

## **ABSTRACT**

In this dissertation I'm concerned with two poetic traditions – of the East and the West. I'm especially interested in the Indian theory of *dhvani* and *vakrokti* and the Western school of Russian Formalism and New Criticism because the two Western critical movements are ontological in their approach and distinguish between the ordinary and the poetic discourse very similar to that of the Indian theories. This dissertation, therefore, tries to make a possible interaction between the two critical traditions – of India and the West. One seems to better appreciate the Western theories by knowing one's own critical practices. This would also bridge the gulf not only between India and the West but also between ancient Indian and modern Indian critical traditions.

### **CHAPTER – I**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The origin and nature of poetic language has interested semanticists, literary critics, linguists, philosophers and aestheticians alike. This chapter makes a brief survey of their various contributions at different times towards the study of poetic language and examines the parallel between the Western and Indian theories of language in general. This chapter is practically an endeavour to examine the theories of poetic language of the two schools of Indian poetics and their Western counterparts by a mode of comparison and contrast.

The Indian theory anticipates some of the conceptual ideas developed by the New Critics and Russian Formalists. However, I'm not studying the influences of the Indian poetics on the West. I do not suggest that the seeds of Western theories are based on the Indian tradition. What I propose to do is to see the points of resemblance between the two.

The chapter also makes a brief survey of literature done on this subject and proposes to start off from where the others have left.

## CHAPTER – II

### ĀNANDAVARDHANA'S *DHVANYĀLOKA* : DHVANI AS POETIC LANGUAGE

This chapter deals with Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*, a treatise on the poetic theory of suggestion. While critically examining the text of *Dhvanyāloka*, I've also tried to look at some of the Western concepts and theories which have striking parallels with Ānandavardhana's theory of dhvani or suggestion. Besides the New Criticism, the Symbolist movement, which developed under the influence of the Romantic-Illuminist doctrine of Blake, Coleridge, Poe, Mallarmé and Yeats, enormously emphasized the importance of suggestion in poetry. Both the movements propounded that the essence of poetic language lies in suggestion and revealed that poetic language works at multiple levels of meaning.

Although the Indian theory of dhvani and its Western counterpart developed at very different times under different circumstances, there are many points of convergence between the 9<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century formulations of the theory of suggestion as poetic language. Both had adopted different methodologies but nevertheless showed that emotion in poetry is essentially suggested.

Poetic language can either suggest an emotion (*rasa-dhvani*), a figure of speech (*alaṅkāra-dhvani*) or an idea (*vastu-dhvani*), according to Ānandavardhana. But *rasa-dhvani* or emotion that is suggested makes for the best kind of poetry. This can be translated to what Eliot calls objective correlative.

Dhvani is a term derived from linguistics which means sound and has its roots in Bhartrihari's doctrine of *sphota*. And some of the major Indian schools of philosophy, grammar and logic, which talk about the phenomenon of word and

language, are the bedrock of the dhvani theory. This chapter therefore also focuses on the philosophical foundation of the Dhvani School.

The two well-known functions of language called recognized by almost all critical traditions are the primary meaning (*abhidhā*) and the metaphorical meaning (*lakṣaṇā*). The dhvani theorists as well as the symbolists and New Critics claimed that there is a third potency of language called suggestion (*Vyañjanā*), which is the proper function of poetic language.

The dhvani theorists however lacked the notion of “symbol”; the Indian dhvani theory was basically a semantic theory and had none of the mystical overtones of the West.

The chapter argues that the suggestive mode is essentially a presentational mode and not a discursive one. The Dhvani theory, therefore, has a wider efficacy because it could account for both the figurative and non-figurative in poetry.

### CHAPTER – III

#### THE STYLISTICS OF DEVIANCE IN KUNTAKA'S *VAKROKTIJĪVITA*

The chapter deals with Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*. Kuntaka's theory of vakrokti is a comprehensive theory which takes into account the concepts of the other Indian schools of poetics like *alaṅkāra*, *guṇa-rīti*, *dhvani* and *aucitya*. By vakrokti Kuntaka understands a certain striking or charming mode of expression which is different from the ordinary mode of expression. Kuntaka is convinced that it is the expressional deviation that is the most important element in poetry.

