CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION

1 Preparation

We are now on the verge of stating the steps undertaken during our study 'The Comprehension of Poetry in the first language Marathi and the second language English at the undergraduate level'.

During our study we have tried to clarify some of the basic concepts which have supplied us with the base for our study.

In Chapter 1, we have tried to discuss comprehension as -- reception, perception and understanding. We have considered these terms as the psychological processes and therefore tried to elaborate their meaning further to include all the shades, that is, the meaning of the term understanding which includes grasping, squeezing the meaning of the object, thing, picture, sound, taste, smell etc. We have differentiated verbal comprehension from non-verbal one to mean literary comprehension.

We have explained the mentalistic activities involved in reception, perception and understanding in the light of psychological concepts in relation to the first language learning and the second language learning. Since our main focus of study was comprehension, we elaborately tried to define it as an act or process of comprising the faculty or capability including the act or action of grasping and understanding the knowledge gained. Since verbal comprehension is possible only through words, we have called it literary comprehension by including the sense, the
feeling, the tone, and the intention involved in poetry, the literary form understudy. But the main focus was on comprehension of poetry because our study was basically directed towards measuring the comprehension of poetry. Therefore we have tried to concentrate on what I.A. Richards calls the four functions or four meanings which can be derived.

In the process of comprehension, we have tried to discuss, the physiological, psychological and linguistic factors and their interrelation in the comprehension of poetry. By the psychological factor we mean the mental activity; by physiological, we mean how the different human senses react and the function of the central nerve system and the brain, and lastly the linguistic factor, that is, the form of the poems which helps in understanding the poem.

In Chapter 2 - i. we have tried to discuss language learning as a mental activity, we have surveyed language as a communicative system involving the behavioural, the mentalistic and the generative capacities of human beings discussed by the behaviourists, the mentalists and the generativists. We have also considered how the first language acquisition differs from the second language learning. This was necessary to show, the interference of the first language while learning and ultimately comprehending literature written in the second language. English. Our study has made it necessary to show and mention this type of difference, dissimilar to that of I.A. Richards, whose main concern was to show the understanding of poetry in English, the mother tongue of his resource students. Therefore certain
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observations made by I.A. Richards in his findings did help us in our interpretation but they were not sufficient because our survey was directed towards the comprehension of poetry in Marathi and English. It was from this point of view that along with the processes of the first language learning, we had to discuss all the aspects of second language learning and also to include bilingualism and its impact on comprehension. At the same time the study of the processes of the first language, second language and bilingualism was necessary to show that the comprehension process of the mother tongue and of the second language outwardly are aimed at linguistic competency. This linguistic competency of the students while learning the first language and the second language may give them sufficient competency to communicate in those languages but as our study has revealed, the comprehension of poetry requires an extraordinary, different type of linguistic competency. The students' failure in understanding the poems under study proves this fact. The statistical data speaks for itself.

Under bilingualism we have tried to define the term in order to decide the competency in the two languages. But here the knowledge of Marathi and English upto the undergraduate level does not help the students in converting them into bilinguals. Bilingualism presupposes equal competency in both the languages. Here we have not therefore tried to show that our students are bilinguals but bilingualism has been brought in, in order to show that they are not equally competent in Marathi and English and therefore cannot be called bilinguals. But the knowledge of
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Marathi and English has interfered in the use of both the languages, for example - using
1> 'cruelistic' for the notion 'krura'
2> 'hard poem' for the notion 'kathin kavita'

Thus we can say that the analysis of the concepts of the first language learning, the second language learning and bilingualism has led us to comment on the comprehension of poetry as exemplified in the interpretation of data.

In Chapter 3 - (i, ii, iii) we have assigned three separate parts to the teaching of Marathi and its importance in the current educational system, the use of English in India and the place of English in the Educational system of India today. Our study concentrates on the comparison of comprehension in Marathi and English poetry. We have grouped the importance of teaching these two languages as the first language and the second language. Marathi is the state language of Maharashtra and English is taught as a compulsory second language up to the degree level. Marathi got greater importance after the reorganisation of Maharashtra as the Marathi speaking state (1957). The aim was to develop Marathi as a language from the Mother tongue to the official language of the state and through it develop the culture and solidarity of the Marathi speaking people.

