

The Other Truth of Literature and Religion

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Though I am not quite sure of what the man of science is engaged in today, at one time, he studied truths that explained the observed. My interest, however, is more in the observer. I watch the observer, including myself, growing, changing, becoming different, and altering the relationships within which he exists, and my language does not have the mathematical precision of the man of science. May be, sometimes, I like to watch the observer die as observer and to see his language go over the brink of silence. I don't know whether this makes sense. However, I love stories and I am sure, you do too. So let me at least promise to tell you in my own way two lovely old stories sometime during the course of our conversation.

Truth needs no support

I spend a bit of my time reading literature and am interested, in a way somewhat different from the usual, in religion. The religion I am interested in is a religion without name or label: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu or Muslim. Also, the religion that fascinates me is harder and more austere than secular humanism. Its truths are vaster and subtler than the truths of ethics and human morality. Religion does not pander to the importance of man. There is nothing sentimental or gentle or soothing about religion. It must be founded on the scrupulous denial of all comforting lies. It must be complete in itself and not need the support of even one follower to make it stand. This, I presume, is how anything that is true should be. What Copernicus or Galileo said did not need the support of adherents to make it valid. When truth has no howling followers it stands more beautiful at the heart of silence. It stands by itself even with the Pope and the Church on the other side.

Only lies need followers to make them stand shakily a while. Gravity operated even during all those millions of years when Newton had not given it a name and formulated the law. If there is a religious truth that too must have existed and must continue to exist, even in the wilderness, independent of whether or not it is called by a name, extolled in sacred texts, paid obeisance to in places of worship. If no such truth exists, one couldn't be bothered by the icons and rituals, the chants and prayers and sacred texts. Truth remains even when there is no *Tathagata*, no "somebody who arrived there." The Tathagata, the Christ, and the Prophet are important because the truth that needs no support in order to exist, can only be known and reflected upon in the language of those who have experienced it, whose authentic lives bear witness to it. The truth that is ontologically transcendent and self-sufficient, is epistemologically existential and given to that perfectly honed, perfectly surrendered and self-naughted consciousness that alone can receive it.

Now, the first story:

The History of Mankind

Once upon a time there was a King in Persia who was a great patron of learning. Learned men from all over the world came to his court to receive patronage. One day the King called all his Scholars together and expressed a desire to have them write for him the History of Mankind. The Scholars got to work, and after ten years of toil, placed before the King the History, bound in a hundred fat volumes. The King was delighted, but he said, "My learned Scholars, how shall I find time to read these hundred volumes? Couldn't you write me a Shorter History of Mankind?" The Scholars went back to work, and after another ten years of labour, brought before the King a Shorter History written in ten fat volumes. The King, an older man, looked at the ten volumes, and said, "My learned Scholars, I have aged in these ten years. Now there isn't time for me to read even these ten volumes. Couldn't you write for me a Still Shorter History of Mankind?" When after another ten years the Scholars brought before the King the Still Shorter History, in one volume, the King was on his death bed. He looked wistfully at the Scholars and said, "Isn't there someone here who could tell me the History of Mankind in brief?" The Scholars looked at each other and then towards the Wisest of the Wise: an old sage who had once been a great warrior, a great statesman, a great

lover, a great ascetic and a great poet, and whose hair and beard, and eyebrows, and eyelashes had all grown white as snow. The Wisest of the Wise went up to the King, and holding the King's hands in his hands, said, "Your majesty, all men suffer and all men die. This, in brief, is the History of Mankind."

