disciplines and the verifiability of statements made in them. According to him pseudo-statements are not verifiable as propositions in scientific discourse. He has a pragmatic criterion of poetic truth: 'A pseudo-statement is "true" if it suits and serves some attitude or links together attitudes which on other grounds are desirable.'[28] 'Language has two uses: referential and emotive. Poetry is the supreme form of emotive language.'[29] 'The emotions and attitudes resulting from a statement used emotively need not be directed towards anything to which the statement refers.'[30] Richards has put such a heavy stake on this distinction that he makes the claim: 'No revolution in human affairs would be greater than that which a widespread observance of this distinction would bring about.'[31]

Corresponding to this distinction in language he makes a distinction between scientific beliefs and emotive beliefs:

> Scientific belief we may perhaps define as readiness to act as though the reference symbolised by the proposition which is believed were true.[32]
>
> [Emotive] beliefs are entertained only in the special circumstances of the poetic experience. They are held as conditions for further effects, our attitudes and emotional responses, and not as we hold beliefs in laws of nature, which we expect to find verified on all occasions.[33]

These clearly formulated positions militate against Richards's own refusal to distinguish between aesthetic experience and ordinary experience. By the time he came to write *Practical Criticism* he considerably modified his views. Instead of 'scientific and emotive beliefs' he employs the terms 'intellectual and emotional beliefs'.[34] Criterion of truth is relevant to scientific belief, but only internal logical consistency is required in intellectual belief. The major concession comes when he says: 'Most beliefs, of course, that have any strength or persistence are mixtures of intellectual and emotional belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well.'[35]

We find that Richards's distinctions are invalidated both by his general theory of poetic response and by his admission that important beliefs are both intellectual and emotional. Psychologists are rapidly giving up the distinctions between the intellectual and emotional compartments of human mind.

In the classical, period, when the Indians believed in something, they believed in it, that was all; they never stopped to bother whether they intellectually believed in it or emotionally. The various aestheticians and critics were influenced by different philosophical systems in the general outlook; sometimes their considerations of aesthetic topics bear imprint of these systems. But the problem of belief, in the form in which it is posed by Eliot and Richards, did not present itself to them. Among the obstacles discussed by Abhinavagupta we have *saṁbhāvanāviraha*, improbability resulting from the weakness of imagination. This is not the

improbability of response to poems containing unacceptable doctrinal beliefs. It deals with the absence of the internal consistency which links the images and actions rendered in the poem. The writer may depict extraordinary feats but only as achieved by extraordinary persons. This is not different from Aristotle's position that poets should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. As the feudal base of Indian society had maintained the stability of its structure for a long time, people in general did not feel any self-division of their mental being. However, it may be necessary to point out that the Indian aestheticians linked *aucitya* (decorum or propriety) with *rasa*. The eighth canto of Kalidasa's *Kumārsaṁbhava* has been criticised by some writers. The canto contains elaborate descriptions of the love-play of Śiva and Pārvati. The objection against the canto is that those who consider Śiva and Pārvati to be the father and mother of the universe cannot be expected to relish it. But even here the argument springs not from any rigid doctrinal positions but from a consideration of the principle of *aucitya* (propriety) in poetry.

To insist that beliefs have nothing to do with poetic appreciation will be as wrong as to insist that poetic appreciation is impossible unless the reader agrees with every belief contained in the poem. Though T. S. Eliot and Erich Heller criticise each other's ideas on the subject they agree at least on one point, i.e., perverse and puerile beliefs and good poetry are antagonistic.[36] Eliot says:

> When the doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate. When it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may, for a reader of well-developed mind, set up an almost complete check.[37]

Erich Heller also says:

> There are ideas and beliefs so prosaic, outlandish, or perverse in their innermost structure that no great or good

> poetry can come from them: for instance, Hitler's racialism. It is this *negative* consideration that to me finally proves the intimate *positive* relation between belief, thought and poetry. If there were no relation, there would be no reason either why the most perverse or idiotic beliefs should not be convertible into *great* poetry. They are not.[38]

It is extremely difficult to analyse what we mean when we say that we believe in something. All beliefs can be expressed in the form of intellectual propositions; but our convictions and emotional attachment will have different degrees of mildness or intensity. We have a wide range from mild expectation to dead certainty. 'I believe the train leaves at 7.30', 'I believe that God exists', 'I believe that she loves me', 'I believe that life does not exist after death', 'I believe that it is glorious to die for one's country', etc., are statements uttered with different degrees of emotional intensity. In real life men and women are capable of entertaining contradictory beliefs. There are superstitious atheists and scientific theists. We have scores of religious and political sects with fanatical adherence to their doctrines. In spite of this we find that great writers are universally appreciated. How does it happen?

Poetry may contain propositions which warrant our assent or dissent, but poetry is not made of propositions. The New Critics are justified in their condemnation of the 'heresy of paraphrase' because propositions cannot be abstracted from poems which are patterns of 'resolved stresses' or 'dramas'. To appreciate Dante's *Inferno* we have to understand the Catholic eschatology, but we do not have to believe that we would be inmates of Hell after death. Poetry is the dramatic rendering of experience in terms of images and action. The beliefs expressed in poetry must be viewed as part of the character and action. The view consistently advocated in this book is that the reader's egoistic practical interests are kept in abeyance at the time of poetic experience. The corollary must be that the beliefs related to our personal interests are suspended during the experience of poetry.

What happens when we read the long Christmas sermon of Beckett in *Murder in the Cathedral?* A Hindu or a Moslem is not converted to Beckett's beliefs though the oration is powerful and persuasive. But he will be attentive because the passion with which the sermon is delivered deepens the tragic heroism of Beckett's martyrdom. The theology underlying the sermon is unacceptable to the Hindu; but, since it is used to reinforce to the moral and emotional significance of the dramatic context, he will not find it an obstacle in his response to the play.

