

*Prathamānam*

(CHAPTER ONE)

**PHILOSOPHY AND LITERARY THEORY: THE**

**ŚAIVA PERSPECTIVE**

For the last three or four decades ‘turn to theory’ has become almost inevitable for the world academia. A host of modern/post-modern theories ranging from Russian Formalism to the Post-structuralism brought about a sea change in the study of literary discourses. These theories put a simple but inescapable condition: to approach a work of art and literature with *difference*. Art and literature present a fossilized experiential content intricately interwoven with binaries and differences. It has a goal of defamiliarization. In short, a work of art and literature is not simply a matter of enjoyment but of serious intellectual concern for both the artists and the audience. The issues relating to literary creativity and its reception is a matter of serious discussion today.

A theory always involves a perspective, a point of view or an intellectual quest (in the sense of philosophy). Philosophy being a vast domain of intellectual activities and also because it is ‘in no man’s land’ (in Bertrand Russell’s words) has always been the source and support of the intellectual activities in various disciplines. Accordingly, every literary theory assumes a philosophical context in which it is firmly rooted and in conformity with which it develops its concerns and critics of reality. It contextualises and also liberates a work of art from the context. It addresses a set of existential and aesthetic issues and provides a perspective so that it can be foregrounded examined and interpreted and deconstructed for its multi-foliated conceptual structures. It involves an internal and general theory of literary discourses.

Modern literary theories have narrowed down the gap existing between literature and philosophy. This became possible when literary and aesthetic theories acquired a great deal of autonomous disciplines. Aesthetics liberated itself from philosophy (vide the work of Shaftsbury and Bamgarton) and established itself an independent domain of enquiry. Similarly, the twentieth century marked the advent of literary theory (poetics) becoming an autonomous theoretical discipline. It overstepped the boundaries of literature as such and established free interactions with a number of discourses. Jeremy Hawthorn has rightly observed, “literary and critical theory today takes its concepts methods and terms from such a wide range of disciplines and areas of study that to keep abreast all new developments would involve the sort of study that would probably make it hard to read any literature at all”.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have also marked a growing indifference about contemporary theory as it is getting cut-off that it is supposed to be a theory of and has been termed as ‘Grandgrindian fashion’.<sup>2</sup>

But there is no doubt that the age of theory has definitely narrowed down the gap existing between philosophy and literature.<sup>3</sup> In the hierarchy of rational discourses literature is below than philosophy and history. A set of issues and assumptions is the two masters in the western traditions have formulated is still

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Hawthorn (1994, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998) *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ix; cf. Terry Eagleton, (1990) *Significance of Theory*.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Plato’s *The Republic*, Ch. 10

relevant and had been extensively responded and commented upon by the critics and theoreticians down the centuries.

We will return to this issue subsequently but before that we need to distinguish between the three associated terms for technical precision and sophistication. We alternatively use poetics, literary criticism and literary theory in general discussion on literature and aesthetics. But scholars have tried to maintain semantic distinction between them. Prof. Rene Wellek makes a remarkable observation in this regard. He distinguishes that “literary theory” is the study of principle of literature, its categories, criteria and the like, with the studies of concrete words of art are either “literary criticism” (primarily static in approach) or “literary history”.<sup>4</sup>

Rene Wellek attempts to defend the English term ‘literary theory’ as referable to “science of literature” because science has become limited to the natural sciences and suggests an emulation of the methods and claims of the natural sciences, which are both unwise and misleading. Wellek also examines another option “literary scholarship” as a possible alternative to German *literaturwissenschaft* and finds that its seems to exclude criticism, evaluation and speculation. Again literary theory is preferable to “poetics”, as in English poetry is still usually restricted to verse and has

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<sup>4</sup> Rene Wellek (1963) *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 1.

not assumed the boarder sense of German *dichtung* or Sanskrit *kavya*<sup>5</sup>. Professor Wellek opines that even poetics cannot be preferred to literary theory, as it seems to exclude the theory of other genres (such as novel). Moreover, it also has 'the handicap of suggesting perspective poetics: a set of principles obligatory for practicing poets.'<sup>6</sup>

Though literary criticism also includes literary theory in principle, it is possible to maintain a distinction between them. Literary theory takes into consideration the common issues like literature as ontology and epistemology, author-reader-text relationship, literary meaning, nature of verbal discourse, creativity and creative process, reception, validity of literary statement and many more other principles and criteria of literature.<sup>7</sup> Literary criticism is concerned with the merit of literary composition, its craft and style, form and content of an individual work and its distinctive features, its language and rhetoric etc. Prof. Kapil Kapoor observes that literary criticism make take up any or all criteria of literary theory with reference to concrete work of art ... literary criticism can often does include a reference to literary theory, in such collocations as 'theoretical literary criticism' as against 'applied literary criticism'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bhamaha, *KL, sabdarthau sahitan kavyan gadyam eadyam ca tadvidha* [word and meaning together constitute *kavya* of which prose and verse/poetry are the two forms].