I have often wondered why the punch line of the story had to come after all that rigmarole about Scholars from all over the world labouring for years to write, first a Complete History, then a Shorter History, and then a Still Shorter History of Mankind. Why didn't the story-teller, without making the King wait to be in his death-bed, get him to ask his Wazir to tell him the History of Mankind in brief, and why didn't he get the Wazir to say what was said by the white haired, white bearded, white-browed, white eyelashed, warrior-lover-ascetic rolled-in-one wise old Owl? The answer that came to mind was: May be because words carry their meaning from the silent being of the man who speaks them. What the scholar sage said, he said after having relegated to silence the information of a hundred volumes and the experiences of a warrior, statesman, poet, lover, and ascetic. Words are made authentic by the person who has the authority to speak them and the authority comes to him from what he is. Without the hinterland of silence insouling words with being, words are hollow. And also, are persons always attuned to hear the hinterland of silence behind words? Or do they have to mature in order to receive? Is the moment of death such a moment of maturity? Enthroned in his durbar in the hour of his glory, would the King have understood how, in front of death, King and Beggar are one and have the same history?

And why does the Sage hold the King's hands in his as he tells him in a sentence the essence of human history? Is the pain of personal suffering healed in a sense of human suffering? Where do the two meet? What is compassion?

Human truth is existential

A bland statement isn't human truth. All human truth is existential, in the sense of being born out of existence. All great changes in society have been brought about by people who have worked as artists upon the medium of their own lives to give shape to their being. The Indian languages have a word for them: *jeevanshilpi*. Whether it is through the Buddha or Christ or Mohammad or through Lenin or Gandhi or Mao, in religion as well as politics, meanings that have changed the

world qualitatively, deeply and durably, have all first been incarnated as states of being, as ideas authenticated existentially.

Structure & communication of experience

A state of being is structurally much more complex than an idea. Many emotions, concepts, perceptions are simultaneously present and interacting within an experience, a state of being. A mind in anguish may hold within it, for instance, the opposite pulls of an intellect denying God and an emotion hankering after Him. A white rose as experience could be many things intertwined: a fragrance, a softness, a shape, blending shades of white, symbol of purity, beauty, fragility, vulnerability, and also, possibly, a memory of a white rose in the hair of a dearly loved child, and a later memory of white roses placed upon her dead body. An experience exists as experience only in the simultaneous existence of its ingredients, in the simultaneity of space, and is broken up when projected through the sequentiality of time. The spatial dimension of a state of being is preserved intact in silence. And the spatial dimension of experience includes the experience of a span of time, of the past, for the past is no longer a flow. The past is simultaneous in memory. The past is time seen in repose as space, as extension. In the mind there is no time, there is only space and spatial awareness of time. Words, because they happen in time, are unsuitable as medium for delivering totalities whose constituents exist spatially and not chronologically. Lovers wishing to share entire states of being know how much more whole than the language of words is the language of silence.

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond
any experience, your eyes have their silence. . .

Silence is the language of intuitive rapport, a language that transmits totals as totals. Mystics too possess God in this language: the Buddha's "If you ask me, I do not know, if you don't ask I know." Doesn't that mean: in words I don't know, in silence I know? The mystic experience is a total, transverbal, transanalytical experience. Words, because they see a bit at a time, may be adequate for analysis, as language of the intellect, but not as the language of experience. The communication of an experience or a state of being as distinguished from that of concepts, is a total communication achieved when silence resonates to silence. Outside the esoteric circle of lover and

beloved, mystic and God, where a return to words becomes necessary, communicating states of being in their wholeness poses difficulties. However, it is in the nature of literature and the arts to face this difficulty.

Thought as experience

Literature communicates experience, not concepts. Even the body of its thought is not made up of thought. It gives us thought as experience, not thought as concepts. When a poem or a play or a novel searches for an answer to a problem it does not look for an abstract conceptual formulation but for a movement from the anguish of *experiencing* the problem to the poise of *experiencing* the solution. In larger works, not infrequently, the plot is woven around a journey in the world outside shaping as well as symbolizing the growth of the mind or the journey within. And there may be more than one person undertaking the same outward journey but bringing to it different attitudes, coming to it with different states of mind, and therefore, experiencing it and learning from it differently. And in one epic work there may be a number of journeys: as for example, in *War and Peace*, the journey of Pierre with the Russian prisoners of Napoleon's army, of Andrey and Natasha with the emigrants from Moscow. And during these journeys the major characters and many minor ones are engaged in meditation over various relationships: between man and himself, man and his loved ones, man and his society, man and mankind, man and the universe, man and death, man and the meaning of life. And not only does each man's journey become an embodiment of meaning or meaninglessness as experience, through being juxtaposed, the experiential meaning of each journey modifies the value of every other. If a lyric is a simple melody in experience, an epic like the *Mahabharat* or an epic novel like *War and Peace*, is a grand symphony revealing to our perception ever new patterns of significance in individual and human experience. I might add parenthetically that the journeys spoken of above are not seen as movement, but in a state of arrest, as simultaneity, as completed movement. They are experienced as space, time perceived in retrospect.