But we cannot effect a total severance between poetry and belief. Erich Heller pointed out the incompatibility of fascism and good poetry. If a writer begins with the assumption that wanton cruelty to children is a laudable ideal, the basic humanity in us will revolt against his creation. Beliefs undergo a mutation when they enter poetry: they drop their status as propositions and assume the status of values. Beliefs outside poetry are sectarian propositions; in the poetry they are fused with value-situations. Most beliefs say directly or indirectly something about the human predicament. Literature is indifferent to those beliefs which have nothing to do with the value-situations in life. A poet need not be interested in the Second Law of Thermodynamics; but if he is indifferent to evil and its consequences he cannot create great poetry. Every belief implies, in practice, certain attitudes to certain specific situations in life. Beliefs may be private and sectarian; values are human and universal. It is the area where beliefs have a bearing upon value-situations in human life which is explored and illumined by the writer. In poetry beliefs become inextricably fused with the total meaning. As I tried to show earlier, during aesthetic experience we transcend the narrow cage of our egoistic interests and merge with the collective humanity. Only the value side of beliefs is relevant in our response to poetry. This value side is neither only intellectual nor only emotional. It is both, and appeals to the undivided humanity in the reader.

# *NOTES AND REFERENCES*

## CHAPTER VI: THE OBSTACLES TO AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

1. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 279. adhikarī ca atra vimalapratibhānśālihṛdayaḥ/
2. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, eds. Batuknath Sharma and Baldeva Upadhyaya (Banaras, 1929), Ch. XXVII, vs. 50-62, pp. 311-13.
3. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXVII, 55.
   yas tuṣtou tuṣtimāyāti śoke śokamupaiti ca/
   dainye dīnatvam abhyeti sa nāṭye prekṣakaḥ smṛtaḥ//
4. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXVII, 56.
   na ca ete guṇāḥ sarva ekasmin prekṣake smṛtāḥ/
   tasmād bahutvāt jñānānām alpatvādayuṣas tathā/
5. Aldous Huxley, *Texts and Pretexts* (London, 1949), p. 5.
6. *Dhvanyāloka Locana*, pp. 38-9. Also see *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 37, where the author defines drama as a form of *anuvyavasāya*. Visveswar's emendations are reasonable. See Hindi *Abhinavabhāratī*, ed. Visveswar (Delhi, 1960), pp. 135-6.
   The sahrdaya's qualifications are as follows:
   laukikapratyakṣānumānādijanitā-saṁskāra sahāye,
   sahṛdaya saṁskāra sacive, hṛdaye saṁvada tanmayī-
   bhavansahakārini/
   Gnoli quotes a passage from Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* (III, 200), where the author conceives the sahṛdaya's heart as vibrating when he enjoys beauty:
   tathā hi madhure gīte sparśe vā candanādike/
   mādhyasthyavigame yāsau hṛdaya spandamānātā//
   ānandaśaktiḥ śaivokta yataḥ sahṛdayo janaḥ/
   'When the ears are filled with the sound of sweet song or the nostrils with the scent of sandal-wood, etc., the

state of indifference disappears and the heart is invaded by a state of vibration. Such a state is precisely the so-called power of beatitude, thanks to which man is "gifted with heart" '. (R. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p. 65).

7. Rājaśekhara, in his *Kāvyamīmaṁsā* divided the concept of *pratibhā* into two: *kārayitri pratibhā*, creative imagination, and *bhāvayatri pratibhā*, aesthetic sensibility, of the reader. As Kuppuswami Sastri has demonstrated the Indian thinkers achieved a synthesis between creation and criticism, between the poet and the *sahṛdaya*. See Kuppuswami Sastri, *Highways and Byways of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit* (Madras, 1945), pp. 13-14. Cf. Melvin Rader: 'The artist himself is a beholder and judge, and the fineness of his art depends largely upon the quality of his appreciation and judgment. The work of art, on the other hand, comes alive only in imagination, and hence the public must share something of the creative capacity of the artist. There is no absolute distinction between creation and contemplation, between artist and beholder' ('Introduction', *A Modern Book of Esthetics*, p. xxxi).
8. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXVII, 59-61.
9. *Abhinavabhāratī*, pp. 280-81.
10. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (London, 1954), pp. 12-18.
11. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 291.
12. Elizabeth Drew, *Discovering Poetry* (New York, 1933), p. 60.
13. *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 280.
svaikagatānām ca sukhaduḥkhasamvidām āsvāde yathāsaṁbhavaṁ tadapagamabhīrutayā vā tatparirakṣā-vyagratayā vā tatsadṛsarjijīṣayā vā tatpracikhyāpayiṣayā vā tadgopanecchayā vā prakārantareṇa vā saṁvedanāntarasamudgama eva paramo vighnaḥ/
14. Henri Delacroix, 'Varieties of Aesthetic Experience', *The Problems of Aesthetics*, eds. Eliseo Vivas and Murry Krieger (New York, 1953), p. 282.
15. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 257.
16. Stephen C. Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality* (New York, 1937), quoted from *The Problems of Aesthetics*, eds.

Eliseo Vivas and Murry Krieger, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

17. I. A. Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
18. Stephen Spender, *The Making of a Poem* (London, 1955), p. 26.
19. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 258.
20. I. A. Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 274.
21. T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 224-5.
22. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 258.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
24. T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1959), p. 96.
25. T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 224.
26. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 258.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
28. I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry*, Selections published in *A. Modern Book of Esthetics*, ed. Melvin Rader, p. 276.
29. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 273.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
34. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 275.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
36. Erich Heller has criticised Eliot's views in his *The Disinherited Mind* (London, 1961), pp. 130-9. Eliot replied to the criticism in his lecture, 'Goethe as the Sage'. See *On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 222-6.
37. T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, p. 96.
38. Erich Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

CHAPTER VII

# *The Value of Aesthetic Experience*

Most of theories which we discussed in the preceding chapters insist on the autonomy of aesthetic experience. But autonomy, in aesthetics as in politics, does not mean sovereignty. The fact that aesthetic experience has a special mode of existence does not imply that it exists in a vacuum or that it is totally unrelated to life's manifold activities. If our real life experiences enrich our aesthetic experiences we cannot possibly deny that aesthetic experience illumines real life experiences. Unless it satisfies very important basic urges in man, aesthetic activity would not have persisted in the course of the evolution of human culture. In this chapter we propose to discuss some theories which try to throw light on the function and value of literature in human life.