<sup>6</sup> Rene Wallek , op.cit. p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Prof. Kapil Kapoor (1995) *Canonical Text of English Literary Criticism*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

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As poetics also involves an internal theory of literature we may use this term in the sense of literary theory also. The term further needs to be contextualized in the Indian *kavya* traditions. In this tradition we do not come across the problem underlined by Prof. Wellek above. In Sanskrit, *kavya shasatra*, *kavya vidya* or *sahitya shastra/vidya* not only discusses the general crafts and rhetoric's of poetry but also the theoretical and philosophical issues pertinent to its own domain of enquiry.

In India, philosophy and literary theory seem always intertwined right from the formation of the discipline.<sup>9</sup> All major literary theories and their exponents are directly or the other way related to some of the philosophical systems of India. *Rasa*, *alamkara*, *riti*, *aucitya*, *vakrokti*, *dhavni*, *guna* and *dosh* – all originate from or anticipate some philosophical environments. The 'contest of faculties' are 'hierarchy' of human discourses does not hold much relevance in the poetic traditions of India. A statement of literature is equally valid and has often been quoted by the philosophers and thinkers to expound and support their own theoretical positions. Similarly, philosophy runs through like the undercurrents of Sarasvati in all the major literary works. What one can think of a better example than *Srimadbhagavatgita* a profound philosophical treaties (*upnisad*) is also the very heart of the world's unparalleled encyclopedic epic, the *Mahabharata*. Acarya Abhinavgupta and Rajanaka Jayratha present the two outstanding examples of this common concern and

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<sup>9</sup> *KL*, Ch. V and VI

insight of these two disciplines. We will provide a Saiva perspective to this distinction subsequently. But let us first enumerate the common issues in literary theory vis-à-vis philosophy.

1. Nature of reality and its linguistic representation,
2. Nature and status of representation of reality in art,
3. Nature and source of artistic creativity,
4. Status of literature as discourse of knowledge
5. Literature as linguistic/verbal discourse,
6. Literary meaning
7. *Pratibha* in philosophy, language and poetics

These are the cardinal issues, which have been debated and discussed in both the traditions – Western and Indian. We will take note of them with a perspective from the Indian philosophy and particularly from the Saiva philosophy of Kashmir.

1. Nature of reality and its linguistic representation

The Western perception of language is essentially representational. Representation pre-supposes some present entity that is to be presented or imitated (*mimesis*). It means that any work of art and literature has to capture this *ideal* object and since the idea and its representation (image) can never be equated in all their ontological and epistemological aspects, any representation cannot be said to be perfect. This also implies that representation is always secondary in the validity of

knowledge. Since all literary and art creativities involve imitation they cannot be ranked with the valid and discourses of knowledge. Moreover, the essential nature of an object can never be represented. Just like a tree in reality cannot be same as in a painted picture. A tree grows and provides shade, as it is an ontological entity, whereas a picture of the tree is devoid of such essential attributes. A representation is always partial and the moment it is equal in all aspects of the actual object, the representation/image will cease to exist.

Representation through the medium of language makes the problem more complex. We may ask to what extent language is a competent means of representing reality. Does language represent the reality or alter it in the sense that reality represented in language is of different nature and characteristics. The issue further relates to literature also, which is a linguistic construct or enterprise in the first place. It is in this sense Plato made his famous objections regarding art and literature. Ideal is real in Plato's ontology which is universal and unique. It is the source of all creativity. The world is a projection of this ideal. The paradigm artist in Plato's philosophy is the carpenter who deals in the spatio-temporal reality. He quantifies, cuts and rearranges the parts out of the integral whole of the log of wood. The couch, which makes is the first deviation (*bhanga*) from the ideal image of it. Secondly, a painter depicts it in the form of a picture. This is the second deviation. Thirdly

comes the poet who describes the object in words and hence literature is thrice removed, displaced or deviated from the reality.<sup>10</sup>

