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PROBLEMS OF EVALUATING A SANSKRIT DRAMA BY WESTERN STANDARD

Both Bharata in *Nāṭya-śāstra* and Aristotle in *Poetics* are primarily concerned with drama, or more precisely, with the art of dramatic composition and representation and the theory of imitation that they espouse in the works – *Nāṭya-śāstra* and *Poetics* respectively – is immediately concerned with the nature of imitation expected in a successful drama.

About the exact date of Bharata, the author of *Nāṭya-śāstra* and reverentially referred to as a sage (Bharatamuni; *muni* = sage) nothing is definitely known. He might have flourished any time between second century B.C and second century A.D. (De 18) . However Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*, a remarkable , detailed treatise on dramaturgy , discusses at length , in its thirty-six chapters, the origin of drama, different kinds of drama, structure of different kinds of dramas, the functions of the physical movements, costumes, diction, different kinds of aesthetic relish or *rasas*, different kinds of music, etc. An interested scholar can glance through the outline of different chapters of Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra* given in P.V.Kane's *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Bombay, 1951). Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra* has been brought out in four volumes as *Bharat Nāṭya-śāstra* (Calcutta, 1982) in Bengali (subsequently referred to as NS). The twenty-first chapter of NS discusses at great length the structural elements of a drama : broad divisions into stages, different kinds of junctures, etc. It can be seen that for Bharata , as for Aristotle, the unity of action is very important. While Aristotle divides an action into three stages – beginning, middle and end- Bharata divides it into five stages; *ārambha* (beginning), *prayatna* (effort), *prāptyāśā* (possibility of attainment of the object, *niyatāpti* (certainty of attainment and *phalaprāpti*(fruition) : *prārambhaśca prayatnaśca tathā prāpteśca sambhavah/niyatā ca phalaprāptih phalayogaśca pañcamah* (NS Vol 3 Chapter 21. 47). These stages incidentally roughly correspond to the Five Act structure of a drama (exposition, rising action , climax, falling action, denouement etc.) Bharata also writes about five elements of the plot: the: *bīja* (germ), the *bindu* (drop), the *patākā* (episode), *prakarī*(incident) and *kārya* (denouement): *bījam binduh patākā ca prakarī kāryameba ca/arhthapṣkṣtayah pañca jñātvā yojyā yathābidhi* (NS Vol.3. 49) Bharata also speaks of junctures:

mukha (opening), *pratimukha* (progression), *garbha* (development), *vimarsa* (pause) and *nirvahana* (conclusion) ; *mukha pratimukham garbho vimaśaśca tathaiva hi/tathā nirvahanam caiva sandhyo nāṭake smṣtah* (NS Vol.3, 52) According to Bharata the most important objective of a drama is to evoke a particular kind of *rasa* or sentiment leading to a particular kind of aesthetic pleasure. These sentiments – there are eight of them in fact – are produced from the union of determinants or causes which give rise to an emotion, external manifestations of that emotion and transitory feelings ; *śṅgara* (erotic), *hāsya* (mirth), *karuṇa* (pathetic) *raudra* (furious), *vīra* (heroic), *bhayānaka* and *bībhatsa* (disgusting): *śṅgārahāsyakaruṇā raudravīrabhayanakāh / bībhatsadad-bhutasamjñau cetyḥṭtau nāṭye rasāh smṣtah* (NS Vol.1. 133).

