

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of my thesis is to study literary criticism in India in the twentieth century. For this purpose, I have selected the following critics, who in my opinion represent the best in the twentieth century Indian criticism. They are : Anandshankar Dhruv, B.K. Thakore, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy, M. Hiriyanna, Krishna Rayan, B.K. Matilal, B.S. Mardhekar, R.B. Patankar, Sujit Mukherjee, Bhalchandra Nemade, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Though these critics do not belong to a single tradition of criticism as such, they have all acquired reputation as being significant critics within their respective traditions.

[ This dissertation is an exercise in comparative criticism, undertaken with a view to highlighting the problems of ① literary criticism in India, and the theoretical issues ② dealt with by major Indian critics during this century.

Such an exercise is necessary in the context of the growing self-awareness of native traditions within India, as well as the increasing intensity of the impact of Western critical ideas. The nature of my study inheres some obvious limitations. I state them before setting out the scope and method of the study.

what  
criticism?

Carries  
onwards

A study of Indian criticism presents a peculiar problem related with the continuity of critical tradition from the second to the twentieth century. Major critical statements of the period before the arrival of the British in India are in Sanskrit, and refer to Sanskrit literature. Simultaneously from the twelfth century onwards, with the emergence of modern Indian languages as medium for creative writing, some stray critical statements and occasionally major literary strategies start appearing. For instance, the changes in the poetic idiom, forms of narratives, and diminishing stylization in Bhakti poetry indicate a new, if non-articulate complex of literary values and therefore, of critical standards. These can be viewed as a kind of non-Sanskrit critical tradition. With the introduction of British style of education in India, some criticism written in Indian languages, but using a mixture of Western, Sanskrit, and nationalistic idiom has acquired importance.

When one tries to discuss the 'tradition' of literary criticism, one has to accept the fact that though conceptually there is a continuous tradition, it involves social and historical contexts pertaining to many languages and intellectual idioms. Yet the extra/literary aspects of Indian history, political structures, metaphysics etc., all of which have a considerable continuity, may make it possible to think of a single chronology of Indian criticism.

Wording.

Yet the continuity of extra-literary phenomena such as metaphysics, social & political structures across ~~history~~ time make it possible to discern a consistent pattern in literary criticism. ~~can be~~ the history of

\* assumption of separation of literary & non literary ?

Handwritten note: The history of Indian literature is a continuous process. The critical tradition is not a linear one but a complex one. The critical tradition is a process of evolution.

Handwritten note: A tradition is a process of evolution. It is not a static one. It is a dynamic one. It is a process of change. It is a process of growth. It is a process of development.

Handwritten note: Circular: what is the continuity of what tradition? or constructed one?

flow of argument: how do we get here?

Working.

in general?

Continuity/Discontinuity: As compared to Western histories of literature, there seems to be no comparable Indian break between tradition and modernity. Certainly there is scant discussion of modernity in Indian criticism. ["make it new" seems not to be a doctrine having any impact on critical practice (though with obvious effects in literary practice) until the 1960's at least, and even in the 80's the language of "critical theory" still found adequate response by some critics.]

Very scant literature is available in the area of literary criticism to aid any discussion about 'modernity' or 'modernism' in Indian criticism. Historians like

Percival Spear<sup>1</sup> argue that the modern period of Indian history begins with Akbar. Sociologists like Milton Singer<sup>2</sup> argue that there is no radical breach in India between tradition and modernity. The term 'modern' is highly debatable as a historical label. Particularly in the Indian context, the complexity of social and ideological composition of India adds to the problems in using the terms like 'modern' and 'modernity'. In the field of literature the terms 'modern' and 'modernity' are generally used as loose historical labels for the post 1857 period; the year marking the establishment of the three universities in India; whereas the term 'modernism' is used as a label for post-independence literature. In the present study, the expression 'modern Indian criticism' is used to indicate the twentieth-century critical thought, which shows an unmistakable presence of the Western critical idiom. To that extent, the expression also helps to differentiate criticism before and after the introduction of the British style of education in India.

Keeping these considerations in view, I have selected critics belonging to different generations, beginning from Sri Aurobindo to Homi Bhabha. These critics represent broad trends and general shifts in the critical climate of

India during the present century. It would be hasty to arrive at conclusions relevant to the entire range of Indian criticism through the <sup>selective</sup> study of critics in some Indian languages and in English. This study should be considered <sup>of limited application only and</sup> useful in itself, and, to a limited extent, of significance as a preliminary step towards evaluating the achievements of Indian criticism.

Though politically, and to a great extent culturally, it is possible to speak of India as a recognisable unit, it is not possible to think of one Indian literature. There is a wealth of languages having written and/or oral literary traditions in India. To speak of all these oral and <sup>written</sup> lexical literatures as a single, unified, and homogenous cultural system is fatuous. It is not possible for an individual to acquaint <sup>himself</sup> with the entire range of Indian literature. Therefore in this study, I have restricted myself to those segments of literature with which I am familiar, namely, Indian works available in English, Gujarati, and Marathi. The choice is also guided by the fact that the three Marathi critics studied, B.S.