The involvement of language makes the depiction of reality somehow more complex. Language always involves a space, an absence, and difference. It hides as well as reconstitutes the reality. Differences among the individuals are quite explicit even though they belong to the same conceptual category. No two cows are same but the same term is applied to all the individual cows. The difference existing between the two individuals is lost over in this process of 'linguaging'. Similarly, language creates differences and discreteness in the single cognition or event. For example, "Hari cooks rice" is a single event and all the components are integrated into each other. But in language, it appears like, three discrete objects sequentially arranged. Moreover, language involves form rather than the substance. The moment we make pitcher its substance, a lump of clay gets hidden. With the same substance, we give it another form and the language has a particular name for that; for example, elephant.

We face a number of queries regarding this representation or imaging principle in language. First question directly relates to the nature of these images itself. An image is a conceptual construct of the ontological entity. A sense of meaning and alternative is always implicit in it. It always – re-present the object. It is of universal and conceptual nature. The relationship between an image/sign,

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Ch. 10.

meaning and the object itself appears different in various philosophical systems in India and also as it has been discussed by the contemporary European scholars.

In a realist system the relationship between a sign and the object is direct because such a system expounds that the world of our experience is real and it is *namadheya* (nameable) and *abhidheya* (knowable). A sign or image deserves a greater epistemological strength in a realist system. In the taxonomy of Indian philosophical systems, Mimamsa and Nyaya-Vaisesika systems represent this school of thought. Here the relationship that holds between word and the object is direct. This can be illustrated as follows:

*vikalpa* (word) / ————— / *padartha* (object/ image)

(Figure 1)

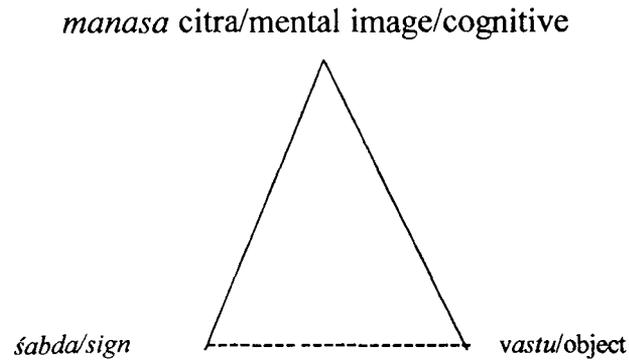
These systems posit that this image or *vikalpa* is positive, real, ontological, universal and individual and direct. Naturally, *sabda* is a valid means of knowledge in this system. We don't find any Western counterpart of this philosophical system.

In an idealist system, like *Vedanta* and *Vyakarana* it is a mental image, indirect, both individual as well as universal and of form and substance, identical with the object, given (*nitya*)<sup>11</sup> and ontological (*padartha rupa*). This involves a

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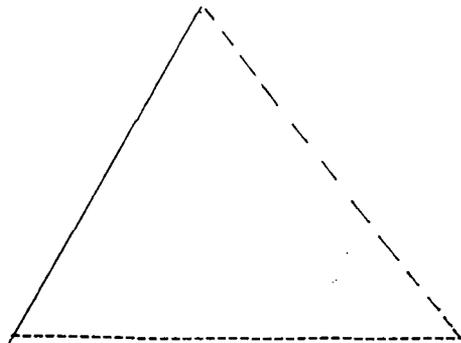
<sup>11</sup> *MBh.* Paspasahnika. Patanjali quotes Katyayani's *Varttika: siddhe sabdartha sambandhe* / Bhartrihari also states: *nityah sabdartha sambandhah* / [VP I.23].

three-fold relationship between the image/word, mental image and the object. It can be illustrated with this triangle:



(Figure 2)

Though belonging to the same idealist fold the Buddhist school of thought offers rather a more complex picture of this relationship which can be illustrated as such:

