CHAPTER II
SYMBOLISM: ITS NATURE & SCOPE

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2.0 Symbol

A symbol, in general, means a mark that stands for something relatively abstract. "For example a cross X is a symbol that stands for the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, i.e., his crucifixion on the cross, besides being a symbol of a Christian. Similarly, words are also symbols that stand for objects." (Jindal & Pushpinder, 1998 : 9) For example the word 'Table' stands for an object consisting of a wooden board supported by four legs. A symbol is also arbitrary that stands for the actual thing. "The word 'rain' is not the actual rain, but serves as a symbol of rain. Its relationship to the actual rain is arbitrary - the word 'rain' is not, for example, wet. In fact, the symbol rain is not any wetter than the symbol dry. Symbols do not possess any of the qualities or characteristics of the thing for which they stand. The word 'small' is actually larger than the word 'big' and the symbol 'green' on this paper is just as black as the symbols 'black' and 'white'. (Devito, 1970 : 7)

A symbol is a kind of sign that signifies several concepts and there is the primary relationship between signifier and signified. That is, the word 'tree' signifies the concept of tree - this is the primary relationship. It may also signify 'life
growth', etc., and when it does, it becomes not only a sign, but also a symbol. So a symbol is built up of several associative relationships between the signifiers and the signifieds. (Cf. Jindal & Pushpinder, 1998 : 31)

"Whitfick regarded a symbol as that which stands for something else. From its etymology, symbolism means a 'bringing together, and this derivation is the logical antecedent of current conceptions, for symbolism is an apposition of ideas and objects, one of which expresses the other. A symbol is either an object which stands for another object, or else for an idea. A manual posture which 'stands for' a letter of the alphabet, or a numeral, or a word is in many respects symbolic." (Critchley, 1975 : 53) Other examples of symbols are the 'conventional signs' for churches, railways, etc. on maps, road signs, and the colours of traffic lights.

The arbitrariness of symbols does not leave a choice. "As Saussure has phrased it, in a now famous passage "the term [arbitrary] should not imply that the choice of the signifier [that is, symbol] is left entirely to the speaker ------- I mean that it is unmotivated, that is, arbitrary, in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified". (Devito, 1970 : 7)
Symbols are made of any substance. "They are made of rock as in the case of the pyramids, which are symbols of royalty; of cloth or colour as in the case of wearing black for mourning or purple for royalty, of ink as in the case of writing; and of course of sound as in the case of speech." (Devito, 1970: 08)

A symbol is based on a learned traditional relation, attributed contiguity, between form and meaning. This relation is completely arbitrary, and this is exactly the basic characteristic of the symbol. "Some examples of the meanings of symbols are, words like af-af represent the barking of dogs and cock-e-doodle-do represent the crowing of a cock. The symbols have meaning for one social group also." (Lehmann, 1972: 20-21) Symbolical quality is one of the things that makes human language so powerful a tool. The symbolical utterance can refer to things out of sight, to the past and the future, to the hypothetical and the possible. The change from expressive cry to vocal symbol marks the great leap forward of intellect, from animal to human. (Barber, 1964: 25)

In a symbol-systems language occupies a special place, for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is almost wholly based on pure convention. The second special feature of
language is that it is put in a unique position. "Language alone is able to relate its symbols to every part and every sort of human experience and to all the furniture of earth and heaven; and for this reason all other symbol-systems are explained by reference to it. (Robins, 1964 : 14)

Symbols are essentially words which are not only connotative, but also evocative and emotive. They also evoke before the mind's eye a host of associations connected with them, and are also rich in emotional significance. "For example the word 'lily' merely connotes a 'flower' but it also evokes images of beauty, innocence and emotional overtone of pity, resulting from suffering or oppression. In this way, through symbols a writer can express much more than by the use of ordinary words : symbols make the language rich and expressive. Concepts which by their very nature are inexpressible can be conveyed in this way. Thus a symbol can be used to convey "pure sensations". (Handa, 2003 : 54)

Symbolism is truly an indirect mode of expression which suggests much more than is actually described. It deals with the infinite and the total, and expresses the spiritual and the abstract through the concrete object. Symbolic art is difficult, complex and obscure. "Symbols may be of two kinds
traditional, and (2) personal. Traditional symbols are stock symbols which have been in general use. For example, 'rose' is a traditional symbol of beauty and has been used by writers from the earliest times. Personal symbols, on the other hand, are devised by the writer for his own purposes to express the vague fleeting impressions passing through his mind or to convey his own sense of the mystery of life. They express the writer's experiences often mystical in nature; as the readers are not familiar with such symbols, they create difficulties for them, though at the same time they enhance the richness of the language". (Handa, 2003 : 54)

