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Book Review

Linguistic Criticism and Literary Studies: Theory and Practice

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It is a known fact that without language there can be no writing whatever the linguistic signs may be. With literature there is a nuance, for only here language unfolds its unique potentialities. Therefore the notion of a literary work remains incomplete unless we realize the legacy of language. Dr Susanta Kumar Bardhan and Dr Prashant Mishra, two renowned linguists in India, have edited *Linguistic Criticism and Literary Studies* to appreciate the very questioning of literary texts on the basis of stylistic differences. The book, written as a Festschrift to eminent linguist S.V. Parasher who always dreamt of a marriage of language and literature, is indeed an apt tribute. Critics have been traditionally interpreting literary works either from historical point of view or by giving textual elements such as plots, characters and themes undue attention. The problem of extra-textual or plot-based exegesis is that it often sets aside the importance of language without which a text cannot even break the ice.

How language works is, therefore, equally significant while discussing literature. To be precise, literature is being and language is responsible for the becoming of that being. The book essentially intends to apply language not simply as a constituent of any writing but rather as a critical tool itself. We know that structuralism first hinted at the arbitrary nature of language. From that very point of time, the stability of literature was also put into question. The introductory essay by the editors reminds us of the history of linguistic criticism that began with the unmaking of language behind the making of literature.

T.Sriraman's 'Postcolonial Stylistics' tries to impart a new hue to postcolonial literature through its indication of a new area – the application of language to analyse postcolonial writing. We know that postcolonial writing is fundamentally a criticism of the hierarchical order of the world where

some nations are stereotypically more important than the others. There is more than one reason behind this marginalization. Sriraman opines that language is one of the key factors in postcolonial criticism. The popularity of English as a language for writing still confuses the critics whether we have really come out of the cocoon of colonial domination. Z. N. Patil's 'Aspects of Linguistic Politeness in Indian English Novels' is a very interesting study of what constitutes politeness and impoliteness in Indian imagination. Though the study is more culture-specific, it shows that even on a universal scale behaviour seems to be a misleading trait of a man. As one's extent of politeness depends on the addressee, there is also a gap between how much polite or impolite one intends to be and how much one ends up being through the application of linguistic specificities.

Vijay Singh Thakur's essay discusses the interconnectedness between language and relationship through a close study of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Baisali Hui's article is about the retrospective state of both language and literature, especially their performative purport in Chinese and Ukrainian folktales. Ivy Lai Chun Chun is more concerned about language as a generic force. In 'Literary Stylistics', Chun shows how the same story written in prose has to be considerably different in the poetic version in terms of meanings and patterns. Achal Deep Dubey's paper is a subtle analysis of some Indian novelists who, in their writings, have made an 'English' of their own through the inevitable introduction of native words and expressions.

'A Pragmatic Study of Eugene O'Neill's *Thirst*' by Susanta Kumar Bardhan and Prashant Mishra is a probe into the play's tragic situation engendering quite appropriately tense language with a tone of selfishness. Suresh Kumar Agarwal's essay focuses on the contribution of language to identity formation, especially how gender influences and is influenced by the choice of language. Prasun Banerjee in his article on John Fowles' *The Collector* traces the limitations of language on which textuality is inherently reliant. Fowles leaves the text open-ended for the readers to create and interpret but finally the readers realize that a text is always incomplete and words are often questionable.

Prashant Mishra and Susanta Kumar Bardhan's 'Stylistics of Deferment in Frost's Poetry' analyses Robert Frost's poetic language the tone and the text of which get intermingled to accentuate the uncertainty of life. Pradeep Sharma's essay is an attempt to capture the transition of psychoanalysis from the classical one to the Lacanian version of the theory that views human mind from linguistic perspectives and how this change had a substantial impact on literary trends. Marlia

Fontaine-Weisse in her article takes the example of J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and shows the immediacy of postcolonial narratology that circumvents stylistic metanarratives. Apurba Saha makes a unique approach towards language. His 'Creole and Calypso on Gavaskar' is a wonderful study of a representative 'Calypso' on the Indian Cricket legend, Sunil Gavaskar, thereby exemplifying the euphonic synthesis of English and Creole in calypso songs.

Susanta Kumar Bardhan's 'Vakrokti and the Poems of Jayanta Mahapatra: A Critical Study' analyses Mahapatra's poetry from the point of view of Sanskrit poetics where the sound and the sense are equally important for poetic harmony. B. V. Rama Prasad's paper treats linguistic structure and literary narratives in the same manner and shows how the essential nature of language and literature is identical, for both can be split into different units, thereby adding sense to a sentence (linguistic) or a dialogue (literary). Veerendra Kumar Mishra, in his paper, observes that language as a means of pure communicative action has failed and therefore scientific objectivity in linguistic criticism no longer holds water. Prashant Mishra in "Indianness in Style: Nissim Ezekiel's 'The Patriot'" discusses the Indianized language of the poem where the colloquiality of the words such as '200%', 'Hindiwallas', 'lassi' or 'Indira Behn' is entwined with the central theme of the poem i.e. patriotism. Sagar Mal Gupta and Nagendra Nathawat's article is experimental in tone. They try to see whether speech act theory can be applied to drama and finally they discover that the way language is used plays a key role in determining the dramatic intentionality. Utsab Mukherjee's essay is a review of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* from narratological perspectives.

Lastly, the volume may not be new in understanding literature through linguistic theories or fathoming the contact zone of the two, but the approach has perhaps never been so diverse. There are multiple articles in the book but they are very different from one another in terms of thoughts and themes. It attempts to bridge the gulf between language and literature through profound insights beyond the horizon of apparent similarities. The authenticity of that sincerity is evident from exhaustive sources, appendices, a good index and individuality of the articles. The book remains to be an interesting read for students, researchers and teachers of all phases.

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