CHAPTER - V

Conclusion

Tracing the evolution of criticism from the time of the Vedas to the present which has taken me on a long voyage across whole centuries and epochs has not been easy. An ambitious and what is more, very delicate, undertaking of this nature must necessarily be guilty of various gaps and omissions. The only excuse one could offer is that the emphasis in this study is not so much on exhaustiveness as on being selective and representative. This, it is hoped, should account for the absence of several authors and their contribution to criticism. However, even such a fragmentary account might give one an idea of the general vicissitudes of Indian literary criticism; its character and function in the past and thereafter.

A brief resume of the contents of each chapter here might not be altogether superfluous since such a retrospective view might help in the crystallization of all that has gone before as well as in the discussion of the prospect that lies before the contemporary Indian critic.

Effort has been made to show in the Introductory Chapter how our criticism in the past has always gone hand in hand with philosophy and shared the same ideals that have given it an unmistakably Indian character. Another
distinctive feature of Indian literary criticism, namely
its antiquity has also received due attention. These two
features have been interpreted as quite unique, for on the
one hand the metaphysical implications of a theory like
the Rasa-Dhvani suggesting the essential svabhava of
literary criticism in ancient India and on the other its
antiquity both point to the advances it had made over
European criticism which (barring Greek and Roman antiquity
which suffered a long break after its first efflorescence)
is comparatively of recent origin and also empirical in
approach.

The Second Chapter which deals with Sanskrit criticism
discusses some of the major theories like Rasa, alankara,
riti, dhvani and vakrokti and points out the amazing
modernity of ancient Indian critical thought and sensibility.
The Sanskrit rhetorician's meticulous attention to crafts-
manship no less than to the realization of rasa in a work
of art (to which the former is only an ancillary and never
an end in itself) should indicate the edge he enjoyed over
his Western counterpart who "sees the part and misses the
whole"; for some at least the method invariably becomes
primary — the mushrooming of critical schools and methods
emphasizing method must support the view.

However, as we have been often reminded, criticism in
ancient India like many other activities was an elitist
affair which explains why the critics of yore did not feel called upon to demonstrate but rather contented themselves with theorizing or conceptualizing. Even such reputed critics as Anandavardhana and Kuntaka refer to a stanza here and a stanza there to illustrate their argument but seldom analyse a whole play or a poem so as to present a sustained discussion. And the examples they provide for purposes of illustration are often so puerile and hardly match the gravity of the theories they seek to elucidate. The innumerable classifications and the absence of demonstration indeed appear to be the chief drawbacks of Sanskrit Literary Criticism, which the modern critic cannot gloss over but at the same time need not get bogged down in the maze of hair-splitting distinctions or trivial examples. Steering clear of these inadequacies he can find the theories themselves to be of great importance and relevance to him. Such sophisticated tools of analysis indigenously available should minimize our dependence on Western scholarship — minimize and not exclude altogether, for abandoning Western literary criticism wholesale would be perverse. The Sanskrit critical tradition with alternate periods of drought has been alive till at least the 17th century when Jagannatha Pandita wrote his famous Rasa Gangadhara. A lull again which is finally broken by luminaries like Hiriyanna, Aurobindo and Coomaraswamy — all of whom with their immense

faith in the traditional past of India tried to revive interest in classical Sanskrit heritage and establish its validity for the contemporary Indian.

Consequently Chapter III of the thesis entitled "The Bridge-builders" examines in considerable detail the contribution of these three scholars to art and aesthetics. In view of the undue neglect suffered by them, clearly evident in the paucity of critical work on their achievement, the Chapter also emphasizes the need for our study of these masters.

