

Communication in Art Song and Literature: Poems Versus Novels

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The primary urge of a poet or writer is to create according to his inspiration but close to it is the urge to communicate with the reader. A singer requires hearer, a painting requires connoisseur. Well, even without the other parties, a poem and a painting may be created or a song may be sung. Think of the wind flowing through the reeds or bamboo grove or a bird's song reaching the ethereal height creating a symphony in the air which is perhaps enjoyed by the silent Nature. Nature exactly does that. It is neither responsible nor obliged to tell man what it enjoys, how it enjoys itself but when a man hears them they become songs touching the heart of the pure sympathizers away from the hullabaloo of the mundane world. Go further and there are the unheard songs, unheard sounds; they are very much there for every sound comes out of silence. When Nature creates such things on its own without waiting for anybody to appreciate the things remain unknown until someone hears or looks at them. Man creates to communicate. If we consider songs it is definitely a field for communication between the singer and the hearer. Man's creation may be said to be, in general term, artificial whereas Nature's creation is natural. Nature recreates itself Man creates imitating Nature or otherwise. But I don't wish to stop telling that Art is imitation only like our great Greek

predecessors. The seer poets created words the way they heard. The higher and highest sources, it may be said the Divine sources, create through man as through the Nature.

Literature always requires two-way communication. Literature is in Indian term *Sahitya*. It has come out of *Sahit*, meaning with or together with or in collaboration with. *Sahitya* is dependent on two parties at least; the creator and the enjoyer or the consumer; it is best if he or she is the right person or the connoisseur. So a poet, writer or singer is fulfilled when he or she is with the audience, in the broader sense the reader and hearer. Man's first urge was to express in poetry, prosaic stories came later. But how the poetry was judged by the ancients? We have found that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle considered poetry as art of imitation. All classical criticisms of poetry were about dramas in the form of poetry. Shakespeare was a dramatist mainly but a poet of one of the highest rank. "Plato asserts that the worth of poetry should be judged by the truth to life achieved by the imitation, not by the pleasure it gives, Aristotle argues that correct imitation is in itself a source of pleasure; and where Plato asserts that the object imitated must be beautiful, Aristotle argues that the imitation of ugly things is capable of possessing beauty." (Dorsch 70) "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," we have delightedly found in Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". The idea of truth is echoed in Coleridge too. Sri Aurobindo feels that a poet is neither a philosopher nor a prophet nor preacher nor a teacher. "The poet shows us Truth in its power of beauty, in its symbol or image, or reveals it to us in the workings of Nature or in the workings of life, and when he has done that, his whole work is done; he need not be its explicit spokesman. The philosopher's business is to discriminate Truth and put its parts and aspects into intellectual relation with each other . . ." (Sri Aurobindo /31)

Communication plays its definite role through novel and poem though the role of some other factors is not denied. The world of novel is full of harrowing tales of the underworld, sex-tasting tales of the hungry generations here and there, the absurd adventures

into history and buffoonery and the gross tales of the common man. Publishing of the novels by the big and multinational publishers seem to be examples of coquetry, each dancing with self-esteem to catch awards. Humble poetry silently creates its subtle world, treasure of knowledge and wisdom; full of bold assertions against the culprits in the society with heartfelt sympathy for the poor; deprived and the needy. Poetry sometimes expresses the dizzy heights of realization; walking in the rarified fields of the poet's mind is something wonderful. Sometimes poetry takes us to the realm of the serene and the sublime.

This comment about the trend, the present scenario in the novel-world and poetryfront does not cover all the novels and all the poetry created yesterday or are created today. There were and are many responsible and classical works in novels, there are many ordinary and perhaps hackneyed poems too that were written or are being written today. Let us here give the names of some great novels to be sure that there are many more. Opinions about them differ with the taste and choice of the readers but on the whole such creations stand on their own ground like *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, *Crime and Punishment* by Feodor Dostoevsky, *Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, *Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokov, *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang, *One Day in The Life of Denislovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Uncle Toms Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Lost Footsteps* by Silviu Craciunas and *Roots* by Alex Haley. Many such books have come in English, in original or translated but alas many of the great Indian novels in regional languages have not been translated in English. There may be a few but here we do not want to name them in the absence of more such works remaining unnoticed. Large numbers of great Indian novels wait for their rendering in English.

Poems with many varieties are not paid even a scanty commercial attention although poems are being written and published regularly. The great epics and poems of the past are part of great literary history but compared to the modern genre of literature, the novel, poem is getting very little love and affection which is certainly not justified but it is the age of the commoners who depend and rejoice entertainment only, they are mostly influenced by the media. In short, one may get much more in poetry than in novels though the volume in a poem is much less than in a novel. But leaving all things aside it must be admitted that man likes to hear stories told in a touching way. This is my observation on the way as a poet and writer of fiction. Critics and readers may differ but by and large this remains the position. It is acceptable at least by the many who think that the present age, a digital age, is a prosaic, criminal world compared to the subjective, sympathetic, sometimes whimpering world of poetry.

References

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