

DR. G. B. MOHAN

*The  
Response  
To  
Poetry*

A Study in Comparative Aesthetics



THE PRESENT WORK is an attempt at exploring certain areas of intersection between the Indian theory of *rasa* and some western theories of poetic experience. The central idea underlying the book is that the concept of *rasa*, interpreted dialectically, i.e., as uniting and integrating opposites, provides a basis for a fruitful enquiry into the nature, mode and value of poetic experience.

Extending the meanings of the pivotal concepts of the Indian theory as *vibhāva*, *alaukika*, *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* and *śānta*, the author has brought out their potentialities and relevance to current critical thinking by discussing them in the context of a wide variety of parallel western doctrines including those of Richards, Dewey, Eliot, Susanne, Langer and Tolstoy. The work is informed, sustained, cogent and amply documented. The impersonality of poetic experience, emotion in poetry, poetry and belief, the obstacles to poetic experience, empathy and identification, tension and equilibrium in poetic experience and poetry and moral action are some of the topics examined. The mutual illumination of the Indian and western theories resulting from

Contd. on back flap



Johnson copy



THE RESPONSE TO POETRY  
A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE AESTHETICS

By  
G. S. KHAN

Professor of Urdu University



PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE



# THE RESPONSE TO POETRY

*A Study in Comparative Aesthetics*

By

G. B. MOHAN

*Banaras Hindu University*



PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE



THE RESPONSE TO POETRY  
June 1968

© PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE P LTD  
New Delhi

Price: Rs. 18.50

Printed by D. P. Sinha  
at New Age Printing Press,  
Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi,  
and published by him  
for People's Publishing House  
Private Limited, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 1.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. *Diogenes*, No. 1, 1953, pp. 129-30.
2. *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York, 1952), p. 13.
3. René Wellek, 'Some Principles of Criticism', *The Times Literary Supplement: The Critical Moment*, 26 July 1963, p. 549.
4. *Oriental Aesthetics* (Cleveland, 1965).
5. 'Oriental Traditions in Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Fall 1965, p. 6.
6. Surendra Barlinge, *Soundarya-Tattva aur Kavya-Siddhanta* (Delhi, 1963), p. 76.
7. All citations from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, unless otherwise specified, are from the edition published by Oriental Institute, Baroda, ed. Ramakrishna Kavi. Second revised edition, 1956, is critically edited by K. S. Ramaswami Sastri. All references to *Abhinavabhārati* also are to this edition.

## CHAPTER II

### *Rasa as Aesthetic Experience*

---

#### *The Word Rasa and Its Meanings*

THE WORD *rasa* has a bewildering variety of meanings. In different periods new meanings evolved out of earlier meanings and in different disciplines the word acquired different connotations. The meanings range from the alcoholic *soma*-juice to the metaphysical Absolute, the Brahman. In the Vedic Age, when the ebullient primitive spirit of the Aryan race was awakening to the splendours and glories of Nature, the word referred to concrete objects: *rasa* meant water, milk, *soma*-juice, etc. Gradually 'flavour', 'taste', and 'tasting' were associated with the meaning of the word. In the Upaniṣadic Age, when the intellectual sophistication of the race had reached unprecedented and perhaps unsurpassed heights, the concrete evolved into the abstract and *rasa* became the essence, the essence of everything, the essence of the universe itself. The sages even declared that *rasa* is Brahman.<sup>1</sup> In dramaturgy and poetics the word *rasa* is used with multidimensional connotations which comprehend the entire poetic process. The theory of *rasa* is primarily audience-oriented and the centre of much discussion in the theory is the reader's aesthetic experience. But we should bear in mind that the word denotes, apart from reader experience, the creative experience of the poet and the essence of the qualities which make a poem what it is.

P138

John Dewey has said:

We have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words



'artistic' and 'aesthetic'. Since 'artistic' refers primarily to the act of production and 'aesthetic' to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate.<sup>2</sup>

7138  
*Rasa* is a word which designates both the processes. The poet creates and the reader recreates. The poet transmutes his experience into a rhythmic verbal pattern of sensuous images and dynamic characters and the reader, in his turn, translates the pattern into a relishable experience which fuses all the sensuous, emotional and intellectual content of the pattern. The rhythmic verbal pattern functions as a conveyor belt revolving round the creative experience of the poet and the aesthetic experience of the reader and thus achieving a synthesis of the poet and the reader. The legend about the incident which occasioned the composition of the epic *Rāmāyaṇā* is instructive. When the sage Vālmiki saw one of the *krauñca* pair shot dead by a hunter he was overcome by sorrow. But his sorrow was transformed into infinite compassion for human suffering. This was an occasion for his creative imagination to start conjuring up forms, images and characters. His heart overflowed with creative compassion which was different from his personal sorrow.<sup>3</sup> The creative experience occasioned by the contemplation of the sorrowful incident issued forth in the epic *Rāmāyaṇā*, Vālmiki, whose heart was full of *karuṇa rasa* infused it into his poem. Unless the poet himself is suffused with *rasa* he cannot infuse it into his work.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that this *rasa* of the poet, which is a contemplative creative experience and not a personal emotion, is the root of the poetic process.

The essential quality of the verbal pattern created by the poet also is called *rasa*. It is this essential quality produced by the various ingredients of the poem like image, character, metre and such other rhetorical devices which is relished by the reader. In this context *rasa* is not an experience in the mind of a sentient being, but the objective relishable quality found in the embodiment of a creative experience. Indian aestheticians speak of *rasavat kāvya* (poem with *rasa*). Ānandavardhana devotes much space to the discus-



sion of the conflict between different rasas and of the necessity to observe aucitya (propriety) in delineating the predominant *rasa*<sup>5</sup>. *Rasa* has been defined as the very 'soul of poetry. It is the dominant element in a poem. It is the fundamental principle which organises all the rhetorical ingredients of a poem. In his *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata is primarily concerned with the production of *rasa* on the stage. Without *rasa* the meanings and elements of a poem or a drama will not 'function', will not come to life.<sup>6</sup>

