CHAPTER III

THE USE AND EFFECT OF POETRY

SECTION I

THE WESTERN POINTS OF VIEW :

"Poets aim either to benefit, or to utter words -at once both pleasing and helpful to life"

- Horace.

"For the effect of elevated language is, not to persuade the hearers, but to entrance them"

- Longinus.

The question of the use and effect of poetry is, in the last analysis, the question of the justification of poetry. This is one of the oldest and most fundamental problems of literary criticism. Broadly, we can discern two approaches among the critics to this problem - the Horatian and the Longinian. The Horation point of view, which is much older than Horace himself, is utilitarian, didactic, moralistic and practical. It holds that apart from giving pleasure, literature also serves or should serve to disseminate knowledge, inculcate moral values and act as a great humanizing and civilizing force.
As against this, the Longinian point of view may be described as more purely aesthetic. It considers that the pleasure which poetry gives is peculiar to it and constitutes its only use. It is reluctant to speak of the moralistic, didactic and practical effects that may accrue from the experience of literature. In its extreme form, the Horatian point of view becomes narrow didacticism sacrificing art for morality. The Longinian point of view becomes, in its extreme form, the cult of "art for art's sake" which forgets that literature being a linguistic art cannot be divorced from meaning and significance.

Both these points of view have their own difficulties, but the point of view which makes poetry a vehicle of knowledge invites a host of questions bearing on the intrinsic worth of poetry as a cognitively meaningful activity. If poetry instructs, what is the subject it instructs us in, and what is the value of that instruction? As a recent writer who has discussed this question puts it, "it is sensible enough to look into a rock formation to see if we can find gold; we cannot in the same way, look into a novel or poem to see if we can find knowledge. What may approximately be called knowledge is controversial in a
sense in which what may be called gold is not”. Nevertheless, there is a persistent feeling that there is something basic in the Horatian view. (How could it otherwise endured through the ages?) It is the aim of this chapter to examine and support the Horatian point of view, to argue in support of the cognitive value of art, and try to integrate it ultimately with the longintan point of view.

From its very beginning poetry was valued not only for the pleasure it gave, but also (and more importantly) for the effect it produced, and the purpose it was believed to serve. Poetry, it was claimed, influenced men’s minds significantly. It is, therefore, an instrument of culture, and it was even regarded as divine. People believed that it expressed truths beyond the capacity of the logical intellect, or of prose speech. Incidents and characters in poetry were archetypes of human situations and models of human nature. Through these poetry brought people closer to the understanding and realization of the ideal. The deep influence of the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata on Indian

culture bears testimony to this. In Western civilization this is seen in the great respect accorded to poetry.

"The Greeks always felt that the poet was in the broadest and deepest sense the educator of his people. Homer was only the noblest example, as it were the classical instance, of that general conception." A study of Homer and other poets' works formed an integral part of Greek education. They were a source of religious beliefs and morals, and of national history and ideals. They were supposed to inculcate courage and piety, and the essential civic virtues. The functions of poet and seer or prophet, though already distinguished in Homer's works, were still liable to be fused. Some of the early Greek philosophers believed that the ancient poets had expressed profound truths through symbol and allegory, and offered allegorical interpretations of Homer. Later Horace was to refer to the Greek belief in the humanizing effect of poetry and its role as an instrument of culture:

Sidney's account of the matter in the Apologie is well known.

While men still roamed the woods, Orpheus, the holy prophet of the gods, made them shrink from bloodshed and brutal living, hence the fable that he tamed tigers and ravening lions. Hence too, the fable that Amphion, builder of Thebes’ citadel, moved stones by the sound of his lyre and led them whither they would by his supplicating spell. In days of yore, this was wisdom, to draw a line between public and private rights, between things sacred and things common, to check vagrant union, to give rules for wedded life, to build towns and grave laws on tables of wood. 4

This traditional view of the value of poetry was questioned by Plato. We have recapitulated his arguments on this subject already in Chapter I Section I (A) above, and there is no need to recall them here in detail. Plato’s concern with poetry was the concern of a philosopher; “All the philosophers interest in speech lies in discovering whether a given sentence is true or false. Not only the informative value of a word, but its educational value, depends on its truth.” The philosopher’s education should lead him to the just and rational governance of his inner being by means of the reason. Now the question is - Does the traditional poetic paideia achieve this? Plato’s answer, was a clear ‘NO’.


His objection to poetry was that it created an illusory world of sensual images and led peoples' minds away from reality. Replies to it continue to occur in later ages. These replies have taken several forms. Sometimes a different metaphysical system is opposed to that of Plato, and poetry is sought to be justified according to it. Sometimes poetry is justified as a world of symbolical knowledge. Related in a way to this mode of justification is the view that poetry is "the complete speech of man", providing "full employment", as it were, to human language and by keeping language "in health", helping its users to remain "in health" individually and socially. Sometimes the question is dismissed as irrelevant or the function of poetry is said to heighten our state of awareness; or its function is to provide us with a kind of pleasure unobtainable otherwise. We shall now briefly consider each one of these points of view.

The first great critic in the West who sought the justification of poetry in a different metaphysical system was Aristotle. He endorsed the traditional view that
poetry both pleased in a peculiar way and instructed us in the awareness of reality. His theory of poetic imitation fused these two functions and made them organic rather than superadded elements in the structure of poetry. Imitation in Aristotle's theory is not mere copying, as it was in Plato's; it is the discovery of the universal in the particular, or the perception of the relation of the specific to the universal. The objects of poetic imitation are human actions. The poet's function about them is to describe not the thing that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary. The connection between two events as cause and effect is not in human affairs absolute necessity as in science, it is only probable; therefore, all that poetry can do is "offer us a view of the typology of human nature freed from the accidents that encumber our view in real life." This is

6. Discussed in more detail in Ch.I Sec.II(A) above.
7. Poetics, Ch. 4
8. ibid. Ch.9, p.25
the significance of "gathering the meaning of things, e.g., that the man there is so and so". The pleasure derived from poetic imitation is at bottom the pleasure that comes from learning; from nurturing and exercising the intellectual nature of man.

If the aim of poetry, in general, is mimesis, the effect of tragic poetry, in particular, is catharsis. The enigmatic catharsis clause in the Poetics has been often interpreted as containing Aristotle's answer to Plato's objection that poetry feeds and waters the emotions instead of restraining them. It is a moot point whether catharsis refers to the reader's or the spectator's state of mind in the aesthetic experience of tragedy, or whether it refers to the central tragic act itself.

10. Poetics, Ch.4, p.9

11. According to Else's anthropological interpretation catharsis pertains to the central tragic act. Else argues that in tragedy the audience acts as an informal tribunal or Areopagus and exculpates the tragic hero from the blame of his deed. The spectators witness the entire course of a tragic action as sympathetic human beings and are convinced of the hero's innocence, taking into account his undoubted morality and his ignorance of the situation he is placed in. The hero's exculpation in the spectators imagination is, according to Else the tragic catharsis.(Else, pp.425-437)
Whatever the interpretation, the acknowledged truth about the effect of tragedy is that it touches our sensibilities in a unique way. The essence of tragedy is the suffering of a great and good (but not impossibly good) protagonist leading to his death. A great but bad man's suffering and death cannot produce the proper tragic effect because pity for the hero's plight and fear of his impending doom are the prerequisites of the effect of tragedy. This is the reason why Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Shakespeare's Richard III and (perhaps even Coriolanus) cannot be called tragic heroes. Their personalities have developed in a single direction. We are impressed by their great status, but their suffering does not evoke pity. Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear, on the other hand, are tragic heroes because they are essentially human, though gifted with more than ordinary fineness of perception and feeling. Their lives evoke our admiration and sympathy ("woe and wonder"). Tragedy appeals to and thus strengthens our sense of justice and right though these principles are often defeated in real life. It shows us how things ought to be. Since the tragic hero is not an actual individual but a poetic creation symbolizing a human type, the spectator's feelings of pity and fear are also about a situation
which symbolizes a state of human existence. The spectators judge it only as fellow human beings, but in an intense, ennobled and disinterested way. Their judgement is influenced by the paradoxical "distance-nearness" relationship of art and reality. As S.H. Butcher explains, "The true tragic fear becomes almost an impersonal emotion, attracting itself not so much to this or that particular incident, as to the general cause of action which is for us an image of human destiny".

So far we have considered the classical discussions of the cognitive value of art. But art is often ecstatic and sublime and transcends the merely cognitive. This aspect of art was emphasised in Longinus's theory of the Sublime. The Longinian view claims that the highest kind of literature appeals not only to the reason or to the emotions, but to the whole being of man. It is distinguished by the quality of the Sublime, and the Sublime transcends the cognitive. The Sublime consists in the first place in

"a striking distinction of language". It calls for a careful arrangement of material. But the real source of the Sublime is in the greatness of mind. "Excellence of style is the concomitant of a great soul ... Surely great words are spoken only by those who think great thoughts".

A great conception amazes by its sheer greatness; it requires no explanation. "Sometimes also, without a word being uttered, a bare conception amazes us because of the nobility of soul it expresses."

14. ibid, p. 148
15. ibid, p. 153
16. ibid, p. 155
17. ibid. Longinus's meaning in these words is clear enough though his expression "without a word being uttered" sounds like an overstatement. Through suggestion a poet can produce the maximum effect with the minimum use of words. Milton describes the moment of Eve's fall in four simple words:

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour,
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe
That all was lost.

- Paradise Lost IX • 780-84
The Sublime gives the impression of vastness, greatness and grandeur. It creates a sense of awe. It follows that the Sublime cannot be a quality only of form, and style. A trivial subject cannot help a poet to give the impression of the Sublime. "Surely great words are spoken only by those who think great thoughts". Genius is the most important source of the Sublime. A great writer may be a little deficient in expression, but he remains greater than an ordinary writer with a perfect style. What bestows greatness on him is his vision, the profound truth about the aspect of life with which he deals. Not any and every subject can give the impression of Sublime, but only those which are informed by the author's vision of the truth of life, and it is this vision of truth that constitutes the cognitive value of literature. "In dealing then with writers of genius, whose greatness falls within the bounds of the use and profit of man, we first conclude that though far removed from perfection, all such men yet have more than human capacity.

18. On the Sublime, Ch. IX, p. 155
19. ibid. Ch. XXXIII, p. 185
20. ibid. Ch. XXXVI, p. 188
Longinus uses here an expression reminiscent of Horace, "the use and profit of man", but he is clearly thinking of the universal, lasting human significance. Longinus, did not come into his own as an influence on English critical thought till the 18th Century and it was Horace who dominated the scene when the question of the use of literature came up in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The attitude of the all powerful/church to literature was, on the whole, one of disdainful tolerance, and in some cases, even of hostility. It regarded pagan classical literature with deep suspicion. Popular literature in the vernacular tongues was still in its infancy, and therefore, below the serious notice of the learned. It encouraged only Christian literature - the Bible and the Fathers. It expected literature to subserve ecclesiastic ends, and this expectation was in most cases fulfilled. "Those two bodies (i.e., the church and the aristocracy) had paid the piper and the tunes had been fashioned to meet their wishes."

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The church disfavoured secular literature as mere fiction, frivolous and immoral. Its arguments against literature were not new; they were Plato's arguments on a much lower theoretical plane. Late examples of the typical medieval church attitude to literature are found in Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579) and William Prynne's *Histriomastix* (1632).

The champions of literature in the Middle Ages sought to defend it by arguing that it was allegorical and that beneath its literal expressions there was sound theology. Dante, in the Epistle to Can Grande della Scala (prefixed to the Paradiso) argued that his work had allegorical (or worldly), analogical (or other worldly), and tropological levels of meaning. Petrarch and Boccaccio argued that theology itself was God's poetry. The Middle Ages could not, however, free literature from the status of handmaiden to ethics.

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22. The authorship of this letter has been challenged. (See H.Hatzfield, "Modern Literary Scholarship as reflected in Dante Criticism", *Comparative Literature III* Fall, 1951, pp. For our argument, however, it is not essential that the Epistle should have been written by Dante.
and theology. A change in attitude came only with the growth of humanism in the Renaissance. The humanistic point of view was based on Horace's doctrine — "to instruct and to please". Though it did not repudiate allegorical interpretations, it acknowledged the peculiar pleasure of poetry and stressed its ethical and civilizing effects. The Italian translations of Aristotle's Poetics were another important factor in the appreciation of literature. The Poetics gave the Renaissance critics a complete rational justification of poetry. The typical Renaissance point of view of the function of literature is presented in English literature by Sir Philip Sidney. His Defence of Poesie is the most sustained and elaborate argument about the use and effect of poetry. He was provoked to make his impassioned though balanced Defence by Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse in which the Puritan writer had condemned poetry as the mother of lies, the muse of abuse. Sidney's reply to Gosson (who is a vulgarised and more virulent Plato) is a broad-based and general defence of the meaningfulness and great cultural value of literature. The importance of poetry is that it "hath been the first light giver to ignorance, and firstnurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards on tougher knowledges." He recounts the

importance of Homer, Hesiod, and Musius to Greek civilization. The civilizing effect of poetry is universally observed in the softening and sharpening the hard and dull wits even of the barbarians. This is possible only through "the sweet delights of poetry", for "until they find a pleasure in the exercise of the mind, great promises of much knowledge will little persuade them that know not the fruits of knowledge".