Different forms of literature meet the challenge of communicating thought as experience differently. While the novel and drama have other resources too at their disposal, poetry meets the challenge through an act of language relating words to silence. Great poetry

communicates not through its words but through a silence indicated by them, a silence frozen between and beyond words. The aesthetic challenge involved in reaching the further shore of silence over a bridge of words is a form of the metaphysical challenge involved in arriving at essence through the flux of existence. Words in poetry constitute the just enough noise that makes silence audible .

In the forest
A berry drops.
Sound of water.

Literature & the jeevanshilpi

Literature, then, is a medium eminently suited to incarnate meanings that are states of being, meanings apprehended as experience. Abstract meanings are *a priori* to experience, existential meanings, simultaneous with it. It is not surprising that artists who have worked upon the medium of their lives, the *jeevanshilpis*, have so often also chosen to be artists upon this other medium of language, to give us parables, tales, songs, epigrams, poems, or may be an epic. Not that they have not chosen music, or painting, or sculpture, or architecture. The parables of the Buddha, Christ, and Paramhansa Sri Ramkrishna, the poetry or the songs of Basho, Rumi, Kabir, Mira, Surdas, the Lingayats and the Bauls, the prose poetry of the Upanishads and the Bible and the Quran, of Eckhart, St. Augustine, and St. John of the Cross, the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana* as epics, each and everyone of these is literature of the highest order. They are literature because in them words have been insouled with the quality of being. They are not dogma which is *a priori* to experience, conservative, and without spontaneous creative dynamism. When we think of social change is it possible to ignore changes generated by religious literature in Europe and Asia and to forget the umbrage of establishments? While the head rolled on the ground the blood gushing out wrote there, "*Anal Haqq.*"

Anonymity

In a broader sense all great literature is religious—Lear, Karamazov, *War and Peace*—for all great literature is true to man's urge to be, and created out of this urge. Paradoxically, while great literature changes society by its very being, by existing, the thought of converting society

rarely creates great literature. Is it because the thought of converting is generally motivated, not by the urge to be, but by a desire to seem: to seem a great thinker, a great visionary, a great rebel? All pure being is only before God, if there is a God, or before the inmost self. All desire to seem is before the world, before others, and this desire easily becomes a deep pretence, a play-acting, disguised even from the self. Being alone remains authentic, and therefore, unaware of power, empowered to change. It was perhaps to retain the purity of their urge to be that the authors of much great literature in the past chose anonymity. Did recognition sully the fountains of being, and therefore, the fountains of true poetry, and art? Who wrote the Upanishads? Who painted Ajanta? Han Shen's poems were collected after his death from the rocks and tree trunks and bamboo shoots upon which he wrote while he lived and died a recluse in a forest, moving higher and higher into the Cold Mountain as mankind tried to reach him. Throughout history, it is worth considering how much great literature has been written under persecution: near our time, the works of Pasternak, Mandelstam, Sinyavsky. "Urge to be" and "desire to seem" are Sinyavsky's phrases from his essay, "In Defence of the Pyramid."

