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**A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF R.K.NARAYAN'S 'SWAMI AND FRIENDS' FROM
DHWANI POINT OF VIEW.**

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ABSTRACT

Indian Poetics contains theories like Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Dhvani, Vakrokti and Aucitya. These theories can be applied on the works of literature. Up till now Indian theories were merely talked about and discussed. Their application on literature can give altogether a new perception to the reader. The work of literature appears with many implied meanings in it. These implied meanings can only be gained with the application of certain theory on the work of literature. The present paper aims to study R.K.Narayan's novel 'Swami and Friends' through the application of Dhvani theory.

Introduction:

The present paper deals with the theory of Dhvani and its application on literature. The application of Dhvani theory on a piece of literature unfolds various layers of meaning out of the text. Every work of literature is pregnant with implied meanings and suggestions in it. One can get that implied meaning by the application of Dhvani theory on the text. Reading the text without the application of Dhvani theory can only give the surface meaning to the text. Every text of literature has something to suggest in it. It depends on the reader that how he comprehends the text. *Dhvani* theory can be applied on any form of literature such as Drama, Novel, Short-story, Essay and Poetry. Every writer knowingly or unknowingly suggests his point of view in his literary work. With the help of Dhvani theory the work of literature becomes more enjoyable. In the present paper R.K. Narayan's first novel 'Swami and Friends' is selected for the application of Dhvani theory. This novel appears with altogether new a meaning to the reader when discussed from Dhvani point of view.

The Theory of Dhvani:

Rajanaka Anandvardhana was a reputed Kashmiri poet, rhetorician and philosopher. He achieved the fame during the period of the 9th C.A.D. Anandavardhana is the author of the works which are both literary



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and philosophical. He has written many works like *Devishatakam*, *Vishamvklila*, *Arjuncharitam*, *Tatvaloka* and *Dhwanyaloka*. The *Dhwani theory* emerges out from the discussion depicted in *Dhwanyaloka*. The theory of *Dhwani* which came into light in the 9th C.A.D. ruled over Indian Poetics from the 9th to 12th C.A.D. Abhinavagupta gave his commentary on the theory of *Dhwani* in his scholarly work of art named *Dhvanyalokalochana*. Abhinavagupta, Acharya Mammata, Vishwanatha and Jagannatha also accepted the principle of *Dhwani* theory given by Anandvardhana.

Anandavardhana's theory of *Dhwani* changed Indian Poetics in its essence. Aestheticians were compelled to revive their notions about the older concepts like *Alamkaras*, *Guna*, *Riti*, etc., in the light of the theory of *Dhwani*. Anandavardhana made a great discovery by stating that every part of speech and small factors like case endings and particles can at the touch of imagination becomes pregnant with poetic meaning.

Anandavardhana says that any good poetry is one which contains *dhwani* or the suggested meaning. He says that the sense of suggestion gives suggested meaning which draws our attention and leads to aesthetic pleasure. If one utters a word 'a flower', the word not only suggests that it is a flower, but also that it is beautiful. Good poetry always conveys emotions. In order to convey emotions, there must be imagination and context. Its meaning is indescribable in words. It deals with the hidden meaning which is very much delicate.

Anandavardhana and his followers clearly mention that they have derived inspiration for the *Dhwanyaloka* from the *Sphotavada* of the grammarians. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the *Sphotavada* of the *Vaiyakaranis* and their concept of *Sphota* and *Dhwani*. Anandavardhana in his *Dhwanyaloka* hails the *Vaiyakaranis* with great respect. He states:

‘The expression is designated by the learned; the foremost among are grammarians because grammar lies at the root of All studies.’(V.S. Seturaman, *Indian Aesthetics, an Introduction*, 83.)



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The central idea of the theory of *Dhwani* is that words in their capacity of conveying sense, possess a threefold function, and consequently express a threefold sense. The three functions are known as *Abhidha* (Denotation), *Laksana* (Indication) and *Vyanjana* (Suggestion), and correspondingly the three senses conveyed are *Abhidheya* or *Vacya* (Denoted, Primary), *Laksya* (Indicated) and *Vyangya* (Suggested) respectively. Similarly, the three kinds of words that give rise to them are termed *Vacaka* (Denotative), *Laksanika* (Indicative) and *Vyanjanika* (suggestive) respectively.

