



The Peculiarities of English Literature : Beyond any transformation in its spirit.

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ABSTRACT

The beauty of life exists not in uniformity but in diversity. As literature represents human life and its ecological entity that's why naturally it wombs this spirit . Down the ages English literature has undergone a variety of themes but the essential work of literature to help the humanities to have better and best countenance has been always intact . literature of any language particularly English one has never failed to perform its duty which is to serve humanities and ensures the universal peace and harmony among diversity of homo sapiens . In the odyssey of this service it always maintains the continuity of the essence and balances it with its competent departure.

Key Words..... uniformity, diversity, ecological, humanities, countenance etc.

INRTODUCTION:-

Literature in general, without doubt spontaneous overflow of human emotions. The consistent flow following the proper passage comes to the specific areas. And that specific area is supposedly the departure, departure not from its continuity but departure from the then existing trends. It is, therefore, not a denial of existence, rather an assertion of it - so departure from what I ask, departure from where, I most sincerely ask.

Literature is defined as a record of exposure to experiences of life. Wide-ranging experiences of Nature, Love, Adventure, Human Psyche and sometimes Archetypal also in nature are recorded in the memory and with the pressure, mounting up, finds their expression through words, symbols, images and ultimately assumes the form of a WORD - 'Word, within a Word, unable to speak a Word', is the predicament of all the artists. The artist as an individual, struggles, grapples with those experiences to free himself from the burden of that state of mind and in the process, a great work of art is born, which we define as literature. In this process of exposure, the artist either scales the height of human consciousness, (by consciousness I mean all three layers of consciousness), or plumbs the depth of it. This is altogether a complex experience which has been explained by so many names and so many critical theories. These theories or advocacy of critical tags do not make literature-reading an experience of pleasure, rather it overburdens our thoughts. We are denied the freedom of enjoying literature as it is or as our mind responds spontaneously. Several nomenclatures have been circulated to define literature as to make it verbose and lengthy.

For example, Stream of Consciousness may be explained as the process of plumbing the depth of human consciousness, while scaling the height is associated with socio-economic, historic- political and in today's parlance eco-criticism too. We take round and round of all these critical jargons by beating about the bush and finally overburden ourselves while making efforts to understand literature in its genuine communication of ideas which the artist aims to portray. It definitely sounds scholarly, but it scarcely helps the readers to understand literature in its simpler way.

English literature with varied sensibilities and themes:-

From Chaucer to Eliot, to post-Modernists and from Shakespeare to Shaw to post- Modernist playwrights, in the disciplines of poetry and art of drama, the basics of contents seem to be similar. What has changed is the way of presentation and representation. This has been supposedly acknowledged as departure. Look at the jungle of isms - Imagism, Symbolism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Existentialism, Feminism and so on - all these have been made out as departure in thematic areas of literature while Expressionistic, Impressionistic, Naturalistic, Realistic, Stylistic devices have been defined as departure in stylistic areas. But, can these be called departure in true sense? It seems, basically, a dilemma of 'What' and 'How'. 'What' is continuous and constant and 'How' takes different shapes and connotations according to many.

factors responsible for responses on the part of the artists. Changing sensibilities of different ages have crucial role to play in shaping the artistic design.

For a Wordsworth it is the reflection of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility.

For oft upon my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood

They flash upon my inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude.

Shelley recounts it as 'pathetic fallacy', as critics put it. Keats' effort of creation has been named as 'negative capability' whereas Eliot's endeavour has been explained in altogether a different way calling it 'objective correlative'. What is suggested by these is the fact that the nomenclatures might be dissimilar, exercise in creation is similar in nature. Continuity and flow of creativity is undisturbed.

Thus, the growth of literature has been conveniently divided into Ages with their predominant thoughts and ideas giving birth to several critical yardsticks applied to their study. 16th century sensibility, 17th century sensibility, 18th century sensibility, 19th century sensibility and so on, have surfaced to judge literature in changing perspectives.

Sixteenth century sensibility is basically the Renaissance habit of mind. Literature during this phase seems to be asserting individualism challenging the classical concept of role of destiny in human life. No more, now, Gods sitting on Olympian Heights dictate terms with the lives of men on this planet, Earth. Man replacing gods at the centre of all activities seem to be the dominant. themes of Renaissance Literature. Spread of Humanism is the hallmark of the era. Simultaneously were born such tendencies as Scepticism, Cynicism, Machiavellianism, wherein human mind was fed on the concept of predominance of individual self.