Works of art serve many purposes. The writing of a play or a novel may enable the writer to get rid of accumulated neurotic tension. A Picasso may decorate the wall. And music may help the listener while away the time. We shall confine ourselves to the question of the moral value of aesthetic experience. Morality is concerned with the growth of integrated human beings and the promotion of harmony and equilibrium in the individual and in human society. It should not be confused with narrow and dogmatic codes of conduct and behaviour. Has art helped mankind achieve the goals of integration, harmony and equilibrium individually and collectively? Great poets have served mankind with great poetry for about three thousand years. It has certainly altered our sensibility. Our feeling-complexes

have been influenced and changed. It has changed the ways in which we see ourselves and others. Above all it has made us intensely self-conscious. But a sceptic can legitimately express the doubt whether it has made man more moral. He may point his finger at the practitioners of scientific cruelties perpetrated on thousands of innocents in the Nazi concentration camps. Hitler had not proscribed Goethe and Shakespeare. The Nazi practice was not an isolated episode. It is only that the barbarity amidst civilisation assumed its most concentrated expression in Hitler's Germany. Today we find man trembling on the brink of catastrophe, of total annihilation of humanity. Great nations with great poetic and cultural traditions behave with such meanness and ferocity as will put the primitive barbarians to shame. If this is the evidence of poetry's moral impact upon the human collective, can we claim that poetry makes the individual more moral? The sceptic will again answer in the negative. The galaxy of great writers includes some incarnations of moral monstrosity. Poetry does not even improve the temperament, let alone character. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry in the University of London Housman said:

> The classics cannot be said to have succeeded altogether in transforming and beautifying Milton's inner nature. They did not sweeten his naturally disagreeable temper; they did not enable him to conduct controversy with urbanity or even with decency.[1]

If this can be said about a poet who tried to justify God's ways to man what are we to think of the influence of poetry on the lesser beings?

There is a wide range of attitudes concerning the relation between poetry and morality. For the sake of clarity and convenience I intend to consider the extremists belonging to both the sides, i.e., the crude moralists like Plato and Tolstoy and the crude aesthetes like Wilde and Gautier. The Indian attitude to the question did not crystallise in the writings of any particular writer though, here also, we

have the cruder and the subtler views. In the end we shall attempt an integration, with Shelley's ideas on the moral nature of poetic imagination as the starting point.

*A Brief Digression on Value*

The essential questions which the value-theorists consider can be reduced to the two fundamental problems: (i) whether we can and should have a general theory of value, (ii) whether value is subjective or objective. A general theory of value is a comprehensive theory applicable to all human activities. It gives a norm to evaluate all human experiences. We cannot compare objects and experiences and establish a hierarchy among them without such a general theory. On the contrary, there are thinkers who try to compartmentalise values and postulate absolute categories like Truth, Beauty and Goodness. We have to avoid the errors of having a general theory which invites a mechanical application ignoring the serious differences in elements of different experiences and a compartmentalised theory which does not interrelate the values keeping them in isolated hermetic vacuums.

There is no unanimity on the question whether values are subjective or objective. Evidently, a value is not objective in the sense in which we speak of the objectivity of the primary qualities of objects which exist independently of human mind. But neither is it subjective in the sense of a dream or an illusion being subjective. We cannot imagine a value which does not involve the satisfaction of some human interests. There is no goodness apart from good actions; and there is no beauty apart from beautiful objects. All values are qualities of subject-object relations. All conscious human experience involves an active reconstruction of the presented data and the evolving of a pattern out of them. The human mind and the environment with which it interreacts are part of the same reality existing in time and space. When we consider the human mind and the object as an indivisible combination in a total historical spatio-temporal situation we realise the groundlessness of

the subjective-objective controversy. The only sense in which we are concerned with the objectivity of a value, of beauty for instance, is its existence outside the individual experient. The subjectivistic alternative would deny all standards and norms and would assert that each person's standards are valid only for him. This will result in complete anarchy in social life and extreme impressionism in criticism. A value which is valid only for an individual will be merely a whimsical preference.

The sanction of value is not the dictates of the individual's 'taste' or 'conscience' but the evolutionary requirements of the human race. But though it exists outside the individual, we cannot conceive of a value which exists outside human society. All values are social values. They are generated by human society in the course of its evolution and organisation. In Caudwell's words beauty plays 'a dual role as object to the individual and subject to the environment.'[2] The values are thus Janus-faced: one face turned towards the experiencing subject and the other towards the experienced object. Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt use the term 'inter-subjective' to refer to the status of values.[3]

## *The Crude Moralists*

### PLATO

Plato's approach to art and poetry was governed by his desire to promote perfect citizens in his utopian republic. His objections to poetry are partly ontological and partly moral. We are concerned only with his moral objections. Before we consider the theoretical source of Plato's objections we should remind ourselves of two things: (i) To Plato beauty is not a value which exists independently of goodness. Goodness and beauty can be conceived in terms of each other. (ii) Plato does not condemn all poetry. He makes a distinction between genuine art and pseudo art. Genuine art imitates universals while pseudo art imitates particulars.

Plato adjudged the value of any human activity in the degree to which it contributed to the material and moral welfare of the citizens. Being a philosopher who valued reason most, he considered that the emotional part was the lower part in man and that poetry, by appealing to this baser part only succeeds in making man more emotional and, therefore, necessarily, less rational:

> So we shall be justified in not admitting him into a well ordered commonwealth, because he stimulates and strengthens an element which threatens to undermine the reason. As a country may be given over into the power of its worst citizens while the better sort are ruined, so we shall say, the dramatic poet sets up a vicious form of government in the individual soul: he gratifies that senseless part which cannot distinguish great and small, but regards the same things as now one, now the other; and he is an image-maker whose images are phantoms far removed from reality.[4]

It is clear that Plato fails to see the mutual connection between reason and emotion. In an integrated human being reason and emotion do not function independently, they reinforce each other. Emotions should not be expelled from the system or suppressed; they should be controlled and organised. Plato's stricture on poetry is the inevitable corollary of his basic assumption that poetry 'arouses' and 'feeds and waters the passions' in the reader. Such an assumption entails the grading of poems on the basis of the moral nature of their subject-matter. We find that Plato, in fact, does so.