The third sense of *rasa* with which I am concerned in the present work, is the aesthetic experience of the reader. Attempts to define beauty have not produced very convincing results because by its very nature it yields only to a circular definition if we forget the intimate relation between the subject and object in its apprehension. The Indian theorists were not entangled in a futile discussion of the subjectivity or objectivity of beauty partly because their term *rasa* is an all-inclusive one. It denotes: (1) the creative experience of the poet; (2) the essential totality of the qualities of a poem; and, (3) the reader's aesthetic experience when he enjoys the poem. The propounders of the theory of *rasa* had a comprehensive vision of the continuity of the poetic process. They synthesized all the factors involved in the creation and enjoyment of poetry under the principle of *rasa*. This synthesis is a praiseworthy achievement of the theory. The continuity of the poetic process is illustrated most aptly in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* with the help of the seed-tree-fruit analogy: 'Just as the tree grows from the seed, and flowers and fruits grow from the tree, so the *rasas* are the root of all the *bhāvas*.'<sup>7</sup> The *rasa* of the poet is the seed at the root of the poem. This seed-experience, which is not a personal emotion but a transpersonal contemplative state of mind, issues forth in the form of a poem. The poet and the reader are alike in their sensibility. The aesthetic experience of the reader is the fruit.<sup>8</sup> Thus we find that to the Indian theorists *rasa* is both objective and subjective in the sense that it is the basic principle which underlies the continuity of the poetic process from the point of the

p 138



between word and meaning. It developed hair-splitting distinctions and a highly sophisticated technical terminology. It is not necessary for us to go into the details of this theory. I shall give an outline of the theory of *dhvani* with a view to show the link between meaning in poetry and poetic experience.<sup>27</sup>

Words have three types of meaning. A word has a primary literal meaning fixed arbitrarily by convention. A word also has a secondary meaning which is derived from the context in which it is used. Apart from these primary and secondary meanings a tertiary meaning also may operate. The tertiary meaning is suggested by the primary or secondary meanings. Beauty in poetry consists in the predominance of the suggested tertiary meaning over the primary referential and the secondary contextual meanings. It may appear paradoxical that the essence of poetry is not what is directly expressed but what is indirectly suggested. All poets find out directions by indirections. They resort to metaphor, paradox, hyperbole and other figures of speech because the direct and straight way of expression is not adequate to objectify their experience. The suggested meaning cannot be considered to be the sum total of the component parts of the primary and secondary meanings. It is certainly based on these meanings; but it also transcends them. It is like the loveliness of a beautiful woman which is not the total of the beauty of the separate limbs and features but something transcending them though based on and projected by them.<sup>28</sup> *Rasa* in a poem is a qualitatively new product arising from a combination of *vibhāvas*, etc. *Rasa* is not in any one of the ingredients but a product of their proper functioning. We can say that it is a quality which appears when the *vibhāvas*, etc., begin to function.

No doubt, the suggested meaning will not become comprehensible if the referential and contextual meanings do not function. But in poetry the latter must be taken as a means to an end. Just as a man interested in perceiving objects in the dark secures a lamp as a means to realise his end, so also one who is interested in perceiving the sug-

n 5  
p 158



behaviour; but ultimately it aims at making you relish certain mental states. The poet may suggest only the rise or fall of a mood; he may suggest an object or a figure of speech. But the suggestion of moods, objects and figures of speech will ultimately terminate in the experience of *rasa*. Like *rasa*, *dhvani* also is a comprehensive concept. It stands for the suggesting words, the suggested meanings, the function of suggestion, the suggested experience and the poem which suggests. In poetry meanings are grasped as symbols of a complex experience. When we relish poetry we apprehend meanings in terms of experience. Rasadhvani (the suggestion of *rasa*, or the suggested *rasa*) is the soul of poetry.

### *The Number of Rasas*

*Rasa* is so called because it is relished.<sup>31</sup> It is another name for the reposeful consciousness established when our self rests on the aesthetic configuration. In this sense *rasa* is the *mahārasa* (the great or basic *rasa*).<sup>32</sup> But it has been the practice of Indian critics to classify the experience according to the *sthāyin* (permanent emotion) evoked by the particular set of determining factors like the *vibhāvas*, etc. The *vibhāvas* determine and control the emotional content of the poem and the emotional response in the reader. Lear and Falstaff do not evoke same emotions though both become objects of our delightful contemplation. According to Bharata there are only eight *sthāyins*. They are love (*rati*), laughter (*hāsa*), anger (*krodha*), heroism (*vira*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*juguptsa*), and wonder (*vismaya*). The corresponding eight *rasas* are the erotic (*sr̥ṅgāra*), the comic (*hāsyā*), the pathetic (*karuṇā*), the furious (*raudra*), the heroic (*vira*), the terrible (*bhayānaka*), the odious (*bibhatsa*), and the marvellous (*adbhuta*). *Sānta* (serenity) was added later. Abhinavagupta accepted only these nine *rasas* because only the *sthāyins* of these nine *rasas* are related to the four *puruṣārthas* (ends of human life).<sup>33</sup> There were periodical attempts to enlarge the list. No sanctity was attached to the number prescribed by Bharata even though the majority of the traditionalists consider that nine



thesis. There was another attempt to reduce all aesthetic responses to one basic experience of wonder.<sup>37</sup> Bhoja, in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* asserts that there is only one *rasa*, *śṛṅgāra* (love), and establishes a peculiar if original relation between ego and *rasa*.<sup>38</sup> He argues that *rasa* is made enjoyable by the ultimate reality which is *ahamkāra* or the sense of 'I' in man. This 'I' is identified with a man's personality and culture. As this ego consciousness is the fundamental basis of all our delights, he calls it *rasa*. This transcendental indivisible *rasa* is described by him as *śṛṅgāra* because it takes man to the peak of perfection. The most valuable synthesis was achieved by Abhinavagupta. Basing himself on some *Nāṭyaśāstra* verses whose authenticity is controversial, he argued that *śānta* (serenity) is the basic *rasa* and that all other *rasas* are only different forms which *śānta* assumes. In the context of Richards's doctrine of the equilibrium of impulses in aesthetic experience Abhinavagupta's synthesis is particularly illuminating. I do not wish to say anything more on the concept of *śānta* at present as it will be discussed in CHAPTER V.

