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I.A RICHARDS' NATURALISTIC THEORY OF LITERARY COMMUNICATION IN
ENCODING AND DECODING THE TEXT

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ABSTRACT

Literature can be perceived from the point of view of a layman or through specialized lenses where the reader is equipped with requisite skills of analyzing and interpreting a literary text or poetry. I. A Richards of the twentieth century empowers readers and critics of today with a scientific and psychological approach in modern criticism. Richards' theory of encoding and decoding a text forms the founding block of New Criticism. This paper describes Richards' naturalistic theory of communication in literature where language is critical. His theory is empirical, logical and analytical and rejects the transcendentalist philosophy. In studying his naturalistic theory of communication, this paper also analyses the relation between communication and values in the communicative process between the artist and the reader.

Keywords: Communication, literary text, naturalistic theory, poetry, values.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In *I. A Richards and New Criticism*, Ashok Kumar emphasizes the significance of language in encoding and decoding process of communication,

All life comes back to the question of our speech, the medium through which we communicate. Great writers like Henry James think so. Even a direct apprehension or intuition of life, the meaning of life, cannot be communicated except in language of some kind. Such transmission or communication is the part of life-process itself. (18)

Communication is central to language and social living. Any form of art like painting, poetry, literary text is a medium of communication. W. M Urban points out in his work *Language and Reality*,

Linguistic communication is embedded in behavioral communication and pre-supposes it. The language of eyes, of touch and of pantomime, above all of gesture, developed by means of empathy in the broad sense, acts both as vital context in which language gets part of its meaning and also as a means of enhancement of communication through language. (277)

The process of linguistic communication encompasses the artist as the communicator but the artist is not concerned with the dynamics of communication; he is interested in conveying his thoughts and emotions. As Chatterjee interprets Richards' emphasis on communicative activity,

Richards maintains that a normal artist is unconsciously concerned with communication. However, with some, the lure of immortality, of enduring fame, as in the case of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, appear to be very strong. In the artist's constant struggle towards impersonality and in his endeavor to evolve a structure for his work which excludes his private, eccentric, momentary idiosyncrasies, and in his concern for universal appeal... (94)

1.1 I.A RICHARD'S NATURALISTIC THEORY:

Two approaches to linguistic communication are naturalistic or behaviouristic theory, and idealistic or transcendental theory. Richards has described his naturalistic theory of communication in his work Principles of Literary Criticism where he contrasts the two approaches and rejects the transcendental theory of communication. Naturalistic theory believes that every communication has a reference to a particular context or situation including animal cries and sounds that are bound to Nature.

Chatterjee explains Richards' choice of the two theories of communication,

Though Richards rejects the transcendental theory and upholds a naturalistic, behavioural theory in his later writings he seems to accept the transcendental theory in respect of his description of the activity of reading poetry...Richards seems to be proceeding beyond the limits of the naturalistic theory. (98)

Richards emphasizes that the poet or the artist is gifted with unique communicative abilities. In his work Principles of Literary Criticism, Richards modifies the term vigilance in describing the communicative process in relation to the alertness of the nervous system to a particular response in connecting experiences. An ordinary man is bound to suppress his impulses caused by a stimulus as he is unorganized in relating particular experiences whereas an artist is composed to avoid any confusion.

S. T Coleridge also presents his views on communication process in his work *Biographia Literaria*. He states that the poet pens down unique thoughts as they occur and achieves ideal perfection with heightened sense of emotions, order and judgement. Chatterjee points out the significant characteristics of the poet as defined by Richards,

The availability of the past experience is the first characteristic of the poet. The second characteristic Richards describes as the normality of the poet. If the experience of the poet does not tally in essentials with that of the reader, there will be a failure of communication... he explains in what sense the artist is to be regarded as normal. (101)

According to Richards communication is a process that organizes the impulses with adequate knowledge and that certain impulses are common to all irrespective of cultural differences. He asserts that imagination facilitates communication and diminishes the variation in in experiences. Coleridge put forth his idea of primary imagination as the prime agent and living power of poetic conception but Richards proposes a vigilant approach to imagination devoid of theological implications. He devises a scientific approach to imaginative power in the form of active impulses that catalyze the stimulation of other impulses. Impulses created in the absence of any stimuli are called impulse imaginative. In the non-imaginary experience impulses created by the stimuli co-operate with each other.

