

## Book Reviews

*Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Michael Kelly, Editor in Chief, New York Oxford University Press, 4 Vols. : Vol. 1, pp. 521; Vol.2, pp.555; Vol. 3, pp.536; Vol. 4, pp. 572; the whole set published in 1998.

The present body of knowledge called "aesthetics" is a unification of numerous academic disciplines and cultures. The term "aesthetics" came into use in the eighteenth century when there was a coincidence of two philosophical tendencies – generalization about the arts and concern for sensory knowledge as independent of logical knowledge. It was situational paradox that those who generalized the arts did not use the word 'aesthetics' and those who practiced aesthetics were not primarily interested in the arts. Finally, in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) the union of the two tendencies set up the programmes for this new discipline. But what was more important for the growth of this discipline was the debate over the crucial issue whether the arts be understood and appreciated in terms of their own individual forms or by an Aristotelian generalization formula. Kelly remarks that it was the former one which dominated the eighteenth century aesthetics and differentiated it from its early history as well as from the tendencies expressed in other cultures. Eighteenth century was a turning point for another important feature, that is, secularization and democratization of art and culture, a feature which contributed a lot to the formation of a cultural public sphere.

The conceptual synonymy of *criticism* and *aesthetics* also started during this eighteenth century. Whereas the English used 'criticism' for discussions about arts and culture, the Germans transformed the word *Criticism* to *Critique*, and this transformation marked the birth of *aesthetics* as a part of philosophy highlighting the fact that philosophical aesthetics emerged out of a wide-ranging cultural context. The present *Encyclopedia* is founded on the dual roles of aesthetics – philosophical and cultural although at times, some contributors have emphasized the either role.

The Editor confesses that he took six years for compiling this encyclopedia. But the apologetic undertone sounds more ironical than factual since such a stupendous work must have taken decades for its completion unless the editor and his associates would have taken much more care than usually expected of and rendered extraordinary academic commitment spectacularly visible in the work itself. It is an academic monument carrying the fullest information about the area of knowledge concerned as it developed during the whole span of the twentieth century. The Editor and the Advisory Board have left no mark of any flaw for a reviewer to point out. There are as many as 600 entries by 450 authors, 100 illustrations, exhaustive bibliographies, cross-references and index. All the entries are meticulously contemplated and comprehensibly presented. The work both defines and describes the area of *aesthetics* in such a way that it appears most convincingly as a prison house of interacting ideas and issues – philosophical, social, psychological, linguistic, religious, political, anthropological converging on the nature, meaning and experience of all the forms of art in as many cultural contexts and periods as possible– western and non-western, ancient and modern, from Aristotle to Abhinavagupta, from Adorno to Bakhtin, from Jaz to Video, from *ut pictura poesis* to postcolonialism, from theoretical aesthetics to aesthetics in practice. No word of praise would suffice for this extraordinary achievement in so significant a growing academic area like aesthetics.

*The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Volume III : The Renaissance (Edited by Glyn P. Norton), 1999, pp.758; Volume IV : The Eighteenth Century (Edited by H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson), 1997, pp.951.

The Editor of the Volume III, Professor Norton most precisely sets up the objective of this Volume : "Criticism and crisis are etymological friends ... Renaissance humanism, above all, was responsible for generating a language that would not only reflect the cultural crisis at hand, but base that crisis in its own distinctiveness as a period. The deepest, most central impulses of humanism are thus critical... The critical temper, in its cultural as well as literary dimension, fixes the Renaissance view of time squarely within the

Greek concept of *Krisis* as designating a moment both of separation and of decision. The present volume has as its chief aim to register the discourse – the voices and modulations, as it were – of the moment.” (p.1). For planning the present volume the editor adopts the paradigm of “self-fashioning” as the keynote of the Renaissance Culture – a term and notion developed by Stephen Greenblatt in his Chicago book *Renaissance self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (1980). For their self-identity Renaissance critics and readers alienated themselves from the earlier unsystematized thinking for concentrating on the varying degrees of changes in literary spheres initiated by the humanist culture that embraced “philosophy of language approaches to reading and interpretation, the crafting of poetics as a tool for describing how texts function, the refinement and expression of literary forms, polemical rivalries, aesthetics, structures of thought, and the postulate that all literary criticism is situational, shaped by its own contextual habitat.” (p.3).