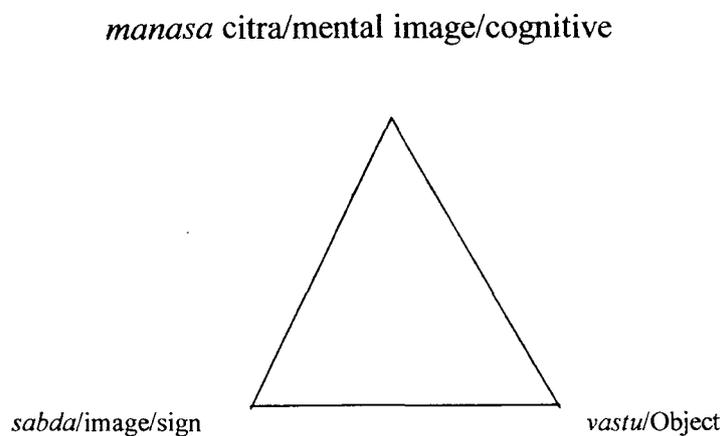


(Figure 3)

In the Buddhist system, as expounded by Dinaga and Dharmakirti sourced by a long tradition of thought, a sign is only *vikalpatamaka* (conceptual or imaginative), *apohatmaka* (differential), unreal, universal and pragmatic. This has no ontological

validity and even in epistemology, its domain is strictly defined as *samvriti* (phenomenal) which cannot even touch the ontological entity.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in the *Saiva* philosophy of Kashmir, since this system of thought posits the theory of *abhasa* and *svantantrya* (appearance and absolute freedom of creative will) it evolves the unique position in Indian theories of meaning. Though *Saiva* philosophers nowhere discuss any theory of meaning as such explicitly on the basis of their theoretical accounts, we may present the following picture:



In this system *sabda*, in its all three meanings as speech sound, word and language is ontological and real. The system acquires a unique synthetic and middle position between the two extremes and tries to fulfill the theoretical space created by the other systems of thought. Between the two extremes like the *Nyaya* and *Buddhism*, between ‘everything exists’ and ‘nothing exists’, this system holds that

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<sup>12</sup> TH. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic* (1993), Vol. II, p. 403.

every appearance is real as that is partial or complete manifestation of the ultimate reality, Paramasiva. Also, the relation that holds between different objects or *appearances* is very much real as nothing is isolated from its sole substratum. Naturally, the relationship that holds between world/image/sign, mental image and the object is real. All these three elements deserve ontological status in the Saiva or Trika system of Kashmir. The system holds that the manifest world is *vangmaya* and blissful projection of the Universal Self. We will be discussing the Saiva concept of *Vak* in full detail as this constitutes the subject matter of the third chapter of this work.

We can posit here two facts.

1. As compared to the discussion on the nature of sign, its epistemic and ontological concerns, the relationship between the three components of signification in the Indian traditions, the West presents a singular picture that can be broadly represented by what we know as **Ogden- Richard's Triangle (cf. Figure 2)**.

2. In all these philosophical systems, either Indian or Western, there is no denial of the cognitive nature of sign. In the Indian tradition, Bhartrhari, the foremost of all the philosophers of language categorically declares that our knowledge is simply a linguistic construct.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> VP 1. 123 *Jnanan sarvan sabdena bhaste.*

## 2. Nature and status of representation of reality in art

Representation is an important topic in art and aesthetics as well. Here, it is the relation of a depiction to what it is a depiction of, in virtue of which it is a depiction of that item is a matter of concern.<sup>14</sup> In art and aesthetics, representation commonly refers to the pictorial representation. As a portrait or picture of *Shakespeare* represents Shakespeare. There could be many representations in the same relation with the original object (Shakespeare in this context). Plato's *Republic* again remains the patronymic text in this regard.<sup>15</sup> Socrates says that anyone such a 'craftsman', if he she carries a mirror about him/her which contains a reflection of the object around is also a kind of representation. A painter is a craftsman of this sort. Like the other activities of art, painting also involves a process of mimesis. Modern scholars like Hans George Gadamer and many others have found the translation of mimesis as 'imitation' too narrow. Mimesis also involves a process and a sense of making the absent present, which once allows the relevance of sheer imitation and makes more sense of the ontological up short of Plato's treatment. Indian aesthetics also discusses this issue at great length. Texts like *Sukranitisara*, *Panchavimsa Brahmana*, *Divyavadana*, *Aitareya Brahamana* and many more discusses representation in the context of art and aesthetics. There is a significance difference between representation through symbol and picture. Symbol

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<sup>14</sup> David Cooper (ed. 1992/77), *A Companion to Aesthetics*, p. 364.

<sup>15</sup> *The Republic*, Book 10, 596, c6.

is always indirect and involves a mental processing. Picture on the other hand is a visual perception and hence is direct.

