Chapter VI

HAPPY SIMILARITY

Equilibrium in Shakespeare's Tragedies

Richards and the co-authors in The Foundations of Aesthetics say that synaesthesia is a state of mind and that it is the ground plan for all aesthetic experiences.

In great poetry there is synthesis and there is inclusion of impulses. It gives the reader a mental state of synaesthesia or peace. It is poetry with limited experiences that stops with such definite emotion as sorrow, joy and pride. Great poetry orders the mind, makes it organised and makes us happier and healthier. It widens our mind in the sphere of our sensibility.

Synaesthesia is a state of balance, a moment of balance. It integrates opposites, and achieves repose. There are millions of fleeting semi-independent impulses, which the poem being a momentary structure of fabulous complexity traps. A good poem when it gives us the satisfaction of the greatest number of impulses edifies and elevates the reader.

Those who read the great tragedies of Shakespeare experience catharsis which ultimately leads to synaesthesia.
The great tragedies of Shakespeare are impersonal; yet they appeal intimately to the reader. In the six great tragedies of Shakespeare the various impulses are systematized.

Richards explains the effect of tragedies in terms of attitudes, resolution, interanimation and balancing of impulses.

In Tragedies there is a sense of release, of repose. Catharsis is caused by the reconciliation of the impulse of pity and fear, by repose in the reader's mind. In tragedies discordant qualities are balanced in a perfect equilibrium.

The various impulses are systematised and intensified in synaesthesia. It has order, complexity, completeness 'concordia discors' heightened attention, impersonality, freedom, aesthetic equilibrium, clarity, alertness, readiness, wholeness, stability and harmony. It is inclusive of impulses and dynamic and brings the whole personality into play. Synaesthesia has 'chung' or stability and 'yung' or harmony. Santa rasa of Abhinava Gupta has in it all these elements, though the terminology used by Abhinava Gupta and his approach are different from the terms used by J.A. Richards and his approach. The highest of the mental state is santa - the state of serenity and peace. In fact samam or santa rasa is the basis of all rasas. Into whatever state a man may slip he will recover
and come back into a state of santa. This state is 'nirvigna samvit'. In the experience of santa there is no loss of the self. It is neither nirvana nor ecstasy. There is no at-one-ness, for the rasa is a universalised experience.

It is a state or stage when the self recognises itself as radiance or Siva. It is pratyabhigna and there is consciousness or both as in synaesthesia. This is a state of 'vyatireeka turiyateeta', a mental state different from ordinary states. This is a state in which objectivity merges into the sub conscious.

At first sight, the scientific theory of Richards seems to have little in common with the aesthetic of Abhinava Gupta. As we have shown, when we go deeper we realize that the polarities dissolve and disappear. The similarity between the two looms large in our mind.

The fundamental principles of the affective theory being the same at bottom, it is only aesthetically plausible that the affective theory of Richards has reached the same sphere as that of Abhinava Gupta.

Some of the leading Malayalam critics have stressed the identity and similarity of Abhinava Gupta's theory of santa rasa with the synaesthesia theory of I.A. Richards.
In Kesariyute Vimarśam Guptan Nair says that:

Kesari was aware of the similarity between Abhinava Gupta's santa rasa and Richards' conception of poetic equilibrium. The description of santa rasa establishes this similarity.

In a general way Joseph Mundassery Says in Kaavya Piitika.

"Writers like C.T. Winchester and I.A. Richards endorse Bharata's theory that depiction in literature shall ultimately lead to emotional delight."

Veda Bhandhu in Abhinava Guptante Rasa Siddhandham writes:

"It may be possible to discover a concrete similarity between the concept of aesthetic enjoyment expounded by Western Literary theorists and that of Abhinava Gupta."

Veda Bhandhu cites passages from Principles of Literary Criticism in support of his view.