Works that preserve for eternity the purity of being and the essence of a lifetime can become texts studying which men catch soul spark and ignite into being. Yeats standing in worship, before the Byzantine "monuments of unaging intellect" recognizes them as sages with the power to integrate, to "gather...into the artifice of eternity." Christ asked the apostles to bear witness to the truth. In India, before an idol is worshipped, the ritual of *pranpratistha* is performed: invoking deity to give life to the idol by indwelling. Could great art be insouled, ignited by the authentic, anonymous being of a creator self-naughted in the moment of creativity? All literature of being continues to bear witness even after the death of the master artist who works upon the double media of life and language. Such literature changes society qualitatively and subtly by working upon the very fabric of society, the minds of individuals. Even if only a few minds are faggot, such literature is in no hurry to ignite. It is patient and works through the momentum of truth. It changes without being committed to change, just by being true, and impinging with the far greater force of experience, not concept. Its effect is perhaps not always overtly manifest.

Men asked Han Shen the way to the Cold Mountain. The way cannot be told. When one knows, one is there. Being, doesn't show the way, it stands as evidence that the way exists, to be found anew by

each one. Being cannot be reached through imitation, by following. It is reached in creativity. And creativity is in finding the way.

A poem does not show us the way. It "teases us out of thought." Ezra Pound's translation of Basho's haiku on the moment that brought him *satori* reads:

An old pond.
A frog jumps in.
Plop!

In the poem, where is the poet? We are left confronted with a pure instant in universal time, with an observation in which the self is totally effaced. This is non-possession of the highest order, so much so it does not even lay claim to the possession of a thought or a feeling. How different from Wordsworth's "I have felt a presence/ That disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts..." Wordsworth is present large as a philosopher in "Tintern Abbey." Basho in his haiku is as anonymous as God in a blade of grass. His mysticism is not abstract, a mysticism of thought. It is concrete, a mysticism of things. It is a celebration of the microcosm. Its attitude is non-assertive, non-possessive, happy: the attitude of *aparigraha*, non-possession. So diminutive in scale, it yet represents the ultimate ideal of a culture: a pure, transparent, free, totally unconditioned state where no mind exists to stand between the observed and the observer, a state of being to whose elusive simplicity generations of Zen Buddhists have aspired. The mystery of the universe solved by a leaping frog!

The Nataraj icon

The Nataraj icon at Chidambaram represents Shiva as the King of Dancers. One hand holds the *damaru*, symbol of the rhythm which holds together the cosmic order: the rhythmic movement of the heavenly bodies, of the seasons, of day and night, of the winds, of vegetation cycles, of breath and pulse; it says, "Know me as creator." Another hand holds fire: "Know me as destroyer and purifier." The third hand, held in *gajahastha mudra*, points to the lifted left foot. "Take shelter at my feet and know all that is created and destroyed is created and destroyed in me, all that is destroyed is purified in me, that destruction is creation." The fourth hand is held in *varabhaya mudra*: "Knowing destruction and creation, have nothing to fear." Shiva's right foot stands on and crushes the body of a dwarf, the *apasmara purusha* ("he who has forgotten"). Flames representing all the energy of the

universe form a ring round the figure; on his forehead is the crescent moon, and in his locks the hooded snake and the Ganga: "He who crushes the dwarf ego realizing it as ephemeral and knows that only the universal energy abides, has nothing to fear." While the body of Shiva whirls through the dance of destruction and creation, his eyes are shown as *dhyananetra* (the tranquil, unwavering, inward looking eyes of the meditator). The consciousness that is Shiva ("embodiment of all that is good") resides at the absolute stillness of the core. Tagore defined dance as "ecstatic meditation at the still centre of movement."

Each little detail of the icon, moulded by generations of anonymous sculptors, is significant. One could just think of the hand holding the *damaru* at its waist where the two conical halves meet at their common apex. A pellet tied to a string alternately strikes the two faces of the drum as the player swings the *damaru* holding it at the waist. Shiva's *damaru* is the *trikal* *damaru* (tri: three, kal: time). The two cones meeting at the waist are the past and the future and the point of the waist where past and future converge and intersect is the eternally flowing moment of the present. Shiva holds the *damaru* by the waist and plays with time striking the past and the future. Time, here, is not chronological time, but subjective time, time as we experience it. In subjective time the past is memory and the future, a projection of that memory as hope and fear. The waking as well as dreaming consciousness of all the *apasmara* *purushas* whom Shiva would crush underfoot is made up only of memory, and of hope with its fears. Time as memory and hope comprise the total, dwarf self. He who clings neither to memory nor to hope and lives only in the flowing moment of the present, he who has entirely destroyed time that is self and celebrates in dance whatever is, whether it is a passing cloud, a blade of grass, a host of flowers, a leaping frog, or the morning stars singing at the moment of cosmic creation, he and he alone is Shiva.

