CHAPTER VI: SOUNDARA RAJAN'S MODELS OF INTERPRETATION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY
History is a "...philosophy drawn by examples"(1). If the subject matter of history is put to methodical and critical exposition, the true content of history is revealed. History conceives and elucidates the growth and decline of civilizations through the "...world of human individuality"(2). In reality, History doesn't exist, but written. The historian adopts appropriate historical method to reconstruct history. The information "...in disorder can't be conveyed to another mind without loss, and are hardly likely to carry meaning very long even for the possessor. This is because the mind is so constituted, that it demands some degree of regularity and symmetry"(3). The norms of reconstruction of history are intricate, like "...the collection of the surviving objects and of the printed, written and oral materials that are unauthentic; the extraction from the authentic material of testimony that is credible; and the organisation of that reliable testimony in to a meaningful narrative or exposition"(4). The historian illustrates facts through certain rules of interpretation. History becomes intelligible if meaning is provided through interpretation.

Reconstruction of History: The Role of Historiography

During the last quarter of the 18th Century, the Asiatic society of Bengal adopted a method to reconstruct the history of Ancient India. Under the auspices of the Asiatic society of Bengal the English and German scholars produced Euro-centric History of Ancient India. The alien approach was highly biased and un-Indian. The classical spirit of Ancient India was not truly explored. The renascent intellectuals, if look to "...the Classical Age for inspiration, there is no justification to call it a deliberate attempt at revivalism"(5). The incorrect understanding of the literary and archaeological material and defective historiographic transliteration had reduced the historical works of English and German scholars to a state of mere Anglo-Saxonic Pamphlets, "Lehrbuch der historischen Methode." The real achievements like art, architecture, sculpture and iconography hardly found proper presentation in English and German version of history of Ancient India. On the other hand, Art History of India... Portmanteau, was still in budding stage.

Historian, Critic and Historiography: Analysis of Strength and Limitation

Historiography of Art is "...an extremely wide one, for it includes the mass of man's work from Palaeolithic times to the present day"(6). If the art historian is often dominated by "...a prosaic, material outlook, the artist tends to turn...
towards direct representation rather than idealization and questioning. His constant search for ideal form makes him obsessive (7). In determining the value of art, the Art Historian moves "in accordance with the character of the age with which he is concerned" (8). He elucidates the character of art in the precise historical background. He is a professional like the Chemist, Physicist, Photographer or Palaeo-botanist. He knows "the ultimate criterion by which quality and genuineness of art are judged" (9). The Art Critic reviews the quality of art as to "how it may be appreciated and enjoyed, or why it should be condemned" (10). The Art Historian must combine the qualities of Art Historian and Art Critic. As relevant knowledge grows each day rapidly, it is difficult "to be an expert connoisseur in more than a very limited field so far as questions of attribution and authenticity are concerned" (11).

Foundations of Soundara Rajan’s Judgment: Exuberance of Manifold Thought

Soundara Rajan, a wandering scholar, is an individual to history. It is essential to recognize the outstanding quality of his published works. He belongs to the age of Humanist Art, literae humaniores. A professional of renascent Graeco-Roman proficiency, Rajan had developed a keen sense of history "typical of his age, how far conservative, showing continuity from what has gone before, and how far precocious, heralding what is to come" (12). He reveals the abstract layers of history and bridges them with the concrete evidence. It is a proper way to explore works of Art in "virtually psychological" (13) fashion. His process of knowing and seeing is similar to Roger Fry’s Vision and Design.