Both sections under Chapter IV discuss contemporary criticism with the distinction that while the first part examines some of the apparent limitations of recent criticism in English, the chief of them being its exclusive borrowings from the West, the second part delineates the efforts made by subsequent critics to extricate themselves from such a situation and march ahead in quest of an identity. These attempts at originality have been, to say the least, salutary in the extreme, for they have put our criticism on the right track again. In restoring our lost connections with our ancient critical heritage as well as in emphasizing the need to develop an indigenous outlook on literature whether our own or others' they have given us a sense of purpose as well as direction. In the Indian context this has been a true deliverance, a "swaraj in ideas."
However, even in the best of this criticism what is missing is the actual application of Indian theories to works of art. A remarkable awareness of the Indian heritage coupled with a uniquely Indian sensibility is present indeed but what is lacking is the intelligent application of Sanskrit critical theories to a poem, play or novel. One is of course, conscious of the fact that these critics have most powerfully and effectively made out a case for renewal of interest in Sanskrit criticism and have themselves pointed out the desirability of judging literary works including the Western in the light of Sanskrit theories. An awareness has therefore been created by them which is in itself a notable achievement but if criticism is to progress still further and utilize the good work done by the critics of the resurgent period, one would point to the method that Prof. Sen Gupta tried in his essay on *Hamlet* but, let me hasten to add, failed. The failure does not lie in the method but rather in the perceptions of the critic whose efforts to examine the play in the light of the *jugupsa* theory do not carry conviction to the reader, for the rambling references, in place of an earnest and sustained analysis, to Indian poetics do not sufficiently build up a case for making a traditional approach to the play. And this obviously accounts for the absence of any new results.

Here is the case of a critic who meant well but did not
realize his intentions, did not have the appropriate tools for his purpose. However, such an approach is still possible provided the critic of the future combines in himself a fine Indian sensibility along with a thorough grounding in Sanskrit Poetics, together, it needs no saying, the intelligence to seize the work of art in front in its many details. To these may be added familiarity with notable analyses of distinguished Western critics of our own time. A lack of any of these would make his criticism incomplete while a combination of the credentials should make the ideal kind of criticism possible. It is imperative, for in the language of Aurobindo:

... whatever helps me to find myself more intimately, nobly, with a greater and sounder possibility of self-expressive creation is good; whatever carries me out of my orientation, whatever weakens and belittles my power, richness, breadth and height of self-being, is bad for me ....

And again

An anglicized India is a thing we can no longer view as either possible or desirable, — and it could only, if pursued to the end, have made us painful copyists, clumsy followers always stumbling in the wake of European evolution and always fifty years behind it.

---


3 Ibid., p. 413.
I that why Henry James, "though himself uprooted", "counseled Edith Wharton to remain 'tethered in native pastures' 'in the interests of her life and art".⁴ He is also reported to have asked his nephew as late as 1899 to "'contact local saturations and attachments in respect to their own great and glorious country'"⁵

The Indian critic who has shown a marked tendency for straying into foreign pastures for so long is precisely in need of this advice to preserve his strong sense of the locale in the interests of his life and art. It must now sound banal to say that while exposure to other cultures and traditions is appreciated, one's unquestioning submission to them is not.

The relevance of this standpoint becomes apparent when one considers as a random example, an article on Eliot's \textit{The Waste Land}⁶ by one of the better known Indian critics where as many as twenty Western critics are quoted with approval chiefly to denigrate the poem. (Richard Aldington, Lawrence Durrell, Maurice Bowra, Lcavis, Helen Gardener, Allen Tate, Lucas, Myers, Hugh Kenner, Fowler, Paul Tillich, Pound, Yvor Winters, Roy Harvey Pearce and TLS. The only

⁵ \textit{Ibid.}
exceptions perhaps are Spender, Collingwood and I.A. Richards who defended the poem! "He laments rather than revitalizes"—what the critic says of Eliot is ironically true of himself! The article is a "dirge" for the poem's "failings": its "bogus scholarship", its lack of unity, its "hollow", "unnatural" echoes, not to speak of the author's "misquotations" of the Upanishads, lack of mythic imagination, and allusions which make the poem "too full of ad lib", sufficient to justify why "the already 'half-forgotten' poem sounds superficial". (p. 36) If the significance of the presence of the Buddha and the Upanishads in the poem is not recognized and appreciated, if the evocation of different traditions is only "exhibitionism" and the "poem's best lines are written by other hands", one fears it is largely because of the critic's misreading of the poem as well as, very sadly in this case his embarrassing deference to Western critical guidance. The companion article on, The Waste Land in the same issue of the magazine which "vindicates" the poem precisely on account of the features which Dr. Ghosh had attacked may be said to underline the value of being "tethered to one's native pastures."

One hates to sound presumptuous in taking strong positions but it has been asserted in circles that must know if our critics had turned to the great Buddhist Nagarjuna for his views on Time and Eternity in order to understand Eliot's use of them in The Four Quartets, their
response might have been valuable to the Western reader himself.

