

F.R. LEAVIS AND C.D.NARASIMHAIAH: A COMPARISON PART 2

Dr. K. Rajesh

*Assistant Professor of English, Department of Humanities & Sciences, CVR College of Engineering,
Autonomous, Vastuanagar, Mangalpalli, Ibrahimpatnam, Hyderabad, India*

Received: 08 Dec 2018

Accepted: 15 Dec 2018

Published: 31 Dec 2018

ABSTRACT

C D Narasimhaiah, like F.R. Leavis(1895-1978) in England, foster, the conscience of his by projecting an Indian English tradition of literature and literary criticism. This paper(divided into two parts) seeks to convince the reader that C D Narasimhaiah's appropriation of Leavis's key notion is part of his strategy to valorize Indians and ensure their worldwide acceptance.

KEYWORDS: *Piece of Art or Work, English Culture and Tradition is Seen throughout his Critical Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Emphasis on the actual relationship of men to their environment ought to be given in a great piece of art or work. Leavis sees a similarity of his idea of 'life' with Lawrence in his *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*. He quotes from Lawrence: "Where the individual begins, life begins. The two are inseparable, life, and individuality. And also, where the individual begins, the unconscious, which is the specific life-motive, also begins."¹ He reflects on Jane Austen's preoccupation with 'life' and that without this she wouldn't have been a great novelist. It may be a positive attitude to come to terms with the society on the part of an artist, which is indicated, by 'Human solidarity' or 'unity of life'. Did he disapprove of which James? Could be he attributed to diversion from his own culture. The early works of James showed evidence of his rootedness in American or English culture but disappeared in his later works, which deals with an international theme. Leavis emphasizes on English culture and tradition is seen throughout his critical analysis. He approves of Conrad's ability to transcend his origins in becoming English². This gives us evidence of his motives in emphasizing the question of Englishness, which was the actual need of the nation and of his own need to establish English as a discipline in universities.

Narasimhaiah also does not like the separation between the individual and society, as we can see from his examination of V.S. Naipaul's very first novel, *The Mystic Masseur*, the success achieved in outward participation is not accompanied by an awareness of the inner absence of what man's life and what gives meaning to his life. He argues that Naipaul's writings fare poorly when compared with that of the distinguished Indian novelist, R.K. Narayan. In Narayan's *The Guide* the central character, Raju who starts his career as a railway guide, seduces a married woman on the promise of

¹ D.H.Lawrence, *psychoanalysis and the Unconscious as Quoted by Leavis in Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence*, pg no 24, Oxford University Press,1976, Oxford.

² Leavis, *Anna Karenina, and Other Essays quoted from R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism Of F.R.Leavis*, pg no 110-111, Cambridge University Press, 1979, Cambridge.

promoting her as a dancer which he ultimately does, but also forges her signature, is sent to prison and finally comes out as a swami, a spiritual guide. This guilt and atones for it. Narayan not only shows his Indian experience but also appreciates the nature of this experience to which Naipaul makes himself is a stranger. Narayan ends the story with a rare self-awareness, self-realization by the hero to a saint and extends its widening circles to include the rest of creation in identification with oneself when he says: "For the first time in his life he was making an effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt a new strength to go through an ordeal." In Naipaul's novel, one can see that the character Ganesh tends to amass wealth and occupy positions of prestige, no matter how goes unchecked. The story starts with mediocrity and ends with mediocrity. Here in both novels, the characters are treated and interpreted differently and according to Narasimhaiah, the character of 'Raju' in 'The Guide' is more acceptable than the other person as he has achieved success by gaining social acceptance and personal salvation in the Indian society. Narasimhaiah points out as to how Naipaul made his all-out assault on the character, with disgust. This shows the reason why Narasimhaiah out rightly criticized Naipaul for his loss of 'Indianness' and for promoting misleading ideas to the world. He appreciated R.K. Narayana for his use of the comic mode to prove the highest kind of reality in *The Guide* a strength which is his hand that of his tradition and most of all hits touch of 'Indianness' to the novel.

F.R. Leavis appreciated Pope's rare ability for the element of metaphysical in his works, "But all the same, working in the fashionable idiom and conventions, a poet, to achieve the profound in poetry, would have to be great indeed, and pope's greatness, we remind ourselves, is of such a kind as to enable him to transcend his age: his profound poetry has in it an essential element of the metaphysical. In Pope alone, in his time, the tradition he represents may be said to bring into poetry the full vitality of the age". The change in tone is achieved by the Pope in his *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. During Blake's times, the deterioration saw its effects on literature. This was mostly due to the influence of Descartes, the division of mind and body, the human being and his environment, the individual and society, which was derived from this scientific thinking. This division of literature and culture had two distinct levels namely the popular and the sophisticated since the seventeenth century. Here it was the responsibility of the artists to create an appeal with their work of art to the readers to respond effectively.³