Plato condemns all those poems which describe gods and goddesses in compromising situations. Gods should not be shown as quarrelling, and wallowing in sensuality. The defence that such poems have allegorical meaning is not acceptable to him. A young person, who ought to mature into a healthy citizen, cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal. Plato does not make clear whether such poems can be circulated among adults; after all, poetry is written for adults. From all evidence it appears that he would have prevented the circulation of poetry among grown up men and women because there are, in every

society, countless persons who refuse to mature into ideal citizens. Generally speaking, statesmen of all colours and shades whole-heartedly support Plato.

Plato has nothing against hymns to the gods or poems praising virtuous heroes. He evaluates poems not on the basis of their total human significance but merely on the basis of the supposed moral or immoral nature of their subject-matter. If a poem portrays evil, the readers will be tempted to experiment with evil. A poem about a murderer is bad; one about a saint is good. We know that the subject-matter is only the raw-material of the poem. There is no one-to-one relation between the subject-matter of a poem and its moral value. Plato's error results from his consideration of poetry as something which excites personal passions of the reader.

## TOLSTOY

It is surprising to see that several centuries after Plato, the Platonic fallacy about the nature of art and aesthetic experience finds powerful expression in Tolstoy's ideas on art. Tolstoy's religious conversion in the later middle period of his life made him repudiate his great achievement in the field of literature. With the extremely violent fanaticism common among the newly converted, he tried to propagate a dogma disregarding empirical data which are important for any attempt to systematise knowledge. His essay *What is Art?* which he considered to be the best arranged and best thought-out of all his ideological works, suffers from serious shortcomings.

In Russian the word for beauty *krasota* means only that which pleases the sight. Tolstoy says that to speak of 'an ugly deed' or 'beautiful music' is to speak bad Russian.[5] It got imprinted in his mind that beauty is merely formal and external and that this formal beauty can be separated from the content which must be religious. He could not but associate this formal beauty with the effete and degenerate aesthetes who led a luxurious and parasitic life. Considerations remote from the central problems of aesthetics in-

fluenced his thinking. Describing a rehearsal of an opera he fumes over the spiritually stunted life of the men and women engaged in its production.[6] He accuses the Russian government and aristocracy of subsidising such useless and harmful art by collecting money 'from the people, some of whom have to sell their only cow to pay the tax, and who never get those aesthetic pleasures which art gives.'[7] Evidently, such accusations are justified as indictments of social systems based on the heartless exploitation of the working masses; but they in no way prove that the aesthetic experience evoked by class art is immoral. Tens of thousands of slaves sweated and died in the course of the construction of the Taj Mahal. One can very well argue that Shah Jahan could as well have buried his spouse in a six foot tomb. But to go further and say that such considerations reduce the beauty of the monument is to confuse issues and values.

Many thinkers have separated beauty and goodness; but Tolstoy put goodness vehemently in opposition to beauty. The puritan in him was mortally afraid of beauty and despised it:

> ...beauty is nothing but what pleases us. The notion of beauty not only does not coincide with goodness, but is rather contrary to it; for the good most often coincides with victory over the passions while beauty is at the root of our passions... The more utterly we surrender ourselves to beauty the farther we depart from goodness.[8]

Here we find Tolstoy repeating the error of Plato who felt that poetic experience consisted merely in the arousal of personal passions. And, just as Plato was led to condemn those works which aroused 'base' feelings and to praise those which evoked 'noble' ones, Tolstoy approves of only those works of art which infect the readers with the religious feeling. Tolstoy was right in condemning the bourgeois decadent art of his time which appealed to the sensuality of the vulgarised leisured classes. But his own conception of morality was very crude and narrow. Here is his definition of art:

> To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and having evoked it in oneself then by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling—this is the activity of art.[9]

In other words, art is the communication or transmission of the writer's recollected feelings. With such a simple definition Tolstoy proceeds to evaluate works of art on the basis of the morality or immorality of the feelings communicated. His standard is simple: if the feelings are religious the work is moral; if they are not religious the work is immoral. Religious art is universal in the sense of being comprehensible to all (unlike the coterie art of the decadents), because every man's relation to God, which is the basis of all religions, is the same. Good art, religious art, unites all men; bad art divides them. The ideal reader, according to Tolstoy, is the ordinary peasant of unperverted taste. Tolstoy's exclusiveness of taste and his theory led him to a blind alley. He passionately repudiated the almost entire artistic heritage of mankind.[10] He pitilessly condemned all his writings except a couple of moralistic fables. This itself is the best criticism of Tolstoy's aesthetics. Obviously, an aesthetic theory which cannot accommodate Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Beethoven and Tolstoy himself is merely an intellectual curiosity.

*The Amoralists*

The amoralist view, the view that art has nothing to do with morality, crystallised in the utterances of the aesthetes of the late nineteenth century. The aesthetes considered beauty to be a terminal value. To them beauty was a religion and a way of life. Many of them explored the depths of vice and perversion and developed the cult of sensation for the sake of sensation. Oscar Wilde put art in opposition to life because he thought that the aim of art was emotion for the sake of emotion and the aim of life was emotion for the sake of action.[11] As C. E. M. Joad puts it, the chief tenet of these decadent writers is that 'experience is to be valuable or is at least to be valued for its own sake, irres-

pective of the quality or kind of the experience.'[12] Most of the aesthetes belonged to the middle classes who could not find their place in the rapidly developing industrial societies. Analysing the social background of the aesthetic movement Plekhanov said: 'The belief in art for art's sake arises when artists and people keenly interested in art are hopelessly out of harmony with their social environment.'[13] This disharmony resulted in the segregation between the artists and the society. The artists lived in the cloud-cuckoo-land of Bohemia as they had no 'niche in society—because no class existed which felt any need for their productions or identified itself with their interests.'[14] Their dandyism, long hair, unconventional behaviour, pallid complexion and cadaverous appearance—in fact all the characteristics which make them the ancestors of the present-day Beatniks—were part of their irresponsible defiant attitude to society from which they were estranged.