In as many as sixty-one chapters the book covers the principal issues in the continental critical environment during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first section deals with reading and interpretation, the second with different aspects of poetics such as humanist classification, rediscovery and transmission of materials, rhetorical poetics and literary genres. The subsequent sections focus on theories of prose fiction, concepts of criticism in metropolitan culture, structures of critical thinking in various disciplines that contribute to literary criticism such as Neoplatonism, cosmography, stoicism, Epicureanism, Calvinism and Jansenism. Different Neoclassical issues such as beauty, judgement persuasion and polemic are discussed at length; and in the concluding section an overall survey of literary criticism in England, France, Italy, Spain and Germany is made. The design of the whole book is encyclopaedic and the editor’s skill has taken extra care for not leaving and relevant aspect of the phenomenon he has undertaken one of his reach. His critical vision is large enough to encompass all the basic features of the period he covers and the galaxy of the contributors with their masterly handling of the topics impresses at once the reader for their richness in both information and analysis. It is a matter of great humility and honesty on the part of the author that he has acknowledged the monumental contributions by Bernard Weinberg to Renaissance criticism in his books *A History of Literary Criticism in Italian Renaissance* (Chicago : 1961, 2 vols.) and *Critical Prefaces of the French Renaissance* (Ed. New York : 1950).

The fourth volume on the 18<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism follows a similar encyclopedic design in covering all the major issues of the continental criticism during the period concerned such as literary genres, language and style, multidisciplinary perspectives of literature and literary theory. “The period covered by this volume”, write the editors, “is one in which many changes in literary history can be recorded, not all of which receive the same degree of critical attention or recognition at the time. (Our primary concern is with the history of this critical response, rather than with the primary phenomena, to the limited extent that the two are separable)”. They further observe perceptively that the rise of the novel or prose fiction during this period is responsible for the evolution of a large body of theoretical issues with their initial and vital remarks on the differences between the novel and prose romance. Apart from a vast body of knowledge called aesthetics or philosophical issues of sublime, beauty, taste, judgement – from Baumgarten to Humboldt through Kant, relationship among the various kinds of art verbal, plastic and musical as dealt with by Lessing and Burke, literary genre theories along with critical appreciation of particular genres grew up during this period.

Douglas Patey writes in the introductory chapter that the 18<sup>th</sup> century inherited from the 17<sup>th</sup> century the meaning of criticism as a large area of intellectual activities such as grammar, rhetoric, history, geography and palaeography. Following Kant’s concept of “criticism” or “critical philosophy”, criticism functioned as application of reason in any kind of enquiry into any area of knowledge – the “Enlightenment critique” celebrated by Voltaire as the tenth Muse which appeared to rid the world of unreason.

Patey further remarks that eighteenth century criticism provides the very model for writing history of criticism. Critical historians like Saintsbury, Adkins, Wellek, Crane, Cohen and Hohendahl have all acknowledged this truth that the 18<sup>th</sup> century criticism provides the foundation for writing history of criticism : “To a remarkable extent, how the history of criticism in any period is written has depended on the historian’s understanding of how criticism evolved from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth...” (p.7). It is in this period that the term “literature” takes on something like its modern meaning.

The spectacular success of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* in all its four volumes (1, 2, 3, 4) published so far lies both in the sincerity and wide-ranging vision of the respective editor(s) and the in-depth learning of the contributors. The fact that a history of criticism can be written by several hands

under the unitary critical vision of its editor(s) has broken the earlier tradition of writing critical history by a single hand the success of this venture depending largely upon the remarkable improvement in the information systems. Other volumes of this series are eagerly awaited.

***The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, Edited by Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, Baltimore, 1994, pp.775.**

The word "criticism" is used in this volume, as it was developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century referring to discussions about the arts and culture. The entries are as many as 226 by some 200 contributors all experts in their respective areas. The disciplinary boundary is obviously wide and unstable: philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, political scholars, linguists all have contributed synoptic accounts and surveys of critical groups, schools and movements with a specific focus on contemporary practice. A distinctive editorial policy of the volume has recommended some thirteen approaches to literary studies: ontological, epistemological, teleological, archeological, descriptive, interpretive, performative, normative, historical, cultural, psychological, appreciative and metacritical (pp.VI-VIII). The Editors write:

The *Guide* is designed in part to assist with the necessary work of stock-taking and consolidation; if it helps to make accessible in clear and concise form a body of material that has become overwhelming, it will have achieved a large task indeed... The *Guide* endeavors to act as an informative, reliable introduction to the principal manifestations of this large and challenging area of inquiry... the *Guide* is decidedly historical in orientation: topics are weighed in terms of their importance in the field of literary studies, as seen from the vantage point today and especially as pursued in North America.... Indexes of names and topics at the end of the volume are helpful for ready reference.