English in India is deeply rooted. although, we say that it was introduced in 1835 when Macaualy's minutes on Indian education were published. English was still there in the country because it came with the English missionaries and the traders. Macaulay's recommendations were brought into practice by the British Government with the sole aim of
teaching English to Indians to convert them into Babus (clerks as interpreters) of English to the Indian languages and use them as petty officials in the British administrative system. Thus English came to India as an accident. It was imposed for the purposes of the rulers. But it developed in such a way that it has provided a linguistic tool for the 'administrative cohesiveness' of the country and as a language of 'wider communication' in India. At the same time the Indianisation of English is so great that it has got 'an institutionalised status' (kachru 83). Thus English has become a part and parcel of Indian life, culture, thought, emotion etc. Even after independence English, although there were movements to uproot, could not be uprooted. Today we use it as a library language and teach it as a compulsory subject up to +2 stage, and even as a compulsory subject for the degree classes. Therefore it was necessary to discuss its development in the educational system of the country.

So from our study point of view the relevance of Marathi and English as languages remains the same, with this difference that Marathi is the first language and English is the second language. When we teach languages we are forced to enter into the literature of these languages. If the comprehension ability of the students is to be tested, there cannot be any genre superior to poetry for this purpose. Therefore we selected Marathi and English poems to test the comprehension ability of the students in the first language and the second language learning. We had a model study available to us in the form of I.A. Richards's contribution (Practical Criticism 1939). His findings have provided us
enough guidelines in our study, and as our study has revealed in the discussion, in the earlier pages, we can see that the comprehension ability of students did not differ much in the first language and the second language. The inabilities and utter incapacies revealed in Richard's studies have also been overtly expressed by our students. The incompetencies in teaching languages still exists as they did in the early 20th century. Even then our study is different from that of I.A. Richards in the sense that we have tried to reveal the undercurrents in teaching and learning of the first language and the second language in the present educational system in Maharashtra, and through it have tried to prove that comprehension abilities in both these languages do not differ much. The data, the graphs and the charts inducted earlier are sufficient proofs of our observations.

Chapter 4 - I & ii - highlights the importance of poetry - any poetry in any language reveals that poetry uses the highest form of language. Understanding poetry in any language requires sufficient mastery over that language. If the students have little knowledge about language, it results in incomprehension and confusion. Enjoyment of poetry depends upon command over language, having ears for the music of the words, knowledge of syntax, understanding of the form and response of the senses. If any factor is missing from the above, the understanding of poetry becomes difficult. Therefore teaching of poetry and learning of poetry should concentrate on developing these abilities. Unfortunately they are not developed in the present system of the first language and second language teaching.
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The aim of reading poetry is to develop the human instincts, to expose them to the highest concepts of human life visualised by the poets. Therefore teaching poetry is not a language exercise, it has to motivate the instinctive urges of the students through sounds and music. If the teacher succeeds in motivating the students through these stages the comprehension abilities will develop. But nothing of this sort seems to be happening in the present day teaching of either Marathi or the English languages. Competency should develop through poetry teaching and it can be tested on the basis of the performance of the students. The performance of our students has shown that their language competency of Marathi and English has not developed, even upto the undergraduate level of language learning and teaching. These conclusions have a greater relevance because poetry forms at least 40 percent of the syllabuses in Marathi, and English and teaching poetry is included from the initial stage (fifth) to std. XIIth of higher secondary education.

In Chapter 5 - we have discussed 'Comprehension of Poetry' -- comprehension as a process consisting of reception, perception, understanding and comprehension. It is regarded as a mentalistic process which develops at an early age and continues upto the third year of the child. The process develops into reception, perception and results into understanding and comprehension. Passing through these stages the child develops the capacity to judge. He understands words, phrases and other language patterns and responds to commands. The movements of the child and the sensation that a sound makes on him show his understanding.
I.A. Richards (1929) has defined understanding as primitive sense -- only sounds are perceived in the mind of the child which lead to the understanding of words. Any utterance is responded to properly by the child. The child is conscious to receive the verbal stimuli - resulting into understanding. He calls these processes as verbal and non-verbal understanding. Verbal understanding is the understanding of words or other utterances, whereas, non-verbal understanding is the understanding of music and painting. The comprehension ability also starts at this age. It's a matter of responses to all the objects around the child. It builds up information and adds to the knowledge of the child. The responses to comprehension can be shown by approval, disapproval or by nodding. It helps in grasping and seizing the information, meaning, suggestion or any such message through verbal texts - poetic or prose texts.

After this we discussed linguistics in relation to poetic comprehension. The discussion of linguistics is necessary because it helps in analysing any form of the language, poetry or prose. Poetry uses the most compact and distilled form of language and for analysing such language used by the poet, the knowledge of linguistics is essential.