There is a remarkable similarity between vakrokti and the some of the concepts of Russian Formalism and New Criticism. The New Critics analysed poems in terms of opposites like texture / structure, extension / intention etc. Vakrokti is related to the technical principles of ambiguity, polysemy, paradox and

irony. Vakrokti can thus be taken to be an analogue to certain concepts of these Western theories.

The phenomenon of multiple implications in poetry has been referred to by terms like ambiguity, polysemy, plurisignation etc. The relationship of vakrokti and ambiguity, which is highlighted in this chapter, as a linguistic phenomenon has various shades of interpretations.

#### **CHAPTER – IV**

### **RUSSIAN FORMALISM AND THE DIALECTICS OF POETIC LANGUAGE**

The Russian formalist's notion of the distinction between the poetic and practical language is similar to the Indian notion of the difference between the language of kavya and sastra. This chapter focuses on Russian Formalism and the theories of some of its important exponents like Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukařovský of the Prague Linguistic Circle. The concepts of "literariness," "defamiliarisation," "foregrounding," "obliqueness" etc. have parallels with Kuntaka's vakrokti.

Since the Russian formalism and the New Criticism, for the first time, tried to give an independent and autonomous position to literary studies, this chapter looks at the similarities between the two important critical movements and the way they differ from each other.

The two related concepts on which formalism is based have been highlighted, i.e. the principle of perceptible form and the notion of the functional or structural significance of literary content.

Poetic language, the formalists believed, rather than being a medium for discourse is a deviant utterance which marks a point of departure from ordinary language for the creation of art. Kuntaka too believes that poetic charm comes

from *vakra-ukti* (deviant utterances). His theory is somewhat similar to formalist theory.

## CHAPTER – V

### THE AESTHETICS OF FORM AND NEW CRITICISM

This chapter aims at studying the concept of poetic language in the New Critical tradition. Though most of the modern critical theories have been concerned with the analysis of the forms and structure of a literary work, but a focused attention was paid to the importance of studying the form of an artistic work by the New Critics and Russian Formalists.

The stronger affinities of the New Criticism with Russian Formalism and the Prague School are striking and surprisingly more so because the New Critics apparently knew nothing of the Formalist school. The New Criticism and the Formalist thought are similar in their approach to the distinction of literature and non-literature and defined these distinctions in theoretical terms. Both significantly emphasized the structure and interrelatedness within a literary work and saw the working of a text as independent of its authorial and socio-historical context. Besides the similarities, the chapter also looks into the major areas where the two critical traditions tend to disagree.

The New Criticism as a literary theory began roughly with the works of I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot and was developed and continued by American critics like John Crowe Ransom, W.K. Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate and others. I've discussed some of their major concepts of poetic language like paradox, irony, structure / texture, tension and Empson's ideas on ambiguities and have tried to see them in the light of the Indian theories of *vakrokti* and *dhvani*. Richards' notion of the emotive language and theories of communication have striking parallels with the Indian notion of *Kāvya* and *sādhāranīkaraṇa*.



The chapter briefly discusses the concept of metaphor and symbol and the symbolist movement of the West, which had developed a rich tradition of the concept of poetic language as suggestion. The New Criticism's emphasis on the poem as singular artistic achievement which is ontologically autonomous brings it closer to the Indian critical theories and makes a case space for a viable comparison between the two traditions.

## **CHAPTER – VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

After looking at the significant points of resemblance between Ānandavardhana's dhvani theory, Kuntaka's Vakrokti and the New Criticism and Russian Formalism, the project concludes by trying to see connections between the critical traditions in India and in the West.

The Indian and Western aestheticians have dealt with topics such as emotionality of literature, autonomy of literature, degree of universalization involved in literary experience, aesthetic pleasure and the nature of aesthetic perception. But the kind of similarity in their approach is astonishing.

The theories of the two traditions however tend to disagree on some major areas, the concluding chapter briefly highlights them. But the focus is on how to build up a comprehensive theory taking into account the two critical traditions where they can be justifiably applied to the texts.