James Whistler and Theophile Gautier represent the quintessence of aestheticism. In his 'Ten O'Clock' lecture Whistler asserted:

> [Art] is a goddess of dainty thought—reticent of habit, abjuring all obtrusiveness, purposing in no way to better others. She is, withal, selfishly occupied with her own perfection only—having no desire to teach—seeking and finding the beautiful in all conditions and in all times.[15]

It is believed that Theophile Gautier, the author of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, coined the phrase 'art for art's sake' in 1847.[16] He went to the extent of declaring: 'I would very gladly renounce my rights as a Frenchman and citizen for the sake of seeing a genuine Raphael or a beautiful woman in the nude.'[17] Lovers of art and custodians of morality may sometimes come into conflict in the pursuit of their interests; but the choice never presents itself in as crude a manner as Gautier has put it. To what an irresponsible extreme ideas about the supposed antagonism between art and morality can push a writer is seen from the following statement of Oscar Wilde. In the Preface to his *The Picture*

of delight. Poetry dissolves the conflicts between ends and means. Abhinavagupta says: The *priti* (delight) and the *vyutpatti* (instruction) are not different from each other; they are two aspects of the same thing.[25] Wellek and Warren also arrive at the same conclusion: 'When a work of literature functions successfully, the two "notes" of pleasure and utility should not merely coexist but coalesce.'[26]

### *Imagination as the Moral Agent*

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* is more an inspired rhapsody than a reasoned thesis. But it contains some suggestive ideas regarding the moral value of poetry. In the beginning of the essay he uses the word 'poet' in a broad sense which includes philosophers and statesmen.[27] Poetry is 'the expression of the imagination'.[28] Imagination is that faculty in man which seeks to come into contact with the ideal world of harmony and order. Later, however, Shelley restricts the meaning of poetry to 'those arrangements of language, especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man.'[29] The passage where he makes extravagant and grandiose claims for poetry is well known: he makes poets the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'.[30] But this claim militates against the notion expressed in another place that 'a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds.'[31] Perhaps this notion was born out of moods of depression and out of realisation that his generation was indifferent and even hostile to this brand new sweet messenger from the golden realm of Ideas.

We find certain echoes of Philip Sidney in Shelley—echoes which run counter to the main contention of his essay. Sidney had argued that poetry was morally valuable because it imitated ideal characters—paragons of virtue—who could be considered by readers to be models of conduct and character. Shelley also argues in a similar vein: Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human characters; when we read about Achilles, Hector, Ulysses and

others we admire them and aspire to become good and heroic like them.[32] This is a very crude view of the moral influence of poetry. Shelley himself in other places has repudiated such a conception. In the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* he declares: 'Didactic poetry is my abhorrence.' In his *Defence* he has said that Milton's God has no superiority of moral virtue over Satan, and that this neglect of a crude and direct moral purpose is a decisive proof of Milton's genius.[33]

Shelley's most suggestive observation is that the imagination itself is an instrument of moral good. Poetry performs its moral function not by describing virtuous characters whose conduct is to be imitated by readers but by nourishing and strengthening the imaginative faculty in every man:

> The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action or person, not our own. A man to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.[34]

I find this an adequate explanation of the moral effect of poetry. Abhinavagupta's statement that poetry strengthens and expands our *pratibhā*, imagination, reinforces Shelley's view. No moral life is possible without an insight into the complexities of concrete human situations. The individual yearns to enrich his self by assimilating the meaningful experiences of others. Spiritual enlightenment is dependent on our capacity to embrace the varied experiences of huma-

nity. By recreating another's experience in our self and by thus strengthening our imagination poetry provides us with an insight into the complexities of our moral existence.

### *Poetry and Moral Action*

Does poetry influence human action? It seems that a simple answer does not exist. Some critics believe that poetry does have a beneficial influence on human action. Yvor Winters thinks that poetry strengthens the intelligence and the moral temper and that 'these effects should naturally be carried over into action, if, through constant discipline, they are made permanent acquisitions'.[35] Elder Olson also believes that poetry exercises a compelling influence upon human action.[36] The historical and the contemporary evidence makes me diffident to assert any such thing categorically. Many poets and artists have earned notoriety by violating not merely conventional moral codes but fundamental humanity. One can always say in their defence that those who are intensely absorbed in their unique vision cannot be expected to remember their moral obligations to their brethren. If the creators of poetry do not turn into models of moral perfection we cannot expect the readers to translate the moral gain in their sensibility into actions. If this were possible the world would have become a paradise by now.

Man does not live by poems alone. His instinctual drives, socio-political doctrines, consideration of his interests and innumerable other factors of environment affect the course of his action in a specific situation. We do not devalue poetry by assigning to it a modest role in human affairs. We may say that poetry does have a beneficial impact on human personality in the sense that it tends to make him moral in his actions. But whether this tendency will be realised in actual practice will depend on many complex factors. C. E. M. Joad says: 'The values "incline" us to pursue them; but the inclination is never a compulsion; we are inclined, not necessitated.'[37] When a man is born he has no personality; he has only some unrealised potentialities. Poetry will help

him realise some of his potentialities and will give a sense of direction to his sensibility. But there is no positive guarantee that this will make the reader of poetry a superior moral being in all his actions.

If poetry does not necessarily influence human action for the better in what way can it be said to be moral? Morality is the attempt of man to organise his impulses and interests in such a way that efficient evolution of society and the self-fulfilment of the individual take place. The necessity of morality results from the fact that both within the individual and in the community there are conflicting interests. When the individual is unable to harmonise his interests he will develop all kinds of neurotic complexes. His personality will be warped and his faculties will be stunted. When a society is not able to impose harmony within itself perpetual discord and anarchy will result which in their turn will aggravate the individual's troubles. It should be realised, however, that permanent equilibrium within the individual and in society cannot be achieved. The individual and the society will frequently confront new situations which demand appropriate readjustment. The strength of our moral sensibility will be challenged and tested by these situations. It is here we find the highest value of art which makes our moral fibre tough and enduring. It makes the readers aware of their responsibility in shaping the moral consciousness of their age. In these days of decadence, when many writers are repudiating the need to address the society, when they are withdrawing into their narrow cloisters, Collingwood's words are worth repeating several times: '[The artist] undertakes his artistic labour not as a personal effort on his own private behalf, but as a public labour on behalf of the community to which he belongs.'[38] Collingwood wants the poet to play a prophet's role, not in the sense that he should foretell the events to come but in the sense that he should tell 'his audience, at risk of their displeasure, the secrets of their own hearts. He should speak out, make a clean breast.'[39] He also thinks: 'Art is the community's medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of

consciousness.'[40] A poet formulates the interplay of human emotions and attitudes for us in concrete, objective, and universal terms. By 'speaking out' he exposes the 'corruption of consciousness' and warns us against the danger of further corruption.