Mardhekar, R.B. Patankar and Bhalchandra Nemade, have also published criticism in English. The aim of this study is not to speak authoritatively about the entire range of literary criticism in India. The aim here is to speak about some of the important critics in the hope that an analysis of their works may help one articulate the central

Maybe the thesis could be that there is a distinction between Indian & English literature & criticism.

which puts them on a kind of comparative parity with other critics such as Bhabha & Spivak.

Repetition

issues involved in the practice of literary criticism in twentieth century India.

Though a large number of books and articles <sup>of criticism?</sup> are available on criticism in Indian languages, there is a relative paucity of scholarly literature <sup>about</sup> on Indian criticism. The critical works written in regional languages rarely get translated into English, and the works available in English are mostly of introductory nature. This field of study, that is 'Indian literary criticism' is not yet well established. At present the field seems to carry the legacy of Indology and to confine itself to reinterpretation of Sanskrit poetics. Alternatively the thought about modern Indian criticism is confined to the discussion of individual language criticism. At a more advanced level, it arrives at a compilation of reports on several Indian languages. In this direction the study by Ragini Ramchandra Indian Literary Criticism (1989)<sup>3</sup>, is of importance as an initial work in this area.

What? {  
Yes but why? {

✓ As against the paucity of comments on the twentieth century Indian criticism, there is no dearth of studies of Sanskrit poetics. Book/length studies of Sanskrit poetics have been many, the outstanding ones being by S.K. De, P.V. Kane, and Krishna Chaitanya.<sup>4</sup> Similarly numerous articles and reviews reinterpreting Sanskrit poetics have been appearing in periodicals. This state of imbalance may

logically though somewhat deceptively, indicate :

(a) that there is no literary criticism worth discussing in India, and (b) that the field of study needs to be updated, but has not been updated owing to several reasons.

There is no gainsaying that the achievements of Sanskrit poetics have been impressive by any standards.<sup>5</sup>

It can hardly be denied that Bharata's Natyasastra provides a seminal aesthetic statement the significance of which is comparable to that of Aristotle's Poetics in the Western literary history. Similarly the theoretical formulations by Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and Kuntaka are of great importance and can absorb the interest of a modern student of literature. The development of insights in the structure of language by Panini, Patanjali, and Katyayana, the insights in the structure of poetic language by Anandavardhana, the discussion of sociology of literature by Rajashekhara, and the meticulous analysis of literary graces by Bhamah and Dandin, and finally the comprehensive compendia on poetics by Bhoja, Mammata, and Vishvanath, all form a

glorious chapter in the history of Indian literary criticism.

In comparison to these critics, the degree of abstraction in the works of the critics studied in this dissertation is less impressive. But it is necessary to view the critics studied in the context of India's encounter with an unprecedented development in creative literature initiated by India's exposure to the modern West. It is natural that

they have to re-examine the formulations of Sanskrit poetics and also to formulate new critical theories. Therefore, to evaluate the nature of strategies adopted by the modern Indian critics, and the evaluation of the success of the strategies, become<sup>s</sup> interesting. The nature of this study is comparable to that of a study of A.C. Bradley, F.R. Leavis, and Frank Kermode, keeping in view that the seminal theoretical formulations of the Western tradition of literary aesthetics were proposed by others like Aristotle, Kant and Croce.

So far no study of the twentieth<sup>th</sup>/century Indian critical tradition has been attempted. The reason may not be that there is no such tradition. It might rather be that the individual language critics are interested in discussing criticism in their own languages, rather than 'Indian' criticism.

Another reason for the lack of development of this field is the inadequate awareness of the modern Indian critical tradition. Tradition, like history, is both an objective phenomenon and a matter of subjective perception of this phenomenon. It acquires meaning when it is grasped by a system of perceptions. By applying this argument to the field of criticism, one could assume that it would be legitimate to posit a tradition of modern Indian criticism as a hypothesis. The aim of my study is to examine the

Although critics tend to work within their own languages (and thus) it is possible to discern a pattern of common assumptions and concerns functioning across regional, and historical divides that constitutes an Indian tradition of criticism.

Circularity

Here's a cut

— several spot of assuming what is to be proved: How do you evaluate the centrality of a critic unless there is a demonstrated centre about which criticism operates? 8

possibility of charting out the field of Indian literary criticism in terms of a tradition. It follows therefore, that this study will explore the inter-connections between various important critics and place them in terms of significance, the nature of their literary ideology, and <sup>describe</sup> <sup>evaluate</sup> their centrality to modern Indian criticism, [to the extent it is possible in respect of each critic studied here].

Of the two observations made above regarding this field of study, I do not subscribe to the first, namely, the only field of interest in the area of Indian literary criticism is Sanskrit poetics. I would rather like to assume that the twentieth-century Indian literary criticism is a valuable field of study and that an examination of its achievements and failures is of considerable significance to modern Indian literary study.

Though criticism is thought of as a single field of literary study, it is necessary to differentiate between kinds of criticism. The broadest division that could be made, is between critical theory and practical criticism.