Not only is poetry in this way significant only to the barbarians but also to those who are highly advanced in civilization. It is remarkable that Sidney answers, in anticipation as it were, those who with Macaulay, hold that poetry has no use for civilization, that it declines as civilization advances. He first carefully determines the relevance of different

intellectual disciplines and then asks what the ending end of all knowledge is. Learning, for Sidney, is never dissociated from the moral betterment of man. The end of all learning is
to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls made worse by their clayey lodgings can be capable of,

to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying of his own divine essence. 26

But no other man of learning except the poet can accomplish this because,

the astronomer looking to the stars might fall into a ditch, the enquiring philosopher might be blind in himself and the mathematician might draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart? 27

These are all "serving sciences"; the highest science is that of the knowledge of man's self*. The final goal of learning is not acquisition of mere theoretical knowledge but virtuous action. If this is so, the poet is superior to

26. Defence of Poesy, p.104
27. ibid. p.104
28. ibid. p.104, Spenser in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, Prefatory to the Faery Queen says, "The general end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline". (English Literary Criticism; The Renaissance, ed. O.B. Hardison, Jr. (New York, Appleton Century Crofts, 193) p.200
the followers of all other disciplines, and that his only serious competitor is the moral philosopher. But the sullen gravity of the latter only repels whereas the poet's sweetness attracts.

In describing the effect of poetry on the soul, Sidney follows Aristotle in the main, contending that poetry makes a deep impression on the soul because it "coupleth the general notion with the particular example", and thus the poet surpasses both the philosopher and the historian. Poetry gives a perfect picture in example of the virtue to which it exhorts people. The effect of such a picture on the sensibilities of people is an empirical fact:

29. The Defence, p.105

30. ibid. p.107

31. ibid. p.107
Truly, I have known men, that even with reading, 'Amadis de Gaule' (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect poesy) have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality and especially courage ... 32

The moral influence of poetry is indirect but unmistakable, and it works on all.

For even those hard hearted evil men who think virtue a school name, and know no other good but indulgere genio, and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the philosopher, and feel not the inward reason they stand upon, yet will be content to be delighted - which is all the good fellow poet seems to promise - and so steal to see the form of the goodness, which seen they cannot but love ere themselves be aware, as if they took the medicine of cherries. 33

It is noteworthy that though the burden of Sidney's Defence is Horatian, his Defence stresses the importance of the poetic function to move. Throughout

32. ibid. p.114

33. ibid.

34. For suppose it be granted ... that the philosopher ... doth teach more perfectly than the poet, yet I do think that no man is so much philophilosphos as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching. It may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and the effect of teaching. (ibid. p.112)
the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, scholars held that rhetoric had a three-fold function - to teach, to delight and to move, and this view was extended to the cognate discipline of poetry.

The importance of Sidney's Defence is that it completes Aristotle's answer to Plato's objections to poetry. True, Aristotle answered Plato's epistemological questions on the same ground, and showed by his theory of tragic catharsis the salutary effect of literature on human emotions. But Sidney put this question in the wider context of human culture, and showed how poetry worked on people's sensibilities and how, by strengthening their sensibilities, it functioned as a means to culture. The importance of Sidney is that for the first time in the history of English criticism, he made explicit, on a wide scale, the grounds on which any programme of poetic education must be based.

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35. G. Shepherd in introduction to the Defence of Poesy pp. 69-70.
If Sidney may fairly represent the Renaissance in England, Dr. Johnson may be regarded as the representative of a later phase of English Neoclassicism. As a literary doctrine Neoclassicism mingled the Aristotelian-Horatian with the Longinian tradition. Together with the theory of imitation, it recognised the element of the Sublime in literature. Dryden for instance declared, "Aristotle with his interpreters, and Horace and Longinus are the authors to whom I owe my lights". But in spite of their enthusiasm for On the Sublime, the Neoclassical critics were influenced more by Horace than by Longinus. Prof. R.S. Crane observes:

With respect to such principles, at any rate, it (i.e. neoclassicism) constituted, from the beginning of the period to the end, a distinct and fairly consistent school, which can be characterized most simply by saying that its basic historical affinities were Roman rather than Greek, that its favourite masters were Horace rather than Aristotle, and Quintilian rather than Longinus. 37


37. "English Neoclassical Criticism - An Outline sketch" in Critics and Criticism, ed.R.S. Crane, p.375
But the influence of Longinus was not altogether negligible. It made itself/gradually as can be seen in the criticism of Dr. Johnson.

Dr. Johnson's literary criticism is a striking example of how a great genius can transform in application a critical dogma into a sensitive and precise instrument of critical evaluation. His pronouncements leave no doubt that he accepted the age old Horatian dictum of the use and effect of poetry. "The end of writing" he declared, "is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing". He characterised poetry as "the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason". His emphasis is the same in his argument against the Unities,


that the unities of time and place are not essential to a just drama, that though they may sometimes conduce to pleasure, they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction. 40

These pronouncements, together with the moralism usually associated with him and his restlessness over the tragedy of King Lear, may give the wrong impression that Johnson made instruction the prime and pleasure the subordinate function of literature. But such an impression would not be correct. Johnson rejected didacticism and made pleasure the indispensable characteristic, the *sine qua non*, of poetry:

Works of imagination excel by their allurement and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining attention. That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity. 42


41."A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtlessly be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life: but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse ... " ibid. VIII,704

42. Lives of English Poets, I.474
He condemned dulness as the most fatal fault. In a
conversation with Boswell, he went to the length of
saying that poetry,

being merely a luxury, an instrument of pleasure,
it can have no value, unless when exquisite of its kind.43

Pleasure, imagination, truth and instruction are
inseparably fused in Johnson's conception of the use and
effect of poetry. Pleasure, has the characteristics of
suddenness, immediacy and completeness, and it gives a
sense of surprise and satisfaction. It cannot be slow and
oversubtle. In his criticism of the metaphysical poets,
he explained:

Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing must
please at once. The pleasures of the mind
imply something sudden and unexpected. What is
perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the
consciousness of improvement, but will never
strike with the sense of pleasure.44

43. Boswell's Life of Johnson (ed. George Birkbeck-Hill
44. Lives of English Poets, I. 59
In Johnson's criticism the beautiful is associated with the pleasant. In the Dictionary he defines beauty as "assemblage of graces, or proportion of parts, which pleases the eye". But his conception goes much beyond elegance, symmetry and embellishment of language. Poetic pleasure excludes the merely pretty, amusing or curious, "the lucky trifle of genius", because, compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful ... they are blossoms to be valued only as they foretell fruits. 45

Poetic pleasure has a deep intellectual quality and therein is the "instruction" of poetry.

The source of poetic pleasure is the representation of nature, i.e., of the unchanging and permanent qualities of human nature and the basic moral law operating in man's actions. As J.H. Hagstrum explains

Art instructs by representing lifelike and particular reality, extensive in its range and various in its forms; and by representing or at least implying, moral psychological truth, which is general, rational and normative. 46

45. ibid. I.284

46. Jean H. Hagstrum Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism, (Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1952,) p.71
Shakespeare is the greatest writer because he is above all the poet of nature. This insistence on the representation of nature, however, put Johnson in a dilemma. Human nature is not always elevating and man's actions do not necessarily imply rational and normative psychological truth. Nevertheless the representation of nature remained for Johnson the source of pleasure and instruction in literature. It was the great praise of Shakespeare;

that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise before him, may be cured of his delirious ecstacies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions. 48

Works of imitation are valuable "because they bring realities to mind".

47. Vide Johnson's criticism of King Lear ( Ib. N. 41 above)
48. Preface/VII.65
49. ibid. VII.78
Johnson's insistence on the truthful imitation of nature was at cross purpose with his stress that literature should teach. He could not praise Shakespeare's King Lear as a just representation of nature. He always felt that the writer had a moral duty towards the reader.

It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature, but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation; greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account. 50

(The Rambler, No. 4)

One way of regarding Johnson's emphasis on instruction is to see in it his constant search for the principles that account for the permanent value of literature. He found one such principle in the connection between life and literature. All great literature is rooted in man's experience of life.

50. The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, III. 22
In emphasising thus imitation and instruction Johnson shows himself to be a true disciple of Aristotle and Horace. But the influence of Longinus is also felt in Johnson's discussion of the Sublime, and of the effect of tragedy. Tragedy, said Johnson, sinks the spectators in dejection, mollifies them with tender emotions, and moves them. In its effect, it is "soft and pathetic". The pleasure of the pathetic depends on the spectator's consciousness of fiction. (or aesthetic distance as it later was to be called.) The term "pathetic" itself has a wide connotation in Johnson's criticism. In the Dictionary he defined "pathetic" as "affecting the passions, passionate, moving". He carefully distinguished the pathetic from the Sublime, and in keeping with his definition made it co-extensive with the range of all human passions. In this sense the pathetic covers the entire field of literature. "The province of poetry is

51. ibid. VII.74

52. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more. - ibid. VII.78
to describe nature and passion". The pathetic is intimate and touches the heart irresistibly. The greatest exemplar of this quality is Shakespeare.

Through all these denominations of the drama, Shakespeare's mode of composition is the same; an interchange of seriousness with merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another. But whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose; as he commands us, we laugh or mourn, or sit silent with quiet expectation, in tranquillity without indifference... 54

Another important effect of literature is that of the Sublime. In the Dictionary Johnson defines the Sublime as 1) "High in Place ... 2) High in excellence, exalted by nature ... 3) High in style or sentiment, lofty, grand ..." etc. It appears that Johnson considers mainly the Sublime which consists in noble thought, magnificence of diction and harmonious construction of phrase. In fact this traditional rhetorical meaning of

54. Preface, VII.68
the Sublime is always present in his criticism. The works of the metaphysical poets lacked the first requisite of the Sublime, namely, nobleness of thought or

that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment and the second, rational admiration.

The fault of the Metaphysical Poets was that "their attempts were always analytic" whereas "sublimity is produced by aggregation".

But this is not the only meaning of the Sublime in Johnson. He also speaks of the emotional effect of the vast, the dreadful, the gloomy that baffles the reason and defies the imagination. In fact, the dreadful and the vast were associated in his imagination even before the publication, in 1757, of Burke's famous Inquiry into the Origin of Our Idea of the Sublime and the Beautiful.

55. Lives of English Poets, I.20-21
In the *Dictionary* (1747–55) Johnson associated the Sublime with the vast and the terrible. In *The Rambler* No. 80 (Dec. 1750) the same association is mentioned, though less succinctly.

"The nakedness and asperity of the wintry world always fills the beholder with pensive and profound astonishment; as the variety of the scene is lessened, its grandeur is increased; and the mind is swelled at once by the mingled ideas of the present and the past of the beauties which have vanished from the eyes, and the waste and desolation that are now before them".

Though the Sublime evokes the feelings of astonishment and terror, it is not to be confused with the pathetic. In Johnson's criticism the pathetic is restricted to the world of human passions, and the Sublime points to the limitlessness of the universe. Accordingly, great objects

56. *The Rambler* The Yale Ed. of the Works of Samuel Johnson IV.57
in external nature, lofty mountains, boundless oceans, vast deserts, their awesome solitude, and the vast questions of man's destiny and the nature of God pertain to the sphere of the Sublime. The terror it evokes always forces on man's mind his littleness, insignificance and helplessness in the vast scheme of the universe. It is disquieting. Johnson considered these to be too overpowering to give poetic pleasure. While discussing the

Sublime in Paradise Lost, he observed, of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence ... from others we shrink with horror ... The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness ... 57

Johnson reacted to the Sublime in a highly individual way because he was very keenly susceptible to the emotions of fear and terror, and recoiled from them even in art where they became unendurable.

56.

57. Lives of English Poets I. 182
Johnson's views on the use and effect of poetry are important because they give a significant turn to the traditional Horation theory. They integrate pleasure with instruction, and make instruction inhere in the poetic representation of life. Though Johnson is often accused of didacticism, he, in fact, rejected the view which made poetic pleasure the sugar-coating of a moral pill. In its basic approach Johnson's theory is the Aristotelian theory in a new garb, given in the context of individual works and authors.

Johnson was the last great exponent of English Neoclassicism. With the advent of Romanticism we enter upon a new epoch. The Western view of the use and effect of literature begins to change radically. Romanticism may be regarded as a defence of works of imagination against the philosophy of empiricism which triumphed in the 18th Century England. Empiricism made experience the only source of knowledge and restricted the scope of experience strictly to sense impressions. It discounted the imagination as a source of knowledge. Hobbes described the imagination as the survival of the sense impression in the memory. It is therefore "nothing but decaying sense and is found
in men and many other living creatures, as well sleeping, 58
as waking*. It is different from memory only in that it
is concerned with mental images. It is the source of wit
or poetic pleasure since wit consists in discerning
similitudes, "celerity of imagining" and "steady
59
direction" to some approved end. This meaning obtains
also in Locke:

For wit lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and
putting those together with quickness and variety,
wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity,
thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable
vision in the fancy. 60

But this, according to Locke, is the source of
error and ignorance; fancy and wit cannot give the knowledge
of things as they are. They "insinuate wrong ideas, move

58. Leviathan (ed. Michael Oakeshott, Oxford:
     Basil Blackwell 1955) p. 9

59. ibid. p. 43

60. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. II. xi
    ed. A. C. Fraser. (New York: Dover Publications,
the passions and thereby mislead the judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheats".

It will be wrong to suppose that the attack of empiricism was directed only against poetic/fancy. Its implications were much wider. By making the mind a passive recipient of impressions from without, it reduced the importance of the knowing subject and the role played by the mind in shaping and moulding sense data in its own light.

In its extreme form, that is, in Hume's philosophy, it went to the length of denying the identity of the self. "For my part", Hume declared,

when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble upon some particular perception or other ... I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but perception. 62

This extreme sensationalism rendered the belief in God and the immortality of the soul impossible and shook the foundation of ethics. It awakened Kant from his "dogmatic

61. ibid. III. x p.146

slumber ", to rebuild on a new epistemology, the systems of religion, ethics and science.

