

Write a critical note on T.S. Eliot's theory of the dissociation of Sensibility.

Introduction :-

Eliot's theory of the Dissociation of Sensibility is an attempt to find some historical explanation to the dissolution of the traditions of unified Sensibility found in the Compositions of Dante and Shakespeare. A unified Sensibility is a Sensibility which is the product of a true Synthesis of the individual with the tradition of feeling with thought and of the temporal with the eternal. According to Eliot, unfortunately the traditions of unified Sensibility were suddenly disrupted during the 17th Century because of a split in the creative personality of the ^{17th} ~~18th~~ century. For this very purpose he propounded his famous theory of Dissociation of Sensibility.

Eliot's theory of the Dissociation of Sensibility:

By Sensibility Eliot means a synthetic faculty which can unite thought and feeling and the Sensuous and the intellectual. Of course the great Elizabethan poets of the early Jacobean age had flourished a unified Sensibility. This is the fundamental reason that their thinking and learning modified their made of feeling and in this way they were elaborately read. We observe that thought and feeling are found in Donne's and in modern poetry. The unification of Sensibility was lost and a dissociation of Sensibility was set. The poets of 18th Century were intellectual.

They thought but didn't feel. On the other hand the romantic poets of the 19th Century felt but didn't think. In Eliot's view Tennyson and Browning can only reflect, but cannot express their experience poetically.

The metaphysical poets like Elizabethan have a unified sensibility. They were simple, artificial, difficult and fantastical. Both Milton and Dryden were great poets and they offered a significant service to the flourish of poetry. Under their great influence the English language became more pure and refined. The feeling expressed in Thomas Gray's poem 'Country Churchyard' is cruder and less satisfying than the feeling expressed in Andrew Marvell's poem 'A Coy Mistress'!

There was also another effect of the influence of Milton and Dryden. During the early 18th century, the poets lacked a balance and they reflected. They enjoyed the luxury of dwelling upon some feeling but couldn't express that feeling poetically. The metaphysical poet had their own faults. But they had one virtue known to be unified sensibility.

Criticism of the theory of the Dissociation of Sensibility :-

The theory of the Dissociation of Sensibility is not Eliot's original critical concept. Eliot was the first critic to find a convincing expression of a split in the personality not only of the artist but also in that of modern men and women. This

theory is generally applicable to metaphysical poetry. According to Leishman, 'In the March of Wit', ~~say that~~ the concept of the dissociation of sensibility can't be applied to all the poems of John Donne. It is true that Eliot praised the metaphysical poets extremely. In his popular poems like Waste Land and The Hollow-men, the metaphysical qualities of his earlier verse appear to have almost disappeared.

Conclusion:-

Eliot's theory of the dissociation of sensibility is undoubtedly one of the most significant contributions to critical analysis and judgement. It brought about a tremendous influence over the creative and critical talents of his contemporaries so that the poets be conscious of the traditions of the unified sensibility.