To look at Shakespeare very briefly: it is possible to consider Othello, for instance, not so much as a tragedy of jealousy but one of obsession with the self born of Ignorance — Ignorance of the Self (avidya). Full of self-centredness and self-importance, wholly incapable of going out of himself he does not have consideration for the 'other'. His vindictiveness and angry, passionate outbursts are the expressions of a man who still does not know — know that "real marriage is like oo, not like olo"\(^7\), for "when the ego is dead is marriage true."\(^8\) Readers of The Serpent and the Rope might vividly remember the moving story of Radha and Krishna where Radha has a very possessive thought of Krishna and Krishna helps her realize the folly of it all in the end.

And she fell at the Lord's feet and understood, and lived ever after in the light of the Truth.

(p. 387)

But in Othello, there is neither "light" nor "understanding", for here is one whose strong instinct for possession and revenge reveal a man of tamasic nature, whose mind as well as visage are black. Even in the end it is doubtful if


\(^8\) Ibid.
there is any other emotion than self-pity, or a knowledge born of suffering. In fact, what we witness is the degradation of a rajasic man with "hair-breadth 'scapes" to his credit to a tamasic one with dark and murderous instincts. Indeed, as Lodovico puts it:

Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? (Act IV, Sc.1)

Unlike Lear he dies an unregenerate man, ignorant of himself and of the knowledge that had he loved the Self in Desdemona his destiny would have been different. His relationship with her has chiefly been a carnal one. Her "sweet body" made his "senses" "ache" and filled him with longings. What a far cry from the great truth: "Verily the wife is dear not for the wife's sake but for the Self's sake". "Ignorant as dust", in the words of Emilia, the one thing that Othello has not been able to achieve even in the final stages is a dissolution of personality, borne out by his egotistical statements.

A few more examples from Western literature to examine the feasibility of evaluating them from an essentially Indian standpoint.

A short poem of Wallace Stevens, namely, "Anecdote of the Jar" seems to lend itself to such an interpretation.⁹

---

⁹ Some of the remarks made in relation to this poem have appeared in an article written by me on Wallace Stevens in Students Handbook of American Literature, (ed), (Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana, 1972).
"I placed a jar in Tennessee" begins the poem. Here is a specific reference to a concrete object or Vastu. Sanskrit critics are agreed upon the absolute necessity of having a subject or a theme (Vishaya) for every composition. The jar here serves as the subject around which the entire poem revolves. In the first stanza the jar is made quite factual through a description of its physical aspects—namely its roundness. There is also an explicit reference to the transformation wrought upon the wilderness by the jar. "It made the slovenly wilderness/Surround that hill". It must be noted here that the idea of the 'alchemy' could not have been impressed upon the reader by the poet without summoning this 'round' object to his aid, which gives the Indian reader at least the right to view the first stanza as an example of vastu-dhvanī.

Having established the jar's physical identity the poet builds up its "tall" and "portly" demeanour in contrast with the "slovenly wilderness" now "no longer wild." By suggesting that the jar has provided a centre to the hill which had no focal point before, the poet has adorned the hill as if it were with his imaginative faculty. He has invested it with order and symmetry as a consequence of which the wilderness which otherwise would have passed unnoticed became an object of contemplation for the jar has gathered all the chaos around it. In its turn the jar too has acquired a new dimension by being placed in those surroundings.
It looked "tall" and "of a port in air", having dominated the wilderness and established a kingdom everywhere. One discovers that this suggestion has been made in this stanza through the vivid, changing images of both the jar and the wilderness which permit us to look at this section as a case of alankara dhvani.