The importance of Kant's new epistemology to the student of literature is that it explained the role of the imagination in the process of knowledge. Further, it laid the foundation of German Idealism which deeply influenced the Romantic movement in literature.

Kant's epistemology was based on the refutation of the assumptions underlying empiricism. One such assumption was the doctrine of epistemological atomism according to which our knowledge is ultimately made up of sensations which are single and separate units like atoms. So in order to construct a theory of knowledge, we must break up knowledge into its smallest units and then derive from them all mental operations. But this empiricist method of analysis has its obvious limitations. It leads to the dilemma that if different perceptions are different existences, the mind can see no real connection between them. So epistemological atomism gives not knowledge, but a chaotic world of sensa. Further, a single atomic sensation is a myth, since nothing absolutely simple can be apprehended in sense experience. Our experience
is always a cluster of sensations, a "sensuous manifold", as Kant put it. But even the clusters of sensations cannot be grasped except through the unifying activity of the mind. The most primary form of knowledge is the awareness of the knowing subject in which the "sensuous manifold" has been unified into an individual object. But all mental operations depend on one supreme principle, namely, the self-consciousness of the knower. It is the pre-condition of knowledge, for, "if I were not aware of myself, I could not recognize myself in successive acts of perception and unify them in a generalization."

But self-consciousness is not the mere individual self. Here Kant makes a distinction between the limited empirical self and the transcendental self. The characteristic of the empirical self is the appearance of our mind as the object of consciousness. The transcendental self is the knower behind all objects. It is one and the same in all consciousness and cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects. Kant does not, however, explain what

64. G.N.G. Orsini, Coleridge and German Idealism, p.120


66. ibid. p.369
the ultimate source of the transcendental and the empirical self is, and how they come to be separated. But these metaphysical questions need not concern us here. What is relevant is that these tenets of his epistemology are the basis also of his theory of art.

The cardinal elements of Kant's aesthetics are:

1) In aesthetic experience we are concerned not with an object but with the representation of an object on the subject's mind. 2) Aesthetic experience is not a conceptual judgement, but it has universal assent. It has "universal subjective validity" as against the "universal objective validity" of science. 3) The source of aesthetic pleasure is that the mind sees in a work of art order and system which satisfy the reason. Since here we are not interested in the real existence of the object represented, our pleasure is disinterested. Since art necessarily pleases all by the order, system and harmony of parts which appear "as if"


68. ibid. pp. 56-66, p. 67
to have a purpose, it is superior to the world of reality.

Kant's "Copernican revolution" in epistemology and aesthetics produced far reaching results. It led to the emphasis in Romanticism on the individual's intuitive grasp of truth in determining the use and effect of poetry. Henceforward, the traditional stress on moral lessons becomes less important.

The most prominent of the English Romantics who discussed the theoretical bases of the arts was Coleridge. He felt the influence of Kant very profoundly. However, so far as his theory of art is concerned, this influence is a little indirect, i.e., it comes through the later

69. ibid. pp. 69-70

70. "The writings of the illustrious sage of Königsberg ... took possession of me as with a giant's hand". (Biographia Literaria, I. 99) Recently in his 'The Origin and Significance of Coleridge's Theory of Secondary Imagination', Thomas McFarland argued that Coleridge had been deeply influenced by the German philosopher Tetens for the essential details of his theory of the secondary imagination. (New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth, ed. G. Hartmann, Columbia Univ. Press 1972) pp. 206-218
modifications and elaborations of the Kantian philosophy by Fichte and especially by Schelling. The most important principle of Schelling's philosophy is the concept of the Absolute or the all-pervading world-spirit which is the ultimate reality and the source of all things. The Absolute resolves the dichotomy of subject and object, nature and the knowing self because everything in its potency dwells in the world-spirit. Thus, the ideal and the real, the thought and the thing are identical in their root. Nature, accordingly, cannot be a dead mechanical order. We feel a close affinity to Nature because it is the expression of the same world-spirit which breathes in us and because/ is in it life, purpose and reason. Reason includes, according to Schelling, not only conscious intelligence, but unconscious, instinctive purposive force in the working of the universe, but it cannot be grasped by empirical methods with their spatial, temporal and causal categories, and their outside view of things. Intuition is the only means to grasp the Reality and the reason in nature. Schelling regarded intuition as artistic intuition, and considered artistic creation as giving an insight into the nature of the creation. Thus art becomes the true organ of philosophy. Art unifies in a sensuous medium the ideal and the real,
mind and matter, subject and object and gives an intuition of the unity of the universe.

Kant and Schelling were the major influences on Coleridge. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and his aesthetical essays are a forceful defence of the imagination as a means to knowledge. In Chapter XII of the *Biographia* he rejects the empiricist theory of knowledge and proposes a new epistemology. However, we shall restrict our discussion to his view of the use and effect of poetry.

The immediate object of poetry, according to Coleridge, is not truth, but pleasure. The source of


72. "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth". *Biographia Literaria and Aesthetical Essays,* ed. J. Shawcross, II.10. and II.384.
poetic pleasure is beauty. Coleridge has explained his conception of beauty in a number of places in his aesthetic essays. The most important attributes of beauty are regularity, a sense of wholeness, the perfect relation of the parts to each other and to the whole, giving an impression of unity:

It is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (formosum) with the vital. In the dead organic, it depends on regularity of form. 73

Coleridge distinguishes the pleasure of beauty from that of the good and the agreeable. Aesthetic pleasure is disinterested while the good and the agreeable have an interest necessarily attached to them; both act on the WILL, and excite a desire for the actual existence of the image or idea contemplated while the sense of beauty rests gratified in the mere contemplation or intuition ... 74

73. *On Poesy or Art*, ibid. II.257.

74. *On the Principles of Genial Criticism*, ibid. II.239
Beauty is the creation of the imagination, that "synthetic and magical power" which blends and fuses parts and gives a sense of unity.

Because of the part played in it by the imagination, poetic pleasure has a deep intellectual quality. A great characteristic of poetry is "DEPTH and ENERGY OF THOUGHT". Coleridge declares,

No man was ever a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language.

He explains how poetry is all this in his Schellingian essay On Poesy or Art which is his most compact statement on the subject.

He begins with the age old maxim "Art imitates nature" and proceeds to argue that art imitates not everything in nature but only the beautiful in it. The

75. ibid. II.12
76. ibid. II.19
stress on the imitation of only the beautiful implies the imitation of the essence or "natura naturans which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man". Art, accordingly, takes an inward view of things. It is interested not in things as they are, but in things as they are grasped by the sensibility of a feeling and thinking individual. It is "of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or ... the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human". Herein lies the secret of the deep human appeal of poetry. Man's reflexion, freedom and choice play an important part in poetic creation which imitates the spirit and perfection of God's creation. Man's mind has an intuition of the moral order and purpose in nature. Only poetry can make this explicit. Man's mind, Coleridge observes,

is the very focus of all the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature. Now so to place these images, totalized and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the forms themselves, the moral reflexions to which they approximate, to make external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts. 79

77. On Poesy or Art, ibid. II.257
78. ibid. II. pp.254-255
79. ibid. II.257
What poetry gives is not wild fancy but an insight into the nature of things. The poet creates out of his mind "forms according to the severe laws of the intellect". Accordingly,

the artist must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure and discourses to us by symbols - the Naturgeist or spirit of nature.

To the objection that art cannot give the knowledge of things as they are, Coleridge replies that art deals through form and figure with the ideal and not with the actual.

The idea which puts the form together cannot itself be the form. It is above form, and is its essence, the universal in the individual, or the individuality itself, the glance and exponent of the indwelling power.

The stress on the intuitive truth of poetry and the imagination as a means to knowledge continues also in

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80. ibid. II.258
81. ibid. II.259
82. ibid. II.259
Wordsworth. In the Preface he describes poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge". But it is distinguished from science with its impersonal approach to truth. It is always coupled with the passions, and is therefore intensely human and brings immediate pleasure to all.

The poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a Man.

The truth which he seeks is not the distant, objective truth of a minerologist; it is the intimate truth of man's experience of life, which is "our visible friend and hourly companion".

Poetry, in short, is the science of wisdom, and works through human passions and imagination. The secret of the poet's appeal is that he is "a man speaking to men".

83. The Prose Works of William Wordsworth I.141

84. ibid. I.139

85. ibid. I.141
The secret of his claim to the knowledge of truth is that he has a more comprehensive soul, a more lively sensibility and a greater promptness to think. Long and deep contemplation is part of his nature. According to Wordsworth, poems to which any value can be attached are all products of long and deep contemplation. Contemplation organises and directs the poet's feelings and distils from them what is significant to all men. It enables him to see a thing as it is without the accidents of time and place and in its universal aspect. The poet then gives expression to his feelings in such a way that

the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened and his affections strengthened and purified. 86

The poet's utterances serve another worthy purpose. The poet finds everywhere objects of interest which excite human feelings and sympathy, and discerns their significance. By giving expression to them he

binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. 87

86. ibid. I.137
87. ibid. I.141
The poet is, thus, no less a benefactor of mankind than the scientist. The poet's work will not cease when science has brought about a material revolution in our condition. Even then he will be active "carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself." He will lend his "divine spirit to aid the transfiguration" of science, that is, to its humanisation, bringing out its significance to us as "enjoying and suffering beings".

This claim, however, could not remain unchallenged for long. In 1825 Macaulay sarcastically remarked, "Truth indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness". Poetry had its appeal in an age of darkness. In an enlightened age, he argued, "there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy ... but little poetry". Some years earlier (i.e. in 1820) Thomas Love Peacock had asserted, in his pseudo-historical account of the conflict between poetry and science that

88. ibid. I, 141

89. ibid. I, 141

poetry was anachronistic in an age of science. "A poet", said Peacock, "in our times is a semibarbarian in a civilized community. He lives in the days that are past ... the march of his intellect is like that of a crab backward". This provoked Shelley to his Defence of Poetry. Shelley's argument is also grounded in the romantic theory of poetry as the expression of the imagination. The imagination transcends reason because while reason apprehends only the relations "borne by one thought to another", the imagination acts upon those thoughts, gives its own colour to them, brings them into unity, and creates new thoughts from them "each containing within itself the principles of its own integrity". It is the means to find the eternal order in things and give expression to that order in its creations. According to this definition of the imagination, all creative ordering of life is poetry, and hence, not only great painters, musicians and builders, but also religious


teachers and law givers are poets. "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth". Poetry is regarded therefore as the source of the highest knowledge, wisdom and morality. It is a great instrument to moral good because it stimulates the imagination. The moral effect of poetry resides not in its didactic teaching but in the way it acts upon our sensibilities and increases the circumference of our imagination.

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others. 96

The philosophy of reason and science which Peacock exalts is no doubt useful, but it cannot solve the problems it creates. The scientist, the mechanist and the political

93. ibid. p.112
94. ibid. p.115
95. "The great instrument to moral good is the imagination and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause". ibid. p.118
96. ibid. p.118
economist combine their specialised knowledge to increase man's knowledge and wealth. Indeed, there is too much of them:

We have more moral, political and historical wisdom than we know how to reduce it into practice; we have more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies. 97

The results of this are disastrous. The empire of man over the external world has increased, but his internal world, for want of poetical faculty, has proportionately shrunk. One visible result of this is economic inequality and despotism of the state:

The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer; and the vessel of the state is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism. Such are the results which must flow from an unmitigating exercise of the calculating faculty. 98

Only poetry can act as a corrective to this evil because it alone has the power to arrange the materials of knowledge according to "a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good." 99

97. ibid. p.134
98. ibid. p.132
99. ibid. p.134
Shelley's *Defence*, it seems, could not convince practical minded people and votaries of science. For in year 1882 Matthew Arnold is seen explaining to "the friends of physical science", the utility of poetry in education. The "friends of physical science" distinguished knowledge of things, i.e., science, from knowledge of words, i.e., humanities, and proposed to make science the staple of education for the great majority of mankind. Here Arnold could not agree with these people though he knew fully the importance of scientific investigations. An exclusively scientific education is good for those who want to become experts and specialists, who can spend all their intellectual life acquiring knowledge and do not ask for anything more. But the great majority of mankind do not want to be, and cannot become specialists. Further, the factual knowledge of science is necessary, but not sufficient to satisfy the demands of the constitution of human nature. "The powers which go to the building up of human life", Arnold points out, "are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners".

A proper scheme of education must look after all these because "we have the need for them all". It must not only impart factual knowledge but relate it to our sense of conduct, and to our sense of beauty. This is what we desire education to do, and "there is weariness and dissatisfaction if this desire is baulked". Except for poetry there is nothing now to look after this desire. The Middle Ages could dispense with the study of humane letters because religion was there to engage and satisfy emotions. But science has now put an end to "medieval thinking" and its supposed knowledge. Religious belief is being overthrown by scientific discoveries. But the emotions which religion satisfied remain and cannot be neglected. Science cannot engage and satisfy emotions because its appeal is chiefly to the intellect and it is tied only to observable facts. Here literature is our only help. The importance of literature, accordingly, must increase in modern times. "Now if we find by experience", Arnold explains,

that humane letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of humane letters in a man's training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of science in extirpating what is calls 'medieval thinking'. 103

101. ibid. p.219
102. ibid. p.219
103. ibid. pp.224-225.
Only literature can meaningfully relate scientific knowledge to our sense of beauty and to our sense of conduct because it is "the criticism of life by gifted man". The real power of literature, then is that it is "the criticism of life" by men who have the grasp of the ideal. Poetry is not interested in particular facts; it is interested in the idea.

But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest, a world of illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.

Poetry supplements scientific knowledge by its comprehensive grasp of life and by its firm hold on ideas. Great poetry brings ideas to bear upon the facts of life. Arnold calls this task, "the noble and profound application of ideas to life". He claims that these are the ideas about the question "How to live?”.