### *The Realisation of Rasa*

Now we may go back to the *rasa-sūtra* and try to elucidate the process of *rasa*-realisation. The *rasa-sūtra* may be interpreted both objectively and subjectively. Objectively interpreted it will refer to the process of realising *rasa* (the essential totality of the aesthetic qualities) in the poem or on the stage. Subjectively interpreted it will refer to the reader's realisation of *rasa* (aesthetic experience). We are concerned with the latter process. A competent reader is expected to have (i) a large fund of experience, and (ii) a trained sensibility. He must be an able observer capable of making appropriate deductions from the interactions of images and characters in the poem. Experiences leave subtle impressions in our consciousness. What a reader gains from a poem will partly depend upon the clarity and variety of these subtle impressions. The reader's *pratibhā* (poetic sensibility), his susceptibility and



p131  
sensitivity to thought-emotion complexes, gets strengthened by its repeated and discriminating exercise. As a result it becomes 'mirror-like'; even the subtlest and most minute emotional nuances and shades suggested in the poem are reflected exactly in the reader's heart and a perfect identification (*tanmayibhavana*) takes place between the reader's sensibility and the basic mental state realised in the poem.<sup>39</sup>

Human experience in its infinite variety is the raw material of poetry. The poet selects an area of human experience, combines and recombines the component elements of that part of experience and fashions a pattern out of them. A poem is not a direct outpouring of the poet; it is an arrangement of words evoking sensuous images and through them ideas of certain characters and their states of mind. All the images and characters are unified by a single dominant emotional quality and a host of transient moods contribute to the impression of the dominant emotion. The poet does not describe emotional states; he suggests them by describing the actions and behaviour of the characters. He resorts to figures of speech, rhyme, rhythm, symbolisation and other rhetorical devices to objectify his experience. Once he objectifies his experience by concretely embodying it in an adequately individualised pattern of imagery it becomes universal. It becomes accessible to anybody who can translate the imagery into corresponding emotional states. Words in poetry are charged with meanings which unfold in the minds of the reader as emotional states. When the poet wants to suggest the emotional states of Pārvatī as she listened to the marriage proposal from Siva he does not say that she was shy, but that she started counting the petals of the lotus which she held in her hand. It is as if the mood of maidenly bashfulness is incarnated in Kalidasa's verse and we perceive it directly. Such a mood has no spatial or temporal limitations because it is personally and empirically connected with none in the world. It is objectified, individualised and also universalised.

I mentioned that the two words *samyoga* and *nispatti* in



overtones. It is also true that he employed this tradition to stem the tide of intellectual and social progress. But his doctrine of impersonality reveals an aspect of the truth about the aesthetic process particularly when we discuss it in the light of the affinity which it bears to the concepts of *sādhāranīkaraṇa*, 'distinterestedness' and 'universality'.

Eliot derived his ideas mostly from T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and Remy de Gourmont—all of whom insist on the impersonality of art. Eliot's frequent shifting of ground, his hesitancy and reservations, and the arguments which advance 'crabwise'<sup>25</sup> make it impossible to formulate his theory with a desirable degree of precision. Nevertheless there are certain statements in his writings which are sufficiently categorical for our purpose.

Eliot starts from the position that aesthetic experience is qualitatively different from ordinary experience. 'The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art.'<sup>26</sup> Some of his explicit statements on impersonality are given below:

✓ The end of enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed; thus we aim to see the object as really is...<sup>27</sup>

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.<sup>28</sup>

The emotion of art is impersonal.<sup>29</sup>

In his influential essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' Eliot declares that the suffering man must be separated from the creating poet. It must be made clear that Eliot is not proposing some kind of 'ivory tower' aesthetics. He does not mean that the sufferings of the poet as a man are totally irrelevant to him as a poet; he only maintains that in the act of creation the personal sufferings undergo a transmutation. The separating and distancing of the hazy, incoherent, fleeting experiences from the poet's critical and creative intelligence is necessary to value them, to invest them with universal significance and to integrate them into



meaningful organic wholes. The poet has to 'fabricate something permanent and holy out of his personal animal feelings.'<sup>30</sup> He has also said: 'Shakespeare, too, was occupied with the struggle—which alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal...'<sup>31</sup>

Vincent Buckley, in his *Poetry and Morality* states, unjustifiably I think, that when Eliot talks of impersonality he means poetry to be 'a form through which we can escape the pressure, the actuality, of our emotions.'<sup>32</sup> Donald Davie approves of the criticism levelled against Eliot for advancing the proposition that the quality of a poem has nothing to do with the 'richness or poverty of the artists' emotional life and times when he is not composing.'<sup>33</sup> Eliot does not mean any such thing. Eliot's poet does have a personality and emotions to escape from. He only wants that the poet's particular experience must be united with a general truth.'<sup>34</sup> This is not possible without abstracting the experience from the individual consciousness where it occurs and without discovering or inventing suitable correlatives which will make it at once impersonal. The fact is that when Eliot was talking about poetry being an escape from emotion and personality he only meant that the poet should subordinate the eccentricities of his personal ideas and emotions to the centrality of European literary and intellectual tradition. 'Escape' is, no doubt, an unhappy word; the poet does not escape into a vacuum or a cloud-cuckoo land; he enters the European mind and enriches it. 'To transcend' is perhaps a better expression. Eliot is clearer in the following passage: '[The greatest art] is impersonal in the sense that personal emotion, personal experience is extended and completed in something impersonal, not in the sense of something divorced from personal experience and passion.'<sup>35</sup>

Some other ideas of Eliot reinforce his doctrine of impersonality. For instance, his ideas of 'objective correlative' and dramatic form of poetry would oblige the poet to render experiences dramatically by creating characters and



situations. His idea of the poet as a medium which amalgamates disparate experiences under the high pressure of creative intensity, though it contains echoes of Platonic inspirational theory of poetic creation, is a complementary doctrine which strengthens his theory of impersonality.

*I. A. Richards: 'Synaesthesia'*

As I pointed out in the last chapter, though I. A. Richards stresses the continuity of poetic experience with ordinary life experiences of the street or hillside, yet he cannot help making a differentiation between them. While our personal experiences rise and die within our own bosoms, poetic experience is communicable and sharable. 'It may be experienced by many minds only with slight variations.'<sup>36</sup> Once he adopts this position he is compelled to recognise the need to 'frame' the work of literature.