2.1 **Language as a Symbol**

Language is a form of symbolism which is the most highly developed, most subtle and most complicated as a symbol. By agreement, human beings can make anything stand for anything. "Various noises that human beings can produce with their lungs, throats, tongues, teeth and lips stand for specified happenings in their nervous systems. We call that system language. For example, when our nervous systems register the presence of a certain kind of animal, we may make the noise : "There's a cat". Anyone hearing us will experience a similar event in his nervous system. Again when we are
conscious of wanting food, we make the noise "I'm hungry". (Hayakawa, 1974 : 24)

According to Bloch and Trager: A Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. (Householder, 1971 : 28)

"Language is a potentially self reflexive, structured system of symbols which catalog the objects, events and relations in the world and by means of which members of a social group interact." (Devito, 1970 : 07)

"There is no necessary connection between the symbol and that which is symbolized. Just as man can make the noise "I'm hungry" without being hungry. Just as social rank can be symbolized by feathers in the hair, by tattooing on the breast by gold ornaments on the watch chain, so the fact of being hungry can be symbolised by a thousand different noises according to the culture we live in." (Hayakawa, 1974 : 25)

Symbols and things symbolized are independant of each other. "For example the little boy who was reported to have said "Pigs are called pigs because they are such dirty animals", here appears that the symbol is inherently connected in some way with the thing symbolized. There are the people

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who feel that since snakes are "nasty, slimy creatures", the word "snake" is a nasty, slimy word. (Hayakawa, 1974 : 25). Sometimes the symbols represent things, but used to represent ideas, for example the circle comes to be not only the sun, but also heat, or light, or a god associated with the sun. (Wallwork, 1969 : 21)

Languages are composed of symbols. Language clearly includes conventional symbols, and as a great many different symbols are involved in it. It is regarded as incorporating symbol systems. "The functions of symbols are determined by their relationship to other entities in the system. The meaning of station is circumscribed by other words possible in the same context: airport, school, super market and so on. The meaning of 'Could you tell me?' is circumscribed by other possible arrangements, such as 'You could tell me', and so on. Throughout language the functions of symbols are determined by their relationship to other entities in that language." (Lehmann, 1972 : 18)

When a speaker of any language wants to communicate with another fellow-being, he puts his message across in the form of symbols (in speech). "The receiver of the message who shares a common code with the sender of the message,
decodes this message sent in the form of symbols and interprets these to arrive at a certain meaning." (Jindal & Pushpinder, 1998 : 9) Thus, language is a symbol-system, though different languages use different symbols.

Language is considered a set of symbols. The nature of language-symbols are different from the symbols of other types of communication. The simplest non-linguistic symbol is a substitute stimulus. Non-linguistic symbols can also be substitute responses and these can also be taught to animals. A dog who learns to "speak" at the sight of food has learned such a substitute response. We can talk about things which are not present, and we can talk about things which ordinarily produce a strong physical reaction without experiencing that reaction. For instance, we can talk about apples even though there are none in the room, and we can talk about them without always making our mouth water even when we are hungry. This type of language is obviously of great importance.

Language itself is a symbol. It is used by humans to convey meaning and symbols stand for meanings of language. (Hall Jr., 1969 : 264) "There is a specific symbol in each language. There are usually a few words in a language that
can only be used as a symbol. (Levinson, 1997 : 65) Some examples given below in the following cases are the symbolic usages in language:

(a) What did you say?

(b) Hello, is Harry there?

(c) Let's go today rather than tomorrow.

(Levinson, 1997 : 66)

"Thus symbolic usages require for their interpretation only knowledge of the basic spatio-temporal parameters of the speech event." (Levinson, 1997 : 65) "Languages often make sure a distinct way of self-introduction through symbols. Visual symbols are quite widely used, as when a red-and-white pole tells us that the shop in front of which it stands belongs to a barber. In cases of this kind, the visual symbol is related directly to a feature of the world around us, of real life." (Hall Jr., 1969 : 264)

"Language symbolises one aspect or another. The letters, characters or other features of writing symbolize only real life meaning. In language, writing symbolizes speech, and speech in its turn stands for real-life meaning." (Ibid.)