In his Oxford Inaugural Lecture, “On the Modern Element in Literature” Arnold speaks of the role of

104. ibid. p.227

105. The Study of Poetry, ibid. p.46

106. Wordsworth, ibid. p.127
literature in bringing about the intellectual deliverance of the age. Such a deliverance consists in

man's comprehension of this present and past. It begins when our mind begins to enter into possession of the general ideas which are the law of this vast multitude of facts. It is perfect when we have acquired that harmonious acquiescence of mind which we feel in contemplating a grand spectacle that is intelligible to us. 107

Only literature with its grasp of the idea can bring about this deliverance.

Arnold speaks also of the service of literature in finding an answer to the social and political problems of his day. In England in the latter half of the 19th Century, social and political influence was passing into the hands of the middle class which was not yet fully prepared for its new responsibilities. The aristocracy and the working classes were also not in any better position. In Europe, communism was propagating its philosophy of class war. Arnold wanted the state to be

the source of national unity; instead, it had become an affair of class-interests and an instrument of class warfare. Arnold believed that only a proper system of education could end this state of affairs by teaching citizens to cultivate their "best self". "We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our best self." As the most persuasive organ of culture poetry seeks to bring out our "best self". Culture is a "study of perfection" and poetry is "the most perfect speech of man". Both aim at showing the best in man. On this, religion, culture and poetry are one.

Religion says - the kingdom of God is within you; and culture in like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. It places it in the ever increasing efficacy and in the general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling, which make the peculiar dignity, wealth and happiness of human nature. 109

Poetry assists culture in this task by seeking to transform the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace "according to the law of perfection".

108. Culture and Anarchy, The Complete Prose Works, V.135
109. ibid. V.94
110. ibid. V.228
As the most perfect speech of man, poetry tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. 111

In other words, it tends "to make reason and the will of God prevail." 112

Poetry has not lost its utility in the age of science. Except poetry, there is nothing in modern times to interpret man's ever increasing knowledge in terms of his whole life, i.e., in terms also of his sense of conduct and his sense of beauty. "Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete." The strength of poetry is, in short, that it is the criticism of life by gifted men.

The Romantic and Arnoldian view of the use and effect of poetry may be seen, though with an altered emphasis, also in 20th Century. English criticism.

111. The Function of Criticism ibid. III.261
112. Culture and Anarchy ibid. V.91
Among the best known critics of our day are T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards, and a brief examination of their views on the subject of this chapter would be in order.

In *The Sacred Wood*, his earliest work of criticism, Eliot said that when we read poetry, we must read it as poetry and as nothing else - a respectable aesthetic tenet. Eliot's meaning becomes clearer when we recall the distinction he makes between the poets who have a mechanism of sensibility that can devour any experience and the poets who ruminate in poetry. Presumably the latter use the medium of poetry to express propositions and thoughts that can be abstracted from the medium and put into prose with no significant loss of meaning. In the poetry of the Metaphysicals, while a propositional element is not absent, there is a fusion of content and expression that makes a prose paraphrase of the poem well nigh impossible.

114. Eliot's views on this subject in *After Strange Gods*, *What is a Classic? The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, and *Selected Essays* are not repeated here since they have been considered in Ch. I.
In his essay 'The Social Function of Poetry' Eliot again rejects the view that poetry is valued for its propositional content. He maintains that real poetry survives not only a change of popular opinion but complete extinction of interest in the issues with which the poet was passionately concerned. Lucretius' poem remains a great poem, though his notions of physics and astronomy are discredited; Dryden's, though the political quarrels of the seventeenth century no longer concern us. 115

Eliot maintains that poetry has nevertheless a social purpose, though not a deliberate, conscious and assumed one—a purpose which is inherent in its very nature. Poetry fulfils its social function by simply being poetry. Accordingly, says Eliot, we should discuss not what it ought to do, but rather "what it does do or has done". 116

The most obvious function of poetry is to give pleasure. In addition, it plays on our sensibilities and communicates new experiences or imparts a new understanding "which enlarges our consciousness or refines our sensibilities". These benefits are more or less

116. ibid. p. 15
117. ibid. p. 18
individual. But there are also indirect social benefits. One such is that poetry serves to equip a language as a vehicle of culture. The poet's service is that

in expressing what other people feel he is also changing the feeling by making it more conscious; he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves. 118

The poet discerns the common thoughts and feelings of the people belonging to a common culture and by giving them expression, brings the people closer to one another. He thus becomes the spokesman of the national mind. "It is enough", explains Eliot,

that in a homogeneous people the feelings of the most refined and complex have something in common with those of the most crude and simple, which they have not in common with those of people of their own level speaking another language ... I will take it as agreed that people find the most conscious expression of their deepest feelings in the poetry of their own language rather than in any other art or in the poetry of other languages. 119

118. ibid. p.20

119. ibid. p.19. In corroboration of Eliot's view, we may cite the example of the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The secret of their lasting appeal is that they give an intense expression to the commonest but very deep Indian notions of man as an ethical being bound by the law of dharma. (For an explanation vide pp. below.) The various characters and situations in these epics show dharma in all its aspects, variations and deviations.
Eliot uses a strange expression to describe the service of poetry to culture through language. It is, he says, by making a language "more literary". By this he means making a language more capable of expressing subtle and deep emotions.

The impulse towards the literary uses of languages of the peoples began with poetry. And this appears perfectly natural when we realise that poetry has primarily to do with the expression of feeling and emotion; and that feeling and emotion are particular, whereas thought is general. It is easier to think in a foreign language than it is to feel in it. Therefore, no art is stubbornly more national than poetry. 120

So great is the role of poetry in preserving language (and by implication, culture, which is nothing but the organised sensibility of society) that if poetry is not cultivated continuously, the language may die together with the culture produced by it. The neglect of poetry will not only make us strangers to all civilizations of the past, but destroy our ability to feel and to express our emotions. It is necessary, therefore, that there should be at least a small group of cultivated people, because

the change and developments of sensibility which appear first in a few will work themselves into the language gradually, through their influence on other, and more rapidly popular authors; and by the time they have become well established a new advance will be called. 121

120. ibid. p.18
121. ibid. p.21
Eliot's emphasis on the service that poetry renders to culture is peculiarly modern. Critics and poets (as for instance, Wordsworth) had, of course, argued earlier that the poet refined and purified language and that his sensibility made an impact on other people's sensibilities, but the emphasis had been equally on the uniqueness of the poet's personality. Eliot's emphasis is rather on the cumulative effect of the poetic activity on language and through it on the sensibilities of its speakers. He reduces the emphasis on the poet's personality.

Another very influential critic of our Century has been I.A. Richards. Richards (at least in his earlier writings) ascribes an expressly other than cognitive function to literature but does not subscribe to aestheticism. Like Plato, he denies propositional truth to poetry, but accepts substantially the Horatian view of the use and effect of poetry not in its narrow didactic aspect, but in its view of the vital connection between life and literature.

The early Richards denies a cognitive function to poetry because it uses language "emotively" and not "referentially" as science does.
A statement may be used for the sake of the reference it causes. This is the scientific use of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions. This is the emotive use of language. 122

The truth of a scientific statement exists independently of the signs through which it happens to be expressed. The meaning of a poem, on the other hand, depends very largely on its total organisation, and any alteration in it results in harm to the poem; in addition, it uses language not for conveying knowledge but for the sake of "the effects in emotion and attitude".

In what way, are the effects achieved by poetry unique or peculiar to it? According to Richards the mind is a bundle of multifarious and conflicting impulses ("appetencies") each of which seeks satisfaction at the expense of others. A man is naturally inclined to satisfy the most insistent of these impulses. On the satisfaction of these depends the fulfilment of a large number of other impulses. In this process, many impulses are suppressed,

and the result is unhappiness and frustration. It should
be our aim, therefore, to bring into play as many of our
impulses as we can ... harmoniously and in an organised way.
Poetry can be of immense help in this task since it is the
distinguishing characteristic of good poetry that it
satisfactorily organises a large number of impulses at once.
It can do so because the poetic experience does not call
upon us to involve ourselves in action. The poem which

123. *Principles of Literary Criticism*, pp. 44–62. In *Poetries and
Sciences*, Richards analogically explains the mind "as a
system of very delicately poised balances, a system which
so long as we are in health is growing. Every situation we
come into disturbs some of these balances to some degree.
The ways in which they swing back to a new equipoise are the
impulses with which we respond to a situation. And the chief
balances in the system are our chief interests". (pp. 25–26)

124. *Principles of Literary Criticism*, pp. 107–133. In *Poetries and
Sciences*, this is corroborated, with the additional, argument
that poetry matures a man's mind. A mature man has "a vast
assemblage of major and minor interests, partly a chaos,
partly a system ... It is this incredibly complex
assemblage of interests to which the printed poem has
to appeal". (p. 28)
"In a fully developed man a state of readiness for action
will take the place of action when the full appropriate
situation is not present. An essential peculiarity of
poetry as of all arts is that the full appropriate
situation is not present. It is the actor we are seeing
upon the stage, not Hamlet. So readiness for action
takes the place of actual behaviour". (ibid p. 29)
organises and satisfies a very large number of impulses even conflicting impulses, is the best poem. The distinction of poetic experience is that it is concerned neither with practical nor with cognitive problems, and it can therefore bring out very complex organisations of our inner impulses. The consequent health and harmony of our inner being is an effect which ordinary experience can hardly give. The poet himself is a man endowed with an excellent neurological organisation. The poet’s experiences are valuable because of the "range, delicacy and freedom of the connections he is able to make between the different elements of his experience." He has a perfect control over his experience because he undergoes it with "more than usual vigilance". His responses are highly discriminating and ordered, and therefore he can visualise varying possibilities of existence more clearly.

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125. Principles of Literary Criticism, pp.107-133

126. The poet is "the man who is most likely to have experiences of value to record. He is the point at which the growth of mind shows itself". "His experiences, those at least which give value to his work, represent conciliations of impulses which in most minds are still confused, intertrammelled and conflicting." ibid. p.61

127. ibid. p.181

128. ibid. p.184
i.e., without habitual narrow interests or confusion. Poetry thus shows, through the poet's experience what is of value in human experience. Thus poetry becomes "an appraisal of existence", and "our storehouse of recorded values".

In his later criticism also this view is upheld, though through the approach is more overtly semantic. Poetry derives its strength from its exploitation of language, from the structures it creates out of words. Every word is "potentially linked with all other words and phrases in an unimaginably multifarious manner". Language, if exploited intelligently, can express the unification of experiences which is otherwise not possible. "The saner saner

129. ibid. p.32
130. ibid. p.61
131. ibid. p.32
132. So Much Nearer, p.175
133. "Words are the meeting points of which regions of experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition come together. They are the occasion and the means of that growth which is the mind's endless endeavour to order itself". Philosophy of Rhetoric, p.131
and greater mythologies are not fancies: they are the utterances of the whole soul of man and, as such, inexhaustible to meditation" and poetry "read more discerningly than heretofore will remake our minds and with them our world". Though influence, range of interpretations and the element of the prophetic, poetry renders great service to humanity and therefore, "poems are the unacknowledged legislation of the world".

It must be stressed that so far as his theory of the use and effect of literature is concerned, there is no fundamental divergence between the early and the late Richards. The stress is consistently on the utility of literature in organising, harmonizing and ordering our life. The basic Horatian view, though suffering a sea-change, thus sustains in great modern critics.

134. *Coleridge on Imagination*, p.171
135. ibid. p.227-229
136. *So Much Nearer*, p.151
The critics we have been discussing so far are in the Horatian tradition; now we turn to the Longinian tradition which emphasized poetic transport. It exerted a noticeable influence on 18th Century English criticism but it also underwent a sea-change, and appeared in the 19th Century as the literary movement of art for art's sake. This movement arose in the latter half of the 19th Century in the wake of *L'Art pour l'Art* movement in France. It started as a reaction against Victorian didacticism. The leaders of the school of "Art for Art's Sake" rejected the view that art should have a moral or useful purpose. The duty of the poet, they held, was not to sing of private emotion and personal sufferings, but to seek perfection of form. The poet must, first and foremost, be a good craftsman. He must understand the resources of his art and seek perfection in form since form alone endures eternally. Some of them insisted that poetry should approximate to the plastic arts, that it should create beauty, physical beauty of form which could be realized through the sense of sight.

The first manifestation of the Art for Art’s Sake School in England was the establishment of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848). But the “P.R.B.” remained a rather amorphous group of artists whose sole unity consisted in their spirit of revolt against contemporary art. They could not develop a full-fledged theory to support their views. But the French influence which they introduced was firmly established by 1870. It was responsible for the founding of the English School of Art for Art’s Sake under the leadership of Walter Pater, William Morris, and Oscar Wilde, to name three of its leaders in literature.

The School of Art for Art’s Sake, in its most persuasive form, argues that poetry is a value in itself and that its value is not to be translated or calculated in terms of religion or morality. In its extreme form, however, it severs all ties of art with life and reality.

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139. “Let us understand by poetry all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form as distinct from its matter”, *The Renaissance — Studies in Art and Poetry*, London: Macmillan, 1913) p.243
It considers the cognitive value of art as irrelevant and exalts art over life itself. Walter Peter, the most influential critic of this school, valued art only for the pleasurable sensations it gave. He believed that art gave pleasure by virtue of its form. He recognized the uniqueness of the impressions produced by different art-objects and he held that the duty of a critic was to explain these impressions by analysing them and reducing them to their elements, i.e., by explaining the form.

The pleasurable impressions of art are indeed rare, and a lover of art must live and die only to experience them. "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end." The life of art consists in the life of pleasurable sensations at their intensest.