Pan Indian Outlook of SoundaraRajan: A Reverance for Pagan Antiquity

Soundara Rajan’s pan-Indian vision inter-connects the art regions of the Indian sub continent. It "will not try to suppress or white wash everything in our country’s past that is disgraceful, but because it will admit them and at the same time point out that there were other and nobler aspects in the stages of our nations evolution which offset the former" (14). His pan-Indian vision is not entirely spiritual. It legalizes the faith so that "one must discern and appreciate, and without sensibility he will never be able to do more than scrape the surface of understanding" (15). Soundara Rajan could make conclusions based upon his classical and lingual knowledge. Art-history "can often provide an essential
part of the evidence vital to the historian of events”[16]. He affirms the view of Hegel that every nation has its own characteristic principles or genius that reflects in all the phenomena associated with it. The progress illustrated by Soundara Rajan is evident from “...the continuing stamina of urbanisation models in India that were governed by multiple antecedent strands of civic ethos” [17]. Soundara Rajan’s dialectic, like Hegel, “...begins with thought, goes on to nature and ends with mind” [18]. He discovers the general principles governing chronological sequence. The rise, growth and decline of Ellora is evident through “...a transitional technique with ground of one mud layer with one to three lime plasters on it. There is no adequate binding medium between them. The paint film is fairly thick suggesting lack of technical delicacy” [19]. Soundara Rajan, “...appears to be interested not only in documentary history, but in all of man’s cultural institution” [20]. He had great competence in organisation and theorization of ideas. He rises above parochial outlook, adheres to unambiguous themes, “...the history of the only genuinely historical reality - oecumenical history” [21]. His searching analysis deciphers the undeciphered historical thought and human will responsible for the occurrences in history. He counteracts the divine precedence as a reason of historical production. To him, each historical incident is transitional. Every historical idea is on conscientious probation as historical mind is inventive rather than conservative. Soundara Rajan sticks to the opinion that “...history never repeats itself but comes round to each new phase in a form differentiated by what has gone before” [22]. History does not accelerate on dubious metaphysical hypotheses. History is simple exposition of human wisdom. Soundara Rajan liberates history from propaganda, where history is a disguised form of reason. His logical presentation is at peak in the Glimpses of Indian Culture, Art, Architecture and Religion (1962). His method of elucidation is brilliant and uncontaminated. He cuts across the embryology of historical thought, seeks the assistance of natural science to understand, and interpret history in Soundara Rajan’s way. He thinks that the vital aim of human foundation “…is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things” [23].

Soundara Rajan’s method of consulting the sources is uncommon. He analyses sources into small organs, classifies them as reliable and less reliable, earlier and later, indigenous and alien, textual and empirical. He perceives twists and distortions in history fabricated by the historians. Being a fastidious intellectualist, he merely articulates where really the distortion lies, “...the oldest remains of independent Hindu Art, either sculptural or architectural, only date from several centuries after the beginning of the Christian era. These considerations in themselves justify the presumption that Hindu architecture is derived...
from the older art of the Buddhists "[24]. The response of SoundaraRajan to the previous context is objective, 'This is true only with the North Indian temples'. He considers each source of history as knowledge about general laws. He adopts general laws that are central to historiography, "...each structure has a certain necessary attitude to and conception of the world" [25]. It provides "...genuine historical knowledge" [26] through "...inward experience (Erlebnis) of its own object" [27]. He points out relation between art idioms and structures. He applies Sanskrit verses selected from the primary texts on art and architecture. He utilizes jargons to make the context precise and objective. He distinguishes the recurring patterns of architectural formulations, "...through the rediscovery, an essence formerly discovered or prized" [28]. His indomitable thought process adopts value neutrality towards contemporary elitist hegemony. His sentence structure is non-whimsical. It depends upon the situation. This kind of structure is apparent in the historical novels of Leo Tolstoy. Soundara Rajan's quality imagination makes the sequence of events picturesque and self-justifying. He cautiously separates the propagandist elements from historical facts with no scope for disagreement involving religion and scientific view. He knows well that he, an ex hypothesi, who is not actually present in the past, yet likes to know the past. Since most of the contemporary historical writing has deteriorated "...into near theory and speculation" [29], SoundaraRajan adopts a proper method to write of history. He evolves a new model which "...is very broad indeed. It includes the way people live, the culture and religion which they generate and regard as acceptable, their scientific pursuits, and above all the general open-minded concepts which serve to rationalize their relationship to the community" [30]. The approach is absolutely non-political.

