

# CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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This study of I. A. Richards' views on Literary Language reveals his belief that literary criticism is a branch of psychology. His specific contribution lies in the two uses of language—the scientific way of the statement of facts and the emotive way showing emotion and attitudes. The language of poetry is aesthetically valuable as it uses emotive language. The critic marks the distinction between the emotive and the referential uses of language too sharp. Here everyone would comment on two major problems. First, the rift between the two uses shows that Richards feels that emotions and attitudes aroused in the poetic experience are not directed toward specific aspects of the individual's environment. But poetry is not concerned with emotions and attitudes in isolation. It is not enough for references to arouse feelings; they must also refer to the things to which these feelings are directed. Second, distinction does not provide an adequate place for considerations of truth and belief in poetry. He excludes such considerations because he feels that judging a poem from the standpoint of its truth or falsity is a misuse of the poem and always leads to misvaluation. Nevertheless, truth can sometimes enhance poetic statements, even though it is not the function of such statements to express the truth. So neither the characterization of emotive language as non-referential nor its description as language which arouses attitudes should be taken to be

self-sufficient. These two facets-emotive and referential language should be combined.

Richards introduced his 'context' theory of language of meaning which makes clear the relationship between words and thought. In reality, words mean nothing by themselves but a writer uses them as they stand for something. The words play the role of instruments to convey the meaning. We understand no word except in and through its interactions with other words. Words interanimate one another. According to associationist view, the succession of ideas or images in train of thought is determined by the laws of association. This theory of context is very significant in understanding the relationship between words and thought. Here Richards' exploration of words and their changing meaning is focused.

This study also reveals the psychological theory of meaning. Richards introduced synaesthesia as the one affective theory that serves as foundation of an aesthetics. This is a new contribution of Richards in Literary Criticism. This theory is based on psychology which helps to bring equilibrium of our impulses. He regards that the real value of the arts lies in the reaction and attitude they create, and whether or not they are conducive to greater emotional balance, equilibrium, peace and rest in the mind of the readers. He stressed the aesthetic value of the literary work which gives scope to beauty and taste. He asserts that major function of the literary work is to communicate the message. So he tells that the literary work

should satisfy the artist and the reader as well. A proper balance of nervous system is made possible with the literary work. He also asserts that the poetry-art is a remedy for world's ill. Here we may not accept this opinion as he has not proved that poetry can save a civilization.

We can say about Richards' contribution is valuable in literary criticism. If we analysed critically the work of Richards we may say that-

His general theory of value is unconvincing; his picture of the value of poetry is laughable. The reduction of poetry to impulses spells the end of poetry.

Richards has converted criticism into a science as he has put literary activity within the province of science. He tells that the more we know of human psychology the more we shall be able to understand the mystery and importance of literary work (art). He does not rest content with the writer's work; he goes to the very source of his mind. His criticism is, as if, a concise treatise on psychology so he asserts that knowledge of psychology is a must for a literary critic.

I.A. Richards has been of the most influential of modern critics. He has tried to discuss what it is that poetry does that is not done by any other kind of handling of language. He uses modern science and specifically psychology in an endeavour to analyse the precise nature of poetry and to distinguish it from

scientific discourse. As David Daiches says -

"In his study of the nature and value of poetry, he uses tools provided by modern psychology to investigate what actually goes on in a poem and how a poem affects the reader."<sup>1</sup>

Richards denies that the mind is a separate entity. It is simply a part of the activity of the nervous system. To solve the problem of meaning and communication he leads to outline view of perception in order to explain the initial processes in reading, and to discuss the nature of 'signs' and the other elements involved in communication. He tried to show how a work of literature can produce a certain state of mind in the reader that leads him to link literary criticism with semantics.

Richards finds a means of not only 'defending' poetry, but of proving it to be the salvation of civilization. By a theory of perception of stimuli and responses, of how signs and symbols work, he made semantics a tool of literary analysis and endeavoured to show how poetry operates and how in fact it is able to capture and transmit those states which he considers valuable.<sup>2</sup>

Charles L. Stevenson points out about theory of value of

literary work as -

"The importance of the theory, it fully worked out, would lie in its freeing our evaluations from a sense of mystery."<sup>3</sup>

As applied to literary criticism, the theory would spare us much lost motion, and much pretentiousness. It would not, however, provide us with a 'science' of criticism. It would at most provide us with a criticism guided by science. And since the guiding effect of science depends on a psychological rather than on a logical relation between our reasons and our evaluations, the theory might prove, even in its ultimate development, to leave us with a diversity of critical opinion.

George Watson writes - "Richards' theories are appallingly vulnerable, and have been under expert fire from Philosophers and Psychologists for many years; and further, his own books since the twenties have been increasingly eccentric. He is one of those unfortunate thinkers whose later works tend to discredit not only themselves and their author, but earlier books as well."<sup>4</sup> Primarily, he is a theoretical critic like Coleridge, and like Coleridge, he indulged in literary analysis only as illustration of a method. Criticism, for Richards, is pre-Baconian, and the object of his own aesthetic is to hurry it forward, with the help of the new psychology, towards the happy condition where the critic can use

laboratory techniques and make falsifiable assertions.

The work of I.A.Richards is a landmark in the history of literary criticism and ever since verbal and textual analysis, interpretation and evaluation on the basis of such analysis, have become the basis of literary appreciation. I.A.Richards, by his own work, has made literary criticism factual, scientific and complete. Thus Richards is a new critic with a difference, and the difference arises from his keen interest in psychology. His interest in psychology will be best brought out by a brief consideration of his views on the value of art and the function of tragedy. His critical methods, verbal and structural analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of a work of art started the vogue of experimentation, and analysis in literary criticism. He challenged both intuitive, cursory reading as well as over-literal reading, and has in this way given a new orientation both to the teaching of literature and literary criticism. At the same time the fresh approach of Richards is rather original and stimulating and that is what has given him an important status in the field of literary criticism.

On the whole, I.A.Richards' views on literary language are fruitful to study his literary work. His study of language helped to distinguish science from literary work or art. At the same time his work concerning literary analysis helps the readers

to appreciate literary work properly. His psychological angle towards context theory of meaning is distinguished in the field of literary criticism.

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