A counted number of pulses is only given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point and be present at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. 142

140. "The aesthetic critic, then, regards all objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels and wishes to explain by analysing and reducing it to its elements". ibid. p. 249

141. ibid. p. 249

142. ibid. p. 249
Pater simply dismisses out of hand any question about the larger meaning of art.

And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience (is) - metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. 143

Pater was no rebel. He was an academic aesthete. But with Oscar Wilde the School of Art for Art's sake became aggressive.

"To the artist, expression is the only mode under which he can conceive life at all" Wilde declared. The core of aestheticism is its cult of a rather hazy, mysterious Beauty which is called variously as the Beautiful, significant Form, Aesthetic Emotion etc. In aestheticism Beauty becomes a matter of style, craftsmanship or expression, having nothing to do with content, subject, substance or matter. Beauty stands for the total autonomy of art, and in this autonomy, the influence of life has no place. It is for this reason that aestheticism repudiated

143. ibid. p. x
144. De Profundis (London: Methuen; 1905 rpt. 1916) p. 88
the old ideal of Nature and its imitation and all
considerations of ethics and religion. "Form" said
Wilde, "is everything. It is the secret of life".

"To art's subject matter we should be more or less
indifferent". This meant nothing less than a "deliberate
rejection of Nature as the ideal of beauty, as well as
of the imitative method of the ordinary painter". Wilde
extolled the purely decorative in art at the expense of
the content. Clive Bell declared:

The representative element in a work of art may or
may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant.

The Aesthetic ideal of form is based on the ecstatic
notion of beauty so poetically expressed by Plato in the
Ion; but in its extreme enthusiasm for form and its

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145. *Intentions* (London: Methuen, 1913) p. 201
146. ibid. p. 17
147. ibid. p. 200
149. *Ion* 535. Edgar Allen Poe also supported this view:
That pleasure which is at once the most pure, the
most elevating, and the most intense, is derived,
I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful.
In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible
to attain that pleasurable elevation or excitement, of
the soul, which we recognize as the Poetic Sentiment...
I make Beauty the province of the poem - 'The Poetic
Principle' included in 'Tales, Poems, Essays of E.A. Poe'
ed. L. Meynell (London: Collins 1952) p. 491
disdain of content, it tends to degenerate into the cult of the meaningless. "Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing." Clive Bell makes the cognitive content of art irrelevant by reducing all art-experience to one unchanging formula—the formula of Significant Form.

What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Pierro della Francesca, and Cezanne? Only one answer seems possible—significant form. In each, lines and colours, combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions.151

It may be asked whether in all our art experience only lines and colours, their combinations and relations, stir our aesthetic emotions; whether there is not something which the artist wants to convey through all these; and whether what the artist wants to convey does not transcend all the means like colours and lines that he uses. What

150. Oscar Wilde _Intentions_, p.45
151. _Art_, p.25
Bell says about lines and colours is not true of all works of art, though the importance of form in art cannot be denied. But the question about the content is particularly relevant about the art of literature because the medium it uses is words, and words cannot exist without meaning; in fact, in literature they acquire subtle and deep meanings.

The point of view of Aestheticism cuts at the very root of any attempt to find art a place in the total scheme of life. It is one thing to stress the importance of form, but it is another thing altogether to deny art cognitive value, to sever it from life which is its ultimate source. Literature gets its enduring quality from the fact that it is rooted in the values which constitute the foundation of human culture. Moreover, literature is the linguistic art. In other arts, meaning remains very indistinct; what impresses us most, is form, as in music, in a Persian carpet or a Chinese bowl. In literature the element of meaning is always much stronger and much more prominent because it fuses elements derived from different levels of experience. It is true that a work of art "is a unity
in which you can no more separate a substance from a form than you can separate living blood and the life in the blood."

But it is possible to separate the form and the content of a poem in our analytical intellect though not in aesthetic experience. By content we refer to the substance, not to the subject. The subject of Wordsworth's Daffodils is daffodils but its substance is what the poet says of his experience of the flowers. The quality of what a poet has to say determines to a large extent the aesthetic worth of a poem. It helps a poet to write a good poem on a trivial subject; it is the absence of this quality that is responsible for a bad poem on an exalted subject. This quality is the substance of a poem, and is also its meaning. The meaning of a poem is more often controversial in a way in which its form is always not - this also shows the predominance of meaning. The sonnet, for instance, follows a rigid structural pattern: - fourteen lines of a certain length, with a particular rhyme-pattern divided into two units expressing two successive phases of one

thought. This form is common to all sonnets. What is not common is their substance which ultimately determines the quality of each individual sonnet. What makes Milton's "On His Blindness" a great sonnet is the intensity of the poet's feeling, his fear of lapse in duty, his religious faith and his final conviction of the benevolent nature of God. No serious discussion of this poem can afford to ignore these elements which constitute the substance of this sonnet.

The point that literature has meaning is so obvious to all readers that any theory which challenges this would appear shocking to them. Nor do all followers of aestheticism sacrifice meaning for form, they only emphasize the importance of form.

The School of Art for Art's Sake put emphasis on the "aesthetic moment" or "the pleasurable sensation of a peculiar or unique kind" but did not endeavour to explain its uniqueness. A serious attempt to explain the psychology of art experience was made in the 19th Century by the
German School of Einfühlung. Though Einfühlung is a general aesthetic theory and not specifically a theory of poetics, it has some significance in this study for two reasons: a) It directs its attention to the psychology of art-connoisseur which is a very crucial factor, and b) it has some striking similarity with the Indian theory of rasa. We may, therefore, go into some of its essential details.

The cardinal principle of this theory is that aesthetic experience is a delectable feeling of sympathy in objects of art and nature. These objects evoke the feeling of joyous sympathy in us by force of association. Every individual form works upon our sensibility by bringing to our mind memories tinged by pleasure or pain, as for instance, a smile of joy or a look of anger evoke pleasant or unpleasant memories. Even natural objects come to be expressive of human life and personality by

force of association as, for instance, a flower with its vitality, beauty and evanescence becomes expressive of youth. The active principle behind this phenomenon is the sympathetic symbolism of objects.

In an object, however, only material conditions which lead to the creation of beauty are given. It is imaginative perception that invests them with meaning. Therefore, only a spectator endowed with this faculty can experience the beauty of an art object. But Einfühlung is not a matter of mere association, recollection or imagination. It is the projection of our feelings into the objects we perceive. In the complete form of einfühlung, there is the identification of the subject with the object, though, of course, it is only partial


154. The specific characteristic of aesthetic pleasure has now been defined. It consists in this: that it is the enjoyment of an object, which however, so far as it is the object of enjoyment, is not an object, but myself. Or, it is the enjoyment of the ego, which however, so far as it is aesthetically enjoyed, is not myself, but objective. (ibid. p. 376)
and incomplete. Theodor Lipps, the most important exponent of this theory, held that aesthetic joy was our own inner emotional activity projected without and experienced in objects that existed independently of ourselves. He rejected, however, the idea of pure subjectivism because art experience was absolutely dependent on the existence of the art objects which demanded only the peculiar and right feeling associated with it. He further pointed out that *aesthetische Einfühlung* was not only indifferent to the question of truth or falsehood, but that it could be felt only in aesthetic contemplation completely free from practical interests and momentary moods of every day life.

The Einfühlung theory was a great improvement upon aestheticism; it sought to explain art-experience. But it also ignored the vital question of the cognitive value of art. If failed, however, to make a deep and lasting

155. "The beauty of an object is every time the beauty of this object and never the charm of anything that is not this beautiful object, or part of it." (ibid, p.381)
impression as an art-theory. We shall go into the
details of that in the conclusion of this chapter while
comparing it with the theory of rasa.

We may now conclude this section with the following
observations: The Longinian view is unsatisfactory
which
because it ignores the cognitive value of poetry/substrate
is very often the most important factor in the enjoyment
of poetry. The Horatian approach still sustains but it
has suffered a sea-change in the intervening centuries.
This is clearly seen in the views of critics like Arnold,
Eliot and Richards. The responsibility of imparting
knowledge is given up wholly to science which is sharply
distinguished from poetry (We may regard this as the
final victory of Plato) This does not make literature
devoid of cognitive significance. There is nothing besides
literature in the present state of our knowledge to help us
understand ourselves and our otherwise scattered and
perplexing experience of life.

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SECTION II

THE INDIAN VIEW OF THE USE AND EFFECT OF POETRY:

Sanskrit poetics presents one integrated view of the use and effect of poetry. This view mainly deals with the following two questions: i) What is the importance of poetry in the general scheme of human life? ii) What is the nature of the delight which poetry affords? While considering the first question, Indian poetics deals with the problem of the cognitive value of poetry and its moral and educational utility. The investigation of the second question has led Indian poetics to the conception of rasa. The prime function of poetry is to give delight; instruction is only secondary and indirect. Therefore, the investigation of the nature of rasa has engaged the principal attention of Indian aestheticians, and their theorizing in this respect constitutes the chief contribution of India to aesthetics. In this section the Indian thinking on both these questions will be briefly dealt with.

The Sanskrit poeticians uniformly hold a high opinion of the function of poetry. It is, in short,
identical with the function of dharma and of the Veda which is the source of dharma.

Bharata's description of drama as the fifth Veda open to all the castes has already been cited. The association of poetry with Veda does not mean that Sanskrit poeticians want to make poetry the handmaiden of morality or that the didactic aspect of the function of poetry is superior, in their view, to the pleasure that poetry affords. They call poetry the fifth Veda to show their profound respect for it. But they never relax their stress on pleasure as the end of poetry. The Agnipurana, for instance, traces the origin of poetry to the manifestation of the bliss (ananda) of the Ultimate Reality. The NS also stresses pleasure as the supreme function of poetry when it likens drama to a toy or plaything (krīdaniyaka); We may extend this a little and

156. NS I.15, It is customary in India for the votaries of any subject of study to exalt it with the appellation "Veda", for example, Ayurveda (The Veda of Longevity).

157. The Agnipurana Ch.339 .1.5 (Anandashram, Poona,1900)p.423

158. NS I.**
take *kṛīdanīyaka* as *kṛida* (play). The only justification of play is the pleasure it gives and the sense of repose it brings. Mammata looks upon pleasure as the crown of the poetic function though he adds that it must instruct too. It instructs, says Mammata, in the delicate and subtle manner of a beloved wife, neither in the high horatory tone of a pedagogue nor in "the take-it-or-leave-it" manner of an acquaintance.

But the question arises: What kind of pleasure does poetry give? What kind of instruction does it impart? The clue to the nature of the instruction that poetry imparts is expressed in the claim that the function of poetry is the same as that of *dharma*.

The word *dharma* has a wide connotation. It means law, justice, duty, morality, righteousness,

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159. *sakalaprayojanamaulibhūtam samanantaremeva rasāsvādanasamubhūtam vigalitavedyāntaramanandam prabhusammita śabdapradhānavedādiśāstrebhyah suhṛt sammitatātparyavat purāṇādītiḥāsebhyaśaḥ ... vilaksanam kānteva sarasatāpādanena ... upadesam ... karoti. KP Ch. i
propriety, religious observance etc. It is also used in the sense of "way of life". When Sanskrit poeticians use the analogy of the Veda to explain the function of poetry, they mean that poetry inculcates the same way of life as dharma. (They do not mean to set up "a poetic way of life").

But what is dharma as a way of life? According to a commonly accepted definition, it is a principle which brings material prosperity and spiritual bliss. Since dharma looks after the well being of every individual...

160. The word "dharma" is in this respect comparable to Richard Hooker's use of 'law' to refer to "the order"... which he (God) hath set down as expedient to be kept by all his creatures, or the order which "God hath eternally purposed himself in all his works to observe"; it is also a rule which "superior authority imposeth", and "any kind of rule or cannon", In addition to this there is "Nature's law", and "a law celestial or heavenly" which gives all knowledge to anglifs; and "the law of Reason" which binds all reasonable creatures; Add to this "Divine law" or the scriptures and "human Law" which is an amalgam of "Divine Law" and the law of Reason. (Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity Book I, ed. Bayne, Everyman's Liberty Library,1925, Vol. I, pp.154-155.

161. yato abhyudayanihśreyasaprāptih sa dharmah (The Śankarabhāṣya on the Bhagavadgītā, Anandashram Sanskrit Series, Poona 1908, p.1)
In this and the next life, it is imperative for all to follow the ideal of dharma. In order to guide the individual in this respect, dharma places before him four common goals of life (purusārthas). These are 1) practice of piety and virtue (dharma), 2) earning of wealth by some kind of economic activity (artha), 3) enjoyment of the lawful pleasures of the world (kāma) and, 4) spiritual emancipation (mokṣa).

Of these four common goals of life (purusārthas) the first and the third, namely, dharma and kāma, alone have relevance from the point of view of the function of poetry. The last goal, namely, mokṣa, being the end of the remaining three purusārthas, has also some indirect relevance to the function of poetry. Indeed, Anandavardhana argues that the Mahābhārata has for its principal subject the sentiment of spiritual quiescence (sāntarasa) which turns men's attention to mokṣa. For that He maintains that in the Mahābhārata, which has the form of śāstra and poetry the great sage has indicated the primacy of sāntarasa and mokṣa. For this
he has devised the pitiful destruction of the Paṇḍavas and the Vṛṣṇis as the end of the story. The conclusion fills the reader’s mind with sorrow (vaimanasya) and we thus know that the principal aim of the work is to create the spirit of renunciation.

The insistence on the attainment of the four common goals of life as a function of poetry is very common in Sanskrit poetics. The view is that by means of poetry the attainment of the puruṣārthas becomes easier even to those who are less intelligent, that poetry brings the fruit of these goals without the arduous effort otherwise required.