Man was now the architect of his own destiny. Marlowe, Shakespeare and other artists created characters who decided their own destiny. Character, thus, became destiny. Living in the moment and performing here and now signaled all human activities negating the notion that God shall determine our destiny on the earth. It was, somehow, the by-product of Renaissance thinking which advocated knowledge as power. Bacon with his pragmatic materialism, Marlowe with his thirst for knowledge, Shakespeare with his knowledgeable ability of astronomy, human anatomy, astrology, his sense of reading the mood of Nature and his capacity to associate it with human nature are all signals of 16th century sensibility. Bacon's alloy of falsehood in truth is his

pragmatic materialism whereas Marlowe's hero's desire to conquer "topless towers of Ilium" is suggestive of human flight into the unknown to understand the mystery of Nature.

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tolerance and progress in the affairs of men, and, in poetry and art, perspicuity, order, unity, and proportion. Thus, it was the Golden Age of natural theology and deistical free thinking: the age of Spinoza, and of Bayle, Collins, Clarke, Wollaston, Shaftsbury, Tyndall, Mary Shelley and others.

Coming to 18th century sensibility, a desire for orderliness prevailed in the era and flight to the unknown imaginative world was somehow chained. Imagined sensory experiences were replaced by real sensory experiences and environment and mood of writing poetry and drama or even other genres suddenly changed placing it on ground realities. Trees and flowers of a jungle vanish to give place to systematized gardens, where floors were there but they were in proper shape and size. Dryden and Pope displayed this orderliness both in content and craft. Rhyme scheme changed to couplets replacing blank verse which allowed imaginative flights. "Shut, shut the door" of Pope is suggestive of keeping himself aloof from the unwarranted influences on his sensibility. But, here too, desire to create poetry did not diminish-only the channel changed. Model of epic writing was there with slight changes to make it mock epic by choosing to employ epic accessories to describe completely the lighter contents. The Rape of the Lock is an example of such endeavour.

Again, while differentiating the content value of poetry with 19th century sensibility in mind, it is proper to note that English romantics gave importance to the role of imagination that it plays in creative endeavour. On this, despite significant differences in points of detail, Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats agree and for each it sustains a deeply considered theory of poetry. For Romantics imagination and Nature are fundamentals because they think that without it poetry is impossible. This belief in the imagination was part of the contemporary belief in the individual self. As in the Renaissance, poets suddenly found the huge possibilities of human self and expressed them in a bold and far-flung art, which is certainly much more than an imitation of life, so the Romantics brought to a fuller consciousness of their own powers, felt a similar need to exert these powers in fashioning new worlds of mind. The Romantics' emphasis on imagination was strengthened by considerations which are both religious and metaphysical. Thus, Locke and Newton became the target of both Blake and Coleridge. They insist that most vital activity of mind is imagination. This is a tremendous claim and it is not confined to Blake and Coleridge. It was to some degree held by Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. Each was confident that not only imagination was his precious possession, but it was also concerned with a supernatural order. They combine imagination with truth because their creation is inspired and controlled by a peculiar insight.

The Romantics, thus, appeal to us because they do something which we cannot, but respect. He believes that in exercising his imagination he creates life and adds to the sum of living experience. He wishes to be not a passive observer but an active agent in a world which exists by a perpetual process of creation. We may not accept all his assumptions and conclusions, but we must admire the spirit in which he approaches his task and admits that the problem he seeks to solve must not be shirked by anyone who wishes to understand the universe which we live in.

Passing from the Romantics to the Victorians with their 'doubt and faith' dilemma to state of

modernity and post modernity we have certain longer sojourns where we need to stay and meditate on the fact whether this transformation was sudden or was it a continuous flow with slight changes here and there. The pre-Raphaelites, the Georgians and the War-poets essentially figure out to form a link between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century sensibilities. While Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenberg may not have contributed to what we call modernism, War Poetry has a clear right to be considered part and parcel of modern poetry.