In Sathyam Śivam Sundaram in the essay 'Eetu Paddhati' M. Leelavathy writes:

No literary work that gives spiritual peace which Indians have described as 'samyoga visraanti'
which Aristotle has described as Catharsis, a purging of heart and which Richards has described as equilibrium of mental state will debase man.4

M. Leclavathy finds parallelism between samyoga visraanti of Abhinava Gupta and the 'mental equilibrium' of I.A. Richards.

According to T. Bhaskaran (Bharateeya Kaavyasastram..p 406) there is affinity between the Cathartic effect of tragedy as explained by I.A. Richards and the theory of swaatma visraanti described by Abhinava Gupta5. Abhinava Gupta's rasa siddhanta has both its psychological level and the metaphysical dimension. Richards wishes to remain at the psychological level. The similarity between the aesthetic theory of Richards and the rasa siddhanta of Abhinava Gupta at the psychological level is obvious and remarkable.

In his exposition of the Cathartic effect of tragedy Richards has given us a lucid exposition of his concept of equilibrium.

Cleanth Brooks writes:

In a chapter significantly entitled 'The Imagination' in Principles of Literary Criticism he describes tragedy as perhaps the most general, all accepting, all ordering experience known and
its special character as 'a balanced power through
its power of inclusion, not through the force of
its exclusion'.

But Richards points out that this balanced poise is not
peculiar to tragedy and it can thus become for him the norm
for all the most valuable literary experiences.

John Paul Russo gives the following explanation of
Richard's concept of tragic joy.

The mind must face what is before it. Tragedy
forces us to live for a moment without suppression
or sublimation. We acknowledge that difficulty
comes from the suppression and not from the
revelation. When we succeed in our response we
proceed through shock and emerge with tragic joy.
Tragedy has the power to overcome the subter-fuges
of repression which makes it the greatest and
rarest thing in literature. Tragedy moves us
because it illuminates the issues that had been
repressed and thereby brings about a sense of
release and a full development of experiences.

Any literary work, not necessarily a tragedy shall
produce equilibrium of impulses in a reader's mind.

"For if the mind is a system of interests and if
an experience is their play, the work of any
experience is a matter of the degree to which the mind through the experience attains complete equilibrium.”

Richards wrote this in *Science and Poetry* published in 1926. When he revised the edition in 1935, he changed it to, 'wider equilibrium'. Whatever the previous state of equilibrium it must be superseded by one yet larger. We find evidence for this dynamic interpretation of equilibrium all through Richard's criticism. To the extent to which a reader partakes of the aesthetic experience and lives the mental life of the great artist at their final moments, he achieve the highest levels of equilibrium and wholeness.

**Psychological Dimensions**

A knowledge of psychology helped Richards analyse the reader-response. But in order to explain why there is such a meaningful reader-response Richards had to delve deep into philosophy. In this Coleridge was Richards' guide and philosopher. Joan Bennet writes on the essay 'How it strikes a contemporary'. In *Principles of Literary Criticism* I.A. Richards raises the question.

What does this contribute to the good of man?.

His own ideas have been nurtured by the study of moral philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to John Smart and G.E. Moore.
Coleridge used to say that everyone is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. Coleridge was a neo-Platonist rather than Aristotelian. As pointed out at the outset Plotinus is the source of much in Coleridge.

In response to a question asked by Reuben Brower, I.A. Richards refers to his transition to Plato,

I suppose that was partly due to Coleridge, finding out he was more a Platonist than he himself sometimes knew. But more still making a Basic English version of the Republic. I would have neglected Plato. Everybody I knew in Cambridge has. They were strangely unaware of Plato12

Coleridge and Richards

However Plato and Plotinus were with Richards through Coleridge. Basil Willey says:

"Coleridge said, I love Plato, his dear gorgeous non-sense and both Coleridge and Richards in their later work showed how very much Plato meant to them"13

In another essay he says:

"Coleridge is a presence throughout principles"14
Kathleen Coburn in her essay "I.A.R and S.T.C" writes:

Even before Coleridge on Imagination (1934) one could have predicted from the first two books, The Meaning of Meaning with C.K. Ogden (1923) and Principles of Literary Criticism (1924) in which Coleridge is referred to more than any other critic that some day Richards would write on Coleridge centrally. Practical Criticism (1929) took its title and some of its tactics from Coleridge. Speculative Instruments is another title from him.