It is possible to think at this stage that each becomes meaningful because of the other, which is true. But the poem does not stop there. The poet who is still questioning, still exploring, while the reader is likely to be led away by the superiority of the jar, gives him a jolt in the third and final stanza and shocks him into recognizing that it was "gray and bare" and did not "give of bird or bush". The jar which is no longer the "unravished bride" has perhaps become a "cold pastoral". The jar in its

section has achieved only the sweetness of heard melodies while the sweeter is still unheard. "Round" implies artifice, a sense of completeness, order, human achievement and the resultant satisfaction. But achievement is a dead end; perfection a tombstone. Nature's imperfection has much more mystery and challenge. Art's contribution consists in imposing some kind of order on Nature but it is still Nature that holds the mystery in its womb and this mystery of Nature continues to tease us. It is true that art gives us the focal point and sensitizes us to discern Nature, for in fact, it was the jar that drew our attention to the
mysteriousness of Nature. But art has its limitations. In the very disorder of Nature there is colourfulness. The disorder itself has a vitality. It contains possibilities whereas art has exhausted its possibilities. There is a lot more lying unrevealed and to be discovered in Nature. But the perfection of the jar forbids any further exploration. So when we are just preparing ourselves to view the importance of the jar in a proper perspective, we encounter a new twist. We learn that the jar is "like nothing else in Tennessee", which revives our interest in the jar, with the result that our loyalties are divided between Nature and Art. We have not been able to make up our minds. Apart from adding an extra dimension to the jar, the wilderness has made it appear grey and bare in contrast with its own colour and variety and the jar, apart from giving a shape and meaning to the wilderness has made it lose something of its inherent beauty and naturalness. It is no longer wild. Though it has gained a symmetry it has become tame. So the two aspects of both, the jar and the wilderness, are presented. Which is superior — the jar or the wilderness? We are not able to take sides. Here is a poem of the act of the mind. But the poet has transmuted all the speculative and metaphysical thinking into a felt sensation. We are now with Nature, now with art, our responses alternating between them. Thanks to the poet we are ever on the quest. It is by creating a series of tensions
that he keeps the poem moving. It is a supreme example of how much a poet can do in barely twelve lines. Without himself stating anywhere whether the jar is superior or the wilderness and where his own allegiances lie, the poet has not merely demonstrated the value of suggestion (dhvani) which opens up endless possibilities but also generated a feeling of satisfaction — satisfaction at the way the poem has progressed — not in resolving the tensions or conflicts in a dogmatic or facile manner, but in keeping the issue open which could still invite endless interpretations.

These are the positive delights or heightened awarenesses of the life of the mind, one would gather. The entire complex experience is what Sanskritists call rasa.

One could now turn to a play like The Cocktail Party to show how an Indian approach is possible even to this work where the situation is intensely Western, for here, as elsewhere, there are unmistakable clues that Eliot cherished some of the values dear to us and also the faith that the wisdom of the East can answer to the ills of Western man vainly seeking solace in a wrong place. A work like this with a reasonable Indian base, with its insistence on suffering and acceptance and duty could have a special appeal and relevance "in a world of lunacy, violence, stupidity, greed...." to Indians themselves who