All art is imagination or a presentation of images, which relates to the references originally in the mind of the artist. Aitareya Brahmana<sup>16</sup> states, 'it is *anukrti* (imitation) of the *deva* (angelic) work of *silpa* (art) is *adhigama* (arrived) here; ... a true work of art is accomplished in him who comprehends this'. Imaging in the Indian system is a form of yoga and only with this power of concentration an artist can visualize the form like the cosmic dancer, Siva (Nataraja) in his mind and latter on can make it externalized. Image is so crucial to a pagan culture like India and ancient Greece that all its crucial cultural facets manifest through it. Prof. Masson-Oursel rightly observes, "Indian art is aiming at something quite other than coping of nature. What we assume, quite superficially, to be the inspiration of an *art for art's sake*, really proceeds from a religious scholasticism that it implies a traditional classification of types established by convention. If here or there, a relief or painting exhibits some features drawn from life, it is only accidentally that the artist has, in spite of himself, transcribes from something Nature<sup>17</sup>; and this is certainly, from the indigenous point of view, the least material part of his work".

One may clearly observe the distinction of representation in art in Indian and the Western traditions. Mimesis remains the central principle. This is the close imitation

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<sup>16</sup> Aitareya Brahmana VI. 27

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in A.K. Coomaraswamy, (1994), *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 117.

of Nature that brings aesthetic merit and excellence to a work of art in the Western context. Indian view attaches more importance on creativity. As language is a creative or constitutive principle in Indian thought, similarly, image making also involves a great deal of creativity and in this process the artist or creator enjoys great liberty. Representation in Indian context can only be studied at different times a greater or less degree of consciousness, a greater or less energy, the criteria are degrees of vitality, unity, grace and the like but never of illusion<sup>18</sup>. The creative process and objective of representation in Indian tradition differ significantly from the West. Here the creative process involves a deep meditation in which the object is clearly visualized and then remains a secondary stage of manifesting it in the relevant medium in which the artist is working. The Siva system, in the theory of abhasa expounds that for an artist or a poet even appearance is sufficient for his purpose that is as real as the object itself. Such contexts emerge only if a philosophical system is more comprehensive and consistent with all the forms of reality.

So, we can conclusively submit that the representation of reality in art in the West does not share much validity as it does in the Indian conceptual framework.

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.117.

### 3. Nature and source of artistic creativity

In the Western philosophical traditions, issues have been discussed relating to the nature of creativity, its sources and the status of artist. Is creativity a deliberate or conscious effort or it is an outcome of some inspiration, unpremeditated spontaneous overflow? An what is the artist? Is he a creator or a craftsman? If he is a creator, then he is a divinely inspired being and the work itself is a product of this divine inspiration. This view is broadly upheld by the Romantic traditions in the West and this broadly manifests through the poetical and critical writings of the British Romantics like William Blake, William Wordsworth, Shelley and others. Here, imagination is the chief source of creativity, which has been defined as ‘divine inspiration or intuition’. Of all the British Romantic poets, Blake seems to be the most revolutionary poet and visionary in his conception of imagination. Blake declares, “One power alone makes a poet: Imagination, The Divine Vision”<sup>19</sup>. In this process of creativity, imagination creates a reality and this creation of reality has been considered as divine and ‘unimpeded energy’. This is also an activity of turning objects into symbols of greater realities. Blake in his exceptionally prophetic style expounds, “this world of imagination is the world of eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after the vegetated body”<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in C.M. Bowra’s (1973) *The Romantic Imagination*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p. 3.

S. T. Coleridge makes an important observation regarding this creative process, “it was the union of deep feeling with profound thought, a fine balance of truth in observing, with divine imaginative faculty in modifying the object of obscured ...”.<sup>21</sup> In the same tradition of creativity and its source (i.e., divine inspiration, Shelly wishes to become ‘thy lyre’ or the divine lyre. Here, the artist is not free to choose or decide the subject matter of his work. A divine wish manifests through him and he has to be its competent instrument only. His greatness or originality lies in this very fact.

Contrary to this viewpoint, is the concept of artist as a craftsman who is free to choose the object of representation. Reason and not imagination is his guiding principle through which he enjoys more freedom and activity in relation to his work. His creativity is a rational process and art is a deliberate and well thought out product of reason.