We approach such forms used in poetry and prose -- through stylistics. Stylistics helps in decoding the poetic message that the poet wants to convey, it helps in decoding the language through its rules. It studies the sounds of words, the selection of words, the musical quality of words, the arrangements of words and the ultimate message, that is the poetic meaning that the poet has to convey.
The poetic language deviates the normal rules of language. The poet deviates in phonology, morphology, graphology, semantics and syntactic manners. Comprehension of poetry necessitates the reader to understand the poetic meaning through these deviations. Thus by applying linguistic codes or categories, we try to dissect the poem to reach to the poetic meaning and ultimately to the poetic message. Therefore we need a careful study of the poem proper. Poetry is full of suggestions and implications, information and expressions. To comprehend poetry, therefore, we have to locate the implied meaning and the surface meaning. Thus comprehension of poetry is not like the comprehension of prose where the surface meaning itself helps to understand. Poetic comprehension is therefore regarded as a literary comprehension involving all the codes of linguistic interpretation.

In the second part we have discussed testing of the comprehension of poetry. Testing of comprehension is necessary because poetry forms a large bulk of language teaching at the undergraduate level of university education. This will also help us in order to test the linguistic competence and performance in both the languages - Marathi and English. Testing helps to locate the precise areas of difficulties of language users. It reveals whether the learning in the first language and the second language is proper or not. It will also tell us whether the aims and objectives of teaching languages are achieved or not. Because poetry uses the highest form of language, this type of study should reveal many facts about the first language and the
second language teaching and learning (as it is proved later on in the other chapters).

In Chapter 6 we have elaborated methodology followed during the study. The detailed discussion has been done on methodology. But the basic fact must be mentioned here. The selection of five poems in English was done with the intention to have comparative study of the achievement of students in the first language and the second language. Why only these poems were selected cannot be successfully reasoned out, but we can say that they are fairly representative poems, both old and new, from Marathi and English. They are representative in the sense that they are included in the syllabuses of the first language and the second language at the undergraduate level.

To test the comprehension of these poems a detailed and upto date questionnaire was prepared. All the aspects of poetry in general are covered in it. The performance of the students was tested by preparing model answers to all the questions. Thus we have tried to eliminate all looseness in preparing the questionnaire.

The administration of the test was done in rural and urban colleges to include all types of students. The tests were conducted by giving proper oral instructions both in Marathi and English in order to make students understand what they were supposed to do. The Marathi poems were numbered 'A' to 'E' and English poems from 'M' to 'Q', all capitals. Each student was given two poems to record his impressions on, but the pairing was done at random. The classification of
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responses as - 1> Correct answers; 2> incorrect answers; 3> Nearer to correct answers; 4> No answer / no response were codified to present the data in a compact manner. The question types were also codified. This helped us in preparing the most compact and up-to-date tables and the charts for presentation.

11 The Tests

Now we have reached to the stage of stating the facts about our procedures and the facts that we have drawn through our survey.

Our questionnaire consisted of three types for poems of both the languages --
1> Multiple choice questions.
2> Descriptive type questions.
3> Impression writing.

We call these three levels of questions. In the first type we expected simple pointed answers in one or two words. In the second level we expected the students to write or describe the situation, a fact, a concept, a thought in the poem. The third type expected the students to record their impressions after the total understanding of the poem. Thus the questionnaire moves from the easy to more difficult questions. The multiple choice questions on all the poems were set to test the simple facts contained in the poems, at the reception and perception stage. In the second type of questions the aim was to test the understandings of images, thoughts, ideas in the poems. The third type were to test the total comprehension of the poems. These three stages are
related to language learning and the comprehension processes already discussed in the earlier chapters.

At these three levels of the questionnaire we recorded the correct, incorrect, nearer to correct and no answer, no responses, on all the poems. The comparative graphic presentation has already been given earlier. Here the facts about the achievement, that is, reception, perception, understanding and comprehension are to be given for all the poems in rural and urban areas, for example -- in M-C questions in Marathi the average percentage of correct answers is 57%, incorrect answers 42%, nearer to correct Nil and no answers/response 1%.

In descriptive type questions -- the average percentage of correct answers is 26%, incorrect answers is 37%, nearer to correct answers is 21%, and no answers/response is 16%. In impression writing -- correct answers are 17%, incorrect answers are 39%, nearer to correct answers are 21% and no answers/responses are 23%.

In the English poems under study the average percentage of Multiple Choice correct answers is 58%, incorrect answers 42%. In descriptive question correct answers are 27%, incorrect answers are 55%, nearer to correct answers are 7% and no answers/responses are 11%. In impression writing correct answers are 7%, incorrect answers are 62%, nearer to correct answers are 17%.