Shiva dances in Chidambaram, a township in South India. May be it is also the sky (*ambara*) of the mind (*chid*)? Or is it that Shiva dances in a mind that is like the sky - totally empty and by its emptiness enabled to hold the infinite?

Islam: Surrender to God

The *Hadith* records Mohammad as saying "Die before you die" (*mootoo qabla an tamootoo*). It is the same truth "Let the self perish before physical death comes." The death and the passing away of all things (i.e. the flame and *kal damaru* of Nataraj) except the Lord, surrendering to

Him (i.e. taking shelter at the feet) and being sustained by Him (the *varabhay mudra*) are again, themes also of the Quran. I quote very briefly from the 55th Surah, *Ar-Rahman*: "All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away; but forever will abide the countenance of thy sustainer, full of majesty and glory." The 3rd Surah, *Al-Imran* Says: "Behold, the only religion in the sight of God is (man's) self-surrender unto Him." The word *Islam* means "self-surrender to God" and *muslim* means "one who surrenders himself to God." Even the Prophet is just a passer-by. In the 41st Surah, *Fussilat*, the revelation says: "Say thou (O Prophet) I am but a mortal like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the one God." Nor does the Quran proclaim Mohammad as the only Prophet. The 30th Surah, *Ar-Rum*, reveals: "And indeed (O Mohammad) before thee we did send forth apostles each unto his own people and they brought them all evidence of the truth." One could compare the Buddha's: the truth always was, whether the Tathagata came or not.

Job: from tragic assertion to mystic surrender

In the Old Testament, Job questioning the ways of God in the hour of intense suffering finally has a vision of God speaking to him out of the whirlwind, enumerating to him His mighty works, and challenging Job to answer:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

... ..

Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of
the earth? declare if thou hast understanding.

Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who
hath stretched the line upon it?

Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid
the corner stone thereof;

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God
shouted for joy? ...

(Chap. 38, Verses 1 & 4-7)

It would be erroneous perhaps to interpret Chapters 38 to 41 as God browbeating Job with a narration of the grandeur of creation, leaving Job's questions unanswered. Because God does not speak or

enter into dialogue in the ordinary sense, he does not answer anyone's questions either. But in another sense, through His creation He speaks all the time to one's understanding, for one to perceive. God speaking to Job of the power and glory of creation could mean, not that God started speaking but that Job's doors of perception opened and he heard. All of a sudden Job's eyes opened to his own insignificance, and as the self perished, he heard God speak out of the whirlwind, out of the vastness of creation: the earth, the sea, snow, hail, rain, drops of dew, the waters, the clouds, and lightning, the lion and its cubs, the wild goats of the rock, the wild ass, the horse with a neck clothed with thunder, the peacock, the ostrich, the raven, the hawk and the eagle, the behemoth, and the leviathan. And Job said to God:

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye
seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes

(Chapter 42, verses 6 & 7)

The verses of Chapters 38 to 41 of the *Book of Job* have the same resonance and sweep as of the "Vishwarupadarshan Yoga" of the *Bhagwad Gita*. In the vision of the omnipotence of Godhead, Job's personal suffering, however devastating, is trashed and rendered meaningless and the vision itself is compensation, in more than double measure, for all he had suffered. In the story "also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Chapter 42, verse 10) should not be taken literally. *The Book of Job* which has been compared to Greek tragedies, moves from a tragic vision like that of the Greek heroes standing up against Fate to be destroyed but not defeated, to a mystic vision where the protagonist surrenders before the majesty of Godhead, and no sorrow, howsoever great, remains, because no self remains.