Richard's psychology has as its bed-rock transcendentalism of Coleridge though Richards will not let Coleridge come into the scene in his exposition of synaesthesia.

Equilibrium or peace is attained whether in Plotinus or in Coleridge when the individual self comes into dynamic harmony with the universal self. As Basil Willey has pointed out Richards has said, "only genuine poetry will produce in a good reader, a response which is as passionate, noble and serene as the experience of the poet". The word 'serene' is significant.

Richards points out in his Coleridge on Imagination that two independent doctrines are there in Coleridge.
Coleridge blends them together.

The two doctrines can be stated as follows:

i. "The mind of the poet at moments, penetrating the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude" gains an insight into reality, reads Nature as a symbol of something behind or within Nature not ordinarily perceived.

ii. The mind of the poet creates a Nature into which his own feelings, his aspirations and apprehensions are projected.\textsuperscript{17}

In the first doctrine man through Nature is united with something other than himself which he perceives through her. In the second he makes of her as with a mirror a transformed image of his own being.

In Coleridge on imagination, Richards points out that Coleridge speaks of the individual spirit and the supreme spirit.

This elevation of the spirit above the semblances of custom and senses to a world of spirit, this life in the idea, even in the supreme and God-like, which alone merits the name of life, without which our organic life is but a state of somnambulism .... But it is not be supposed, that
it is a sort of knowledge. No! it is a form of being, or it is indeed the only knowledge that truly is and all other science is really only as far as it is symbolised of this. .... For it is an immutable birth, that what comes from the heart, that alone goes to the heart; what proceeds from a Divine Impulse, that the God like alone can awaken. (The Friend, Section 2, Essay II 1818).18

Cleanth Brooks in his essay, "I.A Richards and the 'Conception of Tension'" writes:

"His debt to Coleridge is too well known to require comment"19

In the essay "The Dream of Communication" Geoffrey H.Hartman writes:

Thus the main emphasis in Richards falls on 'the medium of response'. 'Art brings the whole of man into activity', said Coleridge, Richards prefers to talk of the wholeness in terms of the nervous system. It is more empirical and affords the image of an extremely sensitive material constituted by stresses, preponderances, conflicts, resolutions and interanimations remote relationships between different systems of impulses before unapprehended and inexecutable connections.20
This medium to Richards is language. There are writers who argue that imagination is deeply material. Richards' imagination is meditating a fifth element - the element of language.

Sometimes it would appear that to Richards language was an end in itself. The Meaning of Meaning and The Philosophy of Rhetorics seem to confirm this impression. Yet language has its meaning and its emotive content. In poetry language has to arouse impulses in the reader and create a state of synaesthesis, which means that poetic language has a dimension beyond its lexicographical structure.

Richards writes:

But there is a more positive task, to reconcile that poetry is the supreme use of language, man's chief coordinating instrument in the service of the most integral purpose of life and explore with thoroughness the intricacies of the modes of language as working modes of the mind. 21

Poetry effects an integration of mind. Richards does not explain scientifically how a poem is formed in the mind of the poet and what exactly it expresses. The general assumption is that each mind is an entity in itself separated from other entities. Yet when Richards discusses communication he speaks of the 'all in all' of us, the
affinity of minds. The harmony that the reader experiences therefore must not only be a harmony with itself but a harmony with the universal mind. This Coleridgean concept is implicit in the writings of Richards. No mind can experience harmony, equilibrium, and freedom unless it reaches the level of universal harmony. Poetry harmonises the individual mind with the universal mind.

