CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A great work of art wins the acclaim of readers, not only of a particular age but of all time; it transcends the boundaries of geography too. It is this perennial appeal of a work of art that Milton pointed to when he said that a good book is "embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life": literature is concerned with the here as well as the hereafter. A great work of art has a universal quality about it: indeed it is this quality that makes it great.

It is one of the paradoxes of scholarship that while one speaks about the universality of literature, one also puts literature into compartments with labels like Greek literature, American literature and Commonwealth literature. The opposing pulls of universality and particularity are felt in discussions on these lines. To reconcile these opposites it is necessary to pose questions of the following kind. Is Indian literature, for example, essentially different from the literature of ancient Rome? Is the creating artist's response to natural scenery or a human situation in Germany different from that of a Chinese artist? To what extent does the nature of particular
languages act as a determinant to the artist’s expression and reader’s response and thus curtail the universality of the work? Cannot emotions like pity and terror be evoked to produce identical responses from all readers, irrespective of the region and language of the writer and the reader? These questions can be multiplied: in the modern world they are extremely relevant, for the reader today has access to the literatures of almost all the countries of the world, written in many different languages.

The present study is the result of an attempt to find common ground in the discussions of literary creation and response in Indian and Western treatises. One can observe a similarity of response to great works of art in the writings of great and sensitive thinkers like Aristotle who lived in Greece and Bharata or Ānandavardhana who lived in India, in different periods of time. There is a striking parallel between the poetics of Aristotle and the rasa-sūtra of Bharata, in the way these thinkers have responded to the literatures of their times. They have spelt out the most comprehensive theory of literary appreciation, since both have been engaged in analysing the effects of drama on the audience or spectator. No discussion of literary appreciation in the West has escaped the influence of Aristotle. What Aristotle said about tragedy in the Greek era was borrowed by Western scholars after him, and these tenets have been found valid for the analysis of all post-Aristotelian creative writing.
While Aristotle by his formalist method emphasised the healthy influence of the drama on the human psyche through his theory of *katharsis*, Bharata by his *rasa-sūtra* underlines the ethical and spiritual effect. That is why Bharata calls drama the fifth *Vēda*, in that he has borrowed the essential elements of the four *Vēdas*, available to the initiated, assimilated them into his dramatic theory so as to benefit all, the initiated as well as the uninitiated. If the Aristotelian poetics set the pace of the creative and the critical activities in the post-Aristotelian generations, Bharata’s *Nātyaśāstra* was the trend setter in the Indian context of creativity and criticism. While looking into the basic tenets of the two systems, one may be pleasantly surprised to see the similarity in the two sensibilities, because after all, all literature is the expression of the human soul. Contemporary Western thinkers are trying to familiarize themselves with the basic concepts embedded in the Indian theories in the hope of refining their critical discussions and for comparative purposes. The Indian theories do not venture to put forward any strange or bizarre ideas, but only help the critic to approach literature in the right perspective.

The impact of British literature on the Indian mind has been two-fold one positive and other negative, positive in that it has exposed the Indian mind to wider literary experiences, enabling it to assimilate new ideas of creative
and critical adventures, and negative in that in its new exposure, it has allowed itself to be so much overwhelmed by these new currents that it has lost its native moorings. Only in the last few years, a need to go back to the roots in order to find the common denominators between the native and the foreign approaches has been felt.

To understand these concepts in their pristine state and give them a new dimension to facilitate better understanding of great works of art is the aim of the following study. To reinforce the fact that every genre can be included under these concepts, the study encompasses select Indian novels in English.

The aim of the study is therefore to understand the Indian aesthetic concepts, particularly, *rasa*, *dhvani*, *sādhāranākaraṇa* and *sahādayatva* as they were originally propounded and interpreted by the prominent thinkers on this subject. The study then highlights their modern relevance, while trying to redefine certain of these concepts to suit the literature of modern times. The basic ideas behind the concepts have a strong validity, but they need modification when one has to study them across the span of nearly ten centuries. Originally these concepts were used in discussions of drama and poetry while in the following study they are used to analyse Indian novels in English. Obviously the study has had to attempt an extension of these concepts to suit the poetics of narrative fiction. While each chapter
is devoted to the discussion of one concept, it is also to be borne in mind that such a division of aesthetic concepts into watertight compartments is neither possible nor justifiable. But to clarify and 'microstudy' these ideas such a hypothetical distinction has been made. All these concepts together constitute the total sphere of literary activity, a mandala, including the stage of creation in the poet which gets expressed in the work of art, and the stage of appreciation when it reaches an ideal reader who responds to the work of art in the spirit in which it has to be approached. In the present chapter the idea of aesthetics is discussed with reference to literary art and this is followed by a synoptic view of studies of Indian poetics in India and abroad.

The many ways in which the art of literature and works of literature can be possibly discussed should be the starting point of a study which tries to understand the nature of literature and the nature of criticism and to establish a link between the two. David Daiches approaches literature and the study of literature with this aim.¹ There is no single right method of handling literary problems and no single approach to works of art that will yield all the significant truths about them.

Our business, as I understand it, is to find out in a humble spirit of enquiry what literary masterpieces really say.²

The study of literature can never be a fixed subject; it should be like the adventure of the spirit among the creations of the imagination in an effort to gain some insight into the creative process that holds out the promise of an ever-renewed vision of beauty.

