

INDIAN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF THE SUBLIME

Indian theory records poetry and music as the highest forms of the fine arts, and considers these two as the fundamental ingredients of the Goddess of Learning identified with the Supreme Speech. The essence of this Goodess of Learning, in its turn, is said to be represented by the literary artist and the appreciative reader, taken together. This statement necessarily implies inter-dependence of the literary artist and the receptive reader, or in other words to state clearly, the mutual dependence between the creative process and the appreciative method. The poetic circuit, as a matter of fact, remains incomplete unless the experience of the literary artist is transplanted into the mind of the appreciative reader. When the expressions employed in the specimen of literary document transplant the unique experience of the literary artist into the mind of the critical connoisseur the poetic circuit becomes complete, and what is brought into being is the art of poetry shining in its splendid charm. This approach of Indian theory to the problem of poetic expression is responsible for the great emphasis laid on the connoisseur of poetic art initiated in to the hieroglyphics of Poetry. Sanskrit theory does not try to evaluate the beauty of a literary creation by analysing the ingredients of the poetic imagination lying behind the genesis of poetry: it tries rather to analyse the impact created by a document of literary art on the mind of appreciative reader, that savours impersonal delight through appreciation of the document concerned.

The experience that is implanted in the mind of the connoisseur reveals itself, on analysis, to be comprised of unmixed bliss or unalloyed joy, and Sanskrit theory rightly regards the state of aesthetic realisation as a delectable state of unmixed bliss. Attainment of this bliss does not depend on the character of the feeling represented: it comes from the self of the connoisseur, and what is experienced at the time of appreciation of poetry is the reader's own consciousness that partakes

* Vice-Chancellor Burdwan University, India.

the nature of bliss. As the poetry is appreciated the experiencer is lifted above the ordinary plane and his narrow individuality is put into slumber, as a result of which he experiences poetry as a member of the instructed public constituting the assembly of the connoisseurs. With profound care Sanskrit theory has analysed the state of beatitude and has demonstrated that along with the connoisseur who experiences poetry, the content of experience also is generalised at the time of its appreciation, as a result of which what is experienced is not the particular or the individual, but the general and the universal. Since the process of experience depends for its fulfilment on the factors of « the experienced » and « the experiencer », both these are necessary in the process of poetic experience; the speciality of this experience lies in the universal character of both these factors. When Sanskrit theory refers to efacement of the feeling of the narrow individuality it does not assert that the experiencer loses his personality altogether. What it emphasises is that the Ego-boundary of the experiencer expands, as a result of which the entire universe is comprehended within the orbit of the Self or the Ego of the connoisseur. There is, therefore, much significance in the description of the state of the aesthetic realisation as « A Bonded-liberated State ».

The function that plays a significant role in the process of attainment of poetic experience is represented by the function of suggestion, which distinguishes poetic expression from ordinary linguistic compositions and places it on a high pedestal. In poetry, Sanskrit theory asserts, it is not the literal that is of primary significance; it is the symbolic that is of real import, and the expression and the expressed jointly bring into light the implicit of supreme charm. Sublimity in poetry is ensured through the operation of the function of suggestion that does not follow the path of logic, and creates wonders. As a matter of fact, it is this function that makes the deformed most beautiful and imparts special charm to the lovely; it is this function that universalises the experienced and the experiencer and leads to the unique confrontation between the generalised subject and the universalised object. Sanskrit theory does not, however, propagate the doctrine of the employment of a peculiar type of expression in poetry and never maintains that the language of poetry is different from language of ordinary word. With all emphasis at its commend it asserts that poetry is capable of being composed with the help of any linguistic expression. It is supreme skill of the literary artist that invests the expression employed with a special power to raise into comprehension the splendidly striking symbolic. Even ordinary linguistic expression is possessed of the power of introducing the generalised content: when this is employed in the fine texture of poetry it acquires greater force, as a result of which the small reader experiences his communion with the universe at large. It is here that Sanskrit Theory differs from the doctrines propounded by symbolists, who advocate the employment of a special type of language

for poetry. Poetry, after all, is not a closed wall, a barricaded pursuit. Sanskrit theory keeps the gates of poetry open to all: to appreciate it, however, what is necessary is the appreciative genius, which enables the reader to catch the splendour of the symbolic lying latent in the superficial texture comprised of the language and the content.

Sanskrit theory thus thinks that the function of suggestion is responsible for the emergence of sublimity in poetry. Good poetry, it asserts, does not depend on the beauty of the expression or the expressed, the charm of the meter or the figure: it depends solely on the splendour of the symbolic, which is represented in the ultimate analysis by the emotive content. Imagination beaming with action and character makes the greatest poet; a coalescence of conscious feeling and thought marks the next: fancy by itself that prompts the literary artist to run riot with exuberance of imagery creates the next and wit the last. The first variety of poetry in which the symbolic content comes out in flying colours is a product of Imagination, which discovers new meanings in old ideas and presents words and meanings, meters and figures suitable for creation of poetry. The second type of poetry in which the symbolic content though subordinate to the literal constitutes the chief source of attraction is a product of splendid coalescence between conscious feeling and active thought. The highest type of poetry, as a matter of fact, is a configuration of pure feeling: in it the creativity of conscious mind does not play any part whatsoever. In the second type of poetry on the other hand laboured feeling and conscious thought play a greater part, as a result of which the literary artist of this poetry appears as more removed from real truth than the artist of the first type of poetry, who is more sincere to his cherished truth. The third type of poetry which abounds in play of fancy represents the composition of a comparatively weak poet, because his mind appears to be distracted from contemplation of the emotive content. And the last variety of poetry in which the charmingness of expression is of profound importance is the product of Wit alone, because in it the literary artist causes admiration and wonder by employment of laboured expressions and musical effects. Thought by itself makes no poet at all; for the mere conclusion of the understanding can at best be only so many matters of fact. Pure feeling even destitute of conscious thought stands a fair poetical chance; feeling being a sort of thought without the process of thinking, — a grasper of truth without seeing it. And what is very remarkable is that feeling seldom makes the blunders that are committed by thought or Wit. Pure feeling, as a matter of fact, holds good for all time to come and since this represents the highest truth it naturally makes the great poetry, which is nothing but a concretised feeling caught in the mirror of a specimen of writing. What the great poet is required to cultivate above all things is love and truth; what he is to avoid is the fleeting and the false. It is not without reason, therefore, that Sanskrit theory emphasises the importance of the per-

manent feeling, which symbolises the eternal truth, and tenders advice to the poets of posterity to avoid depiction of the transient and the individual. The universal, after all, is eternal while particular is evanescent.

Sanskrit theory thus explains the mystery behind Sublimity, and points out to the function of suggestion as lying behind the transformation of the ordinary into the extra-ordinary, — the metamorphosis of the pedestrian into the great and the grand. The principle of adjudicating Sublimity in poetry, as enunciated by Sanskrit theory holds good for all time to come, and it is applicable not only to Indian literature, but to all specimens of literature as well. The fundamentals of the doctrine adumbrated by Sanskrit theoreticians appear and re-appear in the writings of literary critics of the Orient and the Occident in all ages. It is refreshing to note that even some of the most modern theories on literary evaluation seem to have their foundations on the tenets of Sanskrit theory. It is this universal and international character of Sanskrit theory that lends a special charm and splendid originality to it and makes it highly significant to the readers of every literature.