When we experience it, or attempt to, we must preserve it from contamination, from the irruptions of personal peculiarities. We must keep the poem undisturbed by these or we fail to read it and have some other experience instead. For these reasons we establish a severance, we draw a boundary between the poem and what is not the poem in our experience.<sup>37</sup>

Richards's theory of synaesthesia involves inevitably the corollary of impersonality. The equilibrium and harmony established during poetic experience make us feel impersonal and detached because our 'interests are not canalized in any particular direction'.<sup>38</sup> The systematisation of impulses in poetic experience 'makes the emotion assume a more general character and we find that correspondingly our attitude has become impersonal'.<sup>39</sup> This attitude of detachment and impersonality, however, does not result in any passivity, indifference or spiritual indolence. The tremendous spiritual vitality felt by us in aesthetic experiences should disprove this notion. The process makes us more alive and deepens our awareness. The more the impulses, the greater is the involvement of entire essential being; the higher the organisation, the greater is the value of the



experience. In this sense, Richards states, 'to say that we are *impersonal* is merely a curious way of saying that our personality is more *completely* involved'.<sup>40</sup> ✓

### *Transpersonalisation Is Not Dehumanisation*

It is necessary to guard against the danger of making the concepts of detachment, distance, impersonality, etc., rigid and petrified, robbing art of all its human interest. Transpersonal response does not at all mean cold and unemotional response. Emotions are present in greater or lesser intensity in every genuine aesthetic response. Though the emotions are evoked in the framework of detachment they retain all their human qualities. Misunderstanding of the true import of these concepts and misreading of the actual nature of aesthetic experience have led some critics to question the human basis of art itself. The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset thinks that the predominantly aesthetic element in a work of art has nothing to do with human attitudes.<sup>41</sup> He condemns all music and literature produced in the nineteenth century for being profoundly and intensely interested in human realities. His theory of pure art, highly stylised art, where the human element will be 'so scanty that it will be hardly visible'<sup>42</sup> leads him to a perverse snob view that in future art will be 'for the artists and not for the masses of the people. It will be an art of caste and not democratic art.'<sup>43</sup> Andre Malraux says: 'Art must not, if it wants to come to life again, impose any cultural idea upon us, because everything humanistic must be excluded from the start.'<sup>44</sup> Such ideas are a symptom of the artists' alienation from society. Only those artists and theorists who do not receive the vitalising flow of inspiration from the social life as lived by men and women of flesh and blood are capable of negating the human content of art.

Stylisation and dehumanisation are not synonymous. Stylisation is not just the accentuation of the conventional and artificial non-realistic or non-representational aspects of art. The European ballet and the Indian Kathakali are highly stylised art-forms; but they are not, for that reason,



the complexities of the situation, being limited by our desire to react only as the hero reacts. The organic unity of a literary work precludes such identification.

(ii) In poetic or dramatic experience we make implicit value judgments about the characters and incidents represented because without it corresponding attitudes will not be evoked in us. When we identify ourselves with the hero we can only see the action through his eyes whereas the poet wants us to see it through *his* (poet's) eyes. The hero, though very important, cannot be equated with the total aesthetic configuration. Proper value judgments are possible only when we are aware of all the aspects of a situation; the hero has access only to some of them. Criticising R. S. Crane and Elder Olson for their simplified view of the emotional reactions to poetry John Holloway says:

There is no simple sense in which our desires are frustrated when Desdemona is killed or Oedipus found out, or satisfied when the traitor Macbeth is beheaded. We do not 'side with' Lear in that we 'wish good' to him in the shape of military victory or the rescue of Cordelia; so far as these things go, our sympathy for the characters somehow co-exists with a detachment in which we accept—no, more than that, we demand—whatever is brought by the 'fable' in its entirety. Our emotions of concern for the individual characters help to make possible other and more important emotions, those which come directly through comprehension and contemplation, as we grasp the total reality which is the tide of events carried through to its finality.<sup>53</sup>

(iii) I. A. Richards and other practitioners of New Criticism consider 'irony' to be a mark of good poetry. Irony, in their sense, is the result of the poet's awareness of the validity of experiences different from and even opposite to those directly rendered in the poem and of his attempt to include them in its structure. If we are one with the hero or the 'persona' we cannot see the ironical implications of the situation. Unless the reader keeps his distance from the different possibilities he cannot realise the implications of the complex experience embodied in the poem with adequate clarity.



(iv) Identification often leads to unjustifiable emotionalism in the spectator. This happens especially with adolescents and untrained immature readers who consider a poem or a novel an occasion to indulge in personal reveries which are irrelevant to the situations portrayed. The vice of sentimentality in literature is not only the result of a poor artistic mastery of the poet over his material but also the result of a wrong kind of loose emotionalist response on the part of the reader.

(v) Identification with a comic hero is not possible because the essence of his comicality is his abnormality or eccentricity. In what sense can we say that we identify ourselves with Ben Johnson's rogue-heroes? To insist that poetic experience is necessarily inferior when identification with the hero does not take place is to imply that a play like *Richard III* is inferior to any sentimental melodrama.

The conclusion is that though momentary identification takes place with the hero or some other characters, depending on the rhetorical devices employed by the poet and his intentions, we never lose the sense of detachment. Aristotle's 'pity' involves some distance from the hero. *Tanmayibhavana*, identification, takes place not between the reader and the hero but between the reader and the total poem. In other words, while reading poetry or drama we become one with the poet's attitudes and experience. We see not as the hero sees but as the poet sees. Thus identification with the characters is momentary and conditional whereas detachment from them is permanent and absolute.

Our concept of poetic experience as transpersonal embraces the doctrines of *sādhāranikaraṇa*, 'disinterested satisfaction', 'psychical distance' and 'impersonality'. It does not deny the concreteness and individuality of experience evoked by different poems. Neither does it deny that the individual sentient person is the centre of creation and response. Sometimes the idea of impersonal creation and experience is interpreted with heavy mystical overtones. As against any mystical and irrational interpretation which claims that the writer is in contact with the Impersonal Absolute at the



time of creation we have to insist that the writer only objectifies his experience in the forms of universally accessible images and symbols. The concept does not carry any sense of social irresponsibility.

