CHAPTER - XII

OUTCOME OF STUDY IN COMPARISON - EAST & WEST

Introduction

We have in our sojourn arrived at a stage where it would be fruitful to dwelve, for awhile, on both the approaches - East and West so far as the principles of Literary or Artistic Criticism is concerned. Our assessment of the balance-sheet reveals that human genius either in the East or in the West has thought the same thoughts again and again and the logic of working of the mind has remained, in principle the same. The illusion of difference or an apparent opposition is mainly due to incompleteness ingrained in the nature of the mind and it is bound to remain as such. For a complete view of reality it would be, therefore, better that instead of viewing different aspects of reality snapped by human mind, we may view them synoptically so that we may have atleast a "synoptic vision" of the reality through art, it being noted that reality is multi-dimensional, multi-phased and hence no one view of reality is exhaustive of the reality as a whole.

We were prompted to undertake this study of literary principles - East and West to access the truth or otherwise of some tall-claims advanced by the arrogance to show racial superiority which began everything with the Greeks. We have shown
at appropriate place, that Greek civilization itself was an outcome of the fruitful ideas contributed by Assirians, Medes, Messopotamians, Chaldeans, Phoenesians, Egyptians as well as early Indians and that again is established in our study of the principles of art. In fact this arrogance itself has proved detrimental to Western spirit which has refused to go beyond Greeks except when it was shown by French and Italian Romantist and Neo-realists that they can no more remain content by chewing old, outgrown thoughts of Greek Epics and Aristotle. They exposed the myth that the first lessons of art and science in fact, the systematic study of nature were taught to Greeks by non-Greeks. Thales, Permenides, Pythagoras, The Atoneists like Democritus and many others were non-Greeks. Even Plato, Plotinus and Aristotle were taught at Alexandria, the then seat of learning and fountain head of Crecent-moon which was a meeting place of many cultures among them. Indian contribution was substantial. Ideas originating from India, travelling through Egypt, went to Greece, Italy and European mainland multiplying and cross-fertilizing themselves as they mixed with local cultures and traditions. Otherwise how can there be so much similarity as is found when a comparative study is undertaken?

Imitation - the first Principle

The artist in Indian as well as Greek - East and West - starts with the principle of imitation, with one difference, that
in East, or India the artist, in imitating the real and depicting it on canvass or in words or in stone or in performing arts like dance and drama, makes it ideal. The artist does not imitate the reality like that which is reflected in a mirror or in a photograph ditto ditto but modifies it suitably in his portrait in order to reveal the real character and presents it through his medium. He has to do so because his medium exercises a limit on him on one hand and on the other, the sentiment that he is out to depict sets another limit to his expression. Within these two limits he has to allow his sentiments to flow - through channel. That is why in India, art has no such divisions as realistic, idealistic, romantist etc., here the real is the ideal and as ideal always romantic. The beauty assumes ever new forms as it will (Ksane Ksane Yannayam Upaiti) and this characteristic of beauty, Mammat mentions in the very first stanza by saying that it satisfied every demand whenever it is generated and whoever be the generator.

The Philosophic and Imaginative approaches

Mrs. Virginia Woolf has given an illustration of piano and the alphabetical order in which every note is arranged, as is the case of letters in alphabet, in order and hence a competent mind does not find any difficulty in running over those notes or letters one by one firmly and accurately until it has successfully reached the end. This is but one way., the lower way we may say,
the imaginative or the strictly logical way of reaching the truth. But there is also another way, the way of the gifted, the inspired who miraculously, lump all the letters together in one flash - the way of Genius or the philosopher's way. The former is discursive, didactic process and the other is immediate intuitive wholistic way of reaching the truth.

Indian or Eastern approach right from the beginning or the dawn of the civilization till the end, has remained essentially philosophic or intuitive way while that in the West, excluding the Greeks like Aristotle, Plato or Longinus, has remained essentially imaginative, logical discursive, didactic. That is perhaps the reason why no single treatise exclusively devoted to principles of art thought out logically to the point, out of the raw material produced by artists, examining them, eliminating unnecessary detail and then generalizing on the strength of the evidence supported by appropriate illustrations from the poets, is found there. What is found is bare reflections, scattered over works by either artists themselves or by art-critics but not well thought out or logically reasoned arguments is found in the West. Nor do we find any order established in the reflections pointing to gradual evolution of thought leading to certain well defined conclusions. The result is overlapping, repetitions and sometimes chewing the same thoughts again and again.
In Eastern tradition, on the contrary, the beginning is always made with a treatise complete in and by itself, in which every single detail has been well worked out, arranged systematically, and argued out logically. Generalization in the fewest possible words are arrived at to maintain precision and the law of parsimony and are supported by appropriate illustrations from the works of great poets or geniuses from the existing stock of literary output. The treatise with which Indian Aesthetics starts is Bharat's Natyashashtra. The followers of the era next to Bharat are like commentators who interpreted principles arrived at and laid down in sutras or couplets in conformity with the needs of their own times or the manner in which they found them suitable to their genius. The theory of Rasa propounded by Bharat in Natyashashtra was variously interpreted by Bhattanayak, Bhattalollat, Shankuk and Abhinavagupta which again formed the base for the theories propounded by Bhamah, Udbhat, Dandi and Rudrat emphasizing embellishment as the most important element in Poetics. Vaman emphasized poetic qualities rather than embellishment as the most important element while Acharya Kuntak in his Vakroktijivit treatise, emphasized the mannerism, the meaning-loaded language as the most important element in poetry. Last but not the least, Anandvardhanacharya and Abhinavagupta both emphasized and logically argued out Dhvani, Vyanjana the intended meaning as the soul of poetry. Not only they propounded forcefully this theory but they have
also shown that any poetic expression is pregnant with Vyanjana or intentionality of the poet provided we analyse the meaning content properly and push our logical inquiry to lead us behind the linguistic cobweb that conceals reality.

The Western aesthetic thinking for long remains confined to imitation, moves on to imagination and ultimately culminates into expression-intuition.

The ultimate meeting point remains the same for Dhvani is also an intuition expressed in appropriate linguistic garb in accordance with the principle of propriety (Auchitya) through discursive didactic process culminating into an immediate all comprehensive intuition or synoptic vision in which, like flash of lightning, the beauty is revealed in its extraordinary (Chamatkar) form.

It is all one world, be it revealed through imagination or strictly logical world to the artist, scientist or the teacher in their own different ways of approaching it. Each of the approach has its own importance and significance.

When Coleridge said that "no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher", he did not confuse the two faculties of the human mind. Nay, on the contrary he affirmed the importance of the one to the other. Truth
intuitively grasped as synoptic vision, requires logic for its explication, for making the vision revealed, rationally comprehensible to the others. We must remember that human mind works atomistically and hence our division of mind into intellect, intuition, understanding and sense etc., does not retain their watertight division. They fuse themselves into one another when the mind actually works on some raw material. Coleridge said once "The Beautiful is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes One".

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This is but an exploratory study undertaken for curiosity to find what is what in East and West compared with each other. If it provides inspiration for further studies to fruitful minds, our effort will, we are sure, have earned or achieved its objective.

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References

1  Mammatta: Kavyaprakash: Niyatikriyam ... Navarasaruchinam ... etc.

2  Mrs. Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse (Hogarth Press).