Each society has evolved its system of moral values. But the sanction of all these different systems is the same: the universal necessity to realise the basic *dharma* of man, to actualise fully the material and spiritual potentialities of man. Individuals are not born with this moral sense; it is not an instinct. It is inculcated into him by the social environment. The moral sense which we acquire in the process of our growing up has a definite role in our poetic experience. In any poem of some length the poet has to portray men faced with significant moral dilemmas. Conflicts in tragedy are invariably conflicts born out of the character's violation of moral codes. Knowledge and sympathetic understanding of this code are necessary to undergo poetic experience. For instance, a person who believes that murdering in cold blood an innocent and venerable old man who has come to enjoy your hospitality can be good fun, cannot respond to the poignancy of the tragic situation in *Macbeth*. If poetic response demands the involvement of our moral sensibility, it reinforces our sensibility in turn. It is not argued here that a poet merely confirms us in our already established moral convictions or that he only illustrates some moral platitudes. A great poetic genius may, through his poetry, evolve a new way to evaluate feelings and actions. Morality is not the conventional code of conduct and behaviour. It is not a rigid system of puritanical taboos and unpleasant duties. Poetry is indifferent to this realm monopolised by penal code framers and Sunday school preachers. What poetry achieves is the deepening of our awareness of the complexities of human predicament and the heightening of our vitality. The heightening of vitality comes from two sources. The response to good poetry demands great concentration: our intellectual and emotional faculties are strained to the utmost and are harmonised. This enhances

the keenness of our sensibility and enables us to see and feel more clearly and deeply. Further, the heightened vitality is the result of our fusion, during poetic experience with a powerful sensibility which has imposed order on the intractable and chaotic human experience. The unique delight which we feel in our response to poetry is a sign and end of this heightening of our vitality.

# NOTES AND REFERENCES

## CHAPTER VII: THE VALUE OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

1. Quoted by H. W. Garrod, *Scholarship: Its Meaning and Value* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 51.
2. Christopher Caudwell, *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* (London, 1957), p. 736.
3. Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (London, 1957), p. 736.
4. *The Republic of Plato,* tr. F. M. Cornford (Oxford, 1955), p. 329.
5. Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art? and Essays on Art,* tr. Aylmer Maude (Oxford, 1935), p. 87.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 74: 'And these people, often very kind and clever and capable of all sorts of useful labour, grow savage over this specialised and stupefying occupations, and become one-sided and self-complacent specialists, dull to all the serious phenomena of life and skilful only at rapidly twisting their legs, their tongues or their figures.'
7. Tolstoy, *op. cit.* p. 81.
8. Aylmer Maude says that this passage is taken from an earlier version of Chapter VII of the essay *What is Art?* See p. 141.
9. Tolstoy, *op. cit.* p. 123.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
11. Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', *Intentions* (London, 1913), p. 169.
12. C. E. M. Joad, *Decadence* (London, 1948), p. 64.
13. G. Plekhanov, *Unaddressed Letters, Art and Social Life* (Moscow, 1957), p. 163.
14. William Gaunt, *Aesthetic Adventure* (London, 1957), p. 13.

15. James Whistler, 'Ten O' Clock Lecture', *The Religion of Beauty,* ed. Richard Aldington (London, 1950), p. 217.
16. William Gaunt, *Aesthetic Adventure,* p. 19. Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., however, trace the origin of the phrase to the Kantian doctrine of 'purposiveness without purpose'. According to them Benjamin Constant used the phrase 'art for art's sake' for the first time in 1804. See *Literary Criticism: A Short History,* p. 477.
17. Quoted by G. Plekhanov, *op. cit.* p. 157.
18. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray, De Profundis* (New York, 1954), pp. vii and viii.
19. *Nāṭyaśāstra,* I, 108, p. 38. kvacid dharmaḥ kvacitkrīdā/ kvacidarthaḥ kvacicchamaḥ/
20. *Abhinavabhāratī,* p. 282.
21. *Ibid.,* p. 640.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 4.
23. *Ibid.,* p. 10. Idamasmākaṁ guḍapraccannakaṭukauṣadha-kalpaṁ cittavikṣepamātraphalamiti yanna jñāyate/
24. *Dhvanyāloka Locana,* p. 190. vyutpādanaṁ ca śāsanapratipādānābhyām śastretihāsākṛtābhyām vilakṣaṇam/ yathā rāmastathāhamityupamānātiriktām rasāsvādopāya svapratibhāvijṛmbhārūpam vyutpattimante karotīti kamupālabhāmahe/
25. *Ibid.,* p. 336. na caite prītivyutpatti bhinnarūpe eva, dvayor apy ekaviṣayatvāt/
26. *Theory of Literature* (London, 1954), p. 21.
27. P. B. Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', *English Literary Criticism,* ed. C. E. Vaughan (London, n.d.), p. 164.
28. *Ibid.,* p. 161.
29. *Ibid.,* p. 165.
30. *Ibid.,* p. 199.
31. *Ibid.,* p. 169.
32. *Ibid.,* p. 170.
33. *Ibid.,* p. 186.
34. *Ibid.,* pp. 171-72.
35. Yvor Winters, *In Defence of Reason* (New York, 1947), p. 29.

