# AESTHETICS VIS-A`-VIS DIDACTICISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BOOKS OF ISAIAH AND JONAH

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# ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the relationship between 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism' in literature. How these concepts are used in criticism and their co-existence are dealt with concisely. It is an attempt to show how 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism' can go hand in hand in a work of art to have an impact on readers. Both the concepts, in their appealing and instructive natures, can help a literary work achieve its purpose when joined pertinently.

On the whole, the research's attempt is to obviate the separation and accentuate the harmony between 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism'. Following this, how the aesthetics helps the didactic serve its purpose is also discussed in the paper. The concepts are entertained in relation to passages selected from the prophetic sections of the Bible. Excerpts from *The Book of Isaiah* and *Jonah* are analyzed in line with the concomitant relationship between the two concepts. The analyses are worked out to show how 'didacticism', instruction, becomes more effective when accompanied by 'aesthetics' or artistic beauty.

It is in the manner of this research, then, to finally show on the ground of the analyzed passages that the two concepts are also intertwined in literary works, of which the Bible is considered one. It is attempted in the study to indicate evidently that, no matter how much distinction is put between 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism', there is an ample 'room' in the literary world to accommodate both as complementary to each other.

In the first chapter of this paper primary and secondary sources are analyzed in relation to the subject-matter of this paper. Chapter two centers on the concepts that are discussed separately and in relation to each other. In the third chapter passages from *Isaiah* and *Jonah* are taken in accordance with the harmonious relationship between 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism'. Analyses are worked out to show how the passages in focus incorporate the terms effectively.

# INTRODUCTION

## I. Background of the Problem

In an effort to set a pertinent goal with regard to my field of study, due considerations were given to matters that have literary features. In the course of exploration of the subject-matter a class discussion on the state of Amharic prose fiction in 1940's sparked off my interest. It was then concluded that, since the writings of the decade were in the main didactic they could not possibly exhibit artistic qualities or aesthetic expression.

In due course, the following question flashed in my mind: "Are the two concepts necessarily incongruous?" To further reflect on the problem I did more reading. I discovered that the term *didactic* was in fact regarded scornfully in critical circles.

Writers like Holman took the trouble to state that the New Critics, who analyse a work intrinsically and see no other purpose of its production other than itself as an end, were bitter foes of didacticism (1992:139). This discovery gave me an impetus to explore the matter even further.

The "art for art's sake" (*l'art pour l'art*) movement that accompanied "aestheticism" was also responsible for fencing off other intentions in producing a work of art. The thought that emphasises the self-sufficiency of a work disregarded any utility or morality as external to the work. To put it in another way, aesthetics and didacticism are two different concepts that should go their ways separately.

Therefore, thinking that the views are only supposedly contradictory, I decided to write on the subject-matter and the title itself has passed through some refinements

to appear as it is now. I start with the hypothesis that it is possible to argue and show the harmony between the two concepts – didacticism and aesthetics.

## II. Significance of the Problem

The assumption that some thinkers and critics maintain about the didactically oriented literary works as being deprived of aesthetics is called into attention in this study. This modest research attempts to see the possible reasons behind their views so as to define the problem as clearly as possible. If it is assumed that didacticism and aesthetics are not inherently opposed to each other there should be viable arguments and materials (sources) that come in support of the assumption.

Hence, it is significant to raise the issues where they can be seen attentively in order that a better understanding may be ensured. This would, I believe, reinforce the literary foundation to accommodate both didacticism and aesthetics in a harmonious manner.

## III. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study, broadly speaking, is to indicate that didacticism (in literature) and aesthetics are not necessarily opposed to each other and that they can go hand in hand to have an impact on the reader. In light of this the two concepts will be discussed individually and in relation to each other. Attempts will be made to

show how the two concepts join to create a coherent whole, regardless of the belief that is upheld as to the separation of them. The references in focus – the Prophetic Writings – are selected to objectify the problem and are believed to be fairly pertinent to meet the purpose of the study.

