FOREWORD

Professor R. A. Dave has prepared a book which contains brilliant and sensitive essays on some of the aspects of the poetic process. Like all lovers of poetry he has a vivid memory and experience of the Pierian spring of which he has drunk, and the more he drinks of it, the more he loves it. It is this love of and spontaneous attraction to poetry that generates the infectious enthusiasm for the subject, of which his essays are full. It is a pleasure to read them because it is such a spontaneous and whole-hearted surrender of his consciousness to the Muse of Poetry. I have not sat in his class-room; but his classes also must have enthused and inspired the students who attended them. They must have gone out of the portals of their university with a lit lamp and an illuminated mind.

It is difficult to say which of these essays is the best among the essays we read in this book. One surpasses the other. They are so full of the milk of human kindness and the milk of paradise which poets have drunk. The essay called Religion and Poetry, which gives its title to the book, deals with a topic which is deceptively simple. One sees how complicated it is only when one begins to count thread after thread in this web and experience it as warp or woof. One could make a simple statement and say that the poetry, which is born of institutional religion or which flows from a poet who has accepted such a religion without investigating it for himself and without experiencing deeply and originally the truth behind it, results either in simple conformity as in some of the psalms that we read in the Bible or it is simple devotional lyricism, such as we see in the poetry of George Herbert. The poetry of religion which springs from a poet who is an adventurer and explorer in his own traditional plot of religious ground can write a Divine Comedy like Dante who like our Naigamic poets sees that every bush in that ground is afire with God. But there are Agamic poets too, who have evolved their own
philosophy and enhanced their own vision as they go along like Blake, Shelley, Keats and Yeats. T. S. Eliot on the other hand, who is a chip of the nugget of gold called Dante, is in the line of Dante, Valmiki and Vyasa, though not so full and profound.

The essay on the creative process is also interesting, for it collects a number of sidelights and highly individualised images and symbols taken from the poets. There is less of unity in the essay because the images chosen are many and diverse and no sustained attempt is made to detect the unifying thread that binds them together. In this account of the origin of poetry, one can see different levels of poetic perception, the sensuous, imaginative, archetypal and spiritual.

In the essay, “Have We Lost the Tragic Sense?”, we have once more, illuminating speculation on the tragedies produced in recent times and, indirectly, on the nature of tragedy and melodrama. It is true that the tragedies born of modern or contemporary sensibility do not quite rise to the heights of Greek or Shakespearian tragedy. I think many will agree that Pity and Terror, the two differentiae of Tragedy, supplied by Aristotle, should be supplemented by a third constituent which Allardyce Nicoll called ‘grandeur’. It is this grandeur of the human personality that is plentifully in evidence in Tragedy like the other two unique features, Pity and Terror. Unless this happens, Tragedy will not have the sense of reconciliation which it should produce in us in the end. One can also say with the English critic, who remarks that we go to a tragedy to banquet and not to purge, that in order to be full–blooded and full–throated, a tragedy, as a work of art, must be replete with the nine Rasas or tastes or attitudes. The presence of satire, humour, sublimity, horror, beauty, enthusiasm (vira), sorrow, romanticism (subjectivity) and realism (objectivity) is essential for the making of a perfect and great tragedy.

The essay on the aesthetics of poetic translation also deals with an intriguing theme. A translator is not a murderer, for the original poem which he has to translate he cannot murder.
He can only understand or misunderstand it or dive into it insufficiently. What he can murder or produce in a mangled form is his own translation of the original poem. A poem can undoubtedly be translated in a simple way only for understanding the prose sense of the poem, either in verse or prose. But if translation is to be a creative process, a transcreation is essential. The evidence of the creative process can be seen only in a transcreation. This also cannot recreate all the grandeur of the original poem from A to Z, in the target language, language, diction, sense, sensibility as perceived in the inner meaning and imagery of the original poem, rhythm, mood, attitude, and vision. The transcreator will have to incorporate creatively substitutes for all these constituents of poetry in his own transcreation.

Professor Dave can also write superbly on the great poetry of giants like Walt Whitman and others. He takes us into the very heart of the creative process of each poet that he writes about.

I have been made to realise that for a professor to retire at fifty-five or fifty-eight is far too premature. Retirement may not, of course, cover all the years of maturity that lie ahead of him. But I feel sure that such a person will be able to use his leisure for a creative interpretation of the great poets and writers that he has enjoyed. I wish Professor Dave a glorious destiny and also long life, peace, and happiness.

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A WORD OR TWO

Here are bunched up at random a few of my studies in literature. It does not often fall to one’s lot to stumble on the new shores of light even on the native ground. If some of these responses at all register, no matter how very rarely, a few such moments, I should be gratified. For, although presented at national or international forums and published in learned journals they were largely generated in the classroom which was creative and lively and congenial to launching out in the company of students on endless journeying into what Keats calls ‘the realms of gold’. As I look back over the travelled road, juxtaposing my entry and exit, I am sad to see a sea change. Teaching and learning fast cease to be creative processes as they are getting submerged by pseudo academic and parasite programmes. It is in the context of the dying classroom that exercises such as these might have some relevance. To me personally they symbolise the nostalgic memory of the days that are no more. That this little book is blessed with the foreword by one of the most eminent men of letters is a privilege that overwhelms me. The university is a rendezvous where one finds oneself in the company of the master spirits and great minds, transcending all time and space. When I think of influences, direct and oblique, that shaped the contours of my life, Professor V. K. Gokak rises in my consciousness as a guiding star. His kindly words come to me as light beyond the encircling darkness, opening up a new direction. As I fumble for words to express my gratitude to him profound silence envelopes me.

The constraints after I left the university subjected the making of this little book to a heavy strain, leaving little room to review or revise the studies.

I must put on record my thanks to the university and the U. G. C. for letting the book see the light of the day. I should not forget my dear students who shared the adventures in the classroom either.

R. A. Dave

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