Keats's concepts of 'negative capability' and poetic personality also imply the recognition of the necessity to distance the emotions and thus transpersonalise them in poetic creation and response. Keats talks of the necessity to negate one's own identity and lose one's self in something larger than one's self, i.e., reality with all its uncertainties and perplexities. 'A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity... Beneath (the daylight world) is the poet's real world, where his experiences of actual and factual living, freed from the control of time and place, combine and transform themselves into new kinships and patterns.'<sup>55</sup>

The concept of transpersonalisation reconciles the opposition between detachment and participation. In fact the detachment of our spiritual centre from the interests of the 'daylight world' is a condition for our participation in the life of the poem. Aesthetic experience is a universally repeatable process precisely because it is transpersonal. All human beings are endowed with the same *vāsana*, latent impressions, which are *anādi*, beginningless.<sup>56</sup> 'The *samsāra* is beginningless and every man, before being that which he actually is, has been all other beings as well.'<sup>57</sup> To put it in modern terminology, each individual, being a part of the human collective, has all its attributes, at least potentially. All feelings aroused in aesthetic experience have a centre in a living individual; but this fact alone does not make them personal because they are not based on private interests and desires. As Caudwell says: '...the "I" of poetry is the "I" common to all associated men's emotional words.'<sup>58</sup> Our concept of transpersonalisation does not totally ignore the personal spiritual centre; it only emphasises that during aesthetic experience this centre spreads towards and merges with the circle of the human collective. The personal centre is not annihilated but transformed.



## CHAPTER V

### *The Union of Opposites in Aesthetic Experience*

---

THE GREATEST contribution of the Romantic school of criticism, with Coleridge as its most authoritative spokesman in English, was the idea that poetic imagination works by unifying the disparate and conflicting elements of our experience. Before Coleridge, the German Romantics like August Wilhelm Schlegel, Adam Müller and Karl Solger had theorised about the union of opposites in the aesthetic context. The name of Adam Müller needs particular mention because he was one of the earliest theorists who stated that all opposites were united in poetry. According to him the work of art is a contradictory identity; it is both soul and body, form and matter. The artist stands where freedom and necessity, idealism and realism, and art and nature unite.<sup>1</sup>

Many critics have tried to explode the myth of Coleridge as a fountainhead of original ideas by producing irrefutable evidence to prove his plagiarism and heavy borrowing from the German thinkers. We should be more concerned with understanding truth than with distributing prizes for originality. Coleridge himself considered truth as a 'divine ventriloquist': 'I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible.'<sup>2</sup> In fact the principle of the polarity and dialectical union of opposites goes back to Heraclitus. He early recognised that, "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony".<sup>3</sup> The aesthetic application of this dialectical notion can be found, though in a rudimentary manner,



in Aristotle's concept of opposite emotions like pity and fear evoking catharsis. The theory of *rasa* also reconciles many opposites like 'universal—individual', 'detachment—participation', 'unity—variety' and 'excitement—serenity'. In this chapter I propose to bring out the importance of the concept of *śānta rasa* by discussing how it reconciles some pairs of opposites.

### *Imagination as the Great Reconciler*

Coleridge believed that art was a reconciler of nature, the objective principle, and man, the subjective principle. These two antithetical principles are reconciled under his monistic principle which he calls the 'infinite I AM'. His distinction between the primary Imagination and the secondary Imagination is not one of kind but one of degree. Both are synthetic and creative. The primary Imagination imposes a pattern on the sense-data. It is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception.' The secondary Imagination self-consciously evolves a pattern out of the material shaped by the primary Imagination. He calls the second an echo of the first—which does injustice to the qualities which he ascribes to the secondary Imagination. The secondary Imagination struggles with all its vitality to unify, integrate and synthesise the discordant and disparate elements in our experience:

This power [Imagination] reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.<sup>4</sup>

This doctrine has been taken over by I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot in their theories of poetry. Coleridge's concept of



the Imagination as a synthesising agent and his consideration of a work of art as an organic unity are interrelated. Like most aesthetic terms Coleridge's doctrine is both descriptive and normative. It enables the critic not only to describe aesthetic experience but also to fix the relative worth of poems. The greatness of a poem is proportionate to the amount of heterogeneous material fused into an organic whole and the degree of unity which it has achieved. The New Critics, with I. A. Richards at their head, consider 'inclusive' poetry to be great because of its 'invulnerability to irony'. The 'inclusive' poems are those which contain within themselves the awareness of the possibilities of different and even opposed experiences and which can, therefore, without any damage, bear ironic contemplation.

Irony in this sense consists in the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses; that is why poetry which is exposed to it is not of the highest order, and why irony itself is so constantly a characteristic of poetry which is.<sup>5</sup>

T. S. Eliot's definition of 'wit' resembles Richards's definition of 'irony'. He says: '[Wit] involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.'<sup>6</sup> Distinguishing between a poet's mind and an ordinary man's mind he says: 'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary.'<sup>7</sup> Now let us see how certain pairs of opposites are united in poetry.

### *The Universal and the Individual*

Opposites in reality presuppose the existence of each other. The complementary nature of opposites must never be lost sight of. The individual and the social collective are two such complementary opposites. The consciousness of an individual acquires its proper human form and shape in the course of its living in society. We are able to communicate our emotions to others because of the existence of a com-



potentialities is nothing short of a miracle. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, the poet makes a 'perfect round of the broken arcs of the earth'<sup>23</sup> The fragments of human experience embodied by the characters locked in mortal combat with other men and destiny are pieced together and a meaningful whole is constructed.

'Drama' is derived from the Greek word for 'action'. Tragedy and comedy imitate action. In non-dramatic poetry also what is imitated is action. Even the lyric, usually defined as a poem expressing a single mood, imitates action. 'Action' does not mean only the activities of characters. 'Action' includes attitudes and moods also, because the mood expressed in a lyric is either the starting point or a culmination of a series—however short—of feeling-situations. A poem is a work of art in the temporal mode and therefore it is obliged to show some kind of development within it. And all movement is dialectical, i.e., resulting from the pull of conflicting forces. Dylan Thomas says the following about his way of composing poems:

... a poem by myself needs a host of images. I make one image—though 'make' is not the word; I let, perhaps an image be 'made' emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess; let it breed another, let that image contradict the first; make of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all within my imposed formal limits conflict. Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction, and my dialectical method, as I understand it, is a constant building up and breaking down of the images that come out of the central seed, which itself is destructive and constructive at the same time... Out of the inevitable conflict of images—inevitable, because of the creative, recreative, destructive and contradictory nature of the motivating centre, the womb of war—I try to make that momentary peace which is a poem.<sup>24</sup>

