

ON CREATING A POEM

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The crucial question to start with is: are the 'facts' as they appear in an individual's conception limited to and may not exceed the facts as they obtain in the world? The answer is no - there is no such limitation. World includes certain raw materials. By the exercise of his conceptual and imaginative faculties an individual may modify, combine and almost in infinite ways rearrange and transmute the materials of the natural world. In this process the individual is limited only as to the raw materials or given objects; as to their rearrangement and combination he enjoys wide latitude. And the individual who makes these combinations and alterations out of the given objects can be said to have the seeds of being an artist.

Usually people think that the creations by any artist are repetitive in character - i.e., the same scenes of life are shown or represented by the "endless repetition" in an artist's creations. Indeed, this view should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, if a glance is given to the inner eye, one would come to realize that although there is repetition, this repetition at least is not mechanical or monotonous. Different artists have the capability of portraying the same scene of the world or life differently. The same picture of life or world may be marked by the new or renewable specifics of the different artists.

Now take the poet as an example of a creator or an artist. As a creator or an artist poet is a superior being who achieves insight into the secrets of nature and finds the language inadequate to the expression of those insights. Goeth said,

"All languages have arisen from surrounding human necessities, human occupations, and the general feelings and views of man. If, now, a superior man gains an insight into the secret operations of nature, the language, which has been handed down to him, is not sufficient to express anything so remote from human affairs. He ought to have at common the language of spirits to express adequately his peculiar perceptions."⁴

We very naturally talk about flowers, rivers, rocks birds etc. We say that the bird is singing, the river is flowing, the rock is cracked etc. We also know how to describe the specific features of these things - we say of a bird that it is seed-eating, of a river that it flows downwards and so on. Observations of both these types are made on the basis of features that these natural things actually present to us. The same thing happens in the case of human-beings. Here too we make observations, and describe the characteristics of them on the basis of features presented to us - we say that a person is laughing, or well-groomed and so on. Here the direct appearances are evidences of these judgements. Also we talk to states or conditions whose evidence is indirect. For instance, when a person is sad or happy, we get only the person's report, which may be false for various reasons. But still we use words like "happy" and "sad" with a great confidence, which fairly describe the emotional state of a person. According to Russell² the basis for this confidence is a projection from our own experience onto that of another person. Generally when we observe in another person a sort of behavior which in our own case is caused by a certain emotional state, we attribute that state to the other person. Now it can be said that with non-human objects these overt appearances can be regarded as manifestations of inner states. It is a fact that any average person will hardly consider what the bird's inner state may be when it is singing, the river's when it is flowing. It is the poet who really gets deeply involved with this sort of fact. It is the poet who has the ability to identify himself mentally with those facts and it is his very impulse and ambition to do so. While really affected by natural objects a poet perhaps finds himself in a state of mind, which he cannot properly express. This, I

think is only because, our so-called, ordinary literal language is not well equipped. Thus, when a poet sees a flower blooming (bloom can be taken as an outward manifestation of its inner state), it is of this inner life that he tries to communicate his vision and expresses his artistic or poetic feeling by saying "The flower is happy". We know that the most ordinary men will never use such metaphorical sentence like "The flower is happy" after seeing the flower in a bloomed form. They will never use such predicate (which can only be applied to the humans) to the non-human object like flower. But for poets there is a need to use such predicates. In order to manifest what they see or feel they strain the language to the utmost. Consequently, the poet exploits the rich resources of language, plumbing its lexicon to find the proper word and extends to novel limits its syntactic forms. The novelty corps up from the conception which the poet has in his possession. Thus, in metaphor (which is an artist's creation) the whole process is telescoped in the instant of conception and this is both for the artist or poet and the reader or appreciator. Metaphor, therefore, is an immediate expression of the new conception.

If it is asked that given any metaphorical sentence what the exact process of the reader to capture it will be, then perhaps, the answer will be that the reader probably starts from the actual utterance but then, in awareness of the poet's linguistic straits, he should negotiate through the metaphoric utterance to the poet's original insight. Reader's this very negotiation represents not so much a semantic construal as it does a conceptual construal. While processing the metaphorical sentence "The flower is happy", the reader is not interested in working out what sense to give to "happy" - he tries to understand what it would be like for a flower to be happy.