The Suggested sense is that which is obtainable from a word over and beyond its Denoted or Indicated senses and in addition to them. The function of Suggestion operates when the other two functions- Denotation and Indication have exhausted of their capabilities for expression. As in the case of indicated sense, there is no necessity for the primary sense to be incongruous or inapplicable. The suggested sense is grasped along with the primary sense and further to it. Its realization is also dependent on the capacity of apprehension inherent in the responsive reader (*Sahridaya*), and his imaginative experience. And the possible suggested sense from a given usage is not limited to one.

In both the cases of suggestion (*Abhidhamula* or *Laksanamula*), suggested sense is comprehended in addition to the basic sense that helps to generate it. At the time of the realization of the suggested sense, that generative sense too should be clearly perceivable, and should be coherently understood by the reader. Thus suggested is always an additional sense. If the generative sense is a lamp, suggested senses are comparable to objects revealed by it. Dhwanaloka defines *Dhwani* as follows:

‘That kind of poetry, wherein either the (conventional) meaning, or the (conventional) word renders itself or its meaning secondary (Respectively) and suggests the implied meaning, is designated by The learned as *Dhwani* or ‘suggestive poetry’.’ (G. Vijayvardhana, *Outlines of Sanskrit Poetics*, 106-7.)



In this way *Dhwani* is a type of poetry wherein words and sense lose their primary significance in order to suggest other things. It is also necessary that the suggested content is not too obscure. It should be capable of being grasped easily by the cultured sympathetic reader. It should demand no intellectual exercise for its comprehension.

Anandavardhana demonstrated that emotive and suggestive significance which is the very soul of poetry. By thoroughly explaining the linguistic and logical implications of the theory of *Dhwani* he tried to secure for it a high place of honour in the eyes of appreciators and thinkers alike.

‘It marks the termination of the old school of criticism and heralds the birth of a modern school, modern in style, in theory and in approach.’

(K.Krishnamoorthy, *The Dhwanialoka and Its Critics*, 105.)

Different critics have looked at Anandavardhana’s principles of *Dhwani* from different perspectives and Anandavardhana also clarifies it in a nice way. Undoubtedly, the theory of *Dhwani* has certainly been the center of attraction right from the time of its emergence.

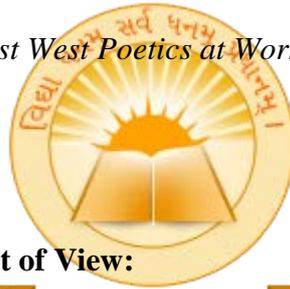
To Anandavardhana posterity is heavily indebted for enunciation of the principles of literary evaluation, - principles, that are eternal in character and are applicable even to modern literature. Application of these principles for the purpose of making literary evaluation of contemporary specimens of Poetic Art may yield splendid results by presenting to the academic world the striking fact, that these norms have not lost their relevance in contemporary society.

In the twentieth century, Anandavardhana’s theory has found a new lease of life, mainly under the impact of western stylistics and structuralism. Critics like Krishna Rayan and C.D.Narasimhaiah have been very enthusiastic about the practical utility of the *Dhwani* theory in the context of Modern Indian Literature.



We have talked too long (and expended much sentiment in talking) on the supremacy of Indian Poetics but invariably in theoretical terms and in isolation, without reference to actual works of art except for stray passages used as touchstones. The practice has persisted in discussion of Poetics in regional languages too..... The time has come for us to make efforts to test the adequacy of these critical concepts in responding to a given work of art. One is embarrassed to see them dismissed as obsolete in knowledgeable circles, while Aristotle, sharing much the same antiquity, still enjoys an enviable status in Indian literary circles and in discussion of Indian literature too, as if to imply 'Other abide our question/Thou art free.'

(C.D.Narasimhaiah, Ed. *East West Poetics at Work*, ix.)