The underlying emotional quality of a poem acquires meaning only in the context of a series of imagined situations. In all poems the poet or the implied speaker or the characters find themselves in certain situations. In life there



inorganic nature we find this phenomenon (seasons, waves). Poetic rhythm is conceived by some theorists as merely subjective. For instance, I. A. Richards says that rhythm is merely a mental activity through which we apprehend the sound and meaning in poetry.<sup>42</sup> According to him rhythm and metre exist not in the stimulation but in the response.<sup>43</sup> De Witt Parker also says that rhythm is primarily in the subjective activities of significant listening or uttering and from them it is transferred to the sounds in which they are embodied.<sup>44</sup> On the contrary, Monroe C. Beardsley considers metre and rhythm regional qualities of the poem.<sup>45</sup> This contradiction is part of the futile controversy over the subjectivity or objectivity of beauty. A satisfactory resolution should formulate a unity of the realised qualities of the sounds and meanings *and* the way in which the reader responds to these qualities. Rhythm operates at the point of intersection between the object having certain objectivity analysable patterns of sounds and meanings *and* the subject able to consider them as a framework within which the controlled modulations of feelings are embodied.

In poetry rhythm has two functions: (i) it casts a hypnotic spell on the reader and puts him in a receptive mood; (ii) it provides him with a frame for the rise and fall of emotions. *Laya* (rhythm) enables the reader to achieve complete absorption (*tallinatā*). In the following passage W. B. Yeats puts his finger on the most essential characteristic of rhythm, the unity of repetition and variation:

The purpose of rhythm is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us within an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols.<sup>46</sup>

What casts the hypnotic spell over the reader is the principle of repetition. The very word 'verse' is derived from the Latin '*versus*' which means 'turning back'. It involves the repetition of certain sound patterns and units of ideas.



The Sanskrit word for metre, *vr̥tta* also suggests *āvartana*, repetition. When certain sound patterns are listened to they leave a *samskāra* (trace) in our consciousness, just as any other event in perception, and there is a craving for the repetition of the pattern; when the pattern returns we have a sense of satisfaction. It does not mean that our mind takes pleasure in unvaried repetitions. There must be subtle differences, variations, surprises, disappointments and the return upon the original pattern. Kenneth Burke says:

A rhythm is a promise which the poet makes to the reader—and in proportion as the reader comes to rely upon this promise, he falls into a state of general surrender which makes him more likely to accept without resistance the rest of the poet's material.<sup>47</sup>

This surrender to the hypnotic spell cast by rhythm shuts off extraneous interruptions and makes the reader keenly sensitive even to the faintest suggestions of the poet.

The variations within the rhythm contribute to the progression of action. Metre is conventionalised rhythm; but two poems written in the same metre may not have the same rhythm. Metre is governed by sound-pattern; rhythm is governed not only by sound-pattern but also by the intricate curves of the emotions and moods which vibrate in the uttered sounds. Rhythm organises the emotions of men and transports them to the state of elemental human existence in which they experience a sense of union with others. Primitive men discovered rhythm in the processes of collective labour.<sup>48</sup> The sense of union with others heightens our consciousness. Christopher Caudwell makes the penetrating observation that the rhythmic apprehension of the embodied social emotions makes the reader sink back into the 'dark vegetative life of the body'.<sup>49</sup> Participation in a programme of good poetry reading will show how rhythm unifies people 'physiologically and emotionally' and how the 'instinctive commonness' of men is realised. Caudwell's own words are given below:

In emotional introversion [caused by rhythm] men return to the genotype, to the more or less common set of



periences and values of life cannot be a competent reader. If we go to the poem with an empty mind we shall gain very little. Experience can enrich a person's life and deepen his insight only if he is capable of making a significant whole of the heterogeneous elements. Aldous Huxley has tellingly put it:

Now experience is not a matter of having actually swum the Hellespont, or danced with dervishes, or slept in a doss house. It is a matter of sensibility and intuition of seeing and hearing the significant things, of paying attention at the right moments, of understanding and coordinating. Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.<sup>5</sup>

There is significant difference between our response to Shakespeare in our boyhood and our adult response to him; this difference is the result of our gaining more life experiences and our stronger coordinating faculty which is a sign of maturity.

(2) The *sahridaya* has a mirror-like sensibility cleansed, refined and purified by his constant acquaintance with poetry.<sup>6</sup> The necessity to train our faculty for appreciation cannot be overstressed. Whenever we use our mental faculties for any purpose higher than that of mere animal existence we have to admit the necessity of training. Without this conscious training we are bound to miss much of what is there in a highly complex work of literature and substitute our own private notions and feelings irrelevantly and 'enjoy' the poem in a spurious manner. The response of a trained critical mind is superior to the 'spontaneous' facile experience of an untrained mind, because the former is fuller and more completely relevant than the latter. Unless we exercise rigorous discrimination in discovering the significance of experiential patterns and the textural qualities of a poem we shall be corrupted by the pressure of fashionable critical opinion.

In a fiercely competitive society opportunities to train such a poetic sensibility are certain to diminish. In such societies genuine cultural and spiritual values are some-



have been influenced and changed. It has changed the ways in which we see ourselves and others. Above all it has made us intensely self-conscious. But a sceptic can legitimately express the doubt whether it has made man more moral. He may point his finger at the practitioners of scientific cruelties perpetrated on thousands of innocents in the Nazi concentration camps. Hitler had not proscribed Goethe and Shakespeare. The Nazi practice was not an isolated episode. It is only that the barbarity amidst civilisation assumed its most concentrated expression in Hitler's Germany. To-day we find man trembling on the brink of catastrophe, of total annihilation of humanity. Great nations with great poetic and cultural traditions behave with such meanness and ferocity as will put the primitive barbarians to shame. If this is the evidence of poetry's moral impact upon the human collective, can we claim that poetry makes the individual more moral? The sceptic will again answer in the negative. The galaxy of great writers includes some incarnations of moral monstrosity. Poetry does not even improve the temperament, let alone character. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry in the University of London Housman said:

The classics cannot be said to have succeeded altogether in transforming and beautifying Milton's inner nature. They did not sweeten his naturally disagreeable temper; they did not enable him to conduct controversy with urbanity or even with decency.<sup>1</sup>

If this can be said about a poet who tried to justify God's ways to man what are we to think of the influence of poetry on the lesser beings?