An artist (e.g. poet) sees the reality of some other world. He has the capability or a kind of power, with the help of which he can see realities that have no earthly counterparts. Yet he thinks, that his report on those realities for him are accurate and faithful descriptions of objects and events that actually exist or occurred. Any ordinary person who could not accompany the poet or any artist on his journey, has not experienced the direct vision of this other

reality and as a result the artistic descriptions come to him as metaphors. No doubt metaphors, through a distortion of our world, enable us to hit one that is different and peculiar. But one must notice that as long as any ordinary person perceives the artist's or poet's descriptions as metaphors, he does not share fully in the artist or poet's vision. True poetic or artistic faith, would consist in our perceiving, with the poet his descriptions as literally true.

Any artist's creation is representation of his mental and emotional exertions of an unusual power and range. By this exertion he goes into the realm of his own making, the realm which is or can be different from our so called empirical world. For example, if we see the side of the poet, we will observe that in order to represent faithfully his vision of his own made reality, the poet employs language that is semantically deviant and this takes the poet away from our so-called empirical world.

The immediate question that can be raised here now is: what are the conditions that contribute to the making of a poem? Or, what really enables an artist to make his creations? This is the question which both Indian and Western rhetoricians have attended very seriously and the outcome is nothing but series of different views. As it is not possible to discuss all the different views of both the sides here, I shall discuss only some of the important views of the Indian thinkers, as they devoted much of their energy towards the delineation of it.

In order to build the world of art, a poet needs only his *genius or pratibhā* which he has in his own possession, and nothing else. This is true for every form of creative activity, i.e., *pratibhā* or genius works at the back of any sort of artistic creation, including visual art and music. The genius of an artist arranges the ordinary world of experience in a new order and thereby creates a novel world, which is the world of art.

Now what actually is *pratibhā*? Can we say that it is something inborn or innate? Or, is *pratibhā* spontaneous? Can *pratibhā* be acquired? Can we say that *pratibhā* of an artist or a creator is sufficient for any creative thinking or production? Or can we say that it is a suggestive power?

Pratibhā is that kind of an internal power, which enables an artist to create a completely excellent and beautiful object, or enables to create such things, which has great clarity and surprising beauty in it. We can find or feel the presence of *pratibhā* in any so-called great creation, specially in poetic composition. That is why Abhinava Gupta said, beautiful poems with charming sounds, feelings, images focus the *pratibhā* of a poet. And wisdom (*prajñā*) of a poet is something unique, which is not like any ordinary wisdom at all. *Pratibhā* is fundamentally an internal disposition or what Bharata (1894) says “*antaragatabhāva*”, without which any creative production is not possible.

If we are to consider *pratibhā* as nothing but internal disposition or creative disposition of an artist, then *pratibhā* must be something natural or spontaneous, which only flows in the mind of an artist. And if it be so, the creative disposition is something, which is not a matter of acquisition or a result of excessive effort. That is, we must say that *pratibhā*, as a creative power of an artist flourishes or develops without any reason.

Here I must mention Jagannatha's view. He regards *pratibhā* as sufficient and the only requisite for an artistic creation or poetic composition. But he says that *pratibhā* is not inborn or innate, rather in some people *pratibhā* is present due to god's grace while in others it is there of special training or proficiency and practice. Thus Jagannatha believes in unobstructed cultivation (*utpādya*).

But if there is no internal flow or creative disposition or artistic sense already there in the mind of proper creator or artist in its own right, special training or proficiency (*vyutpatti*) and practice (*Abhyāsa*) or any other kind of elements cannot ever help a person adequately to become an artist. Perhaps it is the reason why according to Dandin *pratibhā* is primarily natural or “*naisargiki*”. Therefore the fundamental and primary thing in an artist is the *pratibhā* or a consciousness or a unique feeling which necessarily helps him in his creation and without which an artist cannot be said to be an artist in the strict sense. That is why, Anandavardhana gives more emphasis on *pratibhā* than on knowledge. According to him, we can conceal lack of

knowledge by the natural inborn artistic or poetic capability. So, to him, excessive effort, proper training or refined intellect etc., are not real elements of inborn artistic power - it is this natural poetic or artistic sense which is the fundamental condition for driving forward a poetic creation. We can observe in Anandavardhan that emphasis on *pratibhā* does not altogether eliminate the necessity of proficiency or knowledge and practice but they are given a secondary status. And this shows that he does not give knowledge its proper due.