Literature can make contemporaries of Virgil and Alexander Ross; it can raise from the dead as in the case of Jonson and Seneca. The immortal is the author; his immortality is literature.³

Literature is regarded as the expression of "that truth, that reality, not necessary beliefs about reality, given in living experience of the soul's development."⁴

Active appreciation of literature is not always dependent on theorising, though an awareness of literary theories can help in the greater understanding and appreciation of individual works. Literary criticism should be the handmaid of literary theory and not of literary

---


Indian literary theories have approached the world of poetry in a very comprehensive manner, and they have analysed the creative process, the work of art and the reader-response in a detailed and significant manner. The theories are based on the well-developed theories of grammar (vyākaraṇa), logic (mīmāṃsā), exegesis or interpretation (vyākhyāna) and metaphysics (vādānta). Poetics in India as in the West has a history of more than twenty centuries.

Aesthetics is a subject of perennial interest trying to come to grips with the innate and spontaneous responses of the human mind to beauty, its creation and appreciation, and hence the endless debates and speculations on this subject. Aesthetics seems either to align itself with philosophy on the one hand or with psychology on the other. The preoccupation of serious thinkers on the subject of beauty in literary art has generated a feeling that it is possible to gain an opening into the secrets of the poetic and creative process and understand its mysterious hold on those who originate works of art and on those who appreciate them. Disciplines like psychology, physiology of sensation, linguistics, semantics, historical synthesis and analysis, anthropology and philosophy in its various branches seem to contribute to the subject of literary aesthetics.

---

6 Baym, p. 301.
Aesthetics claims to deal with the perception of beauty in art, and the relish and enjoyment which accompany an experience of beauty. Keats's well-known line, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," epitomises the potential for beauty in art, and also of the enjoyment that ensues.

Aesthesis or aesthetic appreciation is a blend of perception and appreciation. It is actually derived from the Greek word aisthetikos which means perceptive; aisthanesthai means to feel or perceive; aesthesia means feeling or sensitivity. In due course the term aesthetics came to describe the philosophy of fine arts or the principle of taste. James Sully has defined aesthetics as "a branch of study variously defined as the philosophy or science of the beautiful, of taste or of the fine arts."\(^7\)

Aestheticians have always found it difficult to define beauty. From Plato to Schopenhauer and Santayana, the definitions have failed to articulate the total experience meant by that word. Edward Bullough, for example, spoke of the "Sisyphus labour of a definition of beauty."\(^8\) The difficulty is probably due to the complex interrelationship of the ideas involved, as in the idea of the connection of

---


beauty and reality. Beauty is an experience to be felt and not to be described.

One of the purposes of aesthetics is to define the beautiful and to analyse the attitude of the human mind to beauty. Beauty presented in the arts has the same effect as that offered by nature. Not only perception but also pleasure is involved. The objects provoking this are of more than one kind. "There is beauty in the ordinary sense, that is, a combination of subtly contrasting but harmonious qualities, and there are complex sentiments of the sublime and the ludicrous which are closely connected to the aesthetic feelings."9 Following this line of definition it is possible to assign to aesthetics a central place both in experience and knowledge.

Presenting a summary view of literary aesthetics, Max I. Baym has pointed out the issues involved:

No theory has as yet successfully defined the relative boundaries of aesthetics, poetics and criticism. Within a broad philosophical framework, however, in which perception and combination are clearly presented in their intimate relation and interaction, aesthetics takes its place as a central consideration in both experience and knowledge. . . . The line of demarcation between aesthetics, poetics and criticism remains blurred

because the general principles of the first find their concretion in the second, and their application in the third; conversely, the last two derive their values from the first.\textsuperscript{10}

It is thus possible to argue that practical aesthetics consists in the establishment of a rational basis for art criticism. If it enables the student of architecture to distinguish between a work of art and a mere structure of utility, or in painting if it teaches appreciation of treatment apart from the subject, or in literary studies if it enables the reader or student or critic to appreciate a poem or drama in all its totality with attention to both theme and technique, then appreciation of beauty becomes the expression of the experienced beauty in works of art. In other words, expression of literary experience becomes literary criticism. The application of aesthetics to practical literary criticism is thus warranted.

There are theorists who maintain that "aesthetic theory is a branch of philosophy and exists for the sake of knowledge and not as a guide to practice."\textsuperscript{11} This statement allows for a theoretical basis within its scope but discourages a normative approach which can assist practice of the same. As against this view, Harold Osborne maintains

\textsuperscript{10} Baym, p. 290.

that there can be no difference between the nature of art or beauty and the principles of criticism.

. . . criticism has lacked its own philosophy, without which research must continue always inconclusive having no touchstone or relevance, nor any criterion to distinguish failure from success . . . every formulation of doctrine . . . inescapably implies theoretical assumptions which belong to the province of aesthetics. . . . as long as aesthetics remains inchoate, criticism must needs be muddled and confused.  

Harold Osborne, unlike Bernard Bosanquet, refuses to separate the philosophy of criticism from the practice of criticism. He holds that

as far as every practical discipline must benefit from a candid understanding of what it is about, aesthetics has an incidental but genuine relevance to practice and specially to the practice of criticism.  

Practical criticism of art and literature, then, is merely the application of theoretical principles which aesthetics exists to illuminate.

John Ducasse has said that the philosophy of art is the general theory of criticism. But criticism is logically prior to aesthetics. The theoretical basis for the appreciation of beauty itself comes from the practical


13 Ibid., p. 35.
response to beautiful things and accruing judgements. This theory is precisely what is meant by aesthetics. There can be no valid study of aesthetics apart from concrete acts of judgement or appreciation. Without criticism there can be no aesthetics. And in every judgement of criticism there is an implied aesthetic dogma.14

Artistic expression involves vague or definite feelings linked with the sensuous medium, "by ideas through which the medium is given content and meaning." Aesthetics deals with the dramatic transformation of sensation into active perception, ideation and feeling. It is concerned with the heightened awareness of the pleasure in expressive thought and feeling and with the concomitant demand for satisfaction marked by a sense of having entered the domain of beauty - a form whose manifestations are myriad but whose aspect is singular and is predominatly marked by harmony and balance. Within its presence man is afforded intimations of his highest and deepest possibilities; he finds the world desirable.16

The application of aesthetics to literary criticism is thus found to be difficult and even impossible sometimes.