In spite of the utmost care the editors have taken in compiling the *Guide* there have been some inadvertent flaws in some entries. For example, the entry on Indian theory and criticism by Feroza Jussawalla is thoroughly confusing. The author's consideration of Bhartrhari's *Sataka* as a critical text is an absolute bluff. Besides, the treatment of different literary theories of classical India is full of misconceptions and misrepresentations in both their historical and conceptual perspectives. But these cases apart, the *Guide* remains one of the most indispensable tools for the students and advanced scholars in literary and cultural studies.

**Marilyn Jurich, *Scheherazade's Sisters: Trickster Heroines and their Stories in World Literature*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998, pp.292.**

The author explores a new type of folktale character, the female trickster, who by trickery saves herself and other women in male-dominated societies where they lose their social identity and safety. Better named *trickstars*, these women expose the hypocrisy and corruption of the male-dominated society. The female trickster is identified and distinguished by male trickster by comparing their differences in functions or performances such as amusement, moral ambiguity, manipulating strategies and reformation of culture and society.

The range of the study is obviously wide in its remarkable multiculturalism of approach and vision. The character is not merely confined to the oral folklore tradition as it draws widely on contemporary feminism, mythology, biblical narratives, and novels, opera and Shakespearean comedy. It is undoubtedly a groundbreaking work that brings to light a narrative type which escaped the sight of literary scholars.

Scheherazade is the central character in the *Arabian Nights* who could be challengingly successful in curing the obsession of the King Shahrayar about infidelity of the whole female gender – an obsession that is drawn only from two cases. Scheherazade's success is due to her extraordinary verbal trick. So she is named as a *trick-star* symbolizing a narrative type overlooked in earlier literary studies. The author most appropriately chooses this character as the prototype of similar ones available in several cultural traditions. The Arabic one is chosen as the prototype since *The Arabian Nights* has been most popular among the folktales since its French translation by J.C. Mardrus and its English rendering by Powys Mathers. It is well known to the lovers of stories how Scheherazade could carry on telling stories for one thousand and one nights to keep the king in good humour so that he would finally discover great narrative skill in a woman destined to reform the misconceptions of a male about the character of the whole of the female gender.

The fundamental issue which stimulates the author for exploring an extraordinarily vast area of verbal art as exhibited in the present work is an ethical one: the age-old male-conception that woman is the archetype of evil, particularly for her verbal trickery. But Jurich questions this conception and demonstrates detouring over the global traditions of oral and written literature, that the conception is a misconception one. A lot of contexts have been discovered with textual evidences that women have been immensely helpful in saving themselves as well as other males and females by their very trickery which has been condemned by the males only baselessly. "To understand what contributes the tricks of women", the author writes, "it is necessary to look at the trick itself... To understand the nature of the trick we have to know the nature of the one who does the tricking. Who is the trickster and what reasons has that individual for using the trick, rather than another means, for accompanying her end? ... Because tricks are so fascinating, they become the basis for stories.... Tricks and women form a natural association; both have been traditionally suspect, regarded with a mixture of suspicion and awe, and both depend on cunning and indirection." (pp.2-3).

Jurich has thus most creatively identified the feminine gender with a literary genre and has most successfully explored a strong argument for the trickery of women that has been immensely helpful in saving humanity and serving social reformation. Chapters 3-5 are full of glaring examples collected from and correlated within the cultural traditions of the whole world. The book is something difficult from the common run of contemporary scholarship. It reasonably displays the author's passion for scholarly pursuits; and she is never satisfied unless she finds every moment of her speculation and imagination is supplied with an evidence. The style itself is narrative as the reader forgets that he is moving around the critical junctures intertwining intricate theoretical issues in feminism, ethics, mythology, literature, folktale, psychology and cultural studies in their widest comparative perspectives.