'Swami and Friends' from Dhvani Point of View:

In Indian Writing in English R.K.Narayan (1906-2001) deserves the place of importance. The term 'Indo-Anglian Literature' is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians. R.K.Narayan belongs to this category. Here for the application of *Dhwani* theory R.K.Narayan's first novel 'Swami and Friends' is selected. Through the application of Dhvani theory the general condition of India is revealed. It shows how every small village of India has been influenced by the freedom struggle. The condition of middle class life India is clearly depicted. It shows the realistic picture of Indian village as reflected in this novel. R.K.Narayan writes admirably clean English. English which he finds serves his purpose admirably. It is perfectly adapted to communicate Indian sensibility. Narayan is the only pure artist who writes for art's sake and not for life's sake. In each of his works, he presents a slice of life, as he sees



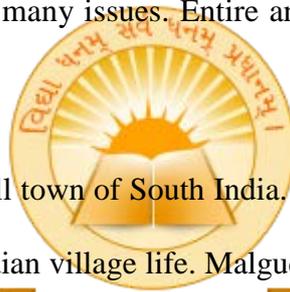
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it, with perfect sincerity and truthfulness. His integrity is above doubt. His one single aim is to amuse and entertain his readers by presenting before them life's little ironies, realistically and vividly. If there is any message, it is never obtrusive; it is for the readers themselves to glean it from their reading of the novels. Narayan is a regional novelist with higher creative sense. Like Hardy's Wessex, Malgudi is the chosen region which forms the background to the works of Narayan, whether novels or short stories. R.K. Narayan has achieved very precious fame and recognition in Indian Writing in English. He won numerous awards and honours for his works.

This novel 'Swami and Friends' has been divided into 19 stories. Each story is an independent and also at the same time a part of a larger whole. Each of them is linked with the other story in such a way that when they appear together they highlight many issues. Entire anthology can be discussed as a whole from *Dhwani* point of view.



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The setting of the novel is the small town of South India. Though R.K.Narayan has given the picture of Malgudi he has suggested the entire Indian village life. Malgudi can be any village of India. R.K.Narayan has given Malgudi as the metaphor of India.

Nallapa's Mango Grove is near the river, the Mempi Forest, Trunk Road to Trichinipoly. One can board the train for Madras at the Malgudi station. Within the town there is Market Road. This road intersects the Race Course Road. There are various streets and lane: Kabir Street, and Kabir Lane, Anderson Lane, Sarayu Street, Kulam Stree, Vinayak Mudali Street, Abu Lane, Ellaman Street, Keelacheri.

Like Delhi and New Delhi there are old and new towns. Extensions are everywhere. The Extensions have cross roads and trim houses. There is Lawley Extension named after Sir Fredrick Lowley, but later renamed as Gandhi Nagar. Even in the early thirties, Malgudi has a municipality, a Town Hall, a Club, and two schools,- The Albert Mission School and The Board High School. The school boys are cricket



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conscious, and talk of Bradman, Hobbs and Tate. In 1930, Swami is a pupil, first in the Albert Mission and later in the Board High School. We hear of motor cars and Swami has an exciting ride to the club in the car of his father's friend.

Malgudi is a district headquarters, and as such there is a Superintendent of police, Rajam's father, and a number of officers and policemen come to see him off at the railway station when he is transferred from Malgudi.

Malgudi is Narayan's Casterbridge, but the inhabitants of Malgudi, although they may have their recognizable local trappings, are essentially human, and hence have their kinship with all humanity. In this sense, Malgudi is everywhere. (Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English*, 167)

Malgudi, the locale of all the novels of Narayan, is a metaphor for India. It is a typically South Indian town, and it has been presented in his work vividly and realistically. Even its past history is given, and in successive novels we see it changing, growing and becoming different. It is a pure 'country of mind' and not any town which exists on the map of India. But one can find the Malgudi everywhere in India. Because this novel deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language etc. of the particular locality of India.