---

10 Most of the observations made here on the play are drawn from a paper I read at a Seminar on "Experiencing Literature" at Dhvanyaloka, Mysore, 1981.
have severed connections with their vital past and are on the way to "nervous breakdowns". In this respect The Cocktail Party has a purpose to serve and fulfils the Indian's critic's expectation of a work of art, for here is a Kavya which revives and recreates a vital aspect of Indian way of life and imparts the value of it to character and reader alike. It is for us not merely to recognize the Indian element in the play but also to examine how closely the work conforms to the Indian conception of a Kavya. If the aim of literature is to generate a unique experience in the mind of the reader, it is then pertinent to remark that there is purgation of neither pity nor fear in this play in the face of Celia's death ultimately — but an experience of a positive emotion ... "satisfaction" as Reilly would view it.... "if that is not a happy death, what death is happy?" The mediocrity of Edward's temperament would no doubt look upon it as a "waste", dying for "a handful of plague-stricken natives who would have died anyway" but considering the "difference that made to the natives who were dying or the state of mind in which they died" (lokakalyana), Celia's very death is transformed into a "triumph" in Reilly's transcendental world, for it is a triumph of the human spirit which explains why inspite of death, disaster and tragic overtones in the play, Eliot maintains and generates an equipoise in the play and in the mind of the reader. So viewed there is no waste generally associated with a tragedy despite the catastrophe, for there
is a sanctity attached to death. There is no loss without a gain and it is in fact, Celia's death that gives an edge to the play, adds an extra dimension and makes suffering meaningful and chastening. It is with this in view perhaps that Eliot calls the play a comedy notwithstanding its high seriousness. It is a comedy in the sense in which Raja Rao's *Cat and Shakespeare* is one. Whatever happens is for the good: "all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well", for life is lila, play and the composition that tries to capture it here is just a 'show', *rupaka* as Sanskrit drama is rightly called by Dhananjaya. The play is a comedy in the Western sense of the term in the light of the cocktail party in the first act and a comedy in the Indian sense of the word lila, in the light of what happens to Edward and Lavinia on the one hand and Celia on the other. Interestingly the news of the death of Celia is received at the cocktail party towards the end of the play as though Eliot is juxtaposing the play of men with the play of the Gods which the death of Celia in a sense is. What is only proper is one should fulfil one's destiny by performing one's dharma whatever the sphere might be. Edward and Lavinia throw a party to friends to celebrate their patch-up. For Celia it is a life of fulfilment, spiritually speaking, because it was not the work of fate or an act of vengeance from man but something done of her own volition.
Indian society has a place for both Celia and the Chamberlaynes as indeed, medieval Christian society amply provided for both. Each has a valid role to play in society. But each dogged by the consequences of his own actions or *karma* needs the intervention of a Guru, a teacher who shows the path. Sir Reilly fits the role unobtrusively and naturally and for a while we forget that Reilly is an English doctor functioning against an English background. What Eliot is suggesting in Reilly’s parting advice to Chamberlaynes and Celia ("Work out your salvation with diligence") is that a modern psychiatrist has need to be more than a psychiatrist. He has to be like the compassionate sage of the ancient times healing the tissues of the spirit. By literally lifting these words of the Buddha from *The Dhammapada* and inserting them so appropriately in a new context Eliot has brought to life the relevance of an old civilization — the mature philosophy of a people who strove for self-perfection even while they lived and loved and suffered. The entire theme except the notion of the party itself seems to be operating within an Indian framework. The responsive imagination of the reader, the *Bhavayitri pratibha* as Rajashekara terms it in his *Kavyamimansa* and the creative imagination of the poet, the *Karayitri pratibha* meet and mingle. The entire critical process beginning from *hrdayasamvada* (correspondence) to *tanmayibhavana* (absorption) and finally to *rasanubhava* (aesthetic rapture) is complete.
The **gusto** and the animation with which the playwright packs his dialogue even in the first scene of the I Act arouses our interest immediately and we feel involved in what is happening. The play which begins on a comic note with anecdotes of Lady Klootz and Vincwalls and Verinders grows tense and more tense as it unfolds Edward's predicament and that of others — Lavinia and Celia and Peter each caught up in an almost identical crisis and compelling our participation. We feel drawn to them and follow them through the ups and downs of their lives and this identification cannot but result in an experience of a positive kind. It might be said that the culminating state of mind of the reader is one of *santha*, for there is a sense of poise as at the end of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. It is well-known that all thought and all activity in ancient India was a means of progress towards Self-realization and God-realization. The play could be interpreted as an enactment of this process at various levels, for each character discovers at some stage that he or she has only been harbouring an illusion (*mithya*). The love relationships between Edward and Celia, Lavinia and Peter and Peter and Celia reveal none has been an ideal relationship, for there has been no love for the Self's sake. But finally the illusions fade one by one and the characters learn to see themselves and one another in a new light, leaving behind the 'shadow of desires of desires'. Needless to say, this realization by the characters, each according
to his *samskara*, could light our paths.

Looked at from an Indian point of view the work would mean much more to us than it would otherwise, (for it has been adjudged a failure, because it is anti-life and so forth). It is in the light of the foregoing examples pointing to the possibility of critical gains that we owe it to ourselves to respond with a native sensibility. The reason why Aurobindo rated *svadharma* as "the first necessity" Not to act in accordance with it meant for him "disintegration of life", "languor, weakness, inefficiency", "confusion, disorder and finally decline and loss of vitality."  

Of course, as he has himself pointed out, "it is neither desirable nor possible to exclude everything that comes in to us from outside," but it is an equally self-evident law of nature that a "living organism, which grows not by accretion but by self-development and assimilation, must **recast** the things it takes in to suit" its genius and reject what would be non-assimilable. (italics mine) The process very aptly described as "atmasatkarana, an assimilative appropriation, a making the thing settle into oneself and turn into characteristic form of our self being," seems to decide the future of Indian criticism.

13 *Ibid*.
14 *Ibid*. 