**Tandra Patnaik, *Sabda : A Study of Bhartrhari's Philosophy of Language*, D.K.Print World (P) Ltd., Delhi, 1994, pp. 178.**

Patnaik views Bhartrhari's ideas on language in modern idiom. According to her, Bhartrhari, the most celebrated Indian writer on language is neither a linguist nor a mystic: he is, in the current idiom, a 'philosopher of language'. Richard Rorty distinguishes between two categories of Philosophy of Language- pure and impure. Frege, Wittgenstein and Carnap, for example, do pure philosophy of language since they deal with "problems about how to systematize our notions of meaning and reference in such a way as to take advantage of quantificational logic, preserve our intuitions about modality, and generally produce a clear and intuitively satisfying picture of the way in which notions like 'truth', 'meaning', 'necessity' and 'name' fit together". On the other hand, impure philosophy of language is explicitly epistemological, i.e., a philosophy such as that of Kant which tends to provide a "permanent a historical framework for inquiry in the form of a theory of knowledge". Donald Davidson and Hilary Putnam have led two different movements by way of attacking the impure philosophy of language. For Davidson, the question "how language works" has no necessary connection with the question "how knowledge works" and Frege and Tarski belong to this group, whereas Russell, Carnap and Quine mingle pure theory of meaning with epistemology. They fostered a "Philosophical Puritanism" which held that the sense data and rules of language are suspicious because they are incapable of being "logically constructed". Now what is the status of Bhartrhari as a philosopher of language?

Patnaik observes that in most of the Indian philosophical systems, the problem of language is a part of epistemology, i.e., *sabda* or language is treated (particularly the language of the Vedas) as testimonial knowledge. But since the Vedic Scriptures await interpretation, authority is sometimes understood in terms of the prescriptive status of the Vedas: they are uncontradictable. But Bhartrhari's approach to language is refreshingly different from the earlier tradition. For the first time he draws our attention to the function of an analyst of language that his concern is not with a fact or object in the outside world, but with only language (or word) that presents the object. In fact, Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics derives from this basic observation of Bhartrhari. Nevertheless, the eight topics he counts under his discussion on language include topics in linguistics particularly the structural aspects of the language which was refined by Panini and was called *Sanskrit* (refined) thenceforward. If Patnaik's own assertion that "Philosophy of language in short, deals with *language*, not *languages*" is accepted and Rorty's concept of "pure Philosophy of language" is taken into consideration, then Bhartrhari cannot stand the criteria of a (pure) Philosopher of language. Since Bhartrhari's observations are based on the structure and function of Sanskrit language, his Philosophy of language

cannot set a universal standard for language in general. But, of course, Bhartrhari's methodology sets a universal standard for studying any language of any time. The comprehensiveness of his approach decries any distinction between the impure and pure categories of philosophy of language as also the distinction between linguistics and Philosophy of language.

Mrs. Patnaik has obviously not worked along the line of Rorty's investigations, and she has rightly not done so. The notable merit of her work lies in highlighting different aspects of Bhartrhari's ideas in comparison with different Western philosophers addressing similar issues in their writings. Wittgenstein is juxtaposed with Bhartrhari's concepts of understanding, communication and limits of sayability; Searle and Austin with communication; Frege and Davidson with thought, truth and language. Although these piecemeal comparisons in cross-cultural examination does not build up a system for Bhartrhari's own reflections on language, the comparisons themselves reflect the author's in-depth analysis and sincere understanding of the philosophers she has undertaken for her project. And in this respect she has advanced the Bhartrhari studies in India beyond her predecessors like Ayer and Sastri. In my view she has never been superficial, and is therefore fully aware of her power and limits in dealing with so important a thinker of ancient India who was considered a divine being (Bhagavan) by the posterity and was immensely influential for various schools of thought such as linguistics, metaphysics, poetics and mysticism in later intellectual tradition of India, since, according to him, any discussion on language is inevitably connected with the structure of the language in question and with the cognition of the people who use it. In writing this book, Mrs. Patnaik has rendered a valuable service to the scholars who work in multidisciplinary areas of knowledge.

**Srikanta Mohanty, *The Other Boundary of Language*, Bhubaneswar: Elite Publications, 1995, pp 275.**

Mohanty understands language in an extended sense – as a medium of both experience and expression. He believes further that our experience of all the art forms – visual, auditory, verbal and audiovisual – has a common linguistic function that can be called "aesthetic realisation" or *rasanubhuti* in Sanskrit. This means that experience of art in general is virtually a *rasa* experience and this *rasa* experience is the other boundary of the linguistic experience. This central argument of the author conforms to the ideas of Bhartrhari (7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) the doyen of classical Indian philosophy of language. But in explication of the philosophical function of language, the author considers only a limited group of philosophers, particularly the linguistic analysts who differentiated poetic language from the language of philosophical analysis. According to them language of poetry is only a pseudo statement (or meaningless) or metaphorical whereas the language of philosophy is verifiable empirical statements. Instead, the author insists that even along the lines of arguments of the analytic philosophers, imagistic language of poetry can be interpreted as "meaningful" – and not merely pseudo statements. In other words, poetic imagery is as meaningful as is a philosophical proposition.