✓  
his itself  
is debatable

Critical theory deals with abstractions, its intended scope is universal. The proof of its validity is grounded in logic. It does not speak of one or the other work of literature, but about 'Literature'. If, at all, it narrows down its scope, it speaks of poetry not a poem, drama not a play, and the novel not a novel. Its drive is towards

✓  
So far, there's mention of the modernising impact of Western ideas on literary practice, but no mention of <sup>any</sup> effect on criticism. What about Marxism, for example, in Bengal or Maharashtra or Kerala?



arriving at philosophical abstractions about the nature of language, its use in literature, its meaning as manifest in a literary form, the experience it communicates, the process of this communication itself, and the quality and nature of the experience communicated. Practical criticism, on the other hand, is concerned with more specific literary problems related to a text or a school of writing, a particular style or a genre, an author or a period and so on. It does meet critical theory at some point, but its drive is towards <sup>descriptive?</sup> analysis and not towards universal <sup>prescriptive?</sup> abstractions.

clarify

Apart from broad divisions of literary criticism as above, it is also possible to make further sub-divisions in this field. It can be argued that the purposes of all kinds of literary theories are not identical. Considering that criticism is not a single unified theory, the criteria for evaluating a work of criticism may vary depending on the nature of that critical work. It may then be assumed that there is no single literary theory and that there are no fixed criteria for assessing its validity. The difficulties involved in a study <sup>of</sup> a critical tradition are multiplied by the terms 'literary theory', 'critical theory', 'poetics', and 'theoretical criticism' as interchangeable or synonymous terms. Though these terms are not really interchangeable, they do share a common ground. In the present study, I use the term 'critical tradition' in a

the concept creates its own problems?

limited sense. I do not intend to discuss practical criticism in India. The body of practical criticism is vast and merits independent study. I intend to discuss theoretical criticism only. But again I employ the term 'theoretical' to mean not only new formulations, but also reformulations.

*trends*  
In the light of the perspective outlined above, the dissertation deals with four major trends in Indian criticism:

*How does he handle the relationships? What distinguishes 1 & 3; doesn't 4 come from 1, 2 & 3?*

(1) Romanticist criticism, (2) Reinterpretation of Sanskrit poetics, (3) Criticism derived from Western theories, and (4) Nativistic and Post-colonial criticism. These trends are devoted a chapter each. The four chapters are followed by a brief section which consists of general conclusions.

Chapter One, 'The Indian Romantics', discusses the works of Anandshankar Dhruv, B.K. Thakore (both representing Gujarati literary criticism), and Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore (both representing Indian critical writings in English). The term 'Romantic' is more of a label than a description. It implies that the orientation of the critics discussed was of a 'Romantic' nature. The Indian Romantic criticism took shape in the light of the factors like, the establishment of universities, the development of printing and publishing, surge of nationalism, etc. Relevant ideas and works of the critics mentioned are analysed to indicate their philosophical inclinations.

*needs work*

Chapter Two, 'Revival and Reinterpretation of Sanskrit Poetics' attempts to discuss the interest in Sanskrit Poetics as a recurring phenomenon. Though there are phases of strong interest in Sanskrit Poetics from time to time, it has not led to the formation of <sup>permanently</sup> viable critical tenets. Rather, the interest generally indicates the <sup>level of</sup> nationalistic fervour. Within this context, the critical works of Ananda Coomaraswamy, M. Hiriyanna, Krishna Rayan, and B.K. Matilal are studied.

Chapter Three, 'The Indian Modernists', discusses B.S. Mardhekar, R.B. Patankar and Suresh Joshi, as critics working within the Western critical discipline. The chapter does not intend to identify the precise influence on each, but wishes to highlight the philosophical and theoretical concerns in each of them.

Chapter Four, 'Nativistic criticism and Post-Colonial criticism', studies two apparently polarised critical tendencies : (1) Nativism, and (2) Post-colonial criticism. As representatives of Nativism, Sujit Mukherjee and Bhalchandra Nemade are studied. As representatives of Post-colonial criticism Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha are selected. Nativism intends to authenticate indigenous critical tradition. Post-colonial criticism, on the other hand, examines the relationship between hegemonic critical canons and native literature. Thus both move towards formulating native critical discourse.

Definition: Modernism = Westernization?

Doesn't one go with the others?

Does the question imply a split. I think it's a modern x post-colonial as well?

So why distinguish it from 2?

All four chapters are followed by notes and references. The final chapter offers general conclusions, and is followed by the bibliography.

## References

1. Percival Spear, India A Modern History (The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1961/72)
2. Milton Singer, When a Great Tradition Modernizes : An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization, (The University of Chicago Press, London, 1980).
3. Ragini Ramachandra, Indian Literary Criticism, (Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989)
4. S.K. De, History of Sanskrit Poetics, (Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1961), P.V. Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics, (Motilal Banarasisdas, Delhi, 1961), Krishna Chaitanya, Sanskrit Poetics : A Critical and Comparative Study, (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965).
5. For an informative account of Sanskrit critics and Criticism,  
<sup>s</sup> See P.V. Kane (1961).

Note :

The translations from the works of Anandshankar,  
B.K. Thakore, Suresh Joshi and Bhalchandra Nemade are mine.