15 Baym, p.292.
16 Ibid., p. 293.
The idea is analogous to the general feeling that it is easier to preach than to follow the tenets preached. The disparity between theory and practice is most conspicuous in the field of creative literature. From ancient times to the modern age, creative arts, especially the literary arts, have evaded the eyes of the theorists; like the other paradoxes which confront us in life, the hunt is on while the hunted evades the hunter. But it is this elusive chase which has kept the interest in arts very much alive.

The aesthetic sense is a feeling of joy, a pleasing sensation which the individual experiences when he responds to any work of art. It may be melodious music, or it may be a haiku or a short story or a novel. Any artistic production is capable of evoking a peculiar kind of response in the experiencer.

Modern aesthetics draws upon the older sciences and from every other source which may contribute to fuller understanding of the arts and their changing roles in civilisation. It makes special use of psychology for the light it may throw on the process of artistic creation and appreciation. These also include symbolic meaning and the emotional effects of various images. It looks to the social sciences where the arts have fitted into the cultural patterns of different peoples and periods. It draws upon the histories of various arts and cultural history in general but differs from them in organising its materials and
conclusions in theoretical rather than chronological order. Aesthetics is also closely related to art criticism, but differs in emphasis general principles and problems rather than the merits of particular artists or works of art. It examines the standards used in evaluation and criticism. As an empirical subject it is regarded as primarily subjective: that is, it is concerned with the discovering and generalising on the facts of art and the related human activities. It does not abandon the problem of value, but approaches it more indirectly through a search for a fuller understanding of the actual nature, function and effects of art, which need to be considered if evaluation is to be more than a dogmatic assertion or expression of personal taste.\footnote{Sully, \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica}, 1956.}

Modern aesthetics makes no claim to proving universal laws of value, but seeks to provide relevant knowledge and methods which may help to make evaluation more informed and intelligent. It does not ignore beauty, but is less narrowly devoted to the task of defining the sublime and the lofty than traditional aesthetics.

Literary aesthetics seeks to provide a mutual calibration for perception and sensibility and to alert the percipient to the infinite possibilities of experience provided by the imagination as articulated in a literary work of art. Literary aesthetics is normatively successful
when it helps the reader to realise that a proper analysis, far from destroying the synthesis of art, helps to realise it at its fullest. Literary aesthetics confronts the opposition between the 'inner' and the 'outer'. Herbert Read says:

It is all the creative activity whence issues the solution to all answerable questions: it is the mother of all possibilities, in which, the 'inner' and the 'outer' worlds like all psychological antitheses, are joined in living union.\(^\text{18}\)

The reconciliation of the 'inner' and the 'outer' can be seen as the union of thought and feeling which are to be made into an artistic whole. The process of allusion is responsible for sustaining the literary activity. A first-class original mind can and will absorb and digest its sources as the body absorbs and assimilates the food that nourishes it. The same source will produce varying results among different minds. Originality and genius consist in the re-presentation and re-orchestration of ideas already prepared by past experience which includes the absorption of past literature. Memory and imagination cooperate in this process.\(^\text{19}\)

To follow the effects of ideas as they are refracted by other minds is in itself an aesthetic process. The

\(^{18}\) Baym, p. 304.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 305-06.
The allusive power of literature is capable of opening new vistas of emotional and aesthetic experience. John Dewey believes that aesthetic feeling goes out into objects, and when it takes the form of beauty, it also becomes a source of interest to the mind. To him aesthetics appears as "a unifying vision, eliminating, among other dualities, the age-old imagined conflict between art and science." The enrichment of experience made possible by the magic power of literature to see life in all its totality its uncertainty, mystery and doubt is the essence of Dewey's aesthetic philosophy. He was influenced by the Romantics, especially Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley. The nuances of language which aid literature to lead to ever-deepening enrichment of experience are also highlighted.

Criticism since the Romantics has tried to solve the subjective-objective dichotomy involved in the experience of art. Response is, thus, subjective, when the reader looks for the feeling expressed by the poet in his poem. Or is there a scientific basis in psychology or even neurology to account for the reading experience? Clive Bell speaks of art as "significant form." Susanne Langer has remarked that feeling can only be adequately expressed in form and symbol.

---

20 Ibid., pp. 357-58.
and cannot otherwise be communicated. Harold Osborne tries to reconcile the dichotomy by proposing the idea of "organic configurational unity."23

The crucial essence of these discussions which feature in modern aesthetics was already anticipated by Indian language philosophers nearly two thousand years ago. Between the ninth and eleventh centuries a really well-developed theory of aesthetics had evolved which had taken into consideration all the nuances of poetic creation and appreciation. Though these theories were born of the literature of those times, they can be used in the context of modern literature in spite of the apparent variations.

Indian thinkers, with a penchant for analysis and categorisation, were entranced with the problem of poetry and poetic experience. They seemed to have been preoccupied with the definition of the experience of poetry, its basis, its process of transmission and its nature. All these issues have been codified and expounded in the discussions of thinkers like Bharata, whose Nātyaśāstra was the foundation for other theorists to build their findings on these matters.


23 Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 168.
The Sanskrit name for literature is *sāhitya* which can be literally translated as 'joined together'. Literature is considered to be a togetherness of word and meaning. Poeticians were interested in the type of utterance in which neither word nor sense was in itself important, where both are indispensable because together they serve the overall structure.

Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* puts forward the earliest known exposition of *rasa*, the cardinal concept in Indian aesthetics. It is regarded as the oldest extant work on the theory of Sanskrit poetics. The work contains the first exposition of the *rasa* theory with considerable information about many topics pertaining to *ālāṅkāraśāstra*. Bharata had merely stated that the conjunction of the correlates of emotion gives rise to *rasa*. It was left to his commentators to interpret this statement and explain how this was possible. Bhatta Lōlatta, Sri Śaṅkuka, Bhattanāyaka, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta were impressed by this aspect of *rasa* and tried to explain the same in their works. It was Abhinavagupta who achieved the breakthrough in the controversy about Bharata. His commentary called *Abhinavabhārati* besides furnishing valuable information about the commentators of Bharata also deals with the concept of *rasa* from the point of view of the poetic artist and of the responding reader. Abhinavagupta has also another commentary to his credit, the *Dhvanīlōkalōcana*, which tries
to explain Ānandavardhana’s doctrine of dhvani (which deals with the role of suggestion in literature). Suggested emotion is the complex, rich and connotational aspect in literary art which is achieved through the paths of rasa and dhvani. Emotions in literature are the life-giving force and these are expressed in literature not through statements, but only through suggestion. The nature of the represented emotions in literature is different from the actual life emotions; and the experience of literature is again an experience which is sui generis, one belonging to the world of art, and governed by that world. This is called nātyadharmi, to differentiate it from the laukika nature of life which is governed by the principles of lōkadharma.

The various issues which have been discussed by aestheticians all over the world, and from all ages (by Aristotle, Plato, Longinus, Sidney, Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Kant, Eliot, Richards and many modern thinkers) are all present in the discussions of Indian aesthetic thinkers.

In the days of Bharata (c. A.D. 400) the rasa theory was applied to only drama. But the emergence of other writers in other genres extended the scope of this theory to other forms of literature. In Indian aesthetic discussions the theories are not discussed in isolation. Each literary theory is an extension to the domain of literature of a particular metaphysical theory. Each point is substantiated
by a quotation followed by a critical commentary. The theoretical criticism could be compared to exposition of the theory without any study of individual works to make an analysis and assessment of the works concerned.

Literary critics in the Sanskrit tradition have laid different principles of literary criticism. Thus Bhāmaṇa (c. A.D. 600) recognises the importance of ālamkāras as is seen from his work Kāvyalaṃkāra. Vāmana (c. A.D. 800) asserts that rīti is the soul of poetry in his work Kāvyalaṃkāra Sūtra Vṛtti. Kuntaka (c. A.D. 1000) looks upon vakrōkti as the distinguishing feature of poetic language in his work Vakrōktijīvita. Ānandavardhana (c. A.D. 900) tries to prove the supremacy of dhvani. But none of them could deny the importance of rasa. P.V. Kane summarises the essentials of Indian poetics and observes the different schools of poetics on the above lines.24

After the Renaissance which brought about a new awakening in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, the phenomenon known as the discovery of Sanskrit about the year 1800 played a similar role in widening Western horizons of response.25 Sanskrit literature was made available to the


Western audience when Sir William Jones translated Kālidāsa’s Śākuntala. This was followed by a German translation. Though Śākuntala and Mēghasandēsa were popular and won the acclaim of even the German writers like Goethe, the general response was rather on a low key.

After the initial wave of enthusiasm to the newly discovered treasures of Sanskrit like the Gītā and Kālidāsa, soon the general public in the West lost interest and left the field to the specialists. These so-called specialists might have been great scholars; yet their literary sensibility was so poor, their English translations so insipid, that Sanskrit students in universities could not develop any regard for that literature.26

In the field of literary theory and criticism much misunderstanding has prevailed in the interpretation of the concepts of rasa, dhvani, gūpa, ailaṅkāra and others. The earlier theorists spent their time in rhetorical and exegetical dialectic without trying to extract the essentials which could help literary criticism.

The renaissance in India around the turn of the century saw fresh attempts to communicate the ideas of the great thinkers to the English-speaking world which is perhaps half the world today. Many multilingual scholars have attempted the enormous task of comparative and

26 Ibid., p. 53.
interpretative approach in the field of explicating the rich, even esoteric beauties of Sanskrit poetics. The affinities with Eliot, Richards or Empson, or even Kant or Schelling, in their response to literary works (characterised by the emphasis on emotive expression and symbolic representation) cannot be missed. To them, the writings of some of these modern critics are reminiscent of Ānandavardhana or Abhinavagupta explaining the theories of rasa or dhvani.

Recent studies have at last begun to emphasise the relevance of Indian poetics to the judgement of Indian literature. The aim has been to seek in that criticism more perceptive guidelines to the appreciation of literary art. The theories of rasa and dhvani have evoked intense interest in many literary theorists. The reinterpretation in terms of conceptual validity has been profound. In the later history of poetics, critics perceive an approach which is eclectic:

... writers reacted to the array of theories before them by trying to arrange them into a coherent whole, irrespective of origin or relevance ... the whole eclectic movement was a part of the classical tradition. ... 27

A close study of Indian poetics shows how the major problems of the art of composition and the experiential

nature of literature on the reader/audience have been thoroughly discussed. The theoretical aspect of Indian criticism is based on the highly developed tradition of poetics which had been followed, interpreted and developed quite studiously. While the theories of *alamkāra*, *vakrōkty* and *ṛiti* were concerned with the problems of art composition, the theory of *rasa* studied the problems of the experience derived from the work of art. The poet had to be endowed with *pratībhā* or *darsana*, that is, intuition or vision, to facilitate the creative overflow into art.