In the first chapter the author offers a general account of the analyst view of language, and in the subsequent two chapters he analyses logical structure of poetic imagery. He is bold enough to reject the authority of Ayer's view that poetic propositions are literally meaningless. According to the author, propositions of science or philosophy cannot be distinguished from those of poetry only on the basis of empirical truth value. Instead, the difference lies on their difference in logical structure: When scientific and philosophical propositions are intended to state or imply (empirical) reality, poetic propositions neither state nor imply this reality. An imagery is non-intellectual, gets transformed to result in an unmediated aesthetic realisation.

The most attractive part of Mohanty's book is the application of his ideas (in their explanation and illustration) to Oriya poetry. But the ideas themselves need accuracy and sophistication in the light of a huge mass of current scholarship on the subject. Particularly his explanation of the structure of imagery is only too insufficient to attract any scholarly attention. Besides, his understanding of the Sanskrit poetics is extremely haphazard. For example, the English word "metaphor" is generally used for the Sanskrit *laksana*. But whereas all the figures of speech are counted under *laksana*, *rupaka* means metaphor and *upama* simile. According to the Alankara School of Sanskrit poetics, poetic propositions basically express our experience of reality in terms of subject-analogue relationship; and the varieties of this relationship determines the varieties of figures of speech counted under two major divisions – resemblance and contrast. Simile, for example is a flat comparison between subject and analogue; metaphor is an identification of subject with

analogue; symbol is an analogue standing for the subject. Imagery is genus and figures of speech species. Ideal poetic expression is always imagistic, but all images are not figures of speech, whereas all figures of speech are images. *Dhvani* is basically an image or a pattern of imagery, though not necessarily a figurative expression. In fact *dhvani* theorists rejected the figures of speech (metaphor in general) as neither necessary nor sufficient for an ideal poetic expression. *Dhvani* is a meaning by revelation.

However, what looks genuine in the book is the author's awareness of the vast boundary of the subject matter he undertakes for an examination. But what he lacks is the proper grasp of this boundary which is much vaster than what he thinks to be. Any discussion on metaphor requires an acquaintance with Max Black's seminal essay and the huge mass of subsequent commentaries. Another basic error he commits is the idea that we experience all the forms of artworks in terms of a common language which might be called *rasa/rasanubhuti*. Abhinavagupta and the Indian aesthetic tradition have concluded that *rasa* is experienced only in two art forms – the theatre and literature, in witnessing a dramatic performance and reading forms of poetry. Experience of painting and music does not generate *rasa*. It seems the Epilogue does not just suit the book in its failing to keep up any coherence and appropriate correlation of the concepts and theories taken up. The book thus should be thoroughly revised in its second edition, particularly concentrating more on the systematic expression and application of Western part eliminating whole of the Sanskrit part in its comparative perspectives, because the author seems to be better acquainted with the analytic tradition than with the traditional Sanskrit poetics.

**Rajnish Kumar Mishra, *Buddhist Theory of Meaning and Literary Analysis*,  
Delhi : D.K.Printworld (P) Ltd., 1999, PP.XX + 292.**

The author writes: "Buddhist theory of meaning has a distinct place in this world of competing theories. The well-defined theory of meaning it offers has become very popular among the Indian intellectuals who are enthusiastic about carrying out comparative studies of *apoha* and the Saussurean linguistics in general and deconstruction of Jacques Derrida in particular. But such studies have not much headway. A truly scholarly research in this area is still awaited.... The present study examines literary language as evidence of the poet's experience in a social context and as such captures the multivalent reality – be it of the text or of the context, social or historical, or of the relationship between the two". To put it precisely, the writer elaborates upon the Buddhist *apoha* theory of meaning, as far as possible, in the current critical idiom, and has applied this theory of meaning in interpreting literary texts – as an explaining model- Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey".