The perception of language as a medium of expression and also as content of thought widely differs in these two (classical verses romantic) approaches. As a craftsman, an artist is the master of his medium and he manipulates it and in this process, creates meaning. As a creator, the medium exists outside the domain of his well and a reality autonomous of the creator manifests through it.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Biographia Literaria*, I.59 (in praise of William Wordsworth) p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> See Prof. Kapil Kapoor and Ranga Kapoor (1995) *Canonical Texts of English Literary Criticism*. Pp. 32-33.

Indian thinkers present a more coherent and comprehensive concept of nature and sources of artistic creativity. Here the artist or poet before getting involved in actual writing goes in deep meditation and through the concentration, he perceives his object of creation or art. He is a yogi who creates the object through the mental vision. He is not dependent on any *upadana* (material) or *nimitta* (efficient) causes. The form he creates is imminent in the medium. His creativity lies in the fact to manifest it. When the wheel of the potter (unlike, the carpenter in the West) sets in motion, a transformation/creation takes place:

1. *dravya* (substance) becomes *rupa* (form)
2. *amurta* (non-manifest) becomes *murta* (murta)
3. real becomes actual

When the object in deep meditation is perceived the task of the artist is over right there. What remains is merely a matter of externalization through the adequate medium. There is a unity of 'craft' and 'creation' in the Indian view of art. *Sukranitisara* lays equal importance to the craftsmanship as well, "only an image made in accordance with the canon can be called beautiful; some may think that beautiful which corresponds to their own fancy, but not in accordance with canon is

unlovely to the discerning life”.<sup>23</sup> There is a complete process involved in creativity. At the first stage, if the method of yog is employed where the realization of identity of consciousness and the object is achieved. This stage is the stage of *dhyana mantra*. The second stage is of making the artifact on the basis of description visualized at the first stage. The third and the final stage involves *para-rupa* (trans-form) where the object in mental perception becomes actual. Coomaraswamy explicates the seven steps in the artistic creation from some Buddhist sources:<sup>24</sup>

1. The artist, (*sadhaka yogin*) ceremonially purifies himself.
2. He withdraws to a solitary place.
3. There he offers daily acts of worship to the deities and the deity.
4. He “must realize in though the four infinite moods of friendliness, compassion, sympathy and impartiality”.
5. Then he must meditate on the cast emptiness (*sunyata*). (This idea of the abyss destroys the *ahamkara*, the ego-consciousness.)
6. Then “he should invoke the desired divinity of the desired utterance of the appropriate *bija*”. (The mystical letter forming the essential part of the mantra of a deity.)
7. Finally, on pronouncing the *dhyana mantra* (description of the personal attributes of the deity), the divinity appears visibly, “like a reflection’ or “as a dream”.

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<sup>23</sup> *Sukranitisara*, edited by Vidyasagar, Calcutta, 1890. Quoted in A.K. Coomaraswamy (1994) *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup> Coomaraswamy, (1957) *The Dance of Siva*, p. 27.

This process of conceptualization and this is the reason also that the technical craftsman in the Indian tradition has been named as silpin (architect), yogin, yogi, sadhaka, rupakara, pratimakara (imager). Art is essentially a yoga in this tradition – a yoga of meditation and concentration in which the artist becomes one with his object. It is in this deep concentration the poet or any other creative artist might have first of all, visualized, the form of Nataraja and his cosmic dance. Tirumular gives a lovely depiction of it along with its suggestiveness :

*“The dancing foot, the sound of the thikling bells,  
the songs that are sung, the various steps,  
the forms assumed by our master as He dances,  
discover these in your own heart,  
so all shall your bounds be broken.”<sup>25</sup>*

As discussed in the Introduction part of this work, agamic literature is rich in literary and aesthetic content. This has inspired a number of lovely poetic compositions in which Siva has been depicted in exceptionally rich fashion. The theoretical support also comes from those philosophical systems, which are rooted in the *agama*. The Trika philosophy of Kashmir, posits that the manifest world is *prakasavimarsamaya* that is of the nature of light and consciousness. Vimarsa is the creative aspect of Paramasiva, which is independent and absolute. Even the technical terminology of this philosophy has a close link of literary and aesthetic issues. Sometimes one wonders, weather this whole philosophical system developed

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<sup>25</sup> Coomaraswamy, (1994) *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 166.

as an aesthetic philosophy<sup>26</sup>. The support of artist as yogi also broadly confirms this philosophical system. Like a yogi, or an artist, Siva, with His Sakti manifests this world on the canvass of His self.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. Status of literature as discourse of knowledge

The Western intellectual traditions records two ambivalent views regarding the status of literature as discourse of knowledge. Literary discourse is characterized by imaginative fanciful and charming. The poet largely depends on the figurative devices for the expression of his thoughts and feelings. Also, the mode of perception of reality or the approach to reality of a poet significantly defers from those of the philosopher or historian. In this context, it is relevant to ask how far is the literary discourse reliable as epistemology and what is the validity and credibility of a statement made by a poet. Is literature a serious discourse at all?