Richards does not explicitly relate the individual entity to the universal mind. He writes about the synaesthesia experienced by the reader. But Coleridgean transcendentalism lurks behind his concept of harmony. That Richards' theory of synaesthesia has similarity with the Chinese concept of Chung-yung is a happy concidence. But it is Coleridge who is with Richards in his books like Principles of Literary Criticism, Practical Criticism, Speculative Instruments and Coleridge on Imagination consistently.

We shall strike comparisons between Richards' concept of synaesthesia and Abhinava Gupta's concept of santa rasa - at two levels - at the level of impulses primarily and also at the transcendental level through Coleridge.

Comparison at Primary Level

Our impulses is on the primary level though we can not set aside the transcendental level totally.
We have seen that Coleridge defines beauty as:
"Subjection of matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol and through which the spirit reveals itself".

In Coleridge aesthetic experience entails the revelation of the supreme spirit. As we have earlier shown Plotinus is at the source of this revelatory theory. The revelatory theory of Plotinus as is shown by Kanti Chandra Pandey is much akin to the saiva pratyabhigna school to which Abhinava Gupta belonged.

Neo-Platonism and Saiva Advaita

Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and saiva pratyabhigna siddhanta have much in common. Hence the similarity between the aesthetic theory of Coleridge who owes much to Plotinus and the aesthetic theory of Abhinava Gupta who drew inspiration from saiva advaita siddhanta.

Poetic experience has its psychological level according to both Richards and Abhinava Gupta. It has its metaphysical level too. Coleridge takes the discussion of aesthetic experience to the metaphysical level where we find that his neo-Platonist aesthetics finds itself in synchrony with the pratyabhigna theory of Abhinava Gupta.
Coleridge has said that the artist must imitate that which is within the thing. Something within the thing is a neo-Platonist idea, and it points to Saiva Prathyabhijna theory. We have earlier said that mystic experience according to Plotinus is the experience of the one, the supreme in the individual, the recognition of the one within one’s own mind. As differentiated from the mystic experience in which duality is obliterated in aesthetic experience the duality of the object and the subject persists. In aesthetic experience, the subject is conscious of something identical with itself. There is consciousness of being. In the supreme aesthetic experience the subject experiences the object as itself. This concept is very similar to the recognition of the object as Siva by the subject that is Siva or to the theory of pratyabhigna. At the metaphysical level the similarity is between the theory of Plotinus and the saiva advaita vadins and between Coleridge and Abhinava Gupta. But at the aesthetic level there is unmistakable similarity between synaesthesia and santa rasa.

On the surface there is little in common between the scientific theory of Richards and the aesthetic of Abhinava Gupta. As we have shown when we go deeper we realize that the polarities dissolve and disappear; and the similarity between the two looms large in our mind.
The fundamental preconcepts of the affective theory being the same at bottom, it is only aesthetically plausible that the affective theory of Richards has reached the same sphere as that of Abhinava Gupta.

The approaches of the two are different.
Terminology used by each is different.
But the 'end-state' is the same.
The soul of aesthetic experience is the same.

Great literary works give us peace, santa rasa. They give us a state of harmony, equilibrium and freedom.
Notes

1 S. Guptan Nair, *Kesariyute Vimarsam*, (Trichur : Kerala Sahitya Academy, 1987) 44.


7 John Paul Russo, *I.A Richards, His Life and Works*, 289.

8 John Paul Russo, 158.

   Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism – A Short History*, 611.

9 John Paul Russo, *I.A Richards, His Life and Works*, 159.

10 John Paul Russo, 160.


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16 I. A Richards, *Essays in His Honour*, 233/34.

17 I. A Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, 145.


19 I. A Richards, *Essays in His Honour*, 139.

20 I. A Richards, *Essays in His Honour*, 166.


22 The Foundation of Aesthetics, 37.