The Perennial Teaching

To the paltry gods of mercenary minds no one comes to be emptied of the self, to be turned to cipher. The gods men have prayed to for the fulfilment of their desires have brought no transformation in the human psyche, destroying self and self-seeking, inundating the emptied mind with love, creativity, and the song of the morning stars. Over such gods division and hatred have deepened, and religions have been turned to politics and disgraced. And yet, often unknown to their worshippers, coded in the scriptures, symbols, icons, artifacts

and expressions of every religion is the perennial teaching: where the small self perishes the Immeasurable takes over; when consciousness is empty of the self it mirrors the Infinite; God is that vast emptiness which alone is the vast fullness.

But the small self doesn't perish easily. Even the desire that the small self should perish and the anguish, why is it not perishing, give life to the small self.

Vivekananda towards the end of his life visited the Khir Bhawani temple and saw it in ruins. A thought came to his mind: "Mother your temple in ruins, I shall rebuild it." And then in a flash of vision he saw Bhawani: "Who do you presume to be? When my temple needs building, I shall build it. Who are you?" In a letter written sometime during the last few months of his life he wrote, "Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear. Now they are vanishing and I drift."

And now the promised second story:

The Bells

Many hundred years ago, near a small fishing village in Japan, on a little island off the main coast, stood a temple hung with a thousand silver bells. The bells, of many shapes, sizes, and sound, were the handiwork of a master craftsman and any breeze, from the slightest to a storm, would set them pealing most melodiously. People from near and far came to hear the bells. Then one day there was an earthquake and the island sank into the sea, and with it the bells. When many years had passed, a legend grew that though the bells, ordinarily, were no longer audible, if a great sage came and sat by the sea, he still heard the bells and they made his face surpassingly beautiful. A prince who had renounced a kingdom to fulfil a spiritual ambition was inspired by this legend. He travelled to the rocky shore opposite where the island with the temple had stood and sat down there striving to hear the bells. All he, however, heard was the sound of the waves breaking on the rocks. He sat there for weeks and months, trying to shut out the sound of the sea, trying to concentrate on the bells, but he heard not a tinkle. The fisher folk liked the young prince, thought he was a holy man, a great aspirant, and looked after his needs. The prince sat there meditating, trying to become a greater sage, he sat there concentrating, trying to hear the bells, only vaguely looking or not looking at the beauty of the sea, the sky and the clouds, the chang-

ing light of the sun, the moon, the stars and the galaxy, the horizon, the boats and the migrating birds, the faces of the men, women, and children who brought him food, the surface of the rock on which he sat, the grass and the flowers that grew in its crevices, the ants and the insects that crawled over them, the lichen and the moss. Spring came, and summer, and autumn, and winter; and again spring came and summer and autumn and winter; and again and again and still still again, but the prince had not heard the peal of the bells. Then one day he gave up. He decided that he would leave. His other desires had left him long ago. Now even this one desire to be a great sage, to hear the bells peal, let go of him and he achieved spiritual poverty. He willed nothing, he knew nothing, he desired nothing. As he sat there completely empty, he responded to the otherness. He opened to the sea and the evening sky. In that absolute silence within him where no desire stirred, where no self was, with his total being he heard the sound of the waves. And then softly, tentatively there was the tinkle of a bell, and then another, and another, and then all at once, interfused with the sound of the waves he heard a thousand bells tinkle and chime and boom. He sat there all through the night, silent, and changed, and empty. Next day when the fishermen brought him food and looked at his face, from the great beauty of its emptiness, they knew that he had heard the bells.

