

The Play Impulse in Schiller's Aesthetics and the *Lila* Concept in Indian Culture (23 November)

This lecture attempts to read Schiller's 'play impulse' in the perspective of the doctrine of *lila* in Indian thought. In our cosmological speculation creation is explained or explained away as *maya* or *lila*. The universe is the expression of the bliss of Brahman; it is spontaneous, unmotivated and therefore can be described only as play, *lila*. The Vedantic doctrine of *maya* defined it as the power which keeps us under the spell of appearance which is mistaken for reality. This illusion is the play. Etymologically, 'illusion' is derived from *ludere*, to play. Placing the notion of play in the context of the theory of John Huizinga, expounded in his *Homo Ludens*, this paper correlates the Indian concept of *krida* (in dramaturgy) and that of *lila* (in philosophy) to Friedrich Schiller's central insight that man is truly a man only when he plays. Schiller, writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution argued that in order to build a community of integrated human beings political education should be supplemented with aesthetic education which would heal the schism between reason and sensuousness in human psyche. Man's fragmentation caused by the sense drive can be overcome by the play drive, the aesthetic impulse, which can restore him to a state in which all inner tensions would be resolved. The Marxist ideas of the kingdom of necessity and the kingdom of freedom are discussed in the context of Schiller's insistence that only a people who are aesthetically educated would be capable of constructing a free society.



Dr. G. B. Mohan Thampi is a former professor of English literature, Banaras Hindu University. He has a Ph.D. in English from BHU and a post-doctoral degree of Dr. Sc.Phil in literary theory from Humboldt University, Berlin. His book *The Response to Poetry* (1964, New Delhi) is regarded as a highly influential treatise on comparative aesthetics that brought to the fore the conceptual affinities between modern Western literary theory and ancient Indian poetics. He held the post of vice-chancellor of the University of Kerala and also served as Director, Institute of Management in Government, Trivandrum. He has published numerous research papers and articles in the areas of comparative aesthetics and cultural studies in English and Malayalam.



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

cordially invites you for a series of lectures on

Comparative Aesthetics

by

Dr. G. B. Mohan Thampi

on

21, 22 and 23 November 2012

at

3.30 p. m.

Venue

Lecture Hall, 11, Mansingh Road,
New Delhi - 110 001

RSVP 23388123

The Rhetoric of Allegory: A Comparative Study of *Everyman*, *Prabodhachandrodaya* & *Manonmaniyam* (21 November)

Allegory, "speaking otherwise than one seems to speak", employs personification in order to expound theological or political doctrines couched in narratives. It is thus a figure of speech and a sub-genre simultaneously. In terms of Indian poetics it may be called *drshtanta*, *pratika* or *upadesakatha* comprehending fabulations like *Panchatantra* and plays like *Prabodhachandrodaya*. This paper compares the literary devices employed by three plays, widely separated in time and place: *Everyman* (16th century England), *Prabodhachandrodaya* (by Krishna Mishra, Sanskrit, 11th century India) and *Manonmaniyam* (Tamil play written by Sundaram Pillai, 19th century, in the then Travancore state, now part of Kerala). All the three are didactic plays intended more for closet reading than for staging publicly. All of them raise profound philosophical-moral questions by presenting characters who represent abstract moral qualities and schools of philosophy. The themes and structure of the plays are analysed from the perspective of traditional and modern dramaturgical concepts. The significance of the yogic term "unmani" in *Manonmaniyam* is brought out to demonstrate the play's indebtedness to the Sanskrit allegorical play entitled *Bhavana-Purushottama*.

Reception Aesthetics, Reader-Response Theory and the Concept of the *Sahrdaya*: A Study in Comparative Aesthetics (22 November)

Reader-response theory and its corollary, reception aesthetics which emerged in the 70s and 80s of the last century claimed to correct the reductionist limitations of Marxism and New Criticism. This paper examines the ideas of Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, and Wayne C. Booth which brought about a paradigm shift by relocating the focus of critical procedures from the text to the reading process. Terms like 'fusion of horizons', 'gaps and vacancies', 'the implied reader' etc. are elucidated in order to expound the specific contribution of this school to the ongoing debate on the active role of the reader in the reading process. Tracing the development of the concept of the *sahrdaya* from Bharata to Jagannatha, the paper compares the way in which I. A. Richards and Abhinavagupta deal with the difficulties of reading and *rasa vighna*, obstacles to aesthetic experience. Finally, the paper demonstrates the significance of the reader-response theory by presenting an explication of the "What the Thunder Said" section of Eliot's *The Waste Land* which may enhance the reader's self-awareness.



इन्दिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र

डॉ. जी. बी. मोहन थम्पी

द्वारा

तुलनात्मक सौंदर्य शास्त्र

व्याख्यानों की श्रृंखला

में आपको सादर आमंत्रित करता है ।

दिनांक

21 से 23 नवम्बर, 2012

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अपराह्न 3.30 बजे

स्थान

व्याख्यान कक्ष, 11 मानसिंह रोड
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