In Plato's philosophy, one may mark this dichotomy of philosophy and literature or in other words, the opposition of reason and emotion. In this hierarchy of discourses, literature is ranked below that philosophy and history and the truth depicted here is thrice removed from reality. The truth of Herodotus, is more reliable than that of Homer. Again the figurative mode of expression alters the reality of a poet in a very significant manner. Since poets themselves claim that they compose

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<sup>26</sup> SS III. 2. 9-11

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when they are not in their normal self (divine madness)<sup>28</sup>. Plato is more skeptical about their statements and he observes that the poets were not able to explain the meanings of their own poems which any of the by standards could have explained them better. If the poet himself is not able to explain his own composition how far it is justified to explore the poet's intention in a work.<sup>29</sup> In fact, a hierarchy is implicit in Plato's notion of knowledge and reality. In his ontology, which is widely known as *line image*.<sup>30</sup> He posits a vertical ordering of knowledge in which intelligible is higher than the visible. Poets copy the *appearances* of reality, which are illusory in Platonian paradigm. Plato categorically states:

“For surely no craftsman makes the idea itself’. It is like reflecting something in a mirror. What we ‘create’ or ‘craft’ is:

“... the appearance of them, but not the reality ... only a dim adumbration in comparison with reality.”

God is “the real author of the couch that has a real being ...” and the carpenter is the maker of the couch. The painter who paints the couch is an *imitator*.<sup>31</sup>

In Plato's philosophy all arts are mimetic and hence hold less validity in the hierarchy of rational discourses. Since literature also a representational or mimetic in

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<sup>28</sup> Plato's *Ion*

<sup>29</sup> Plato's *Apology*.

<sup>30</sup> Plato's *Republic*, Book 6.

<sup>31</sup> Plato's *Republic*, Book 10.

its very conception it cannot be acceptable as a valid means of knowledge. In *Thaetetus* Plato also discusses about the nature of knowledge. He deliberates upon whether knowledge is positive, differential or negative. However, Plato doesn't hold the possibility of a pre-existing knowledge of difference. He perceives this phenomena as vicious circle and one need to get out of it.

We cannot accommodate Buddhist theory of meaning and knowledge in Plato's theoretical model. Though this is a theory of *difference* but it involves major concerns of Buddhist ontology and epistemology. Moreover, a linguistic sign is a kind of inferential sign in the Buddhist thought and it doesn't involve the *paramartha satta* (transcendental truth).

In Plato's framework literature is a weak epistemology because it follows appearances, which are illusory and hence unreal.

Plato's theoretical position on literature as discourse of knowledge has been countered by his own disciples Aristotle. Aristotle builds up counter argument and establishes that actions of human beings are the objects of imitations.<sup>32</sup>

Aristotle holds that truth of poetry is universal and hence not localized like the truth of history or of other disciplines. In effect, comprehensiveness and reception

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<sup>32</sup> Aristotle's *Poetics*, 2

poetic truth is far more pervasive than the truth depicted in philosophy or history. So in this Aristotelian theory Homer restores his glorious positions.

The Indian poetics have also discussed this issue with great insights and sophistication. *Kavyajnana* (poetic truth) is compatible with the reality. However, there is no doubt literary expressions are highly symbolic, metaphorical and *defamiliarized*. Here the poet doesn't rely much on the literal meaning of a world but he resorts to the implied or suggested sense. In great poetry the suggested meaning/ *vyanjana* predominates. Literary expressions are archaic and oblique and demands a rigorous training in poetics and literary theory. It is noteworthy that literary cognition or knowledge has been assigned a distinct category as *alaukika* because it is *vilaksana jnana* (distinct knowledge).<sup>33</sup> As experience of the real self or the universal self also be difficult to categorized, both literary as well as the experience of Brahama has been given the same categorial status.