36. Elder Olson, 'An Outline of Poetic Theory', *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 23.
37. C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Modern Wickedness* (London, 1948), p. 33.
38. R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford, 1950), p. 315.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

# CHAPTER VIII

# Conclusion

As a branch of philosophy aesthetics aims at clarifying the concepts used in discussions of works of art and the experiences of creating and responding to them. Poems of different times and climes are dissimilar in imagery, diction, and metrical patterns; some great poets may register or even bring about revolutions in sensibility. But the basic nature and function of poetry do not change: in all countries and in all periods poetry embodies a significant aspect of human experience in the stylised linguistic pattern; everywhere and always it vitalises the spirit of man by deepening his awareness and by cultivating his sensibility. The means adopted by poets to achieve this end vary; but the end itself does not change. If this is true, the qualifying terms 'Indian' and 'western' in discussions of aesthetic theories do not have any importance other than geographical. The philosophical validity of a concept has nothing to do with its origin in a particular country at a particular time. As no national or continental culture can arrogate to itself the status of a universal culture we should try to integrate concepts and ideas of different countries in a coherent and self-consistent ideological framework.

T. E. Hulme once said that he wanted to speak of verse in a plain way as he would of pigs.[1] He thought it was the only desirable way. But, fortunately for us, poems are not pigs. If you know all about one pig you know all you need to know about all pigs. But the variety of poetry ranges from the lyrics of Mallarmé to the epic the *Mahābhārata*. Poetry will not disclose its secrets before any simple and

plain talk. It must be approached always simultaneously from many angles and levels. We must give up the 'either/or' attitude and adopt the 'both-and' attitude. We have seen that the theory of *rasa,* interpreted in the context of western aesthetic doctrines, offers us a framework within which we can synthesise and integrate a number of concepts and doctrines.

The concepts of *alaukika, sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* and *śānta* are the three corner-stones of the Indian theory of aesthetic experience. All the three concepts are organically interrelated. At some point in the discussion of the differentia of aesthetic experience the question will be asked inevitably whether there is any difference between the emotions in ordinary life and the poetic emotions. The mode in which a poem exists cannot be subsumed under any of the usual categories; hence the experience evoked by it is called *alaukika,* non-ordinary. The naturalist's position that there is no qualitative difference between ordinary experience and aesthetic experience and the isolationist's position which denies any role to emotion in art fail to do justice to the uniqueness of aesthetic experience. The concept of *alaukika* frees us from the rigid either/or approach. It reconciles the extremes of naturalism and isolationism. The indirections, rhetorical devices and stylisation employed by the poet enable us to undergo and contemplate emotions, feel and taste them, simultaneously. Emotions in poetry resemble and at the same time differ from those in life. The concept of *alaukika* integrates poetic experience with the general context of life experiences without sacrificing the uniqueness of the former. In other words, it establishes the 'autonomy' of poetry while denying it 'sovereignty'.

The concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* understood in the light of its western parallels like 'impersonality', 'psychical distance' and 'disinterested satisfaction' resolves the conflict between objectivity and subjectivity. For aesthetic theory it is immaterial whether a writer starts from his private personal experience or from collectively created racial myths; it is irrelevant whether a poem is in first person

singular or in dramatic form. When the poet externalises his experience objectively in terms of images and characters it becomes transpersonal in the sense that it is sharable and repeatable by any number of competent readers. In poetic experience we transcend our private worlds and are elevated to the world of collective human experience. The centre of the individual sentient personality spreads towards the circumference of collective humanity. The enhanced spiritual vitality we feel in poetic experience is due to this expansion of our self. Our interpretation of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* also reconciles the opposition between 'detachment' and 'identification'. We experience both detachment and identification in poetic experience. Our spiritual centre is detached from our common 'daylight world' and also from the work of art which is distanced from our self; at the same time we succeed in establishing identification (*tanmayībhavana*) with the human meanings focussed in the work.

The concept of *śānta* as the basic *rasa* emphasises the union of excitement and composure, tension and equilibrium in poetic experience. The emotions objectified in poetry cause appropriate resonances in the reader; his heart begins to vibrate (*spanda*) in unison with the emotions. But as the resonances are evoked and controlled by non-ordinary determinants (*alaukika vibhāvas*) having no functional role in the reader's practical life he does not experience mental agitation as it is understood in common parlance. The structural progression in every poem is dialectical, involving the interaction of opposite forces. Participation in the progression of a poem causes tension; detachment brings about equilibrium. Content evokes resonances while form imposes a frame of serenity. As in a poem form and content interpenetrate and constitute an organic unity the experience evoked by it unites tension and equilibrium. Mind engaged in the process of poetic appreciation may be compared to a theatre. Part of the mind constitutes the stage on which emotions 'play' their roles. The other part watches and tastes those emotions.

Rhythm in poetry is a powerful factor which casts a hypnotic spell on the reader making him receptive to the subtlest modulations of emotions. It organises our emotions and enables us to realise union with others.

Poetic appreciation is a strenuous activity requiring utmost concentration and alertness of our spiritual faculties. The reader has to cleanse and polish his mirror-like sensibility by constant acquaintance with poetry. Without a conscious and deliberate attempt to refine our sensibility readers cannot discriminate between the genuine and the spurious in the realm of art. Poetry is not a time-killer. It is a complex phenomenon involving images associated with different planes of experience. The expense of intellectual energy needed to understand great poetry is pleasurable because it tones up and vitalises our spirit. The poet's *pratibhā* has been compared to the third eye of Lord *Śiva*;[2] it enables him to intuit, to see before the mind's eye, the *bhāvas* of past, present and future. Poets are, in the words of Ezra Pound, the antennae of the human race. Constant exercise of our fine senses through the medium of imagination develops a 'sixth sense' in the reader which gives him insight into the workings of the inscrutable mystery, the human mind.

The concept of *rasa* as interpreted in this book dissolves the end-means conflict. Aestheticism which fails to integrate art with life and crude moralism which reduces poetry to sermons perpetuate the end-means conflict. Aesthetic experience is both an end in itself and a means for a fuller realisation of human values. Neither the delight of poetry nor the kind of insight it gives has any substitute. In fact the delight (*prīti*) and the insight (*vyutpatti*) are the two aspects of the same process. By pointing out unsuspected affinities between apparently dissimilar things, by establishing meaningful relations between apparently unrelated phenomena poetry extends the range of our awareness. It brings freshness and clarity to our perceptions. It is both exhilarating and enriching to recreate and relive an experience of another who has succeeded in giv-

ing a pattern and significance to the intractable raw-material of life. Every individual has an insatiable urge for communion. In poetic experience we establish such a communion with the poet and through him with humanity. The new meanings and values discovered or generated by great poetry enable us to achieve integration of personality. Without the self-attaining equilibrium no insight into the human predicament is possible. Poetry defines, clarifies and intensifies the qualities of human experience by establishing such an insight-giving equilibrium. This equilibrium is dynamic in the sense that it subtly and imperceptibly alters the constitution of our soul. Herein lies the supreme value of poetry.