Incidentally, while Aristotle mentions only two types of drama – tragedy and comedy – Bharata mentions ten types of drama: *nāṭakam saprakaranamanāko byāyoga eba ca/bhānah samabakāraśca bīthī prahasanam dimah/ihamṣgaśca bijñyo daśamo nāṭyalakṣaṇe/eteṣām lakṣāṇnamham byākhyāsyāmanupūrvaśa* (NS Vol.3. 19). It depends on the nature of the subject, nature of the characters and their number , the number of Acts, and most importantly the kind of sentiment that the play is meant to evoke. There is no need to go into the details. Suffice it to say that of these while the *Nāṭaka* and *Prakaraṇa* of Bharata have striking affinities with Aristotle’s notion of tragedy, the *Prahasaṇa* and *Bhāna* of Bharata partly correspond to Aristotle’s notion of comedy. But a drama like *Śakuntalā* cannot be called a comedy in the Aristotelian sense, because, according to Aristotle, comedy is an ‘imitation of men worse than the average ; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind , the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others; the mask, for instance that excites laughter, is something ugly and distorted without causing pain’ (Bywater 33). It is unfortunate that the second part of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in which he is supposed to have discussed the nature of comedy is missing., and in the *Poetics* that we have very little is said about comedy.

To come back to Bharata’s *Nāṭya-śāstra*. Like Aristotle’s *Poetics*, it is also a treatise on drama. But what is significant is that it is at once a treatise on Dance, Drama, Music and Poetry. Etymologically the word *naṭ* is associated with *nṣt* or dance, and the common points between *nāṭya* (drama) and *nṣtya* (dance) are mainly movements and gestures The relation between dance and drama is so close that to perform a play is to dance a drama. It is this integration that makes the Indian drama so different from the Aristotelian conception. One may point out that the choric songs play an important part in the structure of a Greek drama, but the point is that in the Greek drama the chorus as well as the choric songs retains a separate identity. In fact Nietzsche pointed out in *The Birth of Tragedy* that in a Greek drama a dialectical relationship exists between the Dionysian elements represented by the song and dance of the Chorus and the Apollonian elements represented by the action and dialogue. But in the Indian drama it becomes integrated into the action

of the play and the performance of the actor. The problem of Sanskrit drama or any classical drama in Asia, for that matter, is essentially a problem of enacting poetry. Thus, although Bharata, like Aristotle, uses the same word, *anukaraṇa* which means imitation the apparent likeness only hides a deep-seated difference. The same thing happens in the case of Aristotle who uses the same word, *mimesis* (imitation) like his master Plato but uses it in a radically different sense. Anyway the point is that though *anukaraṇa* can be translated as mimicking, imaging or representation there are some qualifiers used by Bharata which reveal the fundamental difference. One such qualifier is implied in the statement that drama is a representation of the state of the three worlds: *trailokasyasya sarvasya nāṭyam bhavanukīrtaṇam* (NS Vol.1. 17). It is not exclusively a representation of man's activities but those of gods and demons as well:

devātanāmasuṣāṇam rājñāmatha kuṭumbinām/ kṣtāṇukaraṇam loke nāṭyamityabhidhiyate. (NS Vol.1. 19): drama is an imitation of the activities of the gods, demons, kings and family men in the world.

'Drama,' says Bharata, 'becomes instructive to all through the actions and states that it images and through the sentiments arising out of them.' Always, the emphasis is on 'states' or 'sentiments' (*avasthās* or *bhāvas*), the essence, the 'being', and the presentation of *trailokyāvasthā* – the three worlds being *svargamaṣṭyapātāla* – the heavens, the domain of death (our world), and the nether world precludes the possibility of a realistic presentation in the western sense. These qualifications naturally make a drama as Bharata understands it different from the general notion of western drama. All these qualifiers only lead to the inevitable conclusion that Bharata's idea of *anukaraṇa*, in terms of Sanskrit dramaturgy, is basically a different concept from Aristotelian theory of imitation. In the Indian concept the likeness of something to its artistic representation should never be a copy but analogical or exemplary. What is needed is the total apprehension and as the word *sādṣya* (similarity) is further qualified by *pramaṇa* (proportion) it implies that there must be the right proportion and harmony in design. Imitation in Bharata is thus seriously conditioned by properly conceived design. In other words, the design must evolve out of highly conventionalized and often stylized forms and symbols.