Life in Malgudi follows the same rhythm as in the other Indian towns. Indian struggles for independence comes to Malgudi also, and there are public speeches, bonfire of foreign goods and agitations, strikes and window-smashing, processions, slogan-shouting, and *lathi*-charges. It is a curious mixture of the East and the West, of the ancient and the modern.

Indian English sensibility is conveyed as befits a more enclosed and domestic ambience, by the collocation of the Sarayu river where the boys play and the Albert Mission School where they are educated, by the initials of M.C.C. which stands both for the Malgudi and the Marylebone Cricket Club, by the



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association of the Lord of *Tirupathy*, a God of south India, as well as the model railway engine in Rajam's packed toy cupboard, by the policemen rushing the crowd with their upraised *lathis* when the school is involved in a riot, and the Indian Head Master with his distinctly English cane giving the boys six on each hand, by the Junior Willard bats and the small *pooja* room in which a few framed pictures of Gods stare from a carved wooden pedestal among the permanent smell of flowers, camphor and incense; it is effected by English Reader and the grim simple interest sums on the one side, and the Indian luxuries of betel leaves, areca nut, pure ghee and parched coconut, plates of sweets and tumbler of coffee, on the other, and again by the collocation of the blazered members of the tennis club and the alchemist coachman who could turn copper into silver and even into gold.

There is also political agitation in Malgudi sparked off by the arrest of a patriot in Bombay, and thus is suggested the struggle for India's independence, going on all over the sub-continent, with the police obeying the orders of the red men who have come from across the seven-seas. Thus, the vaster and wider world around is suggested at every stage.

We feel that the quality of life in Malgudi is also the quality of life everywhere, that man is motivated by the same passions and impulses in all countries and places, and in this way the regional Malgudi is raised to the level of the universal. The school boy world as presented in the novel is universally true, for it is the same everywhere. Boys are basically the same, whether in Malgudi or anywhere else in the world.

Swami and Friends is a great classic of 'school boy' fiction. The school-world depicted in the novel, is the world of Indian school boys and not an English world. In India most of the students are day-scholars, and pass most of their time at home, and hence the depiction of Swami's home life. There is no ragging-system, as in English schools. The senior boys are not the tyrants; if at all there are tyrants, they are the teachers and the Head Masters. In all these respects, Narayan is true to the reality of Indian scene.

R.K.Narayan has also suggested the religious and often the superstitious spirit of India. Thus, Swami



easily believes that the coachman would be able to multiply his money by the use of some magical formula which he knows. He also believes that Gods, if they are kind, can turn stones into coins. When his stones are not turned into coins, he is angry with the Gods. But he is afraid of their wrath and does not say a word against them, for fear of divine punishment. All alone on the road, he is mortally afraid of ghosts, demons and evils spirits and prays to the God for their protection.

Conclusion:

In this way R.K.Narayan has suggested the implied meaning throughout the whole novel. He has given all the events of the novel in a very simple manner but all the events have their suggestive meaning. *Dhwani* prevails throughout the whole novel. The novel fits properly in the structure of *Dhwani* theory. 'Swami and Friends' is a novel with the meaning which is limited without the application of the theory of *Dhwani*. If this novel is studied, keeping the theory of *Dhwani* in mind, it has meanings appealing to the universe. *Dhwani* theory when applied on a particular piece of literature, that piece of literature appears with more meanings. If one goes through this novel without the theory of *Dhwani*, the novel gives the meaning, but in it is limited. Without the tool of the *Dhwani* theory this text cannot be perfectly understood. This text has the meaning without the theory of *Dhwani* also but that meaning is not universal. When this novel comes under an umbrella of the *Dhwani*, it has altogether a new and universal meaning. The theory of *Dhwani* is not complete in itself. It is a tool which can be used to interpret a text. *Dhwani* theory is like a touch stone. Any text when given the touch of this theory becomes golden with suggested meaning. It becomes pregnant with another implied meaning. When the text is pregnant with meaning the reader gets it with different taste. Any text becomes enjoyable and with more implied meaning when gets connected with the theory of *Dhwani*. Any Indian text is not complete without its interpretation with the theory of *Dhwani*. This theory amplifies the scope of the given text.



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