

Difficulties Of Communicating An Oriental To A Western Audience

Dr.T.SELVAKKUMAR*

Assistant Professor

PG & Research Department of English

A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous)

(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Trichy, India)

Poondi, Thanjavur, 613 503

Selvaa1446@gmail.com

This paper is entitled *Difficulties in communicating an oriental to a Western Audience*. The Western audience to be an average to whom the book page of a Sunday newspaper is addressed. It is difficult to define and oriental. I am concerned with the Indian oriental. One cannot treat the Hindus and the Muslims or India as a group and label them oriental. These two communities are distinguished by their traditional attitudes towards beef and pork, for instance.

A Hindu reader was enchanted by a European novel till he chanced upon the page which described the heroine having breakfast in bed. She was relishing a boiled egg and that fact, to this reader, an oriental Brahmin vegetarian for South India, was to disgusting for words, and she was breakfasting without having brushed her teeth. An Indian doctor told me recently that an English colleague of his in a Madras hospital had said to him that but for being dirty, there wasn't much difference between his Indian and English patients. Kalidas' *Shakuntala* made such an impression in the west, it is worth recalling, and the oriental cinema-going audiences have adopted Western actors and actresses as idealized human beings. *Shakuntala* and the actors might have certain admired qualities. They certainly dispense feelings. In spite of our individual differences, we are related to all creatures that have feelings. There is of course the creative process at work in the presentation of *Shakuntala* and the characters impersonated by actors.

I do not feel disposed to explain the creative process. One recognizes it. It is, as often, unrecognized. Entirely workable techniques exist today to convert a taped conversation into a short story or a chapter of a novel. A work of literary art, however as a result of the creative process has something additional and undefined. It has something to do with its creator. It is his or her uniqueness that is the factor.

Writers have written for purely professional reasons, which is to say, to entertain and to claim rewards as entertainers. One is grateful to storytellers too. Now, John Milton, in a letter replying to an inquiry about what he was thinking of wrote to his corers. Pendent that was not writing as a professional. A man like that in his own estimation feels responsible to generations. Some man has felt themselves to be “the custodians of the uncreated unconscious of mankind.” A man needs to cultivate himself, and to make him exceptional, so as to make something that the generations to come might witness as exceptional. A great work of art, quite obviously, is an effect of a great personality, by whatever standard you may have it, the eastern or the western. To believe in art as a purpose has been a western tradition. It has been an eastern tradition, too, I dare say, but we have little biographical data of oriental artists and writers. To experiment with life, and to feel truly, and objectively, and to master the technique and to excel in the raft, is pursuit of perfection. And poetry is the right medium to aim at beauty. All kind of writing that deals with life additionally is an inquiry into the truth. Literary criticism, in the last analysis, is criticism of life Edger Allan Poe’s vision of a kingdom under the sea, howsoever strange, no aspiring assistant professor or a pushing Ph D candidates or a budding critic without having had a violent personal encounter with life can possibly understand Othello’s love, as revealed in his last speech, which Matthew Arnold might have found poignant and T.S Eliot somewhat wanting, by virtue of his own (Eliot’s) experiment with love. A character of mine heard the ghost of her lover cry out to God for

comfort. It was years after that I knew that the poor woman might feel an additional pang of regret that her lover did not cry out for her.

An aspiring Indian writer has shown me a short story in which a young Indian woman is described as travelling by train. She is reported as grievously afraid because her male companion, in the men's compartment, does not show up at the next stop, to reassure her, that is. The author of the story, a young woman herself, had felt the girl's predicament, I dare say, and she had described it faithfully, and at length. But the English magazine editor wasn't moved by it. He throughout the girl was stupid. He actually called her a dam fool. She might have got out of the women's compartment and looked into the men's compartment for her young man. Yet, the situation was real enough and the girl's response, helplessness and fear, genuine. For her, to expose herself to strange men would be unthinkable. Now, an Indian father of sixty, with tears streaming from his eyes, reviews his predicament. His daughters have grown up, have become *Sayani* know what is what and he has failed to find suitable matches and the dowries for them. This situation, if ably played on the stage, or the screen, is perfectly intelligible to an Indian audience. This is a genuine predicament. A western audience might dismiss the tragic figure of the father as unreal. His tears might merit a laugh. Both these people, the frightened girl in the train and the defeated father of the worldly wise girls always allowing for talent, the magi of a gifted writer do not have a universal appeal. Their appeal might be local. There are people in certain parts of the world today, I imagine, who are worried to death and cannot decide as a matter of national or tribal policy, whether to file their teeth. Their ancestors had always filed their teeth and achieved masculine beauty. This is a genuine predicament. Elsewhere, in certain islands of the Pacific, I assume, currently, the issue to resolve is whether or not you should be acknowledged a man, if you hunted down and consumed at least two of your fellow men. The reformers among them, I suspect, spay to vanquish one man might do. It is a local problem. Yet, Cervantes' man who

fights the windmills and most of us are conditioned not to drift into war against windmills is emotionally acceptable, and so is Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*, intelligible and acceptable. An analytical approach social, linguistic, sociological, psychological anthropological cannot account for the mystery of art and for the makers of art. If T.S Eliot feels awe in the presence of Dante's power to realize the inapprehensible in visual images that would seem to me appropriate enough a response. The lesser folk, in the arm chairs, judge and analyze anybody at all, and instead of explaining anybody at all, end up exposing them.

I am convinced that the genuine approach to my deliberately contrasted two characters, or profiles of man, the common and the excellent I am still on H.Hatter and Haill is to recognize them as contradictions in my own personality during the years I was occupied with them. In order to communicate these, impersonally, I needed a craft, and I have chosen the craft of writing. And my entire linguistic creed an Indian Professor of English has, recently, asked me a question about this in a letter is simply to find a suitable medium. I find the English language is that kind of medium. It needs to be modified to serve my purpose. "Man is born to make," Hilaire Belloc has written. "That human art in which it is most difficult to achieve this end is the art of writing..." "Yet", he continues. "this much is certain, that unconstructed writing is at once worthless and ephemeral and nearly the whole of our modern English writing is unconstructed. The great majority of men do not attempt it you can discover in their slip shod pages nothing of a seal of a stamp.... The things are extremely rare". This is a true today as it was in his day. Something might be done about this.

References:

- [1] George Orwell, letter dated December 17,1944 *All about H.Hatter*.
- [2] Edmund Blunden, letter addressed to the high Commissioner of India, London, February 1952.
- [3] E.M. Forster, letter dated December 9,1947 *All about H.Hatter*.