When we examine the behaviour of infants and young
children, we see that they use symbolic means to convey their intentions. When a child utters 'da', that refers to the act of giving and that means the child wants an object from an adult. When a child says 'woo-woo', 'mao-mao' and 'kua-kua' means child refers to dogs, cats, and ducks. Thus we see that the young children have symbolic capacity to express their intentions. They use referential symbols in their language.

Thus we can say that language is a powerful symbol of our feelings, emotions and ideas. It is a symbol of identity, a tool of cultural transformation and an important factor in social relationship. Symbolism is one of the most affective device of language. It is probably the most important of all the means by which language develops, changes, grows and makes suitable itself to our changing needs.

2.2 Symbolism as an Art

Man crystallizes his knowledge and his feelings in phonetic symbols and written symbols. He collects knowledge and passes it onto his further generations. "Man uses symbols to establish laws and ethical systems. For human beings, acquiring knowledge, securing food, establishing social order, each of these activities involves a symbolic dimension."
"Most explanations of the necessity or value of literature or the other arts take the form of symbols." (1974: 125)

A human being, however, not only undergoes experience but also symbolizes his experience. Man uses very adequate and sufficiently skilful 'symbolic art' to classify his experiences and feelings. (Cf. Hayakawa, 1974: 125) We employ symbolizations as mechanisms of relief when the pressures of a situation become intolerable. (Ibid, 126)

Symbolism gives artistic or aesthetic value to literature and language. Many critics and writers have used symbolism in writings for giving their work an artistic value. Symbolism has been used in poetry, drama and fiction by the authors. It has made their work beautiful. That is why symbolism has been called an art.

Symbolism is called an "equipment for living". (Hayakawa, 1974: 129). Literature becomes artistic by the use of symbolism. When used in literature it gives the reader enjoyment. Symbolism is very useful to fulfil a necessary biological function. It helps us to maintain psychological health and equilibrium. (Cf. Hayakawa, 1974: 128-129)
One's physical health has to be maintained by food and exercise, it would appear that one's psychological health too has to be maintained in the very course of living by 'nourishment' at the level of effective symbols. Literature introduces us to new sources of delight; it makes us feel that we are not alone in our misery; it shows us our own problems in a new light; it suggests new possibilities to us and opens new areas of possible experience; it offers us a variety of "symbolic art" by means of which we can "encompass" our situations. (Hayakawa, 1974 : 129)

Literature is an instrument for maintaining sanity. The symbolic art devised by extremely tortured people like Dostoyevsky or Donne or Shelly for the encompassing of their situations are valuable. They mixed themselves as powerful medicines against their ills, and their medicines not only help us to encompass whatever similar tortures we may be suffering from, but may serve also as antitoxins for future sufferings. (Ibid., 130)

To symbolize one's experiences sufficiently and then to order them into a united whole constitute an art. The novelist, or dramatist or poet has successfully made complete
and given coherence to vast areas of human experience through the symbols. (Ibid., 133) The author achieved his equilibrium works by symbolic art.

The use of symbolism makes the writings "universal" and "undying" (Ibid., 130) The Symbolism adorns literature and art with charm. Art seeks to define feelings by externalizing them, by giving them significant form and for this it uses symbols. That is why the use of symbols in literature is an art. Art finds expression in symbol.

2.3 **Symbols in art**

The symbols in art are metaphors, similes and images etc. All these symbols are meaningful. All these have particular meaning. Meanings that are arbitrary and conventional are called symbolic, and their forms are symbols. Symbols are ornaments of literature and language. "The symbols in art have no any strict structure, since they are conceptual in nature. Symbols in art are suggestive. The function of symbol is to suggest anything. Language uses these arbitrary symbols to sketch non-arbitrary pictures." (Singh, 1987: 95)

Symbols are the effective device in art. We may refer
to the moon as "a piece of cheese", "a lady", "a silver ship", "a fragment of angry candy", or any thing else, so long as the words arouse the desired feelings toward the moon or toward the whole situation in which the moon appears. (Hayakawa, 1974 : 105-106) Metaphors and similes are like embroidery which improves the appearance of our linen. In art, symbols are direct expressions of evaluations and are bound to happen whenever we have strong feelings to express. They are found in special abundance, therefore in all primitive speech, in the speech of the unlearned, in the speech of children, and in the professional group of theater people of gangsters, and of those in other lively occupations. (Ibid., 106) Symbols in art have been used by many poets, dramatists and novelists.