Pope was appreciated due to this quality of his. It is seen when excessive attention is paid to the social, a movement of protest is seen in the creative minds, which can be seen during Augustan age. For Leavis, the technical achievement is antithetical to the creative or poetic use of language. Much stress was given to individual expression in Blake's works. Keats developed his art about life, with emphasis on reality, direct living, and grasp on actualities. He compares Keat's "Ode to the Nightingale" to that of Shelley's "To a Skylark", wherein Keat's percept of 'concreteness' is about a greater 'inclusiveness' of the whole 'complex organism' similar to his metaphor of an organism. But Leavis feels that Shelley's 'To a Skylark' is a mere poetic outpour. The finished product of a poem for Leavis is a 'realized whole' with interrelated parts, and so is language itself, which comes into existence in the meeting of minds. It is not just words that are on the page of poetry, but more than it. It is humane or the personal element that induces 'life' into words is important.⁴

³ Leavis, Revaluations(II): *The Poetry of Pope*, Scrutiny 2.3, pg no 277,1933

⁴ A.C. Goodson, Verbal Imagination, pg no 15, Oxford University Press, 1988, Oxford.

When one compares Leavis's ideas to those that Narasimhaiah's criticism is based on, one finds that Indian fiction in English was more valuable to Narasimhaiah than Indian poetry. He promoted Nehru's autobiography and disapproved of Nirad Chaudhuri's. His argument was concretized and had specific textual evidence like in the case of Leavis. A lot of critics did not argue with Leavis insularity, Englishness, and the impatience that he showed on critics who did not have inwardness with the English language. Narasimhaiah tried to reconcile this quality of his master by discussing his master's message that every critic has a swadharma and that they must cultivate it. So it was 'Indianness' for Narasimhaiah and 'Englishness' for Leavis. His Indianness concentrates on spiritual India like in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, and the application of Rasa/Dhwani aesthetic categories to the study of all literature. This implies a close reading of the literature to get the essence of it or to get its 'sense'. Thus we get to see the Leavisian criteria refracted through the Indian critical scene.

Leavis says that writers or artists should have the aesthetic sense of 'life' and feel for the civilization, the culture, and tradition of the people. He discouraged writers from writing from outside. Narasimhaiah also celebrated writers who wrote with sincerity and from inside. Many writers were said to have derived their ideas and thought from the other countries wherein they did not do justice to both the country and the work. The feeling behind such works was said to be imitative and unacceptable. The same applied to Indian writers too. The idea was not to encourage the writers to cut the Western works to Indian size or to distort their image. We could find the same mistake being committed by the Westerners about India.

We could see that Leavis worked with some of the same criteria in his adverse comments on various poets during the century. His comments on Milton's Book VI of *Paradise Lost*, that Milton expresses his feeling of words rather than a capacity of feeling through words and also that he was 'external' or that he 'works from the outside.' He felt that Milton used "a medium so cut off from speech-speech that belongs to the emotional and sensory texture of actual living and is in resonance with the nervous system."⁵ The "essential expressive resources of English", in Milton's writings was missing due to the usage of the Grand Style and his use of Latinate expression. Dryden, on the other hand, was said to be a great 'representative poet and not a great poet. He was not found to have Pope's kind of strength with the metaphysical poets. Dryden is said to be so completely engrossed that he had neither ear nor spiritual antennae for the other community. He compares the 'life' in Shakespeare from that of 'eloquence' instead of 'life' in Dryden. He felt that Shakespeare personae had a life corresponding to the life of the verse, and in Dryden, the use of explicitness betrays an absence of realization⁶. The weakness of Shelley was his 'weak grasp upon the actual' which was due to his idealism and Platonism⁷. He offered a feeling divorced from thought, even opposed to thought. An exception to these qualities was his *Mask of Anarchy* and his handling of the medium⁸. Eliot became a target both of admiration and attack among his contemporaries during the twentieth century.

Leavis was happy with Eliot's early poetry but declined the later ones. The personal need and personal concerns stimulate the thinking quality of a poet. Leavis's emphasis is on 'life' while Eliot seemed to insist on 'the unreality, the

⁵ Leavis Milton Verse pg no 130

⁶ Leavis, Antony, and Cleopatra, pg no 165.

⁷ Leavis, Revaluations (VIII): Shelly, pg no 160.

⁸ Leavis, Revaluations (VIII): Shelly, pg no 178.

unliving, of the life in time'⁹. The words like 'form' and 'pattern' used by Eliot in his poem remind us of an organism which implies life, but these words meant stillness 'the still point of the turning world' to him.

By Leavis's comments, one could see the use of language, its concreteness, its liveliness, its intensity, and the strength of its spoken idiom. These qualities are invariably connected to the term 'life', which influences him through his critical analysis. Its manifestation could be reflected in 'the spontaneous, the disinterested, the ego-free and the reality creating' nature of the individual¹⁰.