Soundara Rajan's Models of Interpretation: Context and Substance

Priority

The interpretation of History is central to semantics and aesthetics. It is one way of looking at written history from among "...a pulp of disputable interpretation" [31]. However, the word interpretation has no specific definition as such, comprises merely "...historical explanation" [32] and make history more intelligible. History proceeds further "...by the interpretation of evidence" [33].

The interpretation of text involves "...the recognition of two sets of relationship: extratextual relations between language items and the code from which they derive and intra-textual relations between language items within the context itself" [33a]. What is needed, "...first, is more attention to form in art. If excessive stress on content provokes the arrogance of interpretation, more extended and
more thorough description of form would silence. What is needed is vocabulary for forms " (33b). Soundara Rajan adopts context-based interpretation models to make art mean beyond apparent level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Adopted</th>
<th>An Historical Instance</th>
<th>Interpretation...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical Model</td>
<td>Ayatasra Brihaspati</td>
<td>Rectangular Rekha plinth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feudal Model</td>
<td>DeSanskritisation</td>
<td>Emergent Pan-Indianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmentary Model</td>
<td>Conjeeveram Shrine</td>
<td>Silpa Vidya of 900 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual Polity Model</td>
<td>Iconisation of cults</td>
<td>An impact making agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Model</td>
<td>North Indian Gangetic</td>
<td>Matured social behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theocratic Model</td>
<td>20th patala of Pratishta</td>
<td>Genesis of RekhaNagara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interpretation of history links it with the humanities and science. The mutual relation among the two or more constituents of knowledge can be viewed in the relevant context. Among several inter-disciplinary approaches adopted by Soundara Rajan, two select examples are mentioned below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Instance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociological approach</td>
<td>The change in forms of Utsavabhera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropological approach</td>
<td>The enthno-tribal links with early art and aesthetics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pertinent inter-disciplinary approach helps to understand the basic elements of human progress in history.

**Evaluating Soundara Rajan’s Literary Intention: A Polyphonic Harmony**

Soundara Rajan adopts a system of knowledge to process information. He develops an ingenious language, where history is actually codified. He is guided by healthy intellectual tradition. His profound insight excludes superfluous fact. He straightens distorted history from Eurocentric thought. His very uncommon literary intention blends the vision of contemporary India with the abstract historical facts. K. V. Soundara Rajan develops highly simple concept of history from the foundation, combines several concepts, and proceeds to combine two or several judgements about history, -'ratiocination’
Soundara Rajan establishes links between Science of Language and History. This reduces the gap between usage of language and presentation of history. At times, his erratic composition injures the organization of the subject matter. However, his magistral style seems to be moderate and calm. He doesn’t prefer *en armourun silence vart mieux quan*, the language of stillness.

- Soundara Rajan employs figures of thought to illuminate rasa and guna embedded in art. He does it where there is harmony in content, or at the *presence of still point*. * * He associates the *presence of still point* with the Greaco-Roman traditions in art and relates them with the classical Indian thought.
- He conceives cult and form relationship as a sanctum prescription. It is "... *intrinsic to Philosophia Perennis, in which culture originates in work*" [34]. He does not isolate cult origin from the temple traditions.

* It excludes meaningless words and sentences
* T. S. Eliot: Tradition and Individual Talent
He disagrees with the view that the ancient-most art belongs to the common endowment of early Asiatic culture from Mediterranean to China, as far south as Ceylon. His observation, India as a distinct art zone is contrary to the theory that every race has the same creative spirit.

According to him, the element of art in Asiatic culture is primarily Indian. He refers to an early ancient Indian Sanskrit inscription of the Pallavas from Java datable to 2nd and 1st CBC. The very assimilation of diverse and refined Asiatic culture is evident from the inscription. No human culture has ever "...appeared or developed except together with a religion"[35]. Evidently, Hinduism is ancient-most to Asia

K. V. Soundara Rajan observes that, 'style' is worldly and the 'essence' is everlasting. Essence grows around the core. His pan-Indian sensibility in art, sculpture, architecture and iconography are due to his love towards India. He approves the proverbial argument,"...so I say that if we are to weather the storm of the world's flow we must stand our ground, above all in this matter of the relation of man's life to his life work ...(And if) you ask me what can be done, my answer would be,...make Indian culture your foundation, and western technique your means" [36]