Some symbols are "conventional"; thus "the cross", "the Red, White, and Blue", "the Good shepherd" are terms that signify symbolic objects of which the further significance is fixed and traditional in a particular culture. Poets use such conventional symbols; many poets also use "personal symbols". They do so by widely shared associations with an object or action - for example, they associate a peacock with pride and an eagle with heroic endeavor, the rising sun with birth and the setting sun with death, climbing with effort and descent

As an example the word "rose", which in its literal meaning is a kind of flower. In Burn's line, "O my love's like a red, red rose", the word "rose" is a simile; and in the lines by Winthrop Mackworth Praed:

"She was our queen, our rose, our star;
And then she danced - O Heaven her dancing!"

the word "rose" is a metaphor. Then we see William Blake's poem "The sick Rose" :

"O Rose, thou art sick,
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm :
Has found out thy bed of crimson joy :
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy."

This rose is not the simile or metaphor, because it lacks the paired subject - "my love" or the girl referred to as "she", in the examples just cited, which is characteristic of these figures. It is not an allegorical rose since it is not part (62)
of an obvious double order of correlated references, one literal and the second allegorical, in which the allegorical reference of the rose is exactly fixed by its function within the literal narrative. Blake's rose is a rose yet it is also something more than a rose. Blake's rose is a personal symbol. (Abrams, 1978: 169-170)

Different critics of the poem have proposed differing interpretations of its symbolic significance. Many private symbols are an irreplaceable literary device. They suggest a direction, or a broad area of reference rather than like an item in an allegorical narrative, a single and specific reference.

Symbols in art produce an effective communication. They are strong communicative device in language and literature. Symbols in art function as connotators and are made up of the signs of the denoted system. Symbols have become so much a part of art and language.

2.4 Art Symbol

According to Langer, a work of art is an 'Art symbol'. It is an expressive form whose constitutive units are symbols in art. It does not point to any meaning beyond itself. Art symbol is a single organic composition. A writer has
analysed Art Symbol can be analysed by applying semiotic and phenomenological principles. Art symbol is verbal in nature. The function of art symbol is to express anything. According to Langer:

"The art symbol is a symbol in a special and derivative sense, because it does not fulfil all the functions of a true symbol: it formulates and objectifies experience for direct intellectual perception, or intuition but it does not abstract a concept for discursive thought. The art symbol is the absolute image - the image of what otherwise would be irrational, as it is literally ineffable direct awareness, emotion: vitality, personal identity ..... (Singh, 1987 : 32)

Art symbol is such a structure which does not act as constituent of some other structure, it is complete in itself. It can be taken in terms of a complete literary piece. Symbols in art are the constituents at different levels of art symbol. In case semantically seen art symbol and symbols in art come in one category because they communicate a different meaning and are polysemic. If we want to evaluate them as constitu-

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ents, symbols in art and primary symbols act as constituents of structure of another level, art symbol as it is complete does not act as constituent so it can be seen in another category. (Jain, 1994 : 288)

To illustrate different constituents of art symbol and art symbol itself we take up 'Abhijnana Sakuntalam' of famous dramatist Kalidasa. As any complete structure can be termed as art symbol and 'Sakuntalam' is also complete in itself so it is an art symbol. This art symbol is divided into seven acts and every act also differs in stanzas. Some stanzas are made up of one symbol and some of two or three or four or so. This way number of symbols also differ from stanza to stanza. Every symbol is also constituted of pragmatic language units which are primary symbols. As explained above, all constituents become knitted in specific texture. Even a single constituent or single level is left from this whole system, art symbol will be incomplete and proper symbolic meaning will not be drawn from such a piece. Jain has shown a total system of 'Abhijnana Sakuntalam' in the following diagram:
The levels from 'a' to 'c' are the levels of symbols in art. The number of these levels and of symbols in art can also change from one art symbol to another. One art symbol can also be of less than three levels while the other can be more than three levels. Besides, the number of symbols in art can also differ at every level. The difference in levels, in number of symbols in art and the characteristics of symbols in art distinguishes one art symbol to another. These symbols in art
are made of different primary units, viz. symbols which are designated here as Ds. for example a literary symbol can be made of primary symbols of dance, e.g. bola actions and expressions. (Jain, 1994 : 288-290)

Thus art symbol has complete structure. It is one of the important aspects of semiotics and has always been taken by semioticians in reference to symbolic meaning. It has left a very close impact on various aspects of semiotics and language.

References

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