Moreover, if we consider the context in which Bharata first uses the word *anukaraṇa* it would appear that he is more concerned with the scope of drama rather than technique. A classical Sanskrit drama absorbs the deepest insights and beliefs of the people, of the community – the *weltanschauung* as well as the *zeitgeist* as it were – in the same way as the structure and the texture of a Greek tragedy represents in a moving and profound manner the Greek view of man's destiny. One has to think of *Oedipus Rex* to see the point. The profound serenity achieved at the end of a Sanskrit drama is much deeper and more intense than the Aristotelian notion of catharsis or the aesthetic effects of the modern crisis-ridden contemporary drama of the western world. What is supremely important in a Sanskrit drama is the creation of a *rasa* that emerges out of the experience of an action that covers the entire universe of discourse.

It should also be borne in mind that the western world -view and the consequent philosophy of life are significantly different from the Indian world-view and philosophy of life. If western drama excels in tragedy, possibly on account of its tragic view of life the Indian philosophy of life is essentially one of acceptance where everything is supposed to be ordained and predestined by a well-meaning and merciful God where sufferings lead to humanization and moral regeneration bringing one nearer to God. It is this acceptance of life arising mainly out of a belief in the doctrine of *karma* (work) and the concept of rebirth, that precludes the possibility of the existential anguish or the tragic trauma. The entire movement of the western drama created by the great Greek and Roman masters through Shakespeare, Calderon, Racine, Ibsen, Strindberg, Pirandello, Brecht, Beckett, Stoppard, Wesker, just to name a few, may be experimenting with the new elements of structure within the drama itself, but basically all the dramatists follow the imitative mode as suggested by Aristotle. Even the Theater of the Absurd is no exception; only it believes that the world of dream is more real than the world of consciousness, and accordingly it tries to imitate the structure of a dream.

But the traditional Eastern drama whether it is Indian, Japanese or Chinese or Indonesian has a distinct character, which is radically different from its western counterparts. When we read a Noh play, for example, we feel that it ends abruptly. But actually what happens is that the play in which incidentally all the characters wear masks, ends in a dance which sums up the thematic content and the message of the play. So reading the play cannot give full satisfaction; it leaves apparently much to be desired.

Let us now take up a standard Sanskrit play and see how it happens. We take up for discussion Kalidasa's *Abhijñanaśakuntalā*, generally considered one of the best classic plays of ancient India. I take up this play, generally known as *Śakuntalā*, because it is a play with which the western world is fairly familiar, though mainly through translation.

The play is divided into seven acts, neither three nor five. In the first Act, King Duṣyanta while pursuing a doe in the course of hunting happens to come near the hermitage of Kanva. He abstains from killing the doe at the request of the hermit boys who come rushing to tell him that the doe belongs to the hermitage, and therefore should not be killed. They also invite the king to the hermitage to receive the hospitality of Śakuntalā, the foster-daughter of Kañva who was away to Somatīrtha at that time to propitiate the inauspicious stars menacing Śakuntalā. In the course of the Act Duṣyanta meets Śakuntalā and they fall in love with each other. By western criteria this Act serves as the Exposition. It introduces all the major characters of the play; our interest is roused and we look for the consequences. The second Act marks the Rising Action. The behaviour of the king exposes his love for Śakuntalā, though the symbolic use of the bee suggests that it is more lust than love. And as the lust hardens into a determination on the part of Duṣyanta to sexually possess Śakuntalā we are told about a wild elephant that has suddenly entered the hermitage and has been disturbing the peace of the hermit-

age. The wild elephant becomes a fitting symbol for the hardened determination of the king. The third Act is climactic in the sense that the love of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā culminates in marriage which is consummated before the king leaves for the capital assuring Śakuntalā that on his return to the capital he would send a royal party to take Śakuntalā to his palace where he would receive her with the ceremonial pomp and grandeur.