Now, can we say that *pratibhā* or genius of an artist or poet is somehow associated with the suggestive power which lies within his mind and which is the source of his creative account? Yes, we can say, perhaps, that to have *pratibhā* means to have extra suggestive power as well, otherwise what makes a poet look at the simile between two very different things and that too not in a very simple way but rather in a very elegant way! However, it has been claimed by Anandavardhana and his followers of the Dhvani-school of Indian Poetics that the "suggestive power" or "vyanjana" of certain terms is neither like what is called by Annabhata "Sakti" or primary meaning nor like what he calls "lakṣana" or secondary meaning.³ In other words it stands that poetic language (metaphorical language) is not simply structured either through the primary meaning of the word, the reference of which to the significate is direct; or simply through the secondary meaning of the word, the reference of which to the significate is indirect. Rather some other thing works to create this poetic language at the back of this primary and secondary meaning. It is that which is called "suggestive power" or vyanjanā, which is a distinctive power of terms. Let me explain this position by taking an example:

"Go, if thou must go, my beloved.

May the journey be blessed.

And may I be born again

Only at the place where thou art gone."⁴

These above words are spoken by a devoted wife to her husband on

the eve of his departure for a distant place. The first two sentences show the direct anxious expression of the feelings of a devoted wife on her separation from the husband. But in the third sentence a new complexion is pictured and that suggest something opposite of what they signify in their direct sense. Now the suggested sense is this: "Beloved, my life will be gone after your departure. So please do not go". Now this suggested sense is not to be obtained either through the direct or through the indirect signifying power of any of the words actually spoken. It must have then been obtained through a completely different kind of signifying power of what is meant by the statement in question. So *pratibhā* can be explained as a suggestive power which is a distinct kind of power.

One should note that when *pratibhā* is claimed to be the primary source of any creativity, then nothing mysterious is really claimed. Each artistic creation is a reflection of *pratibhā* or genius. A music or tune comes up only when there appears in consciousness a soft light of an idea waiting for a proper combination of musical notes; a painting comes forward only when there appears in consciousness an imagination of beautiful picture, waiting to be projected on a canvas with a right combination of different colours and such will be in the case of poetry too. *Pratibhā* is a kind of seed, a kind of spark without which no creation is possible in any sphere.

But along with this magic touch of *pratibhā* if we also have "Vyutapatti" or proficiency, "Abyasa" or serious effort in concentration, the creation would be no doubt, a marvelous one and a remarkable one. Any genuine writing whether poem or novel demands command over grammar, lexicon, choice of significant words, i.e., vyutpatti. Again if serious effort is given with a concentrated mind the result will be nothing but a splendid one - the writing will emerge in its complete grandeur. If a poet, who is well-equipped in language and vocabulary, gives concentration and effort and has a genuine kind of *pratibhā*, his poem or creation certainly will be of a unique kind than that of a poet who has only *pratibhā*, but poor in other factors or has none of them at all. Thus the lesson is this : in order to be a genuine artist *pratibhā* alone is not enough, we must have proficiency, effort, will to

express and concentration along with this *pratibhā*. These factors along with *pratibhā* enable an artist to give articulate expression to emotions, feelings and imagination in the various artistic media.

To me any aesthetic experience is *transparent* - aesthetic experience, poetic and musical, can be examples of what I call transparent. More clearly, by transparency I mean self-presentation, as distinct from representation. Its hallmark is immediacy and clarity. When we have something transparent in us, without being mediated by anything else, we experience the transparent. To have a transparent experience the transparency is a first-person affair. To communicate it to others is a second person enterprise. The primary aim of any type of artist is to experience and communicate, but *not to explain*.

Further, any sort of art or artistic creation - be it a poem or an use of metaphor, be it a music, be it a painting - is a kind of idealization. Art without *idealization* (may be of the actual), I believe, is impossible. The lens of camera and the eye of human beings are different. The camera lens captures the actual almost exactly, but prospectively. Only when this prospectively capturing is of highly imaginative character, is it artistic. Human eye aided by brain and heart, transforms the actual into an idealized concreteness. It is *concrete* in a very special sense and one should not confuse it with perceptual concreteness.