Prior to this continuity in flow of poetic sensibility, the Georgians, Hardy, De La Mare and Edward Thomas tried to locate the moorings in rural background maintaining their remarkable originality. Hardy's sense of history provides him the platform wherefrom he could create a conducive atmosphere to create some beautiful pieces of poems where he enjoyed full freedom of lyricism which he so sadly missed in The Dynasts based on his studies of the poor version of translation of War and Peace of Tolstoy. There is a kind of innocence in his highly personal idiom to make his verse the finest of the century. Hardy's long period of activity as a poet from the 1860s to the 1920s significantly bridges the 19th and the 20th century sensibility. No assessment of modern poetry is complete without mentioning W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Robert Graves and others. In fact, there is a long list of modernists and post modernists who in their own ways made significant contribution to the continuity of the flow of poetic sensibility.

Yeats, for that matter, goes far beyond the existing train of thought. He does not have the roots in the aesthetic movement for nothing. He chiefly valued the philosophy for the poetry not conversely. In range and variety of what he has done in prose and verse, and, at the best its splendid vitality, its humanity and positiveness and its irresistible artistry lies his greatness as a writer and establishes his supremacy in the 20th century poetry.

In Eliot's hand the intellectual dignity of poetry was restored. Through poetry he portrayed the superficial existence of modern man and probed the mental turmoil of the human lot. He placed man in history and his intimate reaction and relation in historical terms. There is a marked flexibility of technique in his poetry. This flexible technique springs largely from his early study of Jacobean stage verse and also the free verse of Laforgue. This is manifest in *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* which Eliot shows in a distinctive manner and indicates the range of wit in the quizzical title followed by a sombre epigraph from Dante. His break from the Victorian poetry comes out in the opening lines wherein a colloquial language he presents a situation at once distinct and mystifying:

Let us go then you and I

where the speaker is vague, but the images he uses are distinct and clear. Prufrock's irony is made to reflect a general human predicament besides being against himself. *The Waste Land* is from the point of view of its substance an attempt associated with peculiar clarity to diagnose the disorder with its final section to deliver a message emphasizing certain human values on the strength of which the poet can add

Shall I, at least, set my land in order.

A seeming solution is hurred by quoting the Upanishad

Likewise, study of Shakespearean literature varies from one age to another giving the notion that Shakespeare was writing differently in various ages, which is not at all true. Point to emphasize is that content value, i.e., 'What' of literature is undiluted and constant whereas 'How' changes-i.e. perhaps, taken as departure. I leave this aspect to the scholarly discourse of the topic, that will follow during this Conference.

How does an idea or inspiration remain the same, the continuous exercise of capturing the mood of creation and how does it undergo a sea-change in changing sphere of sensibility of two Ages, can be exemplified by a close scrutiny of the similar image of 'evening' - a phenomena of nature - in the context of Wordsworth and Eliot. Evening in Wordsworth's presentation is like a 'nun' breathless in adoration. the silence, the calm of evening, has been communicated through the reflection of peace on her face during adoration, which is inborn and spontaneous. But for Eliot, 'evening' is like a patient etherised on a table waiting for operation. Here the peace and calm of evening have been explained as imposed on the face of a patient, that is the after-effect of ether. Thus, in this context, the evening being the same continuous process of nature - departure in treatment is distinct, marking the change of sensibility of two different ages.

Going to Shakespeare and examining the most essential human emotion, i.e., "Love" in *Antony and Cleopatra*, is associated with Divinity whereas in Eliot the same instinct of love of the typist and the carbuncular clerk degenerates into a mechanical stale affair, so much so that she heaves a sigh of relief, 'Thank God, it is over' and her automatic hand puts a record on the gramophone to escape the ordeal of morbid physicality. Shakespeare provides eternity to love, Eliot handles it mechanically to present the sordid staleness of physical dimension of love. Misconceived dishonesty in the love of Desdemona in *Othello* leads the hero to exclaim, "I shall kill thee and love thee after". This shows clearly the desire for eternity in love. Similar such experience can be cited from the plays of Ben Jonson where the divinity of love of Dyna of classical lore degenerates into a Celia to mark a change in treatment of love. Pious flame of love kindles in the temple of the heart of Dyna whereas this fire burns physically in Celia's heart to mark a distinct fall. At this juncture the compass of scrutiny seems to have been broken altogether leaving the characters in a blind alley not knowing the direction to which they should proceed. So, this anti- thesis of antiquity and contemporaneity, parallelism and contrast play a vital role in continuity and departure of entire human consciousness. Thus, it seems to be an eternal process of understanding the ever-flowing stream of consciousness of human mind on this earth.

"In my beginning is my end", is the time-space-continuum of human existence - marking an ever-lasting archetypal pattern in all its manifestations and dimensions - the persona, the anima/animus, the polarity, the individuation and rebirth. It is, thus, more a dilemma of to be or not to be.