The departure of the king is immediately followed by the appearance of Durvāsas, a sage noted for his hot temper, which marks the beginning of the fourth Act. Śakuntalā absorbed in the thought of her husband does not hear the call of Durvāsas. The ill-tempered sage feels insulted and imprecates a curse on Śakuntalā that the person in whose thought she is so engrossed so as not to notice his appearance, will not remember her even when reminded by her. This Act thus by western criterion marks the beginning of the Peripety or the reversal of fortune of Śakuntalā, who will be rejected by her husband in the fifth Act. The readers or the auditors have now the knowledge of a fact, which is denied to Śakuntalā. Her two friends - Anasūyā and Priyamvadā who have heard the curse feel frightened and on their earnest entreaties the sage softens and concedes that that the curse would end when a token of recognition (*abhijñāna*) would be shown to the king. The girls feel assured because they know that Śakuntalā has the ring of Dusyanta on her finger and that that would act as a token of recognition in due course of time. The Peripety of Śakuntalā becomes manifest in Act V when Śakuntalā, escorted by Gautamī and other hermits, go to the king who in consequence of the curse has already forgotten Śakuntalā and rejects her as an imposter. And when Śakuntalā's friends and the readers are hopeful that the tragedy will be averted as soon as the ring is shown to the king, it is discovered that Śakuntalā's ring had slipped into the river without her knowledge during the journey. The rejection scene is full of all the pathos that Kālidāsa is able to work up. As Śakuntalā left the royal palace – we are told later – a winged being flew into the palace garden, picked up Śakuntalā and carried her away to heavens. The sixth Act records events taking place years after the rejection of Śakuntalā. A fisherman trying to sell a ring with the king's name engraved on it is brought to the king on the charge of theft. On seeing the ring the king immediately remembers the entire Śakuntalā episode. This is the point of Anagnorisis or recognition when Duṣyanta realizes the faultlessness of Śakuntalā. Peripety follows. The tragedy is reversed. The lapse of six years makes the incident 'probable' in the Aristotelian sense. In other words, had the fisherman appeared during or immediately after the rejection of Śakuntalā it would have appeared laboured or an artless imposition or something like *deus ex machina*. However, it is in this Act, that Peripety or reversal begins for Duṣyanta. Duṣyanta, like Śakuntalā, is not aware of the curse of Durvāsas. His sense of tragedy is aggravated by the fact that he is childless while his wife, Śakuntalā whom he did not recognize as wife in the fifth Act was pregnant at that time. The line would come to an end with his death. He had practically 'thrown away a pearl richer than all his tribe'. The remorse of Duṣyanta, who frantically longs to meet Śakuntalā but has no knowledge regarding her whereabouts suffers from intense agony till the next Act (Act VII), crystallizes

into real love for Śakuntalā and contributes to the probability of the union. The episode of *vasantotsav* (Spring Festival), the portrait of Śakuntalā, the king's judgment regarding the title to the property of the drowned merchant etc. that take place in this Act serve as an 'objective correlative' for the king's state of mind. Unlike western drama here we have a double Peripety: one for Duṣyanta and another for Śakuntalā.

The seventh Act marks the happy denouement. The action takes place in heaven in the hermitage of Mārica. Now that he has realized his mistake, and is longing for a union with Śakuntalā the secondary recognition comes through the Aparājitā herb, the protecting charm of Sarvadamana, the son of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā.

It should be evident even from this very brief analysis of the play that it does not fit into any of the accepted genres of western drama. It is not a tragedy, despite the fact that Duṣyanta as a protagonist conforms to the Aristotelian notion of a tragic hero and the action is fraught with tragic potentialities, because, in the first place there is no tragic catastrophe, and in the second place the play does not end in separation but union of the lovers. It is not a pure comedy either because the protagonists suffer largely for no fault of theirs, and also because the characters are not whom Aristotle would call 'worse than the average'; nor the purpose of the play is to provoke laughter or correct follies. It cannot be properly called a tragi-comedy either, because it is not that the tragedy has somehow been averted. In *Śakuntalā* the tragedy is transcended by penance and penitence. In other words, it is not like *The Merchant of Venice* where with the appearance of Portia things begin to change and by the end of the trial scene the situation is completely reversed, Antonio is saved, and a tragedy is averted making room for the union of the lovers. Moreover, six years lapse during which a lot of things happen that prepare the way to make the reunion probable. Since the reunion of the last Act takes place in the hermitage of Mārica in heaven *Śakuntalā* may be called a divine comedy in a very profound sense.