One sort of competence is needed in order to appreciate poetry and fine arts. But this competence may not be necessarily academic in character. One can take *sympathy* as the chief characteristic of this sort of competence. Whereas if one wants to understand or wants to follow the technological effectiveness of Science, one needs to be schooled in some or other definite way. One can say that *Technicality* may be the main characteristic of this kind of competence. In other words, the rules of complex games that we play in science are learnable - whereas the rules that we play in the fine arts or metaphors are so hidden in the man that to use them successfully he must have *genius* in his possession and the appreciator who tries to follow the artistic game must be *sympathetically* disposed.

Hence two kinds of trends are present: one, the path of the scientists

and the other is the path of the artists, or different forms of art. Both the trends are actively present everywhere and were present in the past. The two different trends work or play with the same nature of our own, but in a different way, We have a scope to prove or test the scientific laws, truths and theories. Any scientific theory may be empirically verifiable. But one cannot test or prove or empirically verify the works of art. Can we test or prove any poet's creation (e.g. poetry) in the same way as we can test or prove any scientific discovery? If somebody suggests that for the poet there might intervene a process of trial and experimentation, like the scientists, before arriving at the precise structure for the metaphor, then I should point out that no trace of this process appears in the metaphor, unlike the situation in science, where records of the experiments exist and may be adduced in support of the theory. Any creation of artist is taken as a personal peculiarity and so the artist's expressed work may not sometimes be fully understandable by a critic or an art-follower. Often an artist gets the benefit of the interpreter's doubt. This sort of benefit, I am sure, is not given to the scientist. People expect that any scientific discovery must be objective - it must have some realistic standpoint. That is, any scientific work must be devoid of any subjective touch or bias. It is a fact that both scientific and poetic contributions produce new knowledge. Nature is consistent to the scientist - it does not exceed itself. Scientists discover such things, which are always there in the nature. For example, when the law of conservation of matter and energy was discovered by the scientist, it was a scientific discovery that energy is conserved in physical processes, but it was always a fact of nature. In case of an artist's work, nature can exceed itself, nature is not limited to the artist. Artist can project a state of affairs that transcends anything that our experience has taught us. He may take different data from the given nature, but can combine them in an unusual manner, and can give a new meaning to his work or creation. For example, a poetic combination '*The sea is laughing* has been arranged in an unprecedented way but still these types of sentences express meaning, although these sentences (deviant) may not correspond to our experienced world. The effort to rationalize their meanings is purely conceptual.

It is artist's vision of the world that is novel and produces new knowledge to the appreciator.

The themes or discoveries of science are historically changing - but the same does not happen in the case of art. We always come across the same themes of life, taking different human characters, beauty of nature etc. which take place in the works of art. But the fact to be noted is that the same theme views itself in a new way by which the sympathetic reader does not ever get bored.

At length, a question can be raised - can we hope for progress in art, as we can do in science? Can we say that the present art - be it in the world of literature, or in the realm of music or in any aesthetic part, have progressed a lot, than what it was in the past? I believe that progress is neither a law of nature (as studied in science) or of culture (as captured in music, literature etc.) Rather, depending partly on our personal choice, including the choice of our paradigm, and partly on the characteristics of the objects - the claim to "progress" is settled positively, in whatever way it is defined, is linear or cumulative. In both the domains of human discovery and that of expression the sort of change we observe are branded by two elements - "progressive and regressive", "cultural renaissance", "cultural decadence", "progressive science", "regressive shift in science" and their cognate expressions are often found in the relevant literature.

NOTES

1. Eckermann, J.P., 1930, *Conversations with Goeth* Tr. J. Oxenford, London, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. (414).
2. Russel, B., 1976, *Human Knowledge : Its Scope and Limits*, New York, Simon and Schuster (485).
3. Annambhatta : *Tarkasamgraha - Dipika on Tarkasamgraha* Trans by Gopinath Bhattacharya, Calcutta : *Progressive Publishers*. p.p. 264-265, 289-292.
4. Annambhatta : *Tarkasamgraha - Dipika on Tarkasamgraha*, Trans. by Gopinath Bhattacharya, Calcutta : *Progressive Publishers*, p.291

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