Some of the truths which the Western theorists have discovered in the modern age were intuitively realised by the Indian thinkers nearly a thousand years ago. The Aristotelian concept of intellectual-cum-imaginative pleasure, the metaphysical concepts of Kant and Hegel, and the emotive theory of the modern age can be traced to ancient Indian poetics. The theoretical aspect of Sanskrit criticism is well-developed because it bases its essentials in grammar and philosophy. These two disciplines had reached their highest summits in India as early as two thousand years ago. While grammar has played an important part in the analysis of poetic craft, the philosophical background has helped in the discourse on poetic experience.

Āchārya Shukla, the famous Hindi critic, pays a glowing tribute to Indian theories for the insights they throw on the analysis and evaluation of literature, not only
Indian literature, but also world literature. He sees the history of modern Indian poetics in two phases. The first phase covers the second half of the nineteenth century in which the attention of Indian scholars was drawn towards theory of literature and they explained works of art on the basis of Sanskrit works giving here and there a flavour of Western thought as well. In the second period new vistas were opened and fruitful efforts were made, not only to unlock the treasures of the past, but also to re-evaluate them in the light of modern knowledge. There was a keen desire not only to borrow but also to preserve.

Achārya Shukla has summarised the Indian idea of poetry as the liberation of the human spirit which leads to the state of enlightenment, while liberation of human sensibility culminates in the state of aesthetic experience, through the system of words which is poetry or literary art.

The main trends in Indian poetics can be broadly classified as follows: translations of Sanskrit works on poetics, elucidation of classical theories in the traditional way, re-interpretation and re-evaluation of classical theories in the light of modern aesthetics, and formulation psychological and sociological theories of art to form a new code of criticism.

---

Indian scholars pioneered the study of Sanskrit poetics. Some tried to translate the theories of poetics as had been interpreted and explained by Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. Indians themselves who had no access to the original texts in Sanskrit or in modern Indian languages benefited by these studies which helped them to search for the basic principles in Indian poetics.

S.K.De’s History of Sanskrit Poetics discusses the vast field of alaṅkāra śāstra from Bharata to Jagannātha focussing on matters relating to chronology and authorship while trying to present a historical perspective.

M. Hiriyanna, another pioneer in initiating studies in Indian aesthetics, not only bases his interpretations of Indian poetics from the angles of dārānas like Sāmkhya and vēdānta but also brings into his findings his invaluable original thinking and perception. Hiriyanna has also pointed out the fallacy of some research approaches which try to study the terms alaṅkāra, gūna, rīti, vṛtti, vakrōkti, dhvani, and auchitya in isolation resulting in obscuring crucial issues. His views on art experience are regarded by many scholars as still the best account available in English of the rasa theory as literary criticism. His exposition has tried to present Abhinavagupta’s stance in the proper perspective.
The contribution by P.V. Kane to Indian aesthetics and poetics is outstanding. It is he who, along with Sri Aurobindo, S. Radhakrishnan and B.G. Tilak, tried to vindicate the truth about the chronology of Indian thought, while also interpreting it to show its absolute validity. Many of the remarks in the voluminous Vedic research by foreign scholars were proved wrong by P.V. Kane. In the beginning of his magnum opus, *The History of Dharmaśāstra*, Kane observes

A volume would have to be written to expose the mistakes underlying the assumptions and fallacies in the writings of Hopkins, Buhler and other Western scholars.29

Kane has tried to relate the Indian poetics to modern developments, trends and criticisms. For instance, when he discusses the meaning of the word *pratibhā* which he renders as "the two-fold gift of the poet, of seeing the vision of striking beauty (*vicitra* . . . *prakhyā*), and of conveying to others through appropriate language the vision he sees," he makes a comparative study with I.A. Richards.30 In a footnote to the discussion he refers to Richards's views on imagination which are based on Coleridge's remarks on Imagination and Fancy.


30 Kane, *Sanskrit Poetics*, p. 349.
In the discussion on the theory of *rasa* he speaks of the awareness the Sanskrit theorists had of the effects of poetry on the reader. He compares DeQuincey's divisions of literature into "literature of knowledge" and "literature of power" with a similar distinction in Indian poetics. In analysing the psychological aspect of *rasa* theory, he makes a reference to the findings of psychologists, which are not very different from Bharata's attempt at classifying human emotions. He also incorporates the work of other writers of Sanskrit poetics like V. Raghavan, S.K.De and K.C.Pandey, who have been responsible for generating critical activity on these lines.

S. Kuppuswami Sastri, another scholar who combined in himself the old pundit's erudition in the *śāstras* with the necessary intellectual equipment of a modern, has popularised the Indian concepts. His perceptive comments which try to bring together the Indian and Western methods of analysis are worth studying to understand the sound basis of the comparative approach he has adopted. The affinities between the concept of *āvani* and the modern linguistic studies were instantly recognised by him and the unshakeable foundations of the philosophy of grammar and semantics on which the Indian theories are based have been highlighted by these Sanskrit scholars.31

K. Krishnamoorthy is another recognised authority on Indian poetics who is a research scholar and original thinker in the right blend. He has not only translated the critical theories like dhvani and vakrōkti, but also brought out critical editions of Nātyaśāstra and Abhinavabhārati. His earlier works on Sanskrit criticism and aesthetics as well as his research work, Dhvanyālokā and its Critics, have inspired many scholars, old and new, to pursue this line of aesthetics. His latest book Indian Literary Theories: A Reappraisal (1985) breaks new ground by shifting the emphasis to the integral unity that binds the theories together, to compare them with modern Western ideas and to highlight the relevance of the Indian theories.32

Krishnanmoorthy has this to say about the pioneering efforts of S.K. De and P.V. Kane.