The writer's view, that the relevance of the classical theories should not be assessed by the fact that they are revived by the moderns, is certainly a considerable one. But did Jayanta Bhatta not say – "whence new things are born?" Eliot similarly points out that in order that any discourse be considered great and valuable it must fulfil the demand of each and every generation. What the author wants to say is this that particularly in the Indian context scholars (even so reputed as Harold Coward) have always assessed the universality and originality of classical Indian thought by juxtaposing it with the Western ideas and theories. This has been the essential feature of colonial discourse. One of the most disappointing result of this feature is the rejection of Sanskrit *Dhvani* theory by one of the most eminent Sanskrit scholars of our time Professor V.K.Chari. The present author rightly comments that the value of the Buddhist *apoha* theory of meaning should not be judged by its relevance for understanding or matching the theories forwarded by the contemporary Western critics – may be Saussure or Derrida. It is absolutely agreeable that any idea in any cultural context is always autonomous. The comparative literature discipline of our days falls a victim to an overemphasis on theoretical analyses. The interpretive side is rather unreasonably neglected. Following the Western structuralist model of linguistic, stylistic analysis of a literary work, the author has attempted commendably at analysing an important English poem by applying the Buddhist theory of meaning and discourse analysis. He is thorough with the Sanskrit texts he has handled. But a fundamental question seems to remain unanswered: are the Buddhist linguistics and epistemology peculiarly suitable for analysing Wordsworth's poem(s) only because his definition of poetry as emotion recollected in tranquillity is peculiarly a Buddhist idea? Or are they qualified for being applied to analyse any kind of literary discourse? Another point: in spite of the author's great enthusiasm for working out his analyses with tabular details, the reader of the text feels discomforted by the incoherent presentation of the theoretical ideas. He has been successful in excavating the ideas, but has failed to put them up in a critical order with necessary precision and felicity of style.

**P.L.Bhargava, *Retrieval of History from Puranic Myths*, Delhi : D.K.Printworld (P) Ltd., Enlarged Edition 1998, PP, 146.**

The major question that concerns the subject is : can history be retrieved from myths ? Historical and mythical discourses belong to two different categories : myth is anti/ante-historical; historical discourse is always ascribed to personal authors whereas mythical discourse is impersonal. It reflects the collective unconscious of a culture. In Aristotle's language, myth is more philosophical than history, since history records individual events and characters chronologically whereas myth presents the archetypes that transcend chronology.

In the Indian tradition, *puranas* are elaborations of the Vedic scriptures. In doing so *puranas* are virtually impersonal although they are ascribed to an individual author Vyasa who has no historical identity. Under such theoretical and factual circumstances the question of tracing history in mythology is absolutely an illegitimate attitude, that too when the researcher rejects myths by the criterion that they are unhistorical – not only ahistorical.

The mythical events and characters which Bhargava has questioned from historical perspectives are : Rama's banishment of Sita, Rama's killing Bali surreptitiously, Visvamitra's fatherhood of Sakuntala, Parsurama's matricide, Bhagiratha's bringing the river Ganges from the heaven, Krishna's love affair with Radha, Yudhisthira's crowning Hastinapura in 3102 B.C., Vyasa's authorship of eighteen *puranas* and several sub-*puranas* and Valmiki's robberhood in his earlier life. It is really surprising that an eminent historian like Bhargava should dabble in such questions, a lot of labour thus ending in futility. The most disastrous result of Bhargava's futile quest appears in his study of Visvamitra myth when he writes : "The anecdote of his dalliance with Menaka is a mendacious myth that has undeservedly clouded his spiritual greatness". (P.39) By a single stroke Bhargava wipes out the most glorious literary piece of Kalidasa from the history of Sanskrit plays. Another pitiable statement is "It is a pity that the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata* have given divergent accounts of Jahnu's ancestors" (P.37). The reviewer's normal response is it is a pity that Bhargava does not know the simplest truth that myths *must differ* in different sources. This very difference in the versions of a myth is the sign of the organic growth of a cultural imagination. Following his own (mis-)criteria he would commit the greatest of the critical blunder in rejecting Aeschylus' final resolution of the chain of nemesis bringing in the event of divine forgiveness for Orestes to redeem him of matricide. His noble ventures for searching "bases" and consistency in the several versions of a single myth turn out to be ignoble finally. What are the "bases" for a myth other than the collective imagination of a culture ? What does constitute the pattern of a myth other than the different versions of the same myth in different sources ? Bhargava has hopelessly confused myth with history and the worst critical crime he has committed is assessing the cultural values of myth by historical criteria.