##### 5. Literature as linguistic/verbal discourse.

We have already discussed some of the issue relating to language and literature under the topic 1. Reality seen through prism of language is never the same. While using the language we deal with conceptual constructs. Since literature is primarily a linguistic enterprise all the issues related to language are equally pertinent to literature also. We have already posited that language has a representational role in

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<sup>33</sup> *Abh.* Ch. 6 on Bharata's NS

the western linguistic perception. The fact is implicit in this correspondence theory of languages is that reality always receipts knowledge and its expression in language. In the western classical thought is only a medium and not a content of expression. Language has no cognitive role to perform in theory of knowledge. This is one of the reason that even literature was denied its status in the classical discorsal paradigm. Indian perception of language is significantly different from that of west. Here language is constitutive and cognitive in its very nature. Rgveda declares that language cuts many fold form in the ocean of reality.<sup>34</sup>

Language is central to all the major philosophical system. It is not only medium but also cognition itself. So literature linguistic discourse is richer in its cognitive contents and multi-foliated meaning.

#### 6. Literary meaning

The west being a bibliolatrous culture with a central scripture (the Bible) perceives a text intrinsically related to its author. The presence of a Book (Logos) at the very root of the culture involve many crucial issues and debates, which are pertinent even in literary and philosophical discourses. The author's meaning or intention became the goal of literary speculations. It is only a recent phenomena that the west gave up habit of reading a text with the authorial dominance. Text got liberated not only form author's hold but also from the concepts and became the self-

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<sup>34</sup> Rgveda, I. 164.49

content entity. Reader has a greater space now to constitute his own meaning out of the conceptual structure implicit in the text. Meaning is open ended deferred and always in flux. William Ray makes a remarkable observation while reviewing the nature of literary meaning from Phenomenology to deconstruction: that meaning as it pertains to literature, always seems to have at least two meanings, each of which entails a different, and frequently contrary theory literary work, as well as a distinct critical practice.<sup>35</sup>

Literary meaning has always been a matter of central concern in Indian poetics. The very real realization of the fact that the word and meaning together constitute *kavya* (poetry) is its evidence latter on poeticsians like Anandavardana, Abhinavgupta, and Mammata offer a detailed framework of literary meaning which is known as the *dhvani* theory of suggestion. The approach to literature has been largely linguistic and textual. There is no question of involving the authorial intention or meaning in reading the Indian classical texts because the author does not exist there. Neither there is any claim to be the original exponent or thinker. This may only demean the status of the exponent even he is remarkably original and fresh in his vision and mode of exposition. Neither there is much expectation from the readers as well. Abhinavgupta states, "May this exposition be helpful to all the

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<sup>35</sup> William Ray (1984), *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction*, pp. 1-2.

people of slow understanding, or to some of the key understanding but if to none, at least to myself.”<sup>36</sup>

#### 7. Pratibha in philosophy, language and poetics

Western linguistic and literary theories refer to ‘innate ability’ and ‘genius’ as the sources of creativity and reception of the work of art in literature and aesthetics. *Pratiba* (prati+bha+ka+tap) has several meanings like vision, light, intellect, imaginative faculty and counter image or reflection (pratibimba). It has been central to the philosophical linguistic and poetic speculations of Indian theoreticians. Three terms *pratiba*, *sakti* and *vimarsa* are synonymous in all the three disciplines philosophy, language and literary theory. Mammata<sup>37</sup> and Rudrata<sup>38</sup> prefer the term *sakti*, which is a technical term in Trik philosophy and is identical with the power of Siva. This has several names like *vimarsa*, *citi*, *chaitanya* etc. This is the power through which the Supreme Self manifests His creation.

Bhartrhari gives a full-fledged formulation of the doctrine of *pratibha* in his *Vakyapadiya* also discusses the concept of *pratibha* in the context of grammar. This is the ability of comprehend sentential meaning.<sup>39</sup>

These are the core common issues discussed at length in both the disciplines and have contributed in enriching each other’s domain of enquiry. We may note here

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<sup>36</sup> IPV 1.1.1

<sup>37</sup> KP 1.1

<sup>38</sup> KL 115.17

<sup>39</sup> VP II

that the gap existing between philosophy and literature in Plato's framework has been narrowed down in contemporary discourses. The reason seems to be the acceptance of language at the heart of the matter. Philosophy of language is open to both philosophy and literature. The concerns of language are not merely linguistic but also philosophical and literary and this thesis has been widely discussed, debated and finally accepted in the contemporary rational discourses.