... S.K. De chose to toe the line with the then fashionable judgements of their Western counterparts. In spite of exceptional essays by Prof. Hiriyanna which reveal the philosophical foundation of Indian aesthetics, and the lectures by Prof. S. Kuppuswamy Sastri which underscore some of the significant features of Indian literary concepts, and in spite of laudable attempts at vindicating the beauties of Sanskrit literature and criticism by eminent men of letters like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan, the bulk of Indian research on poetics has flowed

more in the direction of dating the different works, cataloguing them, classifying them and summarising their contents than in estimating their importance in the actual evaluation of literary works. The endless controversies about chronology and authorship gained research importance to the detriment of applied literary studies.  

Krishna Chaitanya (K.K. Nair) is another writer of distinction whose proficiency in Sanskrit, English and Malayalam is noteworthy. His field is vast and includes art, culture, history and science. Apart from *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*, he has another erudite book *Sanskrit Poetics* to his credit. He studies the earlier masters, S.K. De (*History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 1923) and P.V. Kane (*History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 1951) and has this to say about their achievements:

The greatest contribution of these two pioneers was the clear charting of the contours of the material, the vast corpus of writing in the Sanskrit tradition with patiently dug up data on text, authorship and dates. But the tradition remains hermetic because the exposition was not made intelligible to readers who knew only English and not Sanskrit as well, though the works were in English and therefore implied an obligation in this respect on the part of the author.  

33 Krishnamoorthy, *Literary Theories*, p. 66.

Krishna Chaitanya bases his assumptions on the fact that the nature of poetic experience has to be fundamentally universal, and to establish this truth only a sustained critical and comparative treatment would suffice. The influence of Maritian's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* and Van Meter Ames's paper entitled "Aesthetic Values in the East and West" has been acknowledged by Krishna Chaitanya in the preface. He has drawn attention to an analysis by Winchester which is identical to that of Sanskrit poetics.

V. Raghavan's contributions to the various aspects of Indian aesthetics, poetry, drama and music have been voluminous. His major works are *Some Concepts of Alamakāra Sāstra*, *The Number of Rasas* and *Bhoja's Srngara Prakāśa*. He has also published numerous papers in this field with the aim of presenting a comprehensive survey and a critical appraisal of the main aspects of Indian poetics. He is responsible for generating interest among Indians towards the rich heritage of Indian poetics.

Kunjunni Raja consolidates the views of Indian theorists on the problem of language and interpretation while relating them to the modern studies in this field by philosophers like Bertrand Russell, Urban, Ayer, Wittgenstein, and Cassirer, by psychologists, logicians, anthropologists and linguists. Raja has stressed the importance of the Indian contribution to linguistics where many theorists feel there is much to learn from the Indian...
side. Kunjunni Raja's *The Language of Poetry* analyses the theory of *dhvani* in linguistic and literary terms; he brings to his discussions an awareness of Western criticism as well.

R.B. Patankar, well-versed in Sanskrit, Marathi and English, has consistently and systematically published writings on aesthetics. In his book, *Aesthetics and Criticism*, he has analysed various issues related to these two disciplines and has drawn critical attention to their mutual influences. Regarding the *rasa* theory and its relevance to modern discussions on aesthetic experience, Patankar feels that with certain modifications it could be applied to contemporary studies, and modern Sanskritists can participate in the world critical tradition.

Let them (modern Sanskritists) owe allegiance to Sri Sankuka and Abhinavagupta. But let them also take on the task of restating and defending the ancient theories in the context of contemporary literary thought. They will then be required to meet new objections and give an adequate account of modern aesthetic data. They might also realize that it is necessary to modify the ancient theories. . . . If the modern Sanskritists want to be part of the world critical tradition, they will have to assume a new role; they will have to become moulders and not merely discoverers of critical concepts. An active dialogue with Western aestheticians will bring them close, as living minds, to their own past. The past in its turn
will become living if they approach it in this way.  

Like Patankar, G.K. Bhat has also realised the fact that Sanskrit poetics has not been studied in this light to reveal how it can give useful insights into literary criticism and appreciation. He, too, has played a significant role in directing critical attention to the richness of some of the important concepts of Indian aesthetics which have perennial relevance as well as modern applicability.

G.K. Bhat's profound interest in aesthetic and literary problems, and their close relation to literary criticism, is evident in his analysis of the rasa theory. He has tried to extract the essence of the rasa concept from the theory by metaphorical interpretations. He identifies rasa in art as the presentation of an intense emotional experience, revealed through a certain structure and leading to an awareness of universally shared emotion resulting in pleasurable relish. He sees the ever-lasting relevance of this theory to all language and literature. He calls upon Sanskrit critics to develop the science of literary criticism, to extend its scope from mere speculations to the nature of poetry itself.

35 R.B. Patankar, "Does the Rasa Theory have any modern relevance?," Philosophy East and West, 30, No.3 (July 1980), p. 302.
V.K. Chari, who teaches at Carlton University, has interpreted important Indian critical concepts in the light of modern developments in critical thought. As the titles themselves indicate - "Decorum as Critical Concept in Indian and Western Poetics" (JAAC, Fall 1967), "The Indian Theory of Suggestion" (PEW, Oct. 1977), "Validity in Interpretation: Some Indian Views" (JAAC, Spring 1978), and "The Nature of Poetic Truth" (BJA, Summer 1979) - these articles make clear Chari's stand on the possibility of adopting and applying Indian concepts to literary criticism. The concept of auchitya is considered central in Chari's discussions.