The percentage clearly shows the achievement of students regarding comprehension of Marathi and English poems. If we compare the comprehension of Marathi and English
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poems we do not see much difference, for example, if we compare the correct answer in all the three types, we find the correct answers in Marathi in M-C is 57% and in English 58%, in descriptive types for Marathi 26% and English 27%, in impression writing in Marathi 27% and in English 7%. The incorrect answers in Marathi for the multiple choice questions are 42% and in English 42%, in descriptive type Marathi 37% and English 55%, in impression writing Marathi is 39% and English 62%. These figures are proof enough to draw certain conclusions, that is, the students have responded more or less to all the questions on some poems. The rural and urban differences do not much affect the comprehension of poetry in general. The comparison of comprehension of Marathi and English poems also does not show startling differences. The percentage of failure to comprehend both Marathi and English poems has remained the same.

On the basis of these findings and on the basis of conclusions drawn by I.A. Richards the difficulties tally to a great extent, except the consideration of sentimentality and inhibition in the poems. I.A. Richards's conclusions are based on the native speakers' response to English poetry. Our conclusions are based on the undergraduates who study English as a compulsory subject and as a second language. But the achievement and failures in English poems and the achievement and failure in Marathi poems do not differ much, which shows that both the languages are taught and learnt in the same way in the present system of education.
The correct answers at all the three levels are called correct but they cannot be quoted as 100% correct tallying with the model answers. Sometimes the language is not up to the mark but they show some 60% understanding of the poems from those answers. The incorrect answers given to questions on Marathi and English poems do not show even 10% understanding. They are devoid of contents of the poems and of the language. The percentage of incorrect answers is so high that it startles and compels us to think about the drawbacks in our educational machinery.

The nearer to correct answers have a grain of truth expressed in the model answers, but they are deviated from the model answers. The answers are incomplete, lack in the use of proper words, some give extra, unnecessary information not available in the poems. They also reflect lack of understanding of the questions, negligence in reading and understanding questions, negligence in looking at words having different spelling (haven and heaven). The answers also show the inability to express the observed facts in the simple language. But at the same time they show understanding in some cases in some poems and therefore they are called nearer to correct.

The percentage of N.C answers is more in Marathi because it is the mother tongue of the students. They are familiar with the words but the poetic meaning expressed through these words creates difficulties in understanding. The percentage of nearer to correct answers in English is less because it is the second language. They face difficulties at all levels of understanding. Thus the nearer
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to correct answers reveal partial truth and partial understanding of the poems. In terms of comprehension we call it partial comprehension which may be due to understanding of some words, or phrases or concepts or understanding of some feeling like love, hatred, richness, poverty and certain common facts about life.

All the responses to all the questions including the correct ones reveal a shocking fact viz. a total incapability of the students to use the first language and as also the second language. This is a noteworthy point because we teach poetry in order to expose them to the best language even at the undergraduate level. We expose them to the best language of poetry when they do not have any language ability.

Lastly we have to record our impressions about no answers/responses of the students. They have not written any type of answer to the questions. It is therefore a reflection of utter incapacity and inability of the students in language use. The poems are beyond their reach or it may be that the students have purposely neglected to answer the questions and it shows indifference and disregard to our survey. It may be that they were unprepared for such tests which were conducted without prior notice and under the strict supervision of the researcher.

In addition to these comments we have to testify them on what I.A. Richards has said regarding understanding and lack of understanding of the poems. We have discussed these things quite elaborately considering all the ten difficulties that Richards has discussed as testing points to judge the comprehension. For example, Richards says that poetic meaning
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should express four things -- sense, feeling, tone and intention. If the students show positive responses to these four functions which he calls four kinds of meaning then we can say that there is some comprehension. The Sense, Feeling, Tone, intention, Sensuous Apprehension, response to visual Imagery helps in poetic comprehension according to Richards.

But at the same time there are certain factors like Irrelevant Associations, Stock Responses, Sentimentality, Inhibition, Doctrinal Adhesions, Technical Presuppositions and Critical Preconceptions which come in the way of poetic comprehension. How far these facts have come in the way of our students in helping them to understand poems and also spoiling the responses in poetry is discussed in Chapter 8. I.A. Richards's findings date back to 1929. But his interpretation has a relevance even today, because what he has stated bears truth even today. He had also argued about the probable reasons for the difficulties leading to lack of comprehension like immaturity, lack of reading, construeing preconceptions, bewilderment etc. on the part of the students. We have considered these facts in this chapter giving concrete examples of the mistakes.