K. V. Soundara Rajan's intricate concept of beauty is determined by form. The idea of form is spatial. The metaphors of form are derived from ideas of space. This is the reason for more organized vocabulary of forms' in art. His conception of beauty in art envisions equilibrium of cosmic energy. It permeates the very human sensibility. Beauty "...proceeds, underlies and it contains any degree of analysis" [37]. Therefore "...fundamentally naturalistic " [38], "...firmly rooted in nature" [39]. Beauty is "...a visual symbolism, ideal in the mathematical sense" [40] which excites "...active powers of the mind" [41]. It is the vital centre of the aesthetic sensibility. It responds to the change earnestly, "...but yet retains its own distinctive character" [42]. Beauty is "...unity and interconnectedness of rational experience" [43]. It is lucid quality of mind "...illumination or claritas" [44]. In his view, the recognition of beauty depends on judgement, not on sensation, "...the beauty of the aesthetic surfaces depending on their information, and not upon themselves" [45].

The historical literature of K. V. Soundara Rajan is not free from limitations. The chronology is not authentic all the while. In this respect, Benjamin Rowland is more perfect than K. V. Soundara Rajan. Rowland's bibliographic reference stands testimony to authentic chronology. The chronology of pre-Mauryan
rock-cut architecture dealt by Soundara Rajan is not authentic. His obsession with other aspects of Art History must have made him ignore accuracy in chronology. K. V. Soundara Rajan strives hard to break away from the basic gravitational pull of the dogmatic religions. He makes valuable contribution to liberate art from dulling dogma and vicious theology dormant in myths and symbols. In his view, the promotion of art, architecture, sculpture and aesthetics of the sub-continent makes the theosophic ideology intellectually reasonable, culturally dissimilar and socially, economically homogeneous. All art is reproduction of the world of the right mind. A wise man can penetrate beyond his sensory perceptions in art.

K.V. Soundara Rajan was unlucky to miss the information technology. The aerial survey, litho-mapping and computer aided design could have made him more professional. He appears very much perturbed while integrating the fragmented art mosaic. He partially succeeds to coalesce and combine the dynastic ideology with the prevailing vogue in art. His endeavour creates aversion among social psychologists. He lacks the ignis futus of a hypothesized posterity in negotiating the narrow isthmus between two eternities or in furthering the ever widening march of development, in pursuing truth in the interstices of a dictatorial system of belief. His multiple sensibilities, interesting and stimulating, but hesitant in assessment. This sparse and cautious unity is noticeable in Indian Temple Styles (1972). The dilemma of Soundara Rajan blocks him from producing concrete history of Indian Temple Styles. He is uncertain about the possible interaction among the established art zones of the sub-continent.

Appraisal of Classical Scholarship: A Melodious Intellectual Treatise

Soundarajan is an embodiment of classical scholarship. His work is a monument of erudition. He sought refinement everywhere. He prolonged historical investigation to the most logical, incandescent, exact, sublime and scholastic level against the jingoist, antagonistic and fundamental elements. His reflective criticism had silently rebelled against the established truth of the priestly order. His entire scholastic method is logomachies or word wisdom and dialectical hair-splitting. Yet his contribution to historiography is distinctly significant;
• The complete corpus of writing is based on field-studies and consultation of primary sources
• His intention is the product of the awakening of Indian consciousness. This is an unambiguous sign of growing reflection against traditional knowledge
• His scientific attitude promotes intellectual background towards monotheism, where traditional knowledge forms the basis of speculation
• The attributes of divine elements are the underlying reality of nature, all-pervasive and imperishable
• The political and economic transformation is the result of class conflict. The rise of innumerable cults surrounded by obscurity leads to the unity of Godhead or harmony of reason
• He reads each aesthetic item concealed in art. He eliminates dogma through the pursuit of insight or supreme act of reason, where simplicity in thought itself is pure reason. Such insight produces immortal aesthetics
• He identifies genuine ideas latent in art. They communicate the epitome of life. His deep excitement for ideas and impatience to ambiguity makes the historical accounts highly rational
• His theory of history is governed by the immutable principles of liberty. He adopts a self-designed concept of religion, where religion grows out of polytheism
• His understanding of space and time relationship takes different forms of mind; he brings in diverse acts together by conceiving space as the result of harmonious coexistence of forces or factors of production.