The question of decorum is crucial to literary criticism and it raises fundamental questions with regard to the nature of language, poetry and poetic semantics, criteria for the judgement of literature, and even questions involving the philosophy of language.36 His views on the validity of interpretations throw light on the Indian system which was based on sound sciences like grammar, logic, philosophy and the vādānta. His articles have stimulated interesting discussions on comparative ideas by many Western scholars like Dale Riepe. He has played a vital role in bridging the two streams of aesthetics, both through interpretation and application. Western awareness

36 V.K. Chari, "Decorum as a Critical Concept in Indian and Western Poetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI, No.1 (Fall 1967), pp. 54.
of Indian concepts has been largely fostered by Chari's perspicacious discussions.

The involvement of the West in comparative studies in aesthetics is gaining in importance. Harold Osborne's *Aesthetics and Art Theory* makes a comparative estimate of Indian and Western aesthetics. The *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* founded in 1941, has fostered the growth of an awareness of Oriental aesthetics. Thomas Munro, the able and energetic editor, says:

> As geographical and cultural barriers break down throughout the modern world, and as cultural products are interchanged most actively in other fields, it would seem that the time is right for aesthetics to join in the process of collective cultural synthesis. . . . Here as in other subjects it is not easy to work out a synthesis which is satisfactory to all. But certainly each side can learn something of value from the other. The attempt at better mutual understanding is well worth making.37

Even journals like the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, and *Philosophy East and West* have evinced interest in Indian poetics. Van Meter Ames has discussed aesthetic values in the East and the West. Archi J. Bahm has a paper on the comparative study of the two traditions of aesthetics. He

---

has also studied Munro’s views on Oriental aesthetics in another paper.

As a result of detailed discussions on the theory of rasa from the philosophical angle and its precise significance in the light of new source material, it is being increasingly realised that "we have anticipations of the modern ideas of I.A.Richards and the symbolic school of Cassirer and Susanne Langer in the ancient concepts of dhvani, vakrōkti etc." Susanne Langer relates all art to feeling; that is, "the meaning of art is a matter of its relation to human feeling." The idea that works of art are symbols having something in common with what they symbolise is used to explain rather than to describe the aesthetic response. She calls poetry symbolic action. The similarity with the Indian concept, that emotions in art have to be suggested in artistic form which gives them their peculiar quality, is striking. Langer herself has been aware of Indian thought on this subject as is evident from her eulogy:

Some of the Hindu critics, although they subordinate and even deprecate dramatic art in favour of the literary elements it involves, understand much better than their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotion in the theatre. . . . This they call rasa.

38 Krishnamoorthy, Literary Theories, p. 55.
39 Langer, p. 40.
40 Ibid., p. 323.
The idea of applying Indian aesthetic theories in critical analysis of Indian writing in English has been voiced by many scholars. Scholars well-versed in Sanskrit poetics and the English critical heritage have been fascinated by the remarkable insights which Sanskrit poetics offers to many modern critical issues. Though propounded to review and value literature of ancient times, Sanskrit poetics has crossed the boundaries of time and space and has acquired a timelessness because of its having delved deep into the basics of poetic art and criticism. Ancient interpretations of rasa and dhvani belonged to specific schools of thought and had a certain rigidity about them. A radical rethinking about the whole issue is needed. Today the educated Sanskrit scholar need not feel an allegiance to the ancient schools. It is for him to extract the essentials of literary criticisms available from the ancients, redefine them suitably to make them useful in the evaluation of not only Indian literature but also world literature. What is needed is the ability to critically assess the theories without any bias or undue reverence. This can help in forging new and valid critical concepts to judge literature.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, C.D. Narasimhaiah and D.V.K. Raghavacharyulu stress the need for reorganising the critical temper among Indians. The general feeling is that the critic does not know where he stands, is wary of voicing opinions and prefers to echo already voiced views.
Meenakshi Mukherjee calls this attitude of the Indian critic "looking sideways". Like the fiction it tries to assess, modern Indian literary criticism is also twice-born, being nurtured by both Indian and Western traditions. Iyengar has voiced the view that the Indian critic should acquaint himself with Indian aesthetic concepts to understand literature better. In books like *The Adventure of Criticism*, he has made repeated references to this viewpoint. C.D. Narasimhaiah too has emphasised this idea in *Moving Frontiers of English Studies in India*. The invaluable storehouse of Indian poetics can enrich and perpetuate critical tradition in India.

Vasant A. Shahane emphasises the need to evolve an acceptable framework of principles and practices of literary criticism which would be adequate to the task of evaluating its significance. He feels that

that the road to Indo-English Xanadu is covered with pitfalls, the whole area being amorphous where a few apparently valid critical perspectives along with countless modes of critical guesswork seem to be operative.\(^{41}\)

K. Ayyappa Paniker while assessing new trends in literary criticism says that the Indian critical heritage from ancient days is capable of generating a theory powerful

enough to handle modernist and post-modernist writings. Paniker strongly stresses the need for an integrated modern aesthetics which, though deriving its principles from ancient Tamil and Sanskrit sources, also tries to incorporate aspects arising from the facets of contemporary life.

The earlier theories should be interpreted not mechanically as pundits have done for centuries. The spirit, rather than the letter, of these theories should be involved to provide a means of understanding and interpreting contemporary literature. . . . Such an integrated theory - both international and interdisciplinary - should provide the basis for applied criticism.42

In the seminar held at Dhavanyaloka, Mysore, in January, 1984 on the theme "Towards the Formulation of a Common Poetic for Indian Literature Today," many critics emphasised this idea very strongly. K.S. Arjunwadhekar analysed Sanskrit critical theory and criticism of Sanskrit literature through the ages. Ka. Naa. Subramaniam spoke on the comparative study of the two traditions as a promising venture. The belief in the idea of a usable past which might be a creative, intellectual and stimulating process was echoed by these critics.

D. Anjaneyulu has called for comparative exercises in literary aesthetics which can help one to arrive at reliable critical criteria to evaluate as well as to appreciate classical works whether ancient or modern.