In conclusion

Science looks at the universe. Religion, literature and the arts look at the mind looking at the universe, a mind that may change or perish and see differently as it changes/perishes. Science explores the quantifiable world and, to that end, forges a method and a language that are precise, exact, unambiguous, mathematical. Religion, literature and the arts deal with the qualitative, with states of mind, with the elusive, and sometimes with a mind that will annihilate itself unconditionally in celebration or in anguish. They need to forge a different language, of symbols, rhythms, gestures, a language capable of dying into silence. All cultures have explored, ultimately, the relationship between the infinite and the anonymous or self-naughted. Education that will be concerned with the ground of values cannot play down the significance of what is said in this other language. Today when religions are again being used to divide people within and across nations, through the violence, hatred and din let loose, one hears

either the shrill strident voice of warring fundamentalists or the feeble voice of a secularism which, because it has never opened itself to the devastating beauty and the lyricism of the religious experience, has tended to equate religion with mere humanism or ethics – very watery substitutes indeed. To bind mankind together within the vision of an absolute value, to work towards a revolutionary transformation in the human psyche from existing around the self to living after destroying the self, to fight the scheming, dehumanizing, politically self-centred fundamentalism of organized religions so that the earth may survive, it is important for this and future generations to understand what the exploration of the inner world of man in different religions/cultures has been about in the meaningful, creative, nascent stages of their growth. How, if not through an open, questioning, intelligent, catholic study of the other language wherever it is found, can education help man reach, or at least have an intellectual understanding of, the silence beyond language of all cultures?

Postscripts

Education needs to open the human brain to the beauty of the multitudinous, making it receptive, freeing it from prejudices of limiting mind-structures. In the process of reflecting upon what questions an education that will do so should ponder over, two sets of questions had formed in the mind on two different occasions. They are reproduced below as Postscripts I and II.

POSTSCRIPT I

THE ANONYMOUS MIND: LITERATURE & A DIFFERENT WAY OF KNOWING

[Questions concerning culture, literature, language, silence,
catastrophe, kites, half-pants & deconstruction]

Every discussion builds upon certain premises
which are themselves accumulations of
long years of discussion within and across cultures.

So too there are premises/theories
regarding literature and language.

- Is literature a weaving of words into form?
a chain of signifieds and signifiers
where the 'fieds and the 'fiers are all
words words and words
and where the meaning of meanings does not exist?
- Does literature communicate concepts
or does it communicate an experience?
- Does it search for knowledge as concept
or for knowledge as a journey in experience
- a journey
from the state of experiencing the problem
to the state of experiencing the solution
to the state of experiencing a deeper problem
to...
- Does a writer find a linguistic form
for an experience that is his,
beyond words?
- Is the form itself the experience?
- Are we caught in a web of words?
Does man write language?
Or does language write man?
Are we free?
Or are we conditioned?
Are we conditioned by the language of the bourgeoisie
the language of male dominated society
language handed down by generations of exploiters?
- Is language a cultural religio/social identity?
- Is there a Hindu language
a Muslim language
a Christian language
a Marxist language
a Capitalist language?
- Are a culture and its language twin born?
Do they grow together?
feed each other?
- Does the mixing of cultures
cause the mixing of languages?
- Is that why Shekhar, Ulysses, The Waste Land
are multilingual forms?

Does man turn into language whatever he brings
 into the territory of the known
 from the realm of the unknown?

Is language, the realm of the known
 - an ever expanding finite?

Is infinity silent?

Is language the frontiers of thought?

Is language the bounds of self?

Is language our conditioning?

Is language the accumulations of time?

Is language our building material?

Is it what we construct?

And are we the constructions?

Is language us?

Is self, the centre

language, the form

human thought/experience, the content
 of the Circle of the Known?

Is accident the catastrophe

that explodes the centre, form and content?

Is accident catastrophe

Or is it grace?

Is it a cyclone

Or is it deep silence

Or is it a 'cyclone of silence',

- a turbulence of ripples and a still centre?

Can literature be used to go beyond language?

Do symbols, parables, paradoxes, riddles, koans

build Bridges of Language

beyond language:

Nataraj

Resurrection on the Cross

Basho's frog

'Mootoo qabla an tamootoo'

Rashlila.

Does the mind use the poles of language

to polevault

or do poles become icons which the mind worships

as its 'monuments of unageing intellect'?

Who liberates?

The Sarvahara, the have nots of society
or the mind self-naughted
emancipated from all its haves
- material philosophical, psychological -
the mind that has lost its whole property
of language, and years of conditioning
to silence, and to the dance?