There is a wide range of attitudes concerning the relation between poetry and morality. For the sake of clarity and convenience I intend to consider the extremists belonging to both the sides, i.e., the crude moralists like Plato and Tolstoy and the crude aesthetes like Wilde and Gautier. The Indian attitude to the question did not crystallise in the writings of any particular writer though, here also, we



have been influenced and changed. It has changed the ways in which we see ourselves and others. Above all it has made us intensely self-conscious. But a sceptic can legitimately express the doubt whether it has made man more moral. He may point his finger at the practitioners of scientific cruelties perpetrated on thousands of innocents in the Nazi concentration camps. Hitler had not proscribed Goethe and Shakespeare. The Nazi experience was not an isolated episode. It is only that the barbarism amidst civilisation assumed its most extreme form in Hitler's Germany. Today we stand on the brink of catastrophe, of

Great nations with great  
have with such meanness  
ive barbarians to shame.  
moral impact upon the  
poetry makes the in-  
again answer in the  
includes some incar-  
does not even improve  
his inaugural lec-  
University of London

ded altogether  
inner nature.  
able temper;  
oversy with

If this can be said, it is not difficult to justify God's way to man who is the object of His love and grace. The poet.

The relation between the novel and the convention of the novel is a problem common to both the Indian and the Western. Plato and Tolstoy and Flaubert and Zola and Dostoevsky and Gautier. The Indian novel did not crystallise in the writing of the Western writer though, here also, we



have the cruder and the subtler views. In the end we shall attempt an integration with Shelley's ideas on the moral nature of poetic imagination as the starting point.

### *A Brief Digression on Value*

The essential questions which the value-theorists consider can be reduced to the two fundamental problems:

(i) whether we can and should have a general theory of value, (ii) whether value is subjective or objective. A

general theory of value is a comprehensive theory applicable to all human activities. It gives a norm to evaluate

all human experiences. We cannot compare objects and experiences and establish a hierarchy among them without

such a general theory. On the contrary, there are thinkers who try to compare

categories like Truth, Beauty, Goodness and postulate absolutes of having a general theory which invites

a mechanical application of the serious differences in elements of different values and a compartmentalised theory which does not correlate the values keeping them in

There is no unanimity on a question whether values are subjective or objective. Identically, a value is not subjective in the sense in which we speak of the objectivity of the primary qualities of objects which exist independently of human mind. But neither is it subjective in the sense of a dream or an illusion being subjective. We cannot imagine a value which does not involve the satisfaction of some human interests. There is no beauty apart from beautiful objects. All values are qualities of subject-object relations. All conscious human experience involves an active reconstruction of the presented data and the evolving of a pattern out of them. The human mind and the environment with which it interreacts are part of the same reality existing in time and space. When we consider the human mind and the object as an indivisible combination in a total historical spatio-temporal situation we realise the groundlessness of

Philip M. Stark, S.J.  
Woodstock College  
Woodstock, Maryland 21163

have the cruder and the subtler views. In the end we shall attempt an integration, with Shelley's ideas on the moral nature of poetic imagination as the starting point.

### *A Brief Digression on Value*

The essential questions which the value-theorists consider can be reduced to the two fundamental problems: (i) whether we can and should have a general theory of value, (ii) whether value is subjective or objective. A general theory of value is a comprehensive theory applicable to all human activities. It gives a norm to evaluate all human experiences. We cannot compare objects and experiences and establish a hierarchy among them without such a general theory. On the contrary, there are thinkers who try to compartmentalise values and postulate absolute categories like Truth, Beauty and Goodness. We have to avoid the errors of having a general theory which invites a mechanical application ignoring the serious differences in elements of different experiences and a compartmentalised theory which does not interrelate the values keeping them in isolated hermetic vacuums.

There is no unanimity on the question whether values are subjective or objective. Evidently, a value is not objective in the sense in which we speak of the objectivity of the primary qualities of objects which exist independently of human mind. But neither is it subjective in the sense of a dream or an illusion being subjective. We cannot imagine a value which does not involve the satisfaction of some human interests. There is no goodness apart from good actions; and there is no beauty apart from beautiful objects. All values are qualities of subject-object relations. All conscious human experience involves an active reconstruction of the presented data and the evolving of a pattern out of them. The human mind and the environment with which it interreacts are part of the same reality existing in time and space. When we consider the human mind and the object as an indivisible combination in a total historical spatio-temporal situation we realise the groundlessness of



and pulls you away from *adharma* (vice). This *dharma* should not be confused with puritanical moral codes. The word is formed from the root *dhr* which means 'to hold', 'to support'. *Dharma* is that which holds, supports and sustains life. It is the essential law of life; it is the law of a person's essential character. It is also virtue; not the virtue prescribed in manuals of ethics, but the virtue in conformity with the essential law of one's personality. The supreme function of poetry is to make us aware of this *dharma* which is the sanction of all moral values. In this sense poetry is *vedasammita*, equal to the Vedas. But poetry has an advantage over the Vedas; it delights us. Commenting on Bharata's description of drama as *krīdanīyakam* (satisfying the play impulse, enjoyable), Abhinavagupta brings in the analogy of *gudaprachhanna kaṭukaśaḍham* (sugar-coated pill).<sup>23</sup> He does not mean that the moral ingredient of a poem is, by nature, bitter and that *rāsa* is a superimposed value to induce the reader to swallow it. The moral value of poetry does not announce its presence loudly; it does not invite the attention of the reader harshly. Poetry works its moral effect impalpably and sweetly.