The fundamental principles of aesthetics are applicable to all literatures and their critical criteria are universally valid. It is time students of aesthetics and literary critics joined in the process of selective cultural synthesis.43

In an analysis of the rasa-dhvani theory in the context of Structuralism and Deconstructionism, V. Rangan makes a comparative assessment leading to a new poetic for our times.

Structuralism considers the sign, pushing the referent into the background, and is concerned with the 'deep laws' or 'deep structures' operating in the literary text. He relates this to the theory of suggestion of the Indian thinkers called dhvani and claims for it

... a Formalist poetic; it reflects the deep structures. It takes care of the gaps and indeterminacies and invites the reader to reconstruct the meaning himself. The ideal reader gets into the consciousness of the poet and relives the emotion.44

Turning from theory to practice, it is worth considering whether the ancient theories especially **rasa** and **dhvani** have been used in practical criticism. P.S. Sastri's analysis of Hamlet in the light of the critical insights implicit in Ānanda Coomaraswamy's philosophy of art and the more widely accepted **rasa–dhvani** theory of Indian aesthetic tradition is an interesting study.45 Through Sastri's analysis, the whole play becomes perfectly intelligible on the lines laid down by traditional Indian critics.

In his research work entitled *Old Lamp for New*, J.B. Paranjape embarks on a study of William Faulkner's novels in the light of the **rasa–dhvani** theory, with particular reference to three of his novels. The study is proof of the universal applicability of these theories which though formulated in the distant and hoary past are still modern in content and can find a place in the critical approaches of posterity too. His study is prefaced with a valuable introduction to Indian aesthetic theories which he summarises brilliantly. He has quoted and interpreted the original ideas of Bharata, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. He has also taken the stance of the devil's advocate and has tried to pinpoint those aspects in the theories which may be open to attack by modern ways of thought.

---

Edwin Gerow has analysed the rasa theory as interpreted by Abhinavagupta and has applied it to three Bengali novels. The theory of rasa, Gerow states, "formulates and justifies the unique character of artistic expression that constitutes its necessary and sufficient test." He has also shown that He who Rides a Tiger, a modern non-traditional novel, with all its Marxist egalitarian message, is also representative of the metaphysical standpoint demanded by the rasa theory, because of Bhattacharya's treatment of character and theme.46

Krishna Rayan tries to interpret the term suggestion and focusses on its indispensable role in literary art. In Suggestion and Statement in Poetry, he has brought in concepts from Sanskrit poetics, not in the manner of any comparative study (as he admits in the Preface) or in the form of exposition of Sanskrit poetics. He claims that these concepts have identified the crucial characteristics of literary art in a most exhaustive manner. The similarities between the two strands of thought are striking. He analyses the idea of suggestion through the objective correlative, and through metaphor, while also distinguishing between statement as poetry and suggestion as emotion.

In Text and Subtext, Krishna Rayan has interpreted English novels and drama on the basis of their power of

suggestion through their theme, character and atmosphere. In a later book *The Burning Bush* he has studied mostly modern Indian writing.

Krishna Rayan has assimilated the Western critical concepts and the Indian *rasa-dhvani* theory into a coherent body of critical theory that would serve as a universal critical framework for all genres in all languages. He has performed a double trick; on the one hand the lacunae in the Western theories have been overcome, and on the other, the scope of the Indian theories have been extended.47

Both the Western and Eastern methods of criticism seem to be preoccupied with words and how they function in literature.

The hectic activity in the study of language which has characterised the modern critical temper to the extent of challenging conventional and traditional modes of literary criticism and appreciation has affected the reader/critic's attitude to the working of language in literary contexts. Meaning, sense and reference, naming and describing 'speech acts', the varied functions of language, have been topics of special and specialist attention.48 The results have been disastrous in the sense that they have increased obscurity and diverted the course of aesthetic


enjoyment of great works of art. This problem with reference to the arbitrary nature of language had already been anticipated by Indian theorists nearly two thousand years ago.

The ontological status of a work of art was also identified by the Indian theorists. It was identified as the synthesis of the creative writer and the critic who is a sahārdaya in the created poetic experience. As a result art was analysed as that which presented sentiments or emotions in such a way that they could be experienced. The nuances of art-construction were taken into account, while the effect and power of language in its contribution to the total experience was fully analysed.

Rene Wellek arrives at a similar viewpoint after analysing the various issues involved in establishing the ontological status of a work of art.

The work of art, then, appears as an object of knowledge sui generis which has a special ontological status. It is neither real (physical like the statue) nor mental (psychological like the experience of light and pain) nor ideal (like the triangle) . . . It is a system of ideal concepts which are intersubjective. They must be assumed to exist in collective ideology, changing with it, accessible only through individual mental experiences, based on the sound structure of its sentences.49

The essence of these discussions which feature in modern aesthetics is present in Indian aesthetics. In the present study, the concepts of rasa, dhvani, sādhāranīkaraṇa and sahrdayatva have been isolated and their conceptual validity examined. The presentation includes their theoretical framework as found in the interpretations of the thinkers and a study of their modern relevance and applicability as well. While realising that these concepts were originally discussed with reference to Sanskrit drama and poetry, the study has extended its scope to novels, especially Indian novels in English. The concepts are shown to be comprehensive enough to account for a work of art from the conceptual stage to its reception by the reader. The importance of emotions in literature, the expression of which is possible only through language and suggestion, and the transference of this emotion to the reader who is able to thus taste the nuances of art, are the ideas collectively conveyed by these concepts. It has to be understood that these concepts are not mutually exclusive and the differentiation presented in the following chapters is only to facilitate sharper focussing on particular aspects.