## IV. Scope of the Study

The scope of the research is believed to be fairly manageable for it touches upon only Biblical literature in an effort to elucidate the subject-matter laconically. Nevertheless, both books of the *Bible* have a similar point of departure, literariness – literary quality – in this case, that prevent the research from becoming undesirably fragmented and 'bulky'.

The two concepts that are instrumental in bringing the references to focus will be dealt with separately because of their independent essence. Considered along this line, this discussion shall undoubtedly widen the theoretical scope of the study.

## V. Methodology

The research is theoretical in nature and will draw on library materials. Beginning with the problem in mind the main concepts shall be discussed independently and in relation to each other. For this purpose the views of different scholars on the subject will be incorporated.

Based on the Biblical texts analytical discussions shall be done citing pertinent illustrations. This will be carried out to insure that the topic is well entertained with regard to the selected references. The research will be conducted in such a way that it would persuade the reader to look at the materials in a different way. Since 'all understanding is contextual' efforts will be made to clearly show the position of the research in relation to the texts to be analysed, which are responsible for context creation.

To benefit more and have a good look at the problem an interdisciplinary approach will be used. By this I mean is different critical approaches according to their respective pertinence so as to better entertain the concepts in focus. They (the concepts) require different approaches while unfolding their respective nature and suggesting their harmony on account of the passages selected.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Literature Review

### *The Book of Isaiah*

*The Book of Isaiah* is found in the Old Testament section of the *Bible* with its lengthy composition of sixty-six chapters. The book is generally regarded as the greatest of the Old Testament prophetic accounts. The reasons these for are (a) the author (or the prophet) is pre-eminently a prophet of redemption (b) many portions of the book are considered among the finest in literature (Thompson, 1983:1525).

Because of its prophetic nature the book is episodic. In other words the plot is structured in a fragmented manner. With regard to its composition the book is divided into three sections. Section one goes from chapter 1 to chapter 35 and refers chiefly to events leading up to the captivity of the Judean people by Babylon 587 BC. The second section is historical in the sense that it holds four chapters of "plain and simple narrative of certain events during the reign of Hezekiah" (Spence, 1962:ix). It goes from chapter 36 to chapter 39. Section three goes from chapter 40 to 66 and refers to events beyond the captivity, and includes messianic predictions.

As far as the style and diction of the book are concerned many biblical scholars agree that it surpasses any of the similar genres in the *Bible*. Spence quotes Ewald as saying:

> In Isaiah...everything conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no prophet, either before or after, could as writer attain.... In Isaiah, all kinds

> of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together, so as mutually to temper and qualify each other. (1962:xii)

Nothing is left out in the making of the unity of the book. Every bit has its own contribution in the building of the literary quality that it exhibits. It is noted that there is perfect symmetry of the whole. Spence observes that "a lofty and majestic calmness, a grandeur and dignity of expression" is Isaiah's most patent characteristic (Ibid.). Apart from this there is liveliness of composition. This is said to be aided by employment of striking images, dramatic representation, pointed antithesis, play upon words, emphatic expressions, vivid descriptions, and amplification of occasional points (Spence, 1962:xii-xiii).

It is argued that not a single paragraph (in the prophetic writings paragraphs are usually small) is without a metaphor or a simile; the beauty of the texts lies here. After observing how poetic the book looks one can contentedly say that Isaiah is an 'image-laden' book that can appeal to the critical as well as the uncritical mind, to the one who reads it only out of religious devotion. As has been pointed above the less frequent dramatic representation leaves a noticeable impression on the composition of the book. Such a book of literary wealth would suffice to form the basis for dealing with the issues of aesthetics and didacticism. The didactic aim in its composition and the aesthetic expression make it valuable as a subject-matter to deliberate upon.

## *The Book of Jonah*

This book is also found in the Old Testament part of the *Bible* uniquely unfolding the prophet Jonah's personal life. The other prophetic books mostly comprise messages of hope and judgement that take the people as their centre rather than focusing mainly on the prophets' account.