Is the quest

a quest for identity
or is it a quest for extinction of identity?

Is the search

for *one*
or for *zero*?

Is zero infinity?

Is deconstruction the deconstruction

of a system
of a text
of the mind?

Is mind a text?

Is there a mind and a text born
outside the womb of language
in the sheer being of silence:

Dakshinamurti
Arūnachal?

Is Deconstruction a way thought?

Or is it a way of life?

Where is the boy who

twitched up his half pants with one hand
and tugged at the kite string with the other?

The pants are on the ground

the kite's in full flight
the boy

anonymous in the sky?
lost in the sky?
dancing in the sky?

Or

is it the sky
that is dancing with the boy?

When the knower is anonymous in the known
who dances?

POSTSCRIPT II

PARADIGM SHIFT FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF MAN AND SOCIETY

A state of inertia seems to have taken hold of our universities and centres of 'advanced' study. Our institutions are no longer centres of creativity.

I

Could it be that our conceptual structures, our way of understanding/interpreting the world and our relationship to it, have much to do with how creatively we interact with each other, with society, with the environment, with our past, present and future? Could paradigms within which our thoughts operate determine significantly the quality of life in our society? Isn't education expected to raise questions and explore the limitations of present paradigms and the feasibility of generating other paradigms?

II

Could one ask if language is a paradigm? A subtle paradigm that, disguised as tool, operates from within? Isn't the whole history of a culture – social, intellectual, emotional, religious, scientific, philosophical, artistic – embedded in the language/languages that have a symbiotic relationship with the culture? Doesn't choosing a language also mean seeing through that language and, therefore, of being conditioned by the language? Does language become cliché when language becomes the more powerful partner in the relationship between language and its user? Does the paradigm of culture-incarnated-as-language then strangle creativity in its grip?

Do different cultures have different histories/traditions of discourse which are also reflected in the development of their languages? Is there a history/histories that have been preoccupied

mainly, though not exclusively, with an analytical, empirical approach to human experience? Is there a tradition/traditions that have been preoccupied mainly, though not exclusively, with a holistic, introspective, symbolic approach to human experience? Have the languages of these cultures evolved different faculties? Do languages sometimes ossify, and their edges go blunt and they become dead paradigms within which the culture stagnates? Does language become cliché when it ceases being a gesture of the mind and, instead, holds the mind in its stranglehold?

Can two cultures fertilize each other? Can each widen the experiential hinterland of the other? What will then happen to their languages? Will one language be colonized by the other? Or will each delve into its own resources and make broader paradigms of thought available to its users?

III

Have religions become rigid paradigms of thought and ceased exploring man's relationship with himself, with death, with suffering, with consciousness, with the Other, and with the question of the Immeasurable? Have they ceased honing their language? to build with their language a bridge into silence?

IV

Has secular scientific thought ossified and become inflexible, admitting no rationality other than its own into its paradigm? intolerant, contemptuous, brusque in its attitudes like all threatened superstitions of the past or present?

What is the nature of the order that science tries to explore/understand? What is the nature of the language it forges to grasp/communicate its understanding? What sense of wonder drives the scientist?

V

How has humanity tried to understand/interpret/relate with the known and the unknown? through magic? through gestural language of imitation, sacrifice, and celebration? through dance, mime and music? through mathematics? through thought and dialogue? through concentration on the mind? through silence? through waiting for the mind to perish and meditation to take over? through search for identity or surrender to non-identity? Have some of these methods gone obsolete? Can they be complementary? Does the choice of method/

methods impose a paradigm? Can different paradigms refine one another? Is a mind caught in its own paradigm? Is paradigm the self? Should there be a paradigm shift? Or should there be a shift away from all paradigms for creativity to flower?

Should our educational institutions impart thought structures, explicitly or implicitly? What function do such structures perform? Do such structures ossify the mind? When computers take over the field of the known and all permutations and combinations within it, what function will be left for the human mind to perform? Can a net catch a fish, or a paradigm a truth, larger than itself?