162. mahābhārate api śāstrakāvyavārūpacchāvānvavini
ṛṣṇipāṇḍavavirāvasānavāimanasyadāyinīṁ samāptim
uponibadhnaṁ mahāmuninā vairāgyajanatātparyam
prādhānyena svaprabandhasya darsayatā mokṣalaksanāṁ
puruṣārthah sānto rasasca mukhyatayā
vivaksāviṣayatvena sucitah (Dh. A. Ch.IV p.238)

163. SD Ch.Ι, also Bhāmahas Kāvyālemkāra I.2
This may give the impression that Sanskrit poeticians assign an overt didactic function to literature. But this is not the case. The truth is that they do not discuss this question in any great detail; they give importance to the question of aesthetic experience (rasa). Some poeticians have openly called into question the view that poetry should help the attainment of the puruṣārthas. The author of the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa and Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka clearly reject overt didacticism as a function of literature. The Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa makes a distinction between śāstra (scripture), itiḥāsa (history or heroic legends) and kāvya (poetry). Śāstra instructs in matters of piety and spiritual emancipation. Itiḥāsa (lit. "thus it was") also instructs in matters of spiritual emancipation, but it does so in a light manner. Poetry deals with the same matters without any instruction whatsoever. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka adds that in poetry there is

164. dharmārthakāmamokṣaṇām śāstram svādupadesākam
    purvairācaritam sadbhir dharmakārthasaṁadhakam
    mokṣasya yatropanyāsa itiḥāsah sa ucyate
    tadeva kāvyam ityuktam copadesām vinākṛtān

(V.D.P. Vol.III Ch.15, 1-2, G.O.S.No.CXXX, Baroda 1958)
none instructing and none being instructed; every-body is an enjoyer entirely. This view, in fact, is endorsed by all Sanskrit poeticians who make *rasa* the distinguishing characteristic of literature. The contradiction involved in the simultaneous emphasis on *rasa* and the attainment of the *purusārthas* as the function of poetry disappears if we bear in mind that the instruction which poetry gives is indistinguishable from the delightful experience which it affords. If there is no *rasa*, there is no poetry; if there is *rasa* but no instruction there is no cause for complaint; if there is *rasa* and instruction, there is no reason why one should quarrel. But instruction must not be superadded; it must accrue only as part of aesthetic experience; it must be inseparable from the enjoyment of *rasa*. This brings us to the chief problem of Indian poetics, namely, the nature of *rasa*.

The concept of *rasa* has been discussed in Chapter I in connection with the theories of art as illusion and as

165. *kāvye rasayitā sarvo na boddhā no niyogabhāk* (Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka quoted by Abhinava in the *Locana* on the Dh.Ā Ch.1 p.25)
expression of the universal. The discussion there was mainly intended to throw light on the relationship between art and reality. Here the concept will be discussed (without repetition, as far as possible) as a theory of what aesthetic experience is in itself and how it affects the spectator's or reader's mind. The theory of rasa may be regarded as an explanation of the cause and nature of the spectator's or reader's experience of the emotion brought into being in an aesthetic context. *Rasa* can never be expressed in words. Sanskrit poeticians maintain that no sentiment in fact, can be expressed in words. "Leander fell in love with Hero", or "Venus is enamoured of Adonis" are plain statements different from the sentiment of love; far less are they the corresponding aesthetic emotion designated *srngāra rasa*. Both Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta stress that *rasa* can never be conveyed by using mere names of sentiments (*sva sabdanivedita*). *Rasa* is a sheer experience and it can be conveyed or suggested only in a carefully created aesthetic context.

We have already mentioned that the concept of *rasa* and of the objective correlative involved in it was first
adumbrated by Bharata. But it remains rather vague in Bharata. His explanation of *rasa* is as follows:

Even/relish is produced from the combination of various spices, herbs and other materials, so is *rasa* produced from the coming together of various elements (*bhāvas*). Just as the six relish are produced by means of materials like raw-sugar, spices and herbs, even so the permanent feelings inborn in human nature (*sthāyinah*) attain the status of aesthetic feeling when they are combined with other elements. *Rasa* is so designated because it is relished. How is it relished? Just as people enjoy the relish while partaking of food made relishable by various ingredients, and experience happiness etc., even so the enlightened spectators (*sumanasah*) relish the permanent feelings (*sthāyinah*) made relishable by the acting of various elements (*bhāvas* i.e. the objective correlatives of
vibhāva etc.) accompanied with verbal, physical and emotional gesticulations, and experience happiness etc.

According to this theory happiness and a sense of satisfaction characterize aesthetic experience. The experience is 'relishable' by its very nature (āsvādyatva). The happiness and satisfaction that the experience leads to are rooted in our psychological nature. (Therefore, literature is, in one sense, a very 'natural' activity and experience.) This experience is occasioned by the coming

166. yathā hi nānāvyanājanānausadhiravyasyaṃyojā
rasanīspaṭṭih tathā nānābhāvopagamād rasanīspaṭṭih
yathā hi gudādibhidravyaiḥ vyanājanaiḥ ausadhibhisca
sādavādeyo rasā nirvartyante tathā nānābhāvopagataḥ api
sthāyino rasatvam āpnuvanti. atrāḥ-rasa iti kah
padārthak ucyate, āsvādyavat. kathamāsvādyate rasah
yathā hi nānāvyanājanasaṃskṛtam annam bhūjñānā
rāsānāsvadayanti sumanasah puruṣā harsādincādhigacchanti
tathā nānābhāvabhiyāñjītan vāgānasattvopetan
sthāyibhāvānāsvadayanti sumanasah prekṣaka
harsādincādhigacchanti tasmān nātyarasā ityabhikhyātāḥ

(NS, VI) p. 28
together of artistic equivalents (vibhāvādi), i.e., objective correlatives of the persons, situations and feelings that exist in the reality outside art. These artistic equivalents (vibhāvādi) are to aesthetic experience what spices, sugar and herbs are to the making of the taste of a dish. The taste of the dish is not the taste of any particular ingredient, rather, it is the taste of the combination of the several tastes of the several ingredients. What is implicit in Bharata's analogy is that the permanent feeling (sthāyin) becomes relishable only when it is "dressed up" by means of the artistic equivalents.

Nevertheless, Bharata's explanation left open the crucial problem of how the objective correlatives of vibhāva etc. function in order to bring about aesthetic experience. The word he used for the coming together or combination of the artistic equivalents was samyoga. This word came to be interpreted differently by various commentators, and each interpretation led to a separate theory of rasa. The interpretations of Lollaṭa, Srisaṅkuka and Bhaṭṭa Nayaka have already been discussed in Chapter II.
and we need here refer to only that aspect of their theories which bears on the nature of aesthetic experience. These theoreticians concentrate on two questions — 1) How can we account for the spectator's experience of rasa? 2) What is exactly the nature of that experience?

Lollaṭa's theory represents the oldest view of rasa. Lollata, together with the earlier Sanskrit poeticians like Udbhaṭa and Dāṇḍin hold that the feeling which is enjoyed as aesthetic in the experience of a work of art belongs to the characters in it. It is produced by the objective correlates of characters and situations (ālambana vibhava and uddīpana vibhava), and is made manifest by the actions and utterances of characters (anubhāvas) and is further intensified by the subsidiary feelings called into play by the principal feeling (sthāyibhava). Thus the feeling of love in Shakespeare's As You Like It belongs to Orlando and Rosalind, and it is caused by their youth and by their coming together, by

167. cīrantanānām ca ayameva paksah (AB I.272)
Rosalind's beauty and by Orlando's valour etc. It is made manifest by Rosalind's remark after the wrestling bout that Orlando has defeated more than his enemy, and by her presenting her necklace to him. Orlando's verses which he hangs upon the trees in the Forest of Arden and Rosalind's curiosity about his activities in the forest of Arden serve to enhance the feeling of love which is the principal emotion of the play. Though this feeling belongs to the characters, the spectator comes to enjoy it because he identifies the actors on the stage with the characters and imputes the feeling to the actors. Thus, according to Lollaţa, the spectator's identification of the actor with the character is responsible for his experience of the aesthetic feeling. The difference between a feeling caused by reality and the aesthetic feeling, according to Lollaţa, is that the latter is more intense. It may be recalled here that Lollaţa makes all art experience analogous to the experience of an illusion.

168. For details See Chapter I, Section II above.
The most glaring defect of Lollata’s theory is that it fails to account for the spectator’s pleasurable experience. He does not posit, as Aristotle does, that mimesis is intrinsically pleasurable to human beings because in mimesis we learn. He maintains, on the other hand, that in drama the actor is identified with the hero (tādrūpataNASA sandhānata nartakepi pratīyamano rasaḥ), and that rasa properly belongs to the main character. Here Lollata fumbles. Rasa is the experience of the spectator. Now, if the aesthetic feeling or rasa belongs to a hero like Orlando, and is also felt to be existing in the actor who is playing Orlando, there is no reason why the spectator should enjoy it. We do not necessarily relish a feeling like love in other people. Moreover, the experience which the spectator gets from the enjoyment of drama is his own experience; so rasa resides in him, and not in the main characters.

Śrīśaṅkuka rejected Lollata’s theory of identification.

169. KP. Ch. IV.

170. na cātra nartaka eva sukhīti pratipattiaḥ
nāpyayameva rāma iti. (AP. Vol. I, p. 273)
During dramatic performance the spectators are fully aware that they are in the theatre and that the actors are only impersonators and that all their actions and gesticulations are "artificial". Dr. Johnson was to state the same view several centuries later while discussing Shakespeare's violation of the unity of place:

It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or for a single moment, was ever credited.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. 171

In such circumstances there can be no identification of the actor with the hero. Srisaṅkuka agrees with Lollāta on one point, however; rasa belongs to the characters.

Now, if there is no identification of the actors with

the characters and if rasa belongs to characters (who are not actors), how does rasa arise? Śrīśaṅkuka answers that it is occasioned by 'inference', He interprets Bharat's controversial term saṁyoga as referring to the relation between the major and minor terms in syllogism.

O Most small fault, 
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show

*King Lear*, I.iv.260

From these words of Lear the spectator infers the condition of Lear's mind thus: A man in remorse bitterly regrets his action. (major term). Lear bitterly regrets his action (minor term). He is in remorse.

Śrīśaṅkuka rejects Lollāṭa's theory of identification, but still he cannot escape the fact that during dramatic performance the actor is really taken to be the hero. This paradox has a clear bearing on the cognitive status of art. Śrīśaṅkuka is aware of this paradox and of the fact that aesthetic experience is a cognitive category by itself.

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172. For more details of Śrīśaṅkuka's theory see pp.29-30 above.
He has explained this paradox by means of the analogy of the horse drawn in a picture. The characters and situations in literature are like a "picture-horse" (citraturaga). The horse in the picture is not a real horse, nor is it 'like' a real horse; nor is it 'different' from a real horse, nor is it a 'false' horse.

In the same way the actor who plays Hamlet is neither the real Hamlet, nor 'like' him, nor different from him, nor is he a 'false' Hamlet.

The physical fact is that 'picture-horse' is nothing but an optical illusion created by the artist's skill. But that illusion is the object of our aesthetic pleasure. At the moment of aesthetic enjoyment, the "picture horse" is only "horse" irrespective of whether it is real or unreal, similar or dissimilar to any real horse. Here one may ask - Is it the picture that is the source of our enjoyment or the semblance of the horse? Śrīsaṅkuka's answer is that though the element of semblance in the picture is undeniable, the picture is not mere semblance. The horse in the picture may be an illusion, but the picture as a whole is surely not. We see the
picture as a picture, and that makes all the difference. This situation is present in literature also. The characters and situations (vibhāvādi) in the drama are all artificial but they are not taken as such because of the dramatist's style and the actor's histrionic skill. When the spectators are in the theatre, they infer on the strength of the artistic equivalents (vibhāvas) that the actor there is so and so (say Hamlet) and thus come to know and relish the sentiment (rasa) of the hero as it is presented by the actor. But the inference that the actor is the hero is not a dry-as-dust logical inference; it is an aesthetic inference made relishable by the beauty of the work.

There is not much basic difference between Lollata and Śrīsaṅkuka. Both hold that the feeling which is

173. In his criticism of Śrīsaṅkuka, Bhatta Tauta stresses this point. But he altogether misses Śrīsaṅkuka's theoretical grasp of the nature of art.

174. krtrimairapi tathā anabhimanyamānaih (KP Ch. IV)

175. vastusaundarybalād rasanīyatvena anyānumīyamāna vilakṣanāh (ibid)
experienced as aesthetic (rasa) in a work of art belongs to the character. Their only difference is on the point whether imitation leads to the identification of the actor with the character or not. They both fail however to account for the spectator's pleasurable experience of that feeling. Both reduce all art experience to a kind of illusion.

The explanation of rasa as the spectator's experience of aesthetic feeling is found in the theories of Bhatta Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta. The rasa theory in its advanced and perfected form is the work of these theorists. These critics rejected the idea of imitation and based their respective theories on the psychology of the spectator during aesthetic experience. Bhaṭṭa Tauta, Abhinavagupta's preceptor, argued that the idea of imitation was not applicable to characters and situations in the drama. Imitation presupposes two things -

1) Previous perception of the original, 2) perception of the similarity between the original and its copy. So far

176. sadṛśakaranam hi tāvadanukaranam anupalabdha prákṛtina na sakyam kartum (AB I.275)
as the characters and situations in art, whether historical, legendary or invented, are concerned, there is no imitation in this sense.