Horace's formula that poetry both teaches and delights us has its Indian equivalent in the dictum that poetry gives *prīti* (delight) and *vyutpatti* (instruction). It is the nature of aesthetic experience to delight us; it is its function to instruct us. But this *vyutpatti* should not be identified with the knowledge and instruction we gain from the sciences and scriptures. The *vyutpatti* from poetry expands and strengthens our *pratibhā*, imagination.<sup>24</sup> This is not another way of saying that poetry merely enables you to appreciate more poetry. The expansion and strengthening of our imagination takes place because poetry makes our awareness of the basis of values in life keener. The exercise of our imagination is necessary not only when we respond to poetry but also when we react to situations in life. Poetic delight is not a means to achieve the end of moral instruction. A poet does not have 'palpable designs' (to use Keats' phrase) on the reader to execute which he offers the bribe



others we admire them and aspire to become good and heroic like them.<sup>32</sup> This is a very crude view of the moral influence of poetry. Shelley himself in other places has repudiated such a conception. In the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* he declares: 'Didactic poetry is my abhorrence.' In his *Defence* he has said that Milton's God has no superiority of moral virtue over Satan, and that this neglect of a crude and direct moral purpose is a decisive proof of Milton's genius.<sup>33</sup>

Shelley's most suggestive observation is that the imagination itself is an instrument of moral good. Poetry performs its moral function not by describing virtuous characters whose conduct is to be imitated by readers but by nourishing and strengthening the imaginative faculty in every man:

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our 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; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.<sup>34</sup>

I find this an adequate explanation of the moral effect of poetry. Abhinavagupta's statement that poetry strengthens and expands our *pratibhā*, imagination, reinforces Shelley's view. No moral life is possible without an insight into the complexities of concrete human situations. The individual yearns to enrich his self by assimilating the meaningful experiences of others. Spiritual enlightenment is dependent on our capacity to embrace the varied experiences of huma-

p135a



nity. By recreating another's experience in our self and by thus strengthening our imagination poetry provides us with an insight into the complexities of our moral existence.

### *Poetry and Moral Action*

Does poetry influence human action? It seems that a simple answer does not exist. Some critics believe that poetry does have a beneficial influence on human action. Yvor Winters thinks that poetry strengthens the intelligence and the moral temper and that 'these effects should naturally be carried over into action, if, through constant discipline, they are made permanent acquisitions'.<sup>35</sup> Elder Olson also believes that poetry exercises a compelling influence upon human action.<sup>36</sup> The historical and the contemporary evidence makes me diffident to assert any such thing categorically. Many poets and artists have earned notoriety by violating not merely conventional moral codes but fundamental humanity. One can always say in their defence that those who are intensely absorbed in their unique vision cannot be expected to remember their moral obligations to their brethren. If the creators of poetry do not turn into models of moral perfection we cannot expect the readers to translate the moral gain in their sensibility into actions. If this were possible the world would have become a paradise by now.

Man does not live by poems alone. His instinctual drives, socio-political doctrines, consideration of his interests and innumerable other factors of environment affect the course of his action in a specific situation. We do not devalue poetry by assigning to it a modest role in human affairs. We may say that poetry does have a beneficial impact on human personality in the sense that it tends to make him moral in his actions. But whether this tendency will be realised in actual practice will depend on many complex factors. C. E. M. Joad says: 'The values "incline" us to pursue them; but the inclination is never a compulsion; we are inclined, not necessitated.'<sup>37</sup> When a man is born he has no personality; he has only some unrealised potentialities. Poetry will help



Rhythm in poetry is a powerful factor which casts a hypnotic spell on the reader making him receptive to the subtlest modulations of emotions. It organises our emotions and enables us to realise union with others.

Poetic appreciation is a strenuous activity requiring utmost concentration and alertness of our spiritual faculties. The reader has to cleanse and polish his mirror-like sensibility by constant acquaintance with poetry. Without a conscious and deliberate attempt to refine our sensibility readers cannot discriminate between the genuine and the spurious in the realm of art. Poetry is not a time-killer. It is a complex phenomenon involving images associated with different planes of experience. The expense of intellectual energy needed to understand great poetry is pleasurable because it tones up and vitalises our spirit. The poet's *pratibhā* has been compared to the third eye of Lord *Śiva*;<sup>2</sup> it enables him to intuit, to see before the mind's eye, the *bhāvas* of past, present and future. Poets are, in the words of Ezra Pound, the antennae of the human race. Constant exercise of our fine senses through the medium of imagination develops a 'sixth sense' in the reader which gives him insight into the workings of the inscrutable mystery, the human mind.

9125. The concept of *rasa* as interpreted in this book dissolves the end-means conflict. Aestheticism which fails to integrate art with life and crude moralism which reduces poetry to sermons perpetuate the end-means conflict. Aesthetic experience is both an end in itself and a means for a fuller realisation of human values. Neither the delight of poetry nor the kind of insight it gives has any substitute. In fact the delight (*prīti*) and the insight (*vyutpatti*) are the two aspects of the same process. By pointing out unsuspected affinities between apparently dissimilar things, by establishing meaningful relations between apparently unrelated phenomena poetry extends the range of our awareness. It brings freshness and clarity to our perceptions. It is both exhilarating and enriching to recreate and relive an experience of another who has succeeded in giv-

9136



the author's clear focusing of the central issues is remarkably instructive.

*The Response to Poetry* will serve the eastern and western students of literary theories as a bridge of mutual understanding. It is an invaluable and suggestive guide to all intelligent readers interested in the question: What happens when one enjoys literature?

Dr. G. B. Mohan received his M.A. degree with Christian College Gold Medal from Madras University, and his Ph.D. degree from Banaras Hindu University where he teaches English. Humboldt University, Berlin, has invited him for post-doctoral research for a term of three years. He is currently working in Berlin on a book on "Principles of Critical Evaluation".



## *Poems*

FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ

These thirtynine poems represent the highest level reached by Urdu poetry in recent decades. Translated and with an introduction by V. G. Kiernan. Rs. 6.00

## *Art and Social Life*

G. V. PLEKHANOV

These essays written over fifty years ago are an outstanding contribution to the study of aesthetics. Rs. 4.50

## *Marxism and Poetry*

GEORGE THOMSON

A discussion on the origin and growth of poetry by a well-known British Marxist. Re. 1

## *Literature and Reality*

HOWARD FAST

A study in the sources of contemporary literature. How does the creative writer reflect and transform reality in his work? In his provocative and exciting answer to this question, Howard Fast opens new vistas to writer and reader alike. Rs. 1.50

## *Illusion and Reality*

CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL

This book deals with the origin and nature of poetry, covering a vast field from the birth of language to the task of the poet, illuminated by numerous brilliant flashes of insight. Rs. 10.00

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE (P) LTD.