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Textual Criticism: A Process of Monarchy

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What is Textual criticism?

Textual criticism: a general term for the application of logical method to analyzing the relationship between preserved and inferential form of a text, followed by the application of various techniques including critical judgment designed to establish what will ordinarily be the single definitive form of the text, It (textual criticism) is really the foundation of the other sorts of Criticism

“It is the task of textual criticism to collect and study these various writings (copies of the original texts, translations, quotations etc.) in which a text has been preserved, determine the changes that occurred in the wording and arrangement of the text, assess the significance of such changes, and restore, if possible, the original wording or form of the text. If this is not possible, one must decide on the best or most reliable wording and try to account for the historical process through which the text has been arranged. In every case textual criticism seeks to establish a reliable text that can serve as the basis for serious study and reflection.” (Harper’ s Bible dictionary.129-30).

Textual criticism is a methodology of literature based on manuscriptology .The basic idea of textual criticism is to reconstruct an ‘authentic’/ ‘pure’text, by comparing as many versions as possible . But by doing this the cultural uniqueness represented by each version is marginalized. This process has to follow a rigorous methodology that includes collection of

manuscripts, their classification and comparison. By following this methodology certain texts are authenticated, whereas certain texts are marginalized, we find analogous process even in literary historiography and other historical discourses which were essential in 'imagining a nation'. Textual criticism has two parts, namely operational section and observational section. They also have known as lower criticism and higher criticism respectively. The present paper makes an attempt to critically evaluate the entire process of textual criticism.

Reconstruction of 'original text' by comparing versions is analogous to the process of abstracting a 'nation' by comparing 'subnationalisms'. In other words we find an 'ideal text' as synonymous to ideal nation. New historicism problematizes the very idea of 'nationalism' by critically examining the process of imagination that works behind it. Hence at the age of new historicism textual criticism must look in to versions and their cultural uniqueness rather than theoretical abstractions.

All versions of a text are unique and distinct at the same time they influence each other and create an inter textual context that could generate multiple meaning. The polyphonic existence of multiple texts should not be crushed down, for external political motives. Higher criticism which moves from the abstracted 'original text' to

culturally variant texts has immense importance at the age of postmodern historiography.

Nation State and Textual Criticism

A Nation is an imagined community. It is constructed by selecting and rejecting memories this imagination is possible only by overlooking the existing hierarchies of cast, gender, class etc. Nation is imagined as a monolithic entity. This imagination was necessary to fight against colonial domination the rationale behind the textual criticism, especially in Lower criticism, is quite similar to the National imagination . Both ‘Nation’ and the ‘original text’ are tending to be more Universalistic. Common elements claim more attention than contradictory elements .

This could be proved by closely examining the textual studies based on the Manuscripts starting from *Cambridge codex 3* to Masore manuscripts , passing through many centuries the Critical text of *Bible* is reconstructed by comparing many manuscripts collected from varying contexts of time and space . In India manuscriptology gained its momentum during our National phase. Many texts and authors were ‘invented’ as common heritage to all the Indian people irrespective of their cultural differences, during this period. They include *Ramayana* , *Mahabharatha*, texts of Kalidasa etc. All these texts were referred to an Indian and projected Universality.

Historical Coincidence

Nationalistic thought was extensively emerged in 19th century Europe. It was facilitated by industrial revolution and renaissance movements of England, France, Spain, Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Italy. In India the history of manuscriptology begins with M. Vinternits .it is essay published in 1897 illustrated the possibility of Manuscriptology as a distinct science this paper was presented in the Second oriental international congress held at Paris . The same discussions continued in following years. Textual criticism, as a Universal science, began at London world Academy in the year 1904. The spirit of Renaissance and Nationalism were the driving forces acting behind it.

Critique of Nation State and Observational Section

Nation state conceals many of its internal contradictions. attributing otherness to all 'undesirable' elements ,Nation state s attempted to assume amonolithic identity of its own . Lower Criticism also employs the same methodology in constructing the ideal text all the deviation appears in versions despised as exceptions or the other but all these versions have its own unique positions in the genealogy of the text . These genealogies are neglected in Lower Criticism. But by neglecting the

genealogical positions of the versions, the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of these versions are abandoned forever. By doing this a researcher is, in fact, disregard the innumerable possibilities of cultural diversities that made the versions possible.

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