It is needless to point out that the play does not in anyway conform to the norms of Senecan plays or Restoration Comedy or Brechtian epic theater or a poster drama. In brief, *Śakuntalā* is not comparable with any of the various kinds of comedies that we have in the history of western comedy: comedy of humour, comedy of character, comedy of intrigue, comedy of manners, comedy of ideas; or the high comedy, sentimental comedy, social comedy, fantastic comedy, the romantic comedy, dark comedy, or the *commedia dell' arte*. It also stands apart, in structure and texture, from the brilliant variety of verse comedies – both romantic and realistic – produced by the prolific and versatile Lope de Vega and the great Calderon. Rabindranath Tagore in an extremely insightful essay, "*Śakuntalā*" compared in great detail *Śakuntalā* and *The Tempest*, but discovered more differences than affinities. He writes: '*The Tempest* displays power; *Śakuntalā* serenity. In *The Tempest* we have victory by force; in *Śakuntalā* moral triumph. *The Tempest* stops halfway; *Śakuntalā* ends on a note of complete fulfillment. Miranda in *The Tempest* has a *graceful* simplicity, but it is a simplic-

ity based on ignorance; Śakuntalā's simplicity grows into maturity, seriousness and permanence through sin, expiation, patience, experience and forgiveness" (Tagore 662).

As a classical play it is in some respect comparable with western classical plays, *Oedipus Rex*, for example. Both the plays tell established stories of the legendary past. If in the case of *Oedipus Rex* it is the Theban legend, in case of Śakuntalā it is the *Mahābhārata*. In both the plays the role of divinities is functional. Everything is predestined. The curse of Apollo / Tiresias is distantly paralleled by the curse of Durvāsas in Śakuntalā. In other words, both the plays act out a particular curse. But there again there is a difference. In *Oedipus Rex* the curse had taken place before the birth of Oedipus while in Śakuntalā the curse is imprecated in the course of the play and it governs the subsequent action. It is, of course, possible to argue that while in *Oedipus Rex* Fate works through the rage of Oedipus (which may be taken as his hubris) in Śakuntalā it works through the natural promiscuity of the king. Furthermore, in both the plays there is a unity of action, but in Śakuntalā there is neither unity of time nor unity of place. Aristotle, we should remember, did not recommend the unity of place, however. He had only insisted on the unity of action, and about the unity of time he had just mentioned, *obiter dicta*, that the action of a tragedy should be confined, as far as possible, 'to a single circuit of the sun' (Bywater 34). The idea of the unity of place arose out of the misreading of Aristotle's *Poetics* by the critics of the Italian Renaissance : Varro, Scaliger, Minturno and Castelvetro, among others. The wrong notions perpetrated nearly for three centuries, and an important criterion of judging a play was to see whether the three unities were strictly observed. One of Sidney's main charges against the contemporary English drama was the violation of what was known as 'three unities'.

Anyway, to come back to Śakuntalā. It is also possible to identify certain symbolic episodes and the use of symbols in both *Oedipus Rex* and Śakuntalā. It would possibly not be an exaggeration to say that the entire play of *Oedipus Rex* virtually dramatizes the riddle of the sphinx, which Oedipus so proudly solves. He left Thebes with a supporting stick in his hand. In Śakuntalā the play opens with the king chasing a doe which is eventually saved, and that is exactly what would happen to Śakuntalā. Throughout the play the doe stands for Śakuntalā while the bee symbolizes the promiscuous nature of the king. One can point out many other similar symbolic episodes in both the plays. Even then, all these similarities are only surface similarities. Śakuntalā does not have the pace with which *Oedipus Rex* moves to its inevitable end.

