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SOLILOQUIES

(N. V. KRISHNA WARRIOR)

I wonder this talk on Soliloquies, as almost all talks on the Radio by men as insignificant as my humble self, is not a perfect example of a soliloquy. Of course there are talks, fire-side chats and addresses to the Nation, which are listened to in breathless attention, by the entire community, which, for the time being, appears to be glued to the receiving set. And here, though the speaker is not talked back to, there is the sense of perfect communion between the distinguished speaker, who usually is the Head of his state or the leader of his people or some international celebrity, and



by name "Keralasree". My English teacher Sri A. Narayana Poduval was a humorous writer in Malayalam. He was in fact 'Sanjayan of Taliparamba'. Sarasan the humorous magazine which he edited, had wide circulation in those days. Unfortunately, as in the case of Sanjayan, his life also came to a premature end. Sri P. Kunhirama Kurup, the grand old writer who guided the destiny of the Moothedath High School when we were in the High School classes, is a reputed author who has to his credit a number of beautiful poems and valuable literary criticisms like 'Sri Harsha', 'Valmiki & Kalidasa' and so on. Poet V. Gopalan Nayanar has his admirers all over Kerala. Sri Nandi Nambodiri, the enthusiastic social reformer and the ex-editor of 'Yogaksheman' has completed his research thesis on the three

great temples of Taliparamba, Trichambaram, and Kanhirangad. There are also a few budding writers who promise to be torch-bearers of this literary tradition. The two new educational institutions, the Sir Syed College and the Gurudev Vidya Peetam—can be expected to turn out more literary men who will enrich this tradition.

The muslims of Taliparamba, living in harmony with the other communities have been playing an important role in the economic life of this place, appropriating for themselves the major portion of the commercial sector. With the benefit of higher education derived from this sacred seat of higher learning - Sir Syed College - it may well be expected that they will begin to play a significant part in the social and cultural life as well of this historic place.

the invisible audience to whom he is breaking some new national policy, some glad tidings or some colossal disaster, No matter what the theme, the entire talk is emotionally charged, and both the speaker and his audience feel the psychological fulfilment which is the result of a satisfactory dialogue. The case is entirely different with speakers of my caliber. I, for one, would like to imagine, at least for the fifteen minutes during which this talk is to run its course, that the entire humanity is my audience and even animate beings in the far away planets beyond the ionosphere, are tuning in their transistor sets to get some new light on such a momentous topic as soliloquies. But my sense of realism tells me that by this time most of the listeners have already switched off their sets, and the remaining ones are there, just not to miss the opening part of the succeeding item of this evening's programme in which they are tremendously interested.

Soliloquy, then, is speaking alone. This compound word from the latin words SOLUS which means alone and LOQUY which means to speak, was coined by St. Augustine "to characterise a series of discussion between himself and his Reason". In this original sense the soliloquy was a private moral debate, a posing of moral alternatives, and had its origin in doubt. But during the succeeding centuries the word has shed most of its philosophical and religious colouring, the emphasis shifting from the character of the content to the environment in which the debate is carried on, viz., its privacy. The soliloquy has come

to express all sort of desires and feelings and thoughts. It often employs the first person singular and has the nature of a confession.

We do not know who started to employ soliloquy as a dramatic convention. From the very beginning of Indian drama we find it in its fully developed form. Bharata the originator of Indian Dramaturgy speaks of the three kinds of soliloquies which have ever since been in use in Sanskrit plays. The most important of these is the Svagata or Atmagata, which is the real monologue. Here the speaker is thinking or feeling aloud, and the audience are privileged to get glimpse of the soul of the speaker. In the other two kinds of soliloquies, viz. Janantika and Apavaritaka, the element of privacy is in tact; but in the former one character is making a private remark to another character on the stage which has more than two dramatis personae on it. This remark may or may not be overheard by the other characters present on the stage. In any case it will not alter the course of events. The third kind, Apavaritaka, on the other hand, should not fall into the ears of the other characters. It is strictly confidential. Bhasa in his Svapnavasavadatta has made very effective use of this dramatic device, and Kalidasa has followed his legendary predecessor.

In Greek drama soliloquies are comparatively few. This is due to the fact that an all-seeing, all-knowing chorus is always present to bear witness to the events and act as a confidant, thus making privacy, which is the real basis of soliloquy,

almost impossible. With the doing away with the chorus, since middle ages, the soliloquy came to its own in European Drama, where it is employed in a technical way, as a means of exposition or narration to open, close or join scenes, to identify characters and to summarize plots.

Gradually it became an integral part of the dramatic structure, a means of character revelation and a medium of introspection. Perhaps the most celebrated soliloquy, not only on the western stage, but in the whole of the world literature is that of Hamlet:

To be or not to be, that is the question;
Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. It is a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep.....
To sleep, perchance to dream.....

I might quote the entire passage, but enough is enough and time is against me.

stage, soliloquising for five acts, and where the revelation of this one personality is supposed to repalce the variety of events and characters of the old stage action. But Mallarme is only an exception.

As we have already seen the Soliloquy can be a very effective technical devise in the hands of a master artist like Bhasa, Kalidasa or Shakespeare. But we should also remember that there is something which is unnatural and even ridiculous in the very nature of it, and no wonder that in the 18th century and later in the 19th century the realist plawrights discarded it as inadequate for their themes. However, the romantic poets, closet dramatists and still later symbolists used it widely. The French poet Victor Hugo has given us in his play HERNANI perhaps the longest soliloquy running into 160 lines. Mallarme, another French poet, has, of course composed a full play in which only one character holds the

So long we have been considering soliloquy as a dramatic devise. Soliloquy in verse had always had a peculiar lyrical quality. It thus formed an integral part of non-dramatic poetry and our epics are full of long and beautiful soliloquies. In the prose literatue of Sanskrit the genre known as Katha was invariably told by the hero in first person, while the genre known as Akhyayika could be either in the words of the hero or any other person, including the poet. Thus Katha was a long soliloquy. And what is Kalidasa's Meghasandesa. but an extended soliloquy? All our Suktas or hymns, Stotras or prayers

and Vilapas or laments are perfect soliloquies.

Here I may discreetly introduce a new word, monologue. It is composed of the two Greek words Monos and Logos, and means speech by one. Though used almost as a synonym of soliloquy, monologue is supposed to have a somewhat wider meaning, in literary parlance, ~~have a somewhat wider meaning in literary parlance.~~ Monologue is usually long and is relatively complete, and unlike soliloquy it is addressed to someone.

Every student of English literature is familiar with the Dramatic monologue. Robert Browning, We are told on good authority, was not the inventor of this literary genre, but it was he who wrote the most successful dramatic monologues combining dramatic immediacy and psychological penetration. It is a drama condensed to a single episode, and one character occupies the centre of the stage. The story is unfolded by a one-sided conversation by one person to another or a group of listeners. In the dramatic monologues of Browning we find

perfect union of the lyric form with the dramatic crisis-consciousness. Browning wanted to discard all the accessories of the theatre like the simulation of the painted scene, boards, actors, prompters, light and costume while producing the dramatic effect. He took the soul itself to a nobler stage.

The technic of the stream of consciousness or interior monologue familiar to us through the works of James Joyce is the most recent development in monologue. This technical devise is employed in order to give the reader a direct impression of the continuous flow of ideas, sensations, feelings and memories as they come to the consciousness of the character or the author. The idea is to present the inner man in the raw, naked, helpless, even repulsive, but the real man, the whole man. Much may be said about the effectiveness or otherwise of this technical devise, but there is no doubt that some such development was bound to happen with the popularisation of the startling discoveries of psycho-analysis.