We have now come to the stage of summarising our findings about the comprehension of poetry. Our result shows that comprehension remains constant in both Marathi and English. It does not depend on language but on the expression of the experience through language. It leads us to believe that lack of linguistic competence has led the students to the lack of performance. The poetic language expresses the
experience of the poet, and comprehension does not take place because the students fail to grasp the expression and understand the poet's experience. Poetry is not merely a verbal play. It is a verbal system which uses the most compact forms of languages. The students' failure to understand this verbal play in poetry reflects on the students and on the drawbacks in the educational system, that is, both the teaching and the learning taking place today.

In addition, poetic comprehension requires a poetic sensibility which can be developed through proper teaching of language. But poetic language is a special type of language and therefore special efforts are required in the teaching processes. Our result shows that this factor must be lacking in the present day system.

Achievement in Marathi and English shows deficiencies. We have given enough examples of these deficiencies in the earlier pages quoting incorrect answers. This fact forces us to conclude that deficiencies exist in teaching both Marathi and English.

If we compare the comprehension of individual poems considering the difficulty level, we find that the comprehension of simple or easy poems and that of the difficult poems remains the same. In the first languages it is 17% and the second language it is 7%. These figures show that 17% comprehension of the poems in the Mother tongue is not a great achievement, nor the 7% comprehension of English Poems a total drawback. The figures for both the languages are disturbing. This proves that language development and language achievement in both the cases is unsatisfactory.
The comprehension ability for both the Marathi and English poems is worse. The ability to use language whether Marathi or English is more or less the same, and therefore the comprehension is also less. Marathi is the mother tongue, the students are the native speakers of Marathi and therefore it was natural to expect that the comprehension of Marathi poems should have been greater as compared to that of the English poems. But it is of the same type. This fact helps us in drawing conclusions on the basis of our observations that the teaching of both these languages is a neglected affair. The types of mistakes in Marathi and English is not only same at different levels like words, phrase, clause but is also the same as characteristics of poems as a whole. The concepts, the tone, the feeling and the poetic message have remained beyond the students' comprehension. This also proves that the students' comprehension abilities in Marathi and English are the same. Whether proper training in the mother tongue will help in poetic comprehension in the second language is again a matter for further research. But one thing can be said that good teaching of the first language will refine the sensibilities of the students and will indirectly help them in understanding the poems in the second language. The fact that the students lack minimum language competence is again a matter of controversy. Since our study reveals a total lack of comprehension, the students did not possess even the minimum language abilities for poetic comprehension. Our students belonged to the undergraduate classes and they were supposed to have been exposed to the minimum of Marathi and English languages. But their failure
shows lack of reading in both the languages.

Our study has also considered the external factors like the rural and the urban background of the students to find out whether poetic comprehension differs on this issue. But we found that this distinction has not affected the comprehension. The same type of failure or lack of comprehension exists in the urban as well as the rural areas. The students included both girls and boys but it was considered as a variable factor. Similarly all students belonged to the Arts faculty and not the Commerce or Science. Therefore our results also show the type of talent we have for the Arts stream.

But one fact must be noted here that the language errors in Marathi answers are less as compared to those in English. This is an advantage, Marathi being the Mother tongue. This shows that for non literary purposes students might be competent enough to use the mother tongue but they fail to interpret poetry -- it is therefore a result of bad learning and teaching whether one accepts it or not. It also shows lack of reading, lack of exposure to both the languages. This has resulted in incomprehension of the poetic expression -- the poetic arrangement of the words used by the poet. The stock responses, preconceptions and bewilderment are the products of the failure to grasp the poetic expressions.

We, therefore, feel that teaching of English and Marathi has got to be improved. The aims and objectives of the curriculum developers and the syllabus makers have not been fulfilled. Comprehension abilities can develop only when
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we include the theory of interpretation of languages. Unfortunately our heavily loaded language syllabuses do not contain guidance on how to interpret a poem. It is time now that the teaching of literature should include the developmental interpretative procedures that linguistic sciences have provided from the beginning of the present century. The knowledge of linguistics and stylistics will develop the insight of the students to analyse a poem more objectively than depending on told meanings of the poems. The theory of interpretation will teach them all the procedures of approaching a literary form and indirectly polish their language. Knowing language is one thing and knowing language used by others is a totally a different thing. It is for the second part that the knowledge of linguistics and stylistics will help our students in increasing their competency for the literary interpretation which ultimately will increase the comprehension.