**S.M.S. Chari, *Philosophy and Theistic Mysticism of the Alvars*, Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1997, PP.263.**

During a time when Kaula Tantra was dominating the whole of eastern India (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) south India was raising the cult of Vaisnavism under the reign of Pallava, Pandya and Chola kings. It was approximately during this time or a bit earlier that the *Bhagavatapurana* was composed. Twelve Tamil saints who contributed to the origin of south Indian Vaisnavism are called *Alvars* a term in Tamil which means "one who has deeply immersed in God's experience". Thus the cult was more a phenomenological than a speculative system of religious movement when mysticism dominated over philosophy, and therefore, was greatly responsible for the dualist, nondualist and qualified monistic systems of the Vedanta school (that developed during 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries). Vilvamangala, Jayadeva and Sridharaswami (the pioneer commentator on the *Bhagavatapurana*-14<sup>th</sup> A.D.) are the great spiritual heirs of these Alvars, apart from the saint-philosophers like Yamuna and Ramanuja. The whole history of these saints is one of the most glorious events of Indian culture. There is no language to estimate the invaluable contributions of these saints to human culture as a whole. Apart from the original writings by these saints called "prabandham", there had been several studies by scholars like Govindacharya, Hooper, Varadachari and Subba Reddiar. But the present work by Chari is a distinguished one for its systematic dealing with all the major aspects of the area of knowledge. In the eight chapters of the book the topics dealt with are : life and works of Alvars, the doctrines of ultimate reality, God, individual self, *sadhana*, supreme goal, theistic mysticism ending with a general

evaluation of the whole system in its concluding 8<sup>th</sup> chapter. A glossary is very helpful for understanding the technical Tamil and Sanskrit terms along with a bibliography of original source texts, commentaries, related texts and secondary research studies.

The analysis in the present book is uniquely transparent because of the author's own religious involvement with the cult as a sincere practitioner. "The teachings of the Alvars are not basically different from what is said in the Vedas, the Epics and the Agamas. Their uniqueness, however, lies in the fact that they are presented for the first time to the common people in their spoken language (Tamil)." The book is undoubtedly an excellent guide to the scholars who work on both philosophy and religious practices of Vaisnavism as a whole.

**R.C.Pradhan, *Philosophy of Meaning and Representation*, Delhi: D.K.Printworld (p) Ltd, 1996, pp.203.**

The author proposes a representational theory of meaning founding his studies on the philosophy of Wittgenstein, Frege, Davidson and Dummett. The non-representational theory of language has been provided by the theorists like Heidegger, Derrida and Rorty who have rejected the classical theory of meaning and truth. The present book "addresses itself to that question and tries to argue that the notion of representation is a pre-theoretical notion and so it is independent of the debate between the realists and anti-realists over whether truth and meaning can be classically understood. I have argued that the choice is not between language as *representation* and language as *play or game* in the later Wittgensteinian sense, but whether we can think of language that is not about the world at all. So the basic presupposition of semantics is that language is involved in the world. This I call representational relation between language and the world". (pp.IX-X). In the six chapters of the book the author deals with his subject most systematically. He starts with the point that the relation between language and the world is founded upon the Fregean concept of sense that promotes the semantics of representations. Next he studies Frege's theory of representation demonstrating the logical relation between language and the world. Truth is a disclosure concept – a fundamental notion that discloses the structure of the world by disclosing the structure of the language. Meaning and representation are internally linked as both of them are representation – both meaning and truth are co-present in the dynamism of the linguistic representation since language is basically about the world." In the final chapter the author argues against Quine's naturalism on the basic observation that there are facts of the matter in semantics that cannot be reduced to natural facts.

The nature of linguistic representation, as it is presented in this book, is not pictorial since the relation between meaning and the world is logical rather than factual. Language logically represents the world means that the logical structure of both language and the world is the same. But could Tarski's and Davidson's proposal that we think of truth in language, not as a conceptual framework or correspondence to something presented be a step forward – beyond the time of world as "picture" or pictured? Could language be a constative representation without being at the same time a step back to metaphysics? Could there be representation as the performance enacted in *Philosophical Investigations* without being representation as the propositions of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*? The theatrical representation being the paradigm of this enactment- representation, what the recent aestheticians have called a re-presentation, an attack on Platonic mimesis – forms an interesting aspect of contemporary scholarship on the multidisciplinary issue of representation in language and different forms of art. Dr. Pradhan is not perhaps aware of such issues. He might be interested in reading a galaxy of ideas on this attractive area of correlation in my forthcoming book *Art and Representation* with Greenwood Publishing Group Inc.