Coleridge's theory of imagination and fancy parallels Richards' distinctive and repetitive imagination. Although Richards rejects any metaphysical and transcendental considerations in his philosophy of aestheticism in poetry, he appreciates Coleridge's value considerations. As Chatterjee explains, "Imagination is considered as such combination or fusion of mental elements as resulted in certain valuable states of mind and Fancy was regarded as a mere-trivial playing with these elements." (102)

Richards' explains his theory of value as an antithesis to waste considering human attitudes to be wasteful but the human mind to be least wasteful. Human attitudes and human mind are conflicting and hence becomes the norm or standard for similar experiences. In terms of value Richards distinguishes two types of poets, specialist and universal poets. The specialist poet may be consistent or inconsistent with

general development as in the works of W B Yeats. He further considers works of Thomas Hardy and T. S Eliot's works as universal and major poetries as compared to Yeats' minor poetry.

Richards considers the recipient's experience in communication based on imaginative development. He correlated the interaction of impulses and stimuli which takes the form of rhythm, meter, etc. in poetry. The uniform and consistent responses of the readers form the skeleton of communication for further impulses thus completing the communication dynamics. Richards' philosophy of linguistic communication is based on the pillars of stimuli, impulses and imagination, in other words the working of the mind. Richards empowers the poets by emphasizing their role in shaping experiences, preferences and tastes of the readers. Although he his philosophy believes that tastes rarely change by experience.

1.2 VALUES CRITICAL TO RICHARDS' NATURALISTIC THEORY OF COMMUNICATION:

Richards points out in his work *Principles of Literary Criticism* that the two pillars of literary criticism are value and communication which the encoder may not be aware of. Richards defines the human mind as an impulse-system. There are contradictory impulses and urges and wills, or appetencies in the human mind as he calls them. These conflicting instincts cause the human mind to be confused, and the human mind needs to attain an order or systematisation of these conflicting instincts and feelings. The human mind has an intrinsic ability to place contradictory impulsive desires in a formal order it seeks. However, any new experience disturbs the whole system repeatedly, and the human mind must re-adjust various desires in a new way to achieve the desired mosaic or poise.

The optimal state is attained when all the impulses are completely satisfied but because this is rarely possible, the next best state is when the maximum number of impulses is fulfilled and the minimum is irritated. The importance of art or poetry that includes all creative literature is that it helps the mind to achieve the poise or method quicker and more thoroughly than it can do. The challenge in determining value is which of these impulses is more important than the others, and how it is possible to differentiate organisations as generating more or less value than each other. Here Richards divides desires into appetencies and aversions, and says that everything that fills an appetite or seeks is important.

Appetency is an approach impulse, whereas aversion is behaving as a preventive reaction. Both impulse types are used to represent the degree of meaning and the individual experience relative to the object. Appetencies are further subdivided into physiological and social. Physiological appetites include primary needs such as feeding, drinking, sleeping and breathing; social urges include communication and co-operation.

The next element is choices; in his treatment of the competing or conflicting nature of impulses and their organisation, the relationship between impulses and choices is discovered. The incompatibilities between the impulses and the choices we make between them are so critical that it is not surprising, therefore, that choice is a critical concept for Richard's understanding of the integration of the two fundamental human value processes.

Impulses in particular those that are felt or considered, understood and organised through a decision-making process. Choices for Richards refers to the selection of contrasting or opposing urges. An individual makes choices to coordinate impulses; choices also include beliefs, the third major component of Richard's theory. Though choices are part of the arrangement of impulses, they also link impulses to values.

Richards sees human experience as a continuous process of choice, becoming and being dependent on the ability to choose from a range of impulses. Communication is a significant social stimulus. Various tendencies and types of tendencies are dedicated to supremacy within a person's life. Individuals use options to order these impulses. Option patterns come together to form values. Choices then represent both impulses and values simultaneously. This brief analysis of Richard's value theory is made more important by being put in the context of his communication theory.

2.0 CONCLUSION

Richards is of the view that communication cannot transfer experiences in the literal sense but is an interplay of shared experiences between the encoder and the decoder. Recalling the relationship between choices and values within Richard's value theory in his naturalistic approach; whenever one makes communicative choices one inevitably communicates and forms one's values. Values are an inextricable part of Richard's conception of the communication process. Values are a natural consequence of making choices, and the choices made by individuals about meaning are necessarily shaped by their values in the fields of comparison. In order to understand the essence of communication in poetry this theory of values is necessary. There are times in a man's life when his instincts react to the stimuli in such an ordered way that the mind has the experience of life.

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