Bhatta Tauta, further, rejected as irrelevant Śrīśāṅkuka's analogy of 'picture-horse' (citratūrāga). The horse in the picture does not constitute by itself a category of cognition. According to him it is clearly a case of similarity. When applied to the actor, the analogy of 'picture-horse' (citratūrāga) means that the actor tries to put on the semblance of the hero with the aid of make-up etc. But these aids help to create only an artificial outward imitation of the original character. The actor's gesticulations are only the imitations of the external visible results of a feeling (as for example, the raising of eye-brows may be a result of the feeling of anger or of wonder), but they are never the imitations of the feeling itself. How can the feeling of the real character which is part of his inner psychological being, be imitated? Feelings by their very nature are inimitable. They are the very core of rasa, and if they cannot be imitated,

177. sthāyi bhāvo rasah smrtah (KP Ch.IV)
ūnābhāvopagañā api sthāyino rasatvamāpnuvanti (NS VI.288)
how can the inference consequent on imitation follow? Bhatta Tauta therefore rejects the theory of *rasa* as imitation (*anukāra* or *anukarana*) because *rasa* is the aesthetic form of a permanent feelings, and by its very nature, a feeling which is part of our psychological being, cannot be an object of imitation. This view of Bhatta Tauta is at the basis of the theories of *rasa* expounded by Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta.

In Ch.I we have dealt with Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka's theory of art as expression of the universal (vide pp.130-135 above). Our interest now is chiefly with his theory of aesthetic experience. He begins with the question of how the experience of art differs from that of reality. The experience of reality is not always delectable because our involvement in it is of a practical kind. The consideration whether we stand to lose or gain as a result of that experience affects our reaction. When an event in real life concerns people who are stranger to us, our attitude to it is one of indifference. The experience of art, Bhatta Nāyaka maintains, is invariably delightful. It is not conditioned by considerations of practical gain or loss and our attitude to characters in a work of
art is not one of indifference either. Art gives its creations individuality as well as universality. It is against the background of this universalization that the experience of *rasa* takes place. *Rasa* is no doubt the spectator's experience but it is not a private experience. What distinguishes it from non-artistic experience is the frame of mind it creates. To explain this frame of mind Bhatta Nayaka propounded his conception of *bhoga*.

The concept of *bhoga* is based on the Sāṁkhya doctrine of the three gunas. Like *prakṛti* (matter), man's mind is also compounded of the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. At any given time, one of these qualities predominates in the mind and conditions it.

When *sattva* predominates, the man experiences a repose, illumination, and bliss; in *rajas*, he is unsteady and experiences pain; in *tamas*, the mind is torpid and inert.

178. *na tātasthyena nātmagatatvena rasaḥ pratīvate* (KP. IV)

179. For a brief exposition of this theory vide p. 16 above.
A yogi by means of constant practice (abhyāsa) and spiritual discipline makes sattva ever-predominant in his mind. It is in this condition that the yogi comes to realize the Supreme Reality. The spectator's frame of mind during aesthetic experience is to a large extent similar to that of the yogi. Thus, what practice (abhyāsa) gives to the yogi, bhoga gives to the connoisseur of art (rasika).

What characterizes the experience of art in bhoga is its intensity. The careful choice of words, their skilful arrangement, the use of figures of speech and other poetic devices contribute to his effect. In drama, there are, in addition, costume, scenic devices and histrionic skill. These factors work on the mind of the spectator and he cannot remain indifferent and irresponsive. This is the first step in the experience of rasa. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka describes it as destructive of one's thick insensitivity. The spectator's responsiveness or interest is not affected by practical considerations because the

180. nibidānjamohasāmkatā (AB I.277)
characters and situations are universalized. Delight and consciousness characterize the spectator's responsiveness.

At this stage the quality of sattva begins to prevail and interpenetrate rajas and tamas. In this frame of mind aesthetic experience takes place. In it the spectator is spell-bound, as it were. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka says that the feeling of being spell-bound is the work of the rajas which is interpenetrated by sattva. His term for being spell-bound is druti (lit. melting). What characterizes the spell is a peculiar delicateness of mind combined with a kind of Keatsian languour. Druti is especially experienced.

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181. **rajaṃstomuṇvedhavaicitryabalād druti-vistāra-vikāśa**
    **lakṣaṇena sattvodrekapraśanandamayani jasamvidviśranti**
    **lakṣaṇena** (AB I.277)

182. **yadā hi rajas guṇasya drutistamasya vistaraḥ**
    **sattvasyativikāsastādānīm bhogah svarupam labhate**

    Manikyachandra's commentary Samketa on the KP IV (Poona : Anandashram, 1921) p.47

183. Vāmanācārya Jhalakikār has given the following explanation of druti on the authority of "others" (i.e. unnamed critics):-
    **drutirgalitatvamivetī sāmajikanām anubhavasiddhaḥ**
    **sukumāraścittasya vāstabhaviśeṣo druth**

    (The commentary Bddabodhini on the KP Ch.VIII, Poona, B.O.R.I.1965) p.474
in poetry or drama in which love or pathos or spiritual peace (śantarasa) predominates.

Another characteristic of the spectator's mind during aesthetic experience is expansiveness. Bhatta Nāyaka calls this vistāra (lit. expansion) or dipti (lit. flaring up). Because of it the spectator's mind feels inflamed or it flares up, as it were. This is especially experienced in poetry or drama in which heroic zest, anger and disgust predominate. In this condition the mind experiences a kind of expansiveness, as in Tennyson's Ulysses:

... that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield

A third characteristic of aesthetic experience is vikāsa (lit. blooming or opening). It is the work of sattva. It permeates the mind and educates it for a whole-hearted
responsiveness to the work. It is seen in all the rasas and therefore, it is the basic condition of bhoga. In fact, it is the most important characteristic of aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic experience as explained by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka by means of his concept of bhoga is akin to the yogi’s experience of brahman in samādhi (spiritual trance). The only difference between the yogi’s samādhi and rasa is that in the former the yogi realizes the Supreme Reality and in the latter the connoisseur (rasika) experiences the generalized artistic equivalents (vibhāvas).

The achievement of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s aesthetic theory is his satisfactory explanation of the nature of rasa. His theory of the universalization of art (bhāvakatva)

186. parabrahmāsvadāsavidhena bhogena param bhujyate (AB. I.277). This will be discussed in greater detail while dealing with Abhinava’s theory of rasa.

187. vide pp. 130-135 above.
and of the nature of aesthetic delight (bhoga) accounts for the experience of art even when it involves feelings of sorrow, anger, fear and disgust which are productive of pain in real life. The pleasure of pain comes not from these feelings of pain but obviously from the prevalence of sattva in the mind, and sattva partakes of the nature of bliss.

An aesthetic feeling like love (śṛṅgāra-rasa) which the spectator enjoys in drama comes to him only through the medium of aesthetic equivalents of characters and situations. It is not the spectator's direct ordinary experience of love in the practical world. For the same reason rasa is not the memory of an actual past experience.

Though Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka's achievement was considerable, the perfection of the theory of rasa was the work of Abhinavagupta. Abhinavagupta acknowledged his indebtedness

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188. This would be Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka's explanation of tragic pleasure.
to Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, and made universalization (sādharanīkaraṇa) part of his own theory of rasa. He also accepted his concept of rasa as a condition of repose, consciousness and bliss analogous to spiritual trance (samādhī). But Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's theory suffered from some obvious defects. It could not satisfactorily explain how rasa was the spectator's own experience though he was an outsider to characters and situations in art. The postulation of bhāvakatva or universality as a special characteristic of poetic speech was also open to question. Abhinavagupta pointed out that the element of universality was a property of all language; that it was not a special and exclusive quality of poetic speech. Further, universalization by itself cannot account for the spectator's pleasurable experience of rasa. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka only said that the function of words in literature was distinct from mere denotation but he did not care to show wherein the distinctness

189. For more details vide our discussion of the referentiality etc. of poetic speech vide pp. 36-42.

190. KP. Ch. IV
lay. If he did, he would come to see that it was the
work of poetic suggestion (dvani or vyajana). This,
in fact, was Abhinavagupta's contention.

Here we cannot go into the details of the theory
of dvani (poetic suggestion). The relevant question,
however, which even Anandavardhana, the predecessor of
Abhinavagupta had raised was, whether a poem did not mean
much more than what it actually said. He pointed out
that for good readers the meaning of a poem went much
beyond the statements in it. So the meaning which a
poem conveys over and above the statements (vacyartha)
in it, is the work of the power of suggestion in it.
So far as rasa is concerned, it is a matter of intense
experience; it can never be obtained from mere statements
containing words like 'love', 'pity' etc. Abhinavagupta

191. For a brief explanation of suggestion (vyajana) as a
function of words and utterances in a language, see Ch.I,
Sec.II above. Not all suggestion, however, is poetic.
In poetics, the interest in suggestion centres round the
total meaning of a poem, as against its expressed sense.
(vacyartha).
192. Dh.A. Ch.I, p.7
193. nahi śṛngārādīśabdamārābhāji vibhāvādi pratipādenarahaite
kāvye maṅgapi rasavattvapratītirasti (Dh.A. Ch.I, pp.25-26)
also emphasized that rasa could be obtained only through the medium of artistic equivalents (vibhāvas). Mammaṭa pointed out that artistic equivalents were not rasa; they were only the means to it. But rasa is not only a transcendent meaning; it is also an absorbing experience. It must be considered, therefore, on both semantic and psychological levels. Abhinavagupta investigated the problem of rasa on both these levels.

Abhinavagupta's inquiry begins with these questions:

1) What is the "meaning" of a poem (kāvyārtha) ?

2) How do the words in a poem give rise to that meaning?

His answer to the first question is that the meaning in a poem is not equivalent to the meaning of the words or sentences in it; nor is it its paraphrasable "content"; it is the peculiar pleasurable experience that it gives.

To determine the nature of this experience is to determine the nature of rasa. The second question leads to the consideration of the difference between literary and

194. KP Ch. IV

195. tatkāvyārtho rasah (AB I.278)
non-literary use of language. The most obvious characteristics of literary language are that it makes a deliberate use of devices like figures of speech, both of sound and sense, selects and arranges words with great care, and uses them intensively, connotatively. It aims at producing a deep effect on the hearer's mind, but unlike an utterance in everyday life, it never has the nature of a practical communication. Its non-practical nature determines our reaction to it. Our reaction to a non-literary utterance follows a well-defined pattern. When we hear an utterance like "He ruined himself by rashness", we become aware of the tragic fate of a particular individual. Soon this is followed by a subtle mental construct in which this awareness gets universalized - "Whoever is rash may also ruin himself in a like manner". The next step in one's reaction is to relate oneself to this experience - "If I am rash, I may also be ruined". These three steps in one's reaction to an utterance are so subtle and so quick that one does not know the order in which they arise. The important truth about all this is that even an utterance in everyday life can give rise to a meaning much
larger than its expressed sense. Further, it can bring
the hearer to project himself into that larger meaning.
Abhinavagupta describes this last phenomenon as the
gradual "penetration of the hearer's self"
(ātmānapraveśa). This happens also in respect of a
poetic utterance though on an altogether different scale.

The phenomenon of ātmānapraveśa, is due to
the inborn capacity for feeling that all normal
persons have. The feelings of happiness, pride, zest,
sorrow, anger, disgust, fear and wonder,
according to Bharata, are permanent constituents of
human nature (sthāyībhāvas). In addition, there
are other feelings like anxiety, languour, shame etc.
which the permanent feelings (sthāyībhāva) occasionally
call into play. While moving about in the world we
constantly experience these feelings in others and in
ourselves. From constant observation we acquire the skill
of inferring people's feelings from their circumstances.
All these experiences leave on our mind deep and subtle
impressions (vāsanās or saṃskāras). These lie latent
and stored up in the mind, but in appropriate circumstances they are evoked again and become active.

196. To understand more clearly the nature of sāṃskāras or vasānas we may briefly recall here the concept of "transcendental perception" (alaukika pratyakṣā). According to the Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika school of Indian philosophy, when an object is perceived, the species (jāti) to which it belongs is also perceived. Thus, when a tiger is seen, the species of (jāti) tiger is also seen. With the aid of the knowledge of the species (jāti) (i.e., the perception of "tigerness" in this case), we are able to apprehend immediately but in a transcendental way, all the tigers that exist now, or ever existed, or are going to exist. Such transcendental perception also occurs when the subtle impressions (vāsanās, sāṃskāras) left on the mind are evoked by any experience similar to the experience that led to those impressions in the first instance. Thus, when one sees an uncaged tiger even from a safe distance, one becomes aware of its ferocity and one's instinct is to run away. Neither the awareness of the ferocity, nor the instinct to run away is the result of any immediate perception. It may not be the memory of the ferocity of any particular tiger seen in the past either. The perception is the work of the subtle impressions (vāsanās; sāṃskāras) of an experience called forth now by similar circumstances. The Yogasūtra (4.10) speaks of the beginninglessness of the impressions (vāsanās, sāṃskāras) through immemorial previous births and of their becoming active in appropriate circumstances. The poet Kālidāsa describes in the Sākuntala (V.2) how a man experiences a mysterious excitement or restlessness at the sight of beautiful objects, or hearing sweet music. The poet ascribes this to the love experienced in previous births which abides in the form of subtle impressions on the soul and works on a man's mind without his consciousness. Abhinavagupta quotes Kālidāsa's verse to corroborate his theory of rasa. This may give the wrong impression that his theory of rasa is dependent on the acceptance of the doctrine of re-birth. No doubt Abhinava himself accepted this doctrine as a philosopher, but it is not essential that one must subscribe to it in order to explain the experience of rasa.
A man who has witnessed a death-scene and experienced its gloom and grimness becomes aware of these impressions the moment the subject of death is mentioned. In literature also one comes across human situations which call forth our deep latent impressions. This is the basis of the experience of *rasa*. Rasa is no doubt based on the experience of a permanent feeling (*sthāyibhāva*), but it has its own special characteristics too. It is wholly different from the experience of a feeling in real life. It comes to us through the medium of art. It is a state of pure delightful consciousness the undisturbed by the practical preoccupations of life of the spectator. The characters and situations are not regarded as friends or foes or strangers. By means of various devices art brings the spectator's mind to concentrate fully on the object of its consciousness and then universalizes the characters and situations it represents.