Narasimhaiah is in search of Indianness among the writers. He refers to the great Indian epics and stories like *Brithatkatha*, *Jataka Tales*, *Kathasaritsagara*, *Panchatantra*, *the Epics*, *The Puranas*, and *Dasakumaracarita*. He wants the readers to ponder on the thought that one has to concentrate on their country, the traditional values, the culture, and the true feelings in human beings or otherwise the Indianness would be lost. He appreciated Indian novelists in English like R.K. Narayana, Raja Rao, and Arun Joshi to name a few who have read Russian, French and Italian books but still seemed to be rooted in India, for the spirit of the place is a great reality. His criticism of English literature and language are mostly on the theoretical exposition of the merits and the defense of English writing and the practical criticism, which he reinforced on various writers and authors.

Narasimhaiah's serious critical survey has brought about a definite direction to English writings in India. He reminds Indian scholars and critics of their necessity and responsibility towards examining the nature of the work and stresses on 'an attitude of detachment' to concentrate on the writings by creating a critical mood. This is the goal that he set and for which strived to achieve. He draws the attention of the Indian scholars and critics on the 'need for a continuing, the historical approach to the subject'. He is at his best when he employs his critical intelligence to the Indian writing in English by Indian authors. The stress here is on the true assessment of a work of art concerning the organization of the material, sense, and sensibility of the author in the use of the language and environment. He was partial to his favorite genre. His critical response is a mixed idiom with more reference to the new approach to the Indian English writings.

When he speaks of new poets, he concludes, 'many of younger poets can hardly be said to belong to the tradition, let alone continue it in a significant'. The 'Indianness employed as the sole criterion of judgment to the whole group of the new poets, particularly Moraes, Ezekiel, and P.Lal, do justice to the expanding 'consciousness' of the new group, and to say of Ezekiel, 'He has a distinct voice in poetry, but one is not sure that the poet shows any profound awareness of the entire Indian tradition from the Vedas and Upanishads to the present day in all its complexity'. His insistence on Indianness showed his deep attachment to India. He has a passion for critical Intelligence and guidance.

⁹ Leavis, Living pg no 179.

¹⁰ F.R.Leavis and Q.D. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pg no 312, 1980.

CONCLUSIONS

Leavis's and Narsimhaiah's views on literature have created a formidable force in the Indian context. This has attracted a lot of kinds of literature in English around the globe and the practice of swadharma has given a local habitation and a name to the Indian tradition of English studies. Their point of view has been a source of reference for most of the changes in English studies. This has changed the Indian scene by promoting the study of writings in various languages in English texts. This has created an atmosphere for promoting Indian writing in English in English departments. Narasimhaiah's approach to the study of literature has also encouraged a comparative approach to the study of English literature. Naraimhaiah makes clear use of Leavis's notion of Englishness. He substitutes this notion with a construct of his own called Indianness. This is not surprising since, at the time he was actively involved in the reform of English studies, Leavis views almost constituted a paradigm in English studies. While one could criticize his inability to reject this paradigm, armed with the benefit of hindsight, one can't accuse him of being a slavish imitator/propagator of English studies.

REFERENCES

1. *Karl Manihaeim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology, ed, Paul Kecskemeti, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, pg no;165-82,London.*
2. *Benedict Anderson,Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,Verso,1992 London.*
3. *Leavis, Education, pg no 145.*
4. *Leavis, The Living Principle, pg no 49.*
5. *C.D. Narasimhaiah ,The Swan and The Eagle, Indian institute of Advanced study, pg no 168-169,Simla, India.*
6. *Ibid pg no 196.*
7. *Merle E Brown, The idea of Communal Creativity in F.R.Leavis's Recent Criticism, Double Lyric: Divisiveness and Communal Creativity in Recent English Poetry, pg no 212-213, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980, London.*
8. *D.H.Lawrence, psychoanalysis and the Unconseious as Quoted by Leavis in Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence, pg no 24, Oxford University press,1976, Oxford.*
9. *Leavis, Anna Karenina and Other Essays quoted from R.P. Bilan, The Litterrary Criticism Of F.R.Leavis, pg no 110-111, Cambridge University Press, 1979, Cambridge.*
10. *Leavis, Revaluations(II): The Poetry of Pope, Scrutiny 2.3,pg no 277,1933*
11. *A.C. Goodson, Verbal Imagination, pg no 15, Oxford University Press, 1988, Oxford.*
12. *Leavis Milton Verse pg no 130.*
13. *Leavis , Antony and Cleopatra, pg no 165.*
14. *Leavis, Revaluations (VIII): Shelly, pg no 160.*
15. *Leavis, Revaluations (VIII): Shelly, pg no 178.*

16. *Leavis, Living* pg no 179.

17. *F.R.Leavis and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pg no 312, 1980.*