**Structural Historiography: A Science of Writing History**

The historiography of Soundara Rajan is obviously Structural Historiography. It is derived from Sassure's *Model of the Synchronic Study*. Soundara Rajan developed a comprehensive historiography comprising of *scientia* or real knowledge of history on the basis of Sassurean model. He presents history by interconnected structures. Here no word is extra insertion. The Structural Historiography perceives relationship among units of history as units of structured language with content and symbols. To obtain historical meaning, the identification of units with structures or process of signification is required. The symbols in relevant texts and also in concrete art forms are not easily understandable. They convey some objective reality. This reality is either non-existent or at least non-perceptible.
The symbols communicate meaning, and establish association with the very succeeding symbol. This is often referred to as perceiving relationship or grasping well-structured meaning. All the primary sources studied by Soundara Rajan are in classical Sanskrit. Hence signification or identification of units with structures becomes inevitable for him. His Structuralist thought borrowed from Clause Levis Strauss discovers the fundamental rules of sign making and its basic process of activation. According to Philologist Clause Levis Strauss, structure being an event orients, balances and organises the harmony of historiography. To value Soundara Rajan’s historiography, it is necessary to know the process of signification in regard to structures and their implicit-code relation with history. Some among the codes of signification applied by SoundaRajan are mentioned below.

**Structural Historiography: A Few instances of the Signification Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Language</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Select Instances from the Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proairetic Code</td>
<td>Code of Implicit Action</td>
<td>Vishnu lying in deep slumber with scanty clothing and thin limbs, his head to the north. He is blue bodied and four armed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneutic Code</td>
<td>Code of Mystery</td>
<td>The Pallava, Pandya, Rashtrakuta and Chola trends influenced the Jaina art. However, the style and idiom were largely conservative in the early stage (CAD 600-1000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultural Code | Code of Identity | Deccan means dakshina, “righthand” (Latin dexter) secondarily, meaning “South”, since southern India is on the right hand of a worshipper facing the rising Sun
---|---|---
Connotative Code | Code of Character | A grand secular character in art, megalopsuchos, certainly contains many concrete features and sounds, very much like the portrait of a certain sort of Greek gentleman in order to show Aristotle’s list as culture specific
Symbolic Code | Code of Disagreement | The southern vimana is the result of arithmetical progression from top to down in a pyramidal mold, where there is a permanent proportionate relationship among parts

### Synchronic Model of Ferdinand Sussure

**Basis of Structural Historiography Pursued by K.V. Soundararajan**

![Structure Diagram]

- **Structure**
  - **Content**
    - **Common Meaning**
  - **Symbol**
    - **Archetype**
  - **Organ or Unit**
    - **Sub-Text**
      - **Complete Meaning**
      - **Link to Ensuing Unit**
      - **Integral to Main**
      - **Structural Historiography**
K. V. Soundara Rajan's Structural Historiography recognizes all the functions of competitive human nature-intelligence in history. His historiography stimulates the entirety of history through well organized structures. He is cautious while choosing structures. It reduces the risk of inconsistency in presentation of events.

K. V. Soundara Rajan presents History, metaphysics and linguistics through Structural Historiography. It reveals the association between form and meaning. His strenuous and figurative language comprehends and reproduces a thought with precision. His text is not shallow in meaning. It is mere outline or indication of his meaning. He is successful in demystifying a complex system of knowledge through rhetorical, figurative and etymological analysis. The Structural Historiography of Soundara Rajan is unambiguous like a mountain stream, provided the movement of signs are understood well. The ineffaceable foot prints of K.V. Soundara Rajan ought to be pursued within the broad framework and scaffold of contemporary historical research.

Any one, who creates beauty, deserves remembrance.
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