# *NOTES AND REFERENCES*

## CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

1. T. E. Hulme said: 'A reviewer last week spoke of poetry as the means by which the soul soars to higher regions, and as a means of expression by which it becomes merged into a higher kind of reality. Well, this kind of statement I utterly detest. I want to speak of verse in a plain way as I would of pigs—that is the only honest way' (quoted by J. A. Passimore. 'The Dreariness of Aesthetics', *Aesthetics and Language,* ed. William Elton, Oxford, 1954, p. 42).
2. See Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta,* p. xxxi. Gnoli quotes a verse from Hemchandra's *Kāvyanuśāsana*: rasānuguṇaśabdārthacintāstimitacetasaḥ/kṣaṇaṁ svarūpaśparsotthā prajñaiva pratibhā kaveḥ//sa hi cakṣur bhagavatas tṛtīyam iti gīyate/yena sākṣātkaroti eṣa bhāvaṁs traikālyavartinaḥ//

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# GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT SANSKRIT TERMS

*abhivyakti* : Manifestation in distinct-individualised form.

*adhikārin* : Qualified person. One who is competent to relish poetry by virtue of his fund of life experiences and his trained mirror-like sensibility.

*ahaṁkāra* : Ego; the sense of 'I' in man.

*alaṁkāra* : Ornament; figure of speech. Some writers considered it synonymous with beauty. Poetics was called *alaṁkāra-śāstra.*

*alaukika* : Non-ordinary; not to be obtained in practical every-day life. Aesthetic experience is *alaukika* as it is evoked by images and characters having no functional status in our life. Though this concept demarcates aesthetic experience from ordinary experience, yet it achieves its integration with life by pointing out that aesthetic experience is the relishing of one's own transpersonalised emotions.

*anubhāva* : Consequents. Signs or indications of feelings which make us aware of the emotional focus of poetic contexts.

*anukaraṇa* : Imitation.

*anupraveśa* : Entering into the heart of the poetic situation; active imaginative participa-

tion of the reader in the life of the poem.

*artha* : Meaning, end, purpose.

*arthakriyā* : Causal efficiency; the ability to produce effects in practical life. A Buddhistic concept widely used in Indian philosophical literature. The characters in poetry do not have *arthakriyā* because they are not contemporary with us. This makes them transcend the specifications of the 'real' and the 'unreal'.

*bhāva* : State, emotion, feeling; that which brings into being the essence of a poem. The *bhāvas* make *rasa* pervade the heart of the reader. In this sense *bhāva* includes *vibhāva, anubhāva, sthāyi, vyabhicāri* and *sāttvika bhāva*. But generally the last three are referred to by this term.

*carvaṇa* : Literally 'chewing'. The reader's active imaginative reconstruction of the poet's experience embodied in the poem.

*dhvani* : Suggestion, evocation, resonance. In poetry words have a suggested sense which, though based on their conventional and contextual meanings yet transcends them. This suggested sense is apprehended in the form of *rasa*. The suggestion of *rasa* (*rasadhvani*) is the soul of poetry.

*kāvya* : Poetry; the creation of the poet. Imaginative literature in prose or verse.

*laya* : Rhythm.

*mahārasa* : The great basic *rasa;* the *Śānta rasa;* the basic state of the self in which poetry is relished.

*pratibhā* : Poetic sensibility, intuition, inventiveness, genius. The ability to create novel works. *Pratibhā* is a form of direct perception. It has been divided into creative (*kārayitri*) and receptive (*bhāvayatri*).

*puruṣārtha* : The ends of human life. They are four: *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (material wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), *mokṣa* (spiritual liberation). Poetry inclines us towards the *puruṣārthas.*

*rasa* : Taste, flavour, essence, beauty, aesthetic experience. *Rasa* is manifested by the union of *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *vyabhicāribhāva.* Nine *rasas* are generally recognised, the classification being based on the permanent emotion delineated in and evoked by the poem.

*rasika* : One who is competent to relish *rasa.*

*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* : Transpersonalisation. The process of establishing 'psychical distance'. The images and characters in a poem are not apprehended as determined by concepts of reality or unreality, time or space. At the time of creation the poet distances his visionary experience from his practical interests; at the time of appreciation the reader detaches his self from his egoistic interests so that he can achieve complete identification with the emotional focus of the poem.

*sahṛdaya* : The ideal reader whose sensibility is like that of the poet. The *sahṛdaya* has a rich fund of life experiences and has a pure mirror-like sensibility.

*saṁskāra* : Impressions left by experiences. Subconscious states constantly generated by

experience; they are organised around certain permanent emotions.

*sāttvika-bhāva* : Involuntary states like sweating, fainting, horripilation, etc. *Sattva* is the essential quality of mind, *Sāttvika-bhāvas* are delineated in drama by the imitation of human nature through concentration of mind.

*sthāyibhāva* : Permanent emotions; permanently organised dispositions. They are related to typical universal situations and generate definable modes of conduct. It is called permanent or dominant also because it integrates the parts of a poem giving it thematic unity.

*tanmayībhavana* : To become one with the poetic focus.

*vāsanā* : Tendencies of the past lying dormant in the mind; loosely interchangeable with *saṁskāra.*

*vibhāva* : Determinants. Those elements which determine and define the nature of feelings to be evoked in the reader's mind. Vehicles of feelings; characters, images, etc.; 'the objective correlatives' in the poem.

*vighna* : Obstacles which prevent the full realisation of aesthetic experience.

*viśeṣa* : Particularity. In the context of aesthetic theory it means that the images and characters transcend the limitations of space and life and so they have no real individuality. It does not mean that they are not highly individualised having unique characteristics.

*vyabhicāribhāva* : Transient moods accompanying emotions. They are weak, mild and they rise and fall with the *sthāyibhāvas.*

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