The more fundamental difference is the difference in the worldview and the philosophy of life. As literature is culture-bound there is always a symbiotic relationship between the ethos of a country and the drama that it produces. So, while it is true that because of the presence of the concrete universal it is always possible to enjoy a drama produced in a different culture it is not possible to critically evaluate it without considering the world view of the culture that produced it. The frame of reference has to be different if we seriously mean to do justice

to a literary work produced in a different culture. More so, when it comes from a country which has a rich cultural heritage spanning centuries.

It is worth recalling in this connection what Eva Kushner wrote in a highly insightful article, "Comparative Literary History among the Human Sciences" published in *Comparative Literary History as Discourse* (Toronto, 1992).

She writes:

'As a large number of young or renewed literatures emerge onto the literary scene, we are learning what we ought to have known long ago: that categories and concepts cannot automatically be drawn from one literature to describe the history and articulation of another. Ignoring developmental specificities leads to false generalization. In studying African literatures written in European languages it is all too easy, but also *misleading, to stress what an African work has in common with seminal European works, and ignore the African intertext within and across nations*, including the all-pervasive presence of oral tradition' (emphasis added).

And again:

'This error might be regarded as a detail, but it is representative of a more fundamental error: *the failure to detect and bring to light the specificity of African aesthetics and its ethical basis*; and this, in turn, calls attention to an even more fundamental risk of error, which is the failure to recognize the phenomenon of emergence of new literatures and to make adequate allowance for them in history, criticism and theory; this is what happens when European concepts and categories are applied by extrapolation to non-European phenomena linked to an unrelated state of civilization' (emphasis added)

George Farquhar (1678–1707) was wiser than he knew when in defending the English comedy he wrote 'The rules of English comedy don't lie in the compass of Aristotle or his followers, but in the pit, box and galleries' (Quoted in Sampson 424).

The 'pit, box and galleries' represent the ethos of a country at a given historical point of time, and this becomes inscribed in the play produced. The age of Kālidāsa (c. sixth century) was a glorious age of contentment and prosperity in Indian history. The auditors comprised the people who were sensitive and critical, had faith in the essential goodness of things and believed in the final triumph of virtue. To them an object becomes really beautiful, not when it is just pleasing to the eye but only when it is touched by moral beauty. In *Śakuntalā* in the beginning Duṣyanta is attracted by the physical beauty of Śakuntalā when he sees her for the first time in the hermitage of Kañva, but in the seventh Act when he sees Śakuntalā he is charmed by her moral beauty. Both Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā are transfigured as they have passed through the purgatorial fire. Not only that the lust has been distilled into love, or more precisely, profane love has been sublimated into sacred love, but also both earth and heaven have been used in the process, both literally and metaphorically. If the first love at the hermitage of Kañva was earthly, the love that we witness in the reunion of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā at the hermitage of Mārica in heaven is heavenly. It may be appropriate to quote here, in E.B. Eastwick's translation, Goethe's admiration of *Śakuntalā* in 1792 in the following lines :

‘Wouldst thou the young year’s blossom and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,
Wouldst thou the earth, and heaven itself in one sole name combine?
I name thee, O Sakuntala! And all at once is said’.