Any discussion of D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, Robert Graves shall reveal the only fundamental that all these artists tried to present their own response to the prevailing mode of the time. They represented with their stamp of individuality which in no way can be called a departure in the true sense of the term. Still it is left to the open discourse on the subject.

Literatures in English being written all over the world reflect the same tone and temperament, may be in varying degrees, has the indigenous essence even though flowering at a foreign soil. In fact, the poet feels around him chains of both the creative process and critical perspective. The most complex and perhaps, the most compulsory responsibility is to find and create a tradition at the same time. I am glad to refer to the findings of Dr. H. M. Prasad in his book *Indian Poetry in English* where he opines that a writer has to locate a harbour to anchor his boat and to act as a lighthouse to help others to sail across. It seems that Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" has something to do with this realisation. He further argues that an explication of new poetry in terms of culture, language and literary tradition along with constant comparison with Commonwealth and American literatures, Indian writings and literatures in indigenous languages may be rewarding in fining out the exact places of Indian poets in English in the realm of poetry. Indian poets in English, like their counterparts in fiction perceive a plurality of identity emerging from duality of cultures. Reasons are many and also obvious. The acceptance of English language for creative configuration is involvement in depth and it exposes the writers to the cultural burden behind it. A language is what literature has made of it. After all, the dynamics of a language are lexical contours of the area of writer's mind and again the experience of bi- cultururation has filtered in the lives of all those who have been colonised directly or by remote control. In order to prove his points he has quoted lines from the diary of Dostoevsky, "We Russians have two motherlands- Russia and Europe." Being an American was 'a complex fate'. The concept of Negritude etched tangible grooming in every African psyche. Australian poets gladly turned to 'Arabian desert of human mind. New Zealand poets shook off the cultural displacement and continually made atraumatic recognition of the alternative indigenous heritage. Caribbean writers mostly settled abroad with threnodies of remembered homes. In *The Middle Passage* V. S. Naipaul says, "Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indians more than most, needs writers to tell who he is

and where he stands."

The lot of Commonwealth writers seem to be 'as ambiguous a tableau by Kafka' to use the expression that Baldwin made for American Negro, but in each case, there are subtle variations. The basic kinship lies in the fact that they are all children of their soil nourishing themselves on their native soil even if they are under another sky. Eugene O'Neill was the first dramatist to give a tradition to American Drama. Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee followed him but O'Neill never lost his Irish moorings. Henry James accepted the sublime synthesis of Europe, but he never lost his real roots in the native soil. Could Eliot ever shed off the American in him? Katherine Mansfield wrote with New Zealand in her bones. Patrick White drew on Australian experience in the times he lived abroad. Mulk Raj Anand wrote his *Untouchable* and *Coolie* from London. Kamala Markandaya has been living in England for a long time and yet she has recently fictionalised the triangular tension emerging from an interaction of tradition, modernity and the adolescent mind of an Indian girl. Raja Rao, residing in France and A. K. Ramanujan teaching Linguistics in Chicago, Parthasarathy whoring after English Gods are not radically different from a R. K. Narayan writing from his Malgudi or Keki N. Daruwalla transmuting the topography of India in his poetry. The essential allegiance is to the native spirit.

What is indicated by these examples is the fact that continuity of literature writing is constant and permanent with slight changes here and there in accordance with several reasonable deviations. But can these meaningful digressions be called departure in the true sense of the term?

Conclusion:- Going through the above mentioned details it has been observed that literature has repleted this world with a variety of unmemorable ideas, thought and philosophy which have played the significant and magnanimous role in adoring and managing humanity since its inception.

Literature helps human being revealing their minds and changes their perception of the world and let them see what is out of the stock. With time ,we began to reflect, asks questions and understand better. Since reading literature exposes human beings to the blending of themes and topics ranging from science and discovery to history and culture we start developing a holistic perception on the world and view the world with open mind. Literature especially English literature encourages people of the modern society about themselves .By studying different literatures of the world we naturally collate our lives with those we find in literature. we deepen our feeding of human reactions and our self responses as we equate and contrast ,not only the views of multitude authors but also our own desired and thought- out views. In course of describing the essence of literature. F Scott Filzgerald says:-

“That is part of the beauty of all literature.

You discover that your longings are universal

that you are not lonely and isolated from anyone you belong.”

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