**A.C. Sukla**

**Grazia Marchiano (Ed.), *East and West in Aesthetics*, Roma : Institutii Editoriali E Poligrafici Internazionali, 1997, pp.200**

Professor Marchiano, the founder of the Lotus and the Rose Group of Studies in comparative aesthetics in the University of Siena (Italy) has been consistently pursuing her mission for building up a body of aesthetic principles, norms and theories on the ground and belief in an intercultural intellectual unification. Italian sensibility has been a protean direction in formulation of contemporary aesthetic ideas developing eminent centres in Bologna, Rome, Milano and Turin. Apart from the migrated Italian scholars like Umberto Eco and Gianni Vattimo, native scholars like Stephano Zecci and Grazia Marchiano have been



extremely enthusiastic in promoting Italian aesthetic sensibility in conformity with the glorious Roman intellectual heritage. Marchiano's strong conviction for structuring an international body of aesthetics is reflected in the present work. She collects papers from different scholars who are actively engaged in developing aesthetic ideals foregrounding their own national cultures. Mentions may be made of Professors Imamichi and Sukla who are responsible for disseminating and popularising aesthetics in their own countries (Japan and India respectively) through the periodicals on aesthetics they edit. There are representative scholars from Finland, Venezuela, Belgium, U.S.A and Romania along with the scholars from Japan and India.

In the introductory remarks Marchiano pleads for the validity of comparative aesthetics by reference to Larson and Deutsch versus Dayakrishna and Panikkar. The first group of philosophers being optimist for comparative philosophy, the second group is sceptic. Whereas Panikkar rejects comparative philosophy altogether as a contradiction in terms (a thing cannot be philosophy and comparative simultaneously), Dayakrishna thinks that "the so-called comparative studies" of philosophy is nothing but reporting of data in terms of Western conceptual framework. Dayakrishna's apprehension of the dominance of the Western conceptual framework almost in all our contemporary intellectual activities is only self-evident. But this apprehension has been speedily outdated, particularly in the present context of reactions against colonialist discourses. The essays collected by Marchiano do not show any dominance of the Western conceptual framework. Each author has spoken on the issues that concern his own critical tradition. Consider, for example, Sukla's paper on *Dhvani*. Whereas Professor V.K. Chari has rejected the universality of *Dhvani* theory put into the Wittgensteinian framework, and consequently has rejected the most vital theory of Sanskrit literary aesthetics, Sukla has presented the theory entirely in its home-tradition without mentioning any of the Western critics/theories which could accommodate or reject this theory. Reversely, the ontological issue which the *Dhvani* theory raises (in Sukla's demonstration) compel a Western critic for rethinking the theories of literary meaning his tradition has forwarded so far. Thus, in the context of the present anthology, the comparative nature of Sukla's paper does not follow any established Western conceptual framework; yet it is essentially comparative. Marchiano significantly quotes Keji Nishitani : "to say that each thing is an absolute centre means that wherever a thing is, the world worlds. And this in turn, means that each thing, by being in its home-ground is in the home-ground of all, each is in its own home-ground" (p-11). This is a crucial statement for justifying the mode and validity of all comparative activities in our intellectual world across the national boundaries.

Juxtaposing Sukla with Hashimoto's paper "The Semantic Transformation of an Axiological Concept" generates an excellent comparison of the Japanese concept of *Ma* and the Sanskrit concept of *Vyanjana* and *Dhvani*. If *Ma* is a transformation of potentiality into actuality, in Sanskrit *Dhvani* (actuality) is a transformation of *Vyanjana* (linguistic potentiality). The Sanskrit philosophers did not hold language as purely a phenomenon of use. Like every phenomenon language has its own potency and it operates by unfolding this potency – it is language which speaks not man, as Heidegger puts it.

Marchiano's own paper along with that of Professor Imamichi is highly original and provokes the reader's imagination for rethinking the things known so far. Dethier's essay on Hegel's thinking on the East, Mitias' paper on the semantics of architecture are all rich in ideas, information, analysis and assessment. Professor Marchiano's anthology is a landmark in the contemporary scholarship on comparative aesthetics.

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