197. For more details Abhinavagupta's theory of the universalization of art see Ch. I, Sec. II.
Thus, in aesthetic experience a feeling does not remain a mere feeling; it becomes the perception of a feeling in an idealized form. The experience of rasa is undisturbed and absorbing. In it the spectator's ego is neither completely suppressed nor especially conspicuous.

Rasa, however, can be experienced only by those who have poetic sensitivity. Poetic insensitivity is one of the "obstacles" (vighna) to the enjoyment of rasa. Not all readers or spectators are sensitive and therefore, the experience of rasa is not available to all. There are other conditions also. The inclination to interpret literature as a portrayal of one's own life, and the complete absorption in one's private concerns hinder

198. manasi saksatkaratmikā pratītip (AB I.279)
199. nirvighnapratītigrāhyā ibid.
200. ... nātmā atyantatiraskṛto na viśeṣata ulinikhatā ibid.
201. sva-para-gatadesakalaviśeṣāveśā (AB I.280)
202. nījasukhādivivasibhāva (AB I.280)
the experience of rasa. In addition, our enjoyment of a work of art may be inhibited by the poet's shortcomings, or in a drama, from the actor's wrong acting. Improbability of plot and characterization, weak artistic equivalents, lack of clarity, wrong emphasis, and a doubtful nature of the poetic devices used, are "obstructions" that have their source in the poet. Wrong emphasis, lack of clarity, and a dubious nature of acting (as when it is difficult to know whether the actor is laughing or crying) are the "obstructions" caused by the actor.

When all these obstructions (vighnas) are removed, the realization of a rasa (rasapratiti) begins. It obliterates everything else from the spectator's

203. sambhāvanāviraha  
205. asphutatva  
207. saṁśayayoga  
209. sphutatvābhāva

204. pratītyupāyavaikalya  
206. apradhānata  
208. apradhānata  
210. saṁśayayoga

--- AB I.280 ---
consciousness, absorbs his heart and sways his whole body. It is characterised by intensity, joy and pure consciousness. There is nothing like it in man's experience. Its nearest analogue is the yogin's consciousness of Brahman in samadhi.

For a number of reasons Abhinavagupta's theory represents the apex of Indian speculation about the nature of aesthetic experience. The most important of all is vexed that it answers the vexed problem of Indian poetics — How does the spectator enjoy the feeling when he is an outsider to artistic characters and situations? Abhinava's answer is that in rasa the spectator is experiencing only his own feeling, i.e., a feeling inborn and instinctive in him. But this is distinct from the experience of reality because of the peculiar condition of the spectator's ego in it. Rasa does not obliterate

211. hrdayamiva praviśan, sarvāṅgānāmi vālingan,
     anyat sarvam tirodadhāt (KP Ch. IV)
his ego, but it momentarily suspends its practical side. It puts the ego on the level of pure consciousness.

Later Sanskrit poeticians like Mammatā, Visvanātha and others unhesitatingly accepted Abhinavagupta’s theory of rasa. Its importance in Indian poetics will become clear if we bear in mind that according to Indian poeticians rasa is the soul of poetry. In order to assess the achievement of this theory, it is necessary to consider it in the light of comparison. This is done in the Section that follows.

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SECTION III

CONCLUSION:

From our discussion in Sections I and II of this chapter it will be seen that there is much general agreement between Western and Indian traditions on the basic function of poetry. Both accept (though with different emphases) that poetry delights as well as instructs, or at best, that it should do so. In both these traditions the belief obtained that poetry was divine in origin and that it conveyed wisdom and esoteric truths far beyond the ordinary human intellect. It was esteemed as the source of all knowledge, and therefore its educational value was undisputed. The Vedas and the Homeric epics were the source of religion and culture respectively in India and Greece. However, with its gradual secularization, poetry lost much of its direct religious significance. But the stress on its general cultural, moral and educational influence continued.
Part of the ancient belief in the divine origin of poetry was the prophetic role of the poet. In the Ion and the Phaedrus Plato speaks of the poet as "possessed", through whom the divine speaks to men. He compares poetic outbursts to madness and frenzy, and describes how the poetic muse affects the rhapsode and through him, the hearers. We do not have any parallel in Indian tradition to this Western view. No doubt the Hindus regard the Vedas as divine and poetry as divinely inspired and there is a view in Sanskrit poetics that one cannot be a poet without at the same time being a seer (rsi), but the Hindus never looked upon the poet as a prophet in the gross sense of oracle. In the later version of Western tradition (in Shelley, for example) the poet as prophet was interpreted in a broader sense. Further, the idea that poetry is a kind of madness (furor poeticus) is also peculiar to Western tradition.

In both these traditions poetry is associated with wisdom and learning. In India, it was looked upon as a means to the attainment of the four common goals of life (purusārthas). In the West, the Horatian view
with its stress on the social and moral function of poetry found favour with a majority of great critics. But this view did not go unchallenged. Plato's questioning of the cognitive value of poetry marks the beginning of a long but fruitful controversy in the West on the value of literature as knowledge. It led to extreme views such as that poetry was superior to history and philosophy, that it was the queen of all serving sciences, and that it could replace religion. It was also asserted, in contradiction to these views, that the poetic world was illusory, meaningless and retrograde in nature, or that its cognitive value was irrelevant. The contrast between discursive knowledge and imaginative writing, and the cognitive status of literature are among the crucial problems of Western criticism. The long controversy in Western tradition on these problems demonstrates that the claims regarding the instructiveness and the social utility of literature cannot be lightly dismissed. The Western preoccupation with these problems is ultimately traceable to the influence of Plato's powerful personality and his forceful condemnation of art. His influence asserted itself subsequently (though on a much lower theoretical
plane and confusing with other influences such as puritanism and utilitarianism) in a Gosson, or a Peacock or a Macaulay. Their condemnation of poetry in the name of truth or religion or science or progress provoked great poets and critics like Sidney, Shelley, Arnold and others to memorable defences of poetry. And even other great poets and critics like Johnson, Wordsworth and Coleridge who were not directly involved in this polemic, spoke unhesitatingly for the social and cognitive function of literature.

The polemic regarding the cognitive value of literature is a point of contrast between Western and Indian poetics. There never arose in the history of Indian poetics a controversy of this scale and magnitude on this subject. True, the Indian poeticians made a sharp distinction between a systematic discursive study (sāstra) and imaginative writing (kāvyā). Ānandavardhana speaks in one connection of the difference between history (itihāsa) and poetry. But these distinctions

212. na kaveh itivr̥ttamātransirvahāpena kīcīt pravojanam
     itihāsadēva tattiddheh (Dh.A. Ch.III)
were made only to explain the peculiar nature of poetry. The prime concern of Indian poetics is the search for the "soul" of poetry. The soul of poetry is the pleasurable experience it affords, in other words, it is rasa. While explaining the nature of rasa, Abhinavagupta observed that as an experience it was a category by itself and that any question regarding its cognitive status was irrelevant. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka maintained that in poetry there was no instruction at all; there was only pleasure. The Indian poeticians recognised the uniqueness of aesthetic experience and made it the sole worth of art. In this they came very close to the position of the 19th Century School of Art for Art's Sake in the version of it stated by A.C. Bradley in his 'Poetry for Poetry's sake'. But unlike the exponents of this school, they did not remain content with the mere

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213. \[ \text{nanyevam raso aprameyah syād evam yuktam bhavitum} \]
\[ \text{arhati. rasyataikaprāṇo hyasau na prameyādisvabhāvah} \]
\[ \text{(AB I.286)} \]

214. \[ \text{kāvye rasyitā sarvo na bodhā na niyogabhāk} \]
\[ \text{(quoted by Abhinava Dh.A. p.25)} \]
assertion that art experience was unique; they proceeded to unravel the mystery of its uniqueness.

The various theories of *rasa* are the endeavours of Indian poeticians to understand the psychology of art-experience. They seek to explain it from the enlightened spectator's (*rasika's*) point of view. They begin with the empirical fact that art-experience is the spectator's own experience and that any theory seeking to explain it must remain faithful to this fact. They give great importance to the moment of aesthetic rapture, and therefore, the explanation of the spectator's frame of mind during that moment is the core of the sophisticated theories of *rasa* propounded by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta. While explaining art-experience they never argue from any a *priori* principle; whenever they recur to this or that school of philosophy, they do so only for corroboration by analogy. They take their stand on the fact of experience. This is true not only of the great exponents of the theory of *rasa*, but also of those poeticians who deal with the minor varieties of
aesthetic pleasure like *camatkāra* or *vaicitrya* (pleasant astonishment or astonishment at the recognition of a previously unnoticed beauty).

The exploration of art-experience from the spectator's point of view is comparatively recent in Western poetics. It is true that Aristotle's theory of tragic catharsis and Longinus's conception of the Sublime are very ancient, but they deal only with only two varieties of aesthetic experience, namely, the tragic and the Sublime. There also tragic catharsis as Aristotle explains it (or as his commentators do) refers not to the moment of art-experience but to its aftereffects. The absence in Indian poetics of the Sublime has been much lamented, but as Prof. V.K. Chari points out, the Sublime is not an independent category of aesthetic experience; it is a quality which may be experienced,

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215. These will be considered in brief in Ch. IV below.

in connection with the tragic (as in Shakespeare's *King Lear*), or the heroic (as in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*) or any other sentiment in art.

The investigation of the psychology of art began in Europe in the 18th Century with Addison's essays on "The Pleasures of the Imagination". 18th Century aesthetics was interested mainly in the problem of taste and art-experience as a distinct mode of awareness. Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) crowns all aesthetic speculations on these subjects in Western tradition.

In the 19th Century the German School of *Einfühlung* or aesthetic empathy made a serious attempt to explain the psychology of art. The theory of this school has some striking similarity with the theory of *rasa* in some essentials. Its stress on the power of the art-object to evoke associations giving pleasure and pain, and the importance it gives to the projection of the spectator's

are feeling into the art object is reminiscent of Abhinavagupta's explanation of the function of aesthetic equivalents (vibhāvādi) and his concept of the penetration of the spectator's self into the art object (atmanupravesa). Theodor Lipps' contention that art-experience is not pure subjectivism since it depends on the art-object and is controlled by it, finds corroboration also in the theory of rasa.

Nevertheless, there are also substantial points of difference between the two theories. The Ein uhlung theory makes objects in nature expressive of human life and personality. According to it, human beings attribute by force of association, their own feelings to natural objects. The theory reduces art-experience, to a large extent, to a kind of pathetic fallacy. The theory of rasa on the other hand, concentrates only on the artistic equivalents of human feelings and situations (vibhāvādi). There is no question of any pathetic fallacy in them. The attribution of human feelings to natural objects is
common enough in Sanskrit literature, and Indian poetics has not altogether ignored it. But such attribution is looked upon as nothing more than a stylistic device.

The theory of *rasa* is interested more in human situations than in natural objects. Further, the *rasa* theories altogether reject the identification of the subject with the object in art-experience. We may only recall here the elaborate arguments of Bhatta Nayaka and Abhinavagupta to establish that *rasa* is not one's own private feelings (*ātmagatatva*). They also considered the difficulties of making art-experience purely objective (*tātasthya*). The projection of one's own feelings in the art-object is also not enough to account for art-experience. It is too complex to be explained on the basis of any one of its characteristics. The *rasa* theory, therefore, seeks to explain aesthetic experience by taking into consideration the various factors involved in it, namely, the art-object, the spectator's

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218, 219. For details see pp.130-135 and 330.

220. *Ātmānupravesa* is an essential element in art-experience according to Abhinavagupta. But he points out that this is a characteristic of our reactions to both aesthetic and non-aesthetic situations (for details see p.540 above).
experience of it, the frame of his mind during that experience, the universality of the art-object, and the aesthetic distance which characterizes this experience. The *rasa* theory is far more comprehensive than the *einfühlung* theory. In fact it is the most complete aesthetic theory since it is free from the usual one-sidedness of most art-theories.

It must be noted, however, that Indian poetics, which concentrates on the psychology of art, almost completely ignores the question of its social utility. Its repeated emphasis on poetry as a means to the attainment of the four common goals of life (*purusārthas*), and its eulogy of poetry as a vehicle of knowledge and wisdom are never developed into a well-argued theory. In Western poetics, on the other hand, the social utility and the cognitive value of literature are problems of central importance. Especially the problem of the social
utility of literature occupied the attention of all the critics in the West. It has been shown in Section I above, that the typical Horatian view of the use and effect of literature, though suffering a sea-change, has endured through centuries of literary criticism in the West. This is more significantly true of the Romantic and post-Romantic periods when the age-old idea of an overt or covert didactic function of literature came to be finally discarded, but the imagination came to be valued as a means to the individual's intuitive grasp of truth. Shelley maintained that the imagination was superior to reason because it was the co-ordinator of all knowledge grasped by reason, and that poetry, alone had the power to arrange the materials of knowledge according to the principles of the beautiful and the good. This emphasis persists also in Matthew Arnold's critical writing. The greater Western critics never lose sight of the fact that literature is valuable because it is useful, and that it is useful because it is meaningful. They consider it imperative, therefore, to
explain how it is meaningful. This is seen even in the early criticism of Prof. I.A. Richards who ascribes an expressly other than cognitive function to literature. On the background of this elaborate Western theories of the use of poetry, the position of Indian poetics on this subject seems rather sketchy. The Indian poetics gave more importance to the aesthetic effect of poetry than to its social utility perhaps because they felt that its social utility was indirect working its influence on society through the transformation of the individual by means of the aesthetic experience.