This encomium came soon after the establishment of The Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784 headed by Sir William Jones. In 1789 Jones introduced *Śakuntalā* to the western world with his translation. In his Preface to his translation he referred to Kālidāsa as ‘the Shakespeare of India’. Alexander von Humbolt wrote : ‘The English and German translations of the *Śakuntalā* have excited the feeling of admiration which has been so amply bestowed upon Kālidāsa. Tenderness in the expression of feelings and richness of creative fancy, has assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations’ (In Gajendragadkar 31). August Wilhelm Schlegel, who made significant contribution to the theoretical foundation of, and helped usher in, German Romanticism through his famous lectures on dramatic literature delivered in Jena and Berlin in the first decade of the nineteenth century, said : ‘Among the Indians, the people from whom perhaps all the cultivation of the human race has been derived plays were common long before they could have experienced any foreign influence’. He further goes on to say: ‘It has lately been made known in Europe that they have a rich dramatic literature, which ascends back for more than two thousand years. The only specimen of their plays hitherto known to us is the delightful *Śakuntalā*, which notwithstanding the colouring of a foreign climate bears in its general structure a striking resemblance to our romantic drama’ (In Gajendragadkar 31).

There is no point in listing accolades showered on *Śakuntalā*. But we should not lose sight of one very important point. The aesthetic response of Goethe, the greatest literary figure of Germany or of Humbolt or other literary luminaries is based on their reading of the translated text of *Śakuntalā*, and who does not know that poetry is untranslatable and that a translator is a traitor (*traduttore/ traditore*)? And then there is the problem suggested at the very beginning of this essay: I mean the problem of translating and / or understanding even by the western readers who read the text in original Sanskrit, the strange thought-patterns, the subtle nuances of cultural specificities and the indigenous sensibility built up through centuries of tradition handed down by one generation to another. The fact that, not because of, but in spite of these impediments to proper aesthetic response, literary connoisseurs have appreciated *Śakuntalā* for various reasons, only confirms the paradoxical ambivalence of a classic literary text: though frozen in a particular time and space, it transcends time and space, and becomes timeless and universal. While this paradox implies the existence of a literary universal on account of which we can appreciate and enjoy a literary work produced in a completely different culture it also implies that for a proper evaluation of a literary work one must not only study it in original, but also be conversant with the literary tradition and the critical heritage to which a particular literary work belongs, the way, for example, the oriental scholar E. Fenollosa was with the literary tradition and the critical heritage of Japanese Noh plays. Otherwise,

the evaluation, based mainly on the semantic and/or philosophical content of the translated version of a play originally written in Sanskrit tends to become impressionistic and subjective, while literary criticism, in its ideal condition, should be as objective as possible.

To sum up. Evaluating a Sanskrit drama by western standard is fraught with many problems. First, there is the problem of critical criteria. Aristotle's approach to drama, despite certain surface similarities, is radically different from Bharata's, mainly on account of a radically different worldview. Secondly, there is a symbiotic relationship between the ethos and the aesthetics, and not infrequently ethics of a country. Even Eliot who said in 1919 in "Tradition and the individual Talent" that 'Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry' (SE 17) conceded in 1935 in "Religion and Literature": 'Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint' (SE 388). In other words the aesthetic criteria must be completed by moral criteria in the evaluation of a literary work. Thirdly, the problem of language; and more so when that language is no longer spoken, and a drama, let us remember, is full of dialogues. Much of the dynamics of the dialogic imagination of the dramatist is inevitably and possibly irretrievably lost to a modern reader.

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PROBLÉMY HODNOCENÍ SÁNSKRITSKÉHO DRAMATU PODLE ZÁPADNÍHO STANDARDU

Mohit. K. Ray se ve své práci zabývá sanskrtskou dramatikou a problematikou jejího přenosu do prostředí tzv. západní kultury. Hledá konkrétní odlišnosti v její percepci v různém jazykovém prostředí a samozřejmě i příčiny těchto odlišností, při čemž podrobuje analýze a následnému srovnání díla sanskrtské a evropské dramatiky. Jednou z podstatných částí Rayovy studie je komentář těch termínů obsažených ve staroindické učebnici divadelního umění (*Nāṭyaśāstre*), jež lze srovnávat s platností pojmů užívaných v oblasti divadla a dramatu už od Aristotela. Diskutuje tedy mj. možnost chápat poetiku indického či asijského divadla obecně prostřednictvím pojmů, které vznikly a dlouho fungují v naší (západní) divadelní tradici.