The book has four chapters that mainly focus on the adventurous trips of Jonah, which are conducted first against God and second against the prophet. His refusal not to carry out the mission that is given to him is rightly commented upon by Deane:

> It is concerned chiefly with Jonah's own personal feelings and history in relation to this mission. Possessed with the national hatred of idolatrous Gentiles, and fearing that God, in his great long-suffering, might, after all, spare these Assyrians to whom he was sent, and that thus his prediction would be discredited and a heathen nation saved, he attempted to escape the unwelcome errand. (Spence, 1963:1)

The moral corruption in Nineveh initiates the writing of *The Book of Jonah.* It is considered more as a history rather than a prophecy (Spence, 1963:viii). "Its didactic and symbolical purpose" (Spence, 1963:ix) is chiefly accounted for by its insertion among the prophetic writings of the *Bible*. It is a narrative which also comprises poetry as a form of prayer. Its tale-oriented story is put "graphically, and has quite a dramatic interest" (Ibid.). Its manageable size, coupled with its interesting story with didactic intention, suits the purpose of this paper. In due course its passages will be analysed in line with the harmonious co-existence of aesthetics and didacticism.

Rene` Wellek and Austin Warren, in their *Theory of Literature,* bring to light the nature of aesthetics in defining literature, "Here the criterion [for defining literature] is either aesthetic worth alone or aesthetic worth in combination with general intellectual distinction" (1982:21). Aesthetics is said to be known through style, composition and presentation of a given work of art. It is also argued that such factors are mostly prevalent in a work that has an intellectual eminence.

Wellek and Warren argue that "...literature only works in which the aesthetic function is dominant" (1982:25). Other works, they assert, have aesthetic elements. It seems that aesthetics play the vital role in recognizing and accepting a given writing as a work of art. They also try to point out that "it would be a narrow conception of literature to exclude all propaganda art or didactic and satirical poetry" (ibid.).

Though the book does not specifically and extensively treat the problem of this study, discussions on related facts are important to note. The text is functional in giving a general framework into literature within which this study is handled.

*The Theory of Criticism from Plato to the Present* as edited by Roman Selden, is a valuable resource to the study. The section on 'Aesthetic Dimension' gives a background information on aesthetics and allows the works of the prominent figures to speak about the matter from varying angles.

Of the thinkers that are brought into light Emmanuel Kant is one. He is known among critics for his thoughts on aesthetic judgement. To him "the beautiful is that which apart from concepts is represented as the object of a universal satisfaction" is achieved because of the "disinterestedness" of the approach to

aesthetics (Selden, 1995:245). This and other relevant thoughts that have a direct link with aesthetics will be used in the study.

In another section titled 'Moralism', the points of view from Plato to David Holbrook are entertained. The instruction that could be obtained from works of art is seen from a moralistic angle. And the discussions on 'moralism' are thought to be important in explicating didacticism.

Samuel Johnson, for instance, is one among many who fences off any literary product that propagates immorality: "If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account..." (Selden, 1995:483). He not only rejects the immoral ones, but also favours instructiveness in literary works by uplifting what is accepted to be good and by degrading what is termed to be bad. Related ideas of others in the text will also be considered where appropriate.

Anne Sheppard, far more than any accessible author, deals with aesthetics in relation to art in her book *Aesthetics.* The whole book is about aesthetics and mainly deals with the concept with regard to literature. As the writer herself puts it the second half of the book – about five chapters – concentrates on literature. The book "offers a general introduction to aesthetics" (1987:3). It discusses the concept in comparison with the different thoughts/theories proposed in line with the philosophy of art.

Then it shifts to what it terms "Art, Beauty and Aesthetic Appreciation" (Sheppard, 1987:56) to call attention to ideas of earlier thinkers and critics such as Plato and Emmanuel Kant. It is stated that "Aesthetic appreciation is a complex matter, involving both emotional and intellectual factors" (1987:64). Though it is stated that aesthetic appreciation is very much subjective, it is tried in the book to look at the concept as tangible as possible by citing examples from works of art

analysing different possible reactions given to them. One example is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Sheppard, in the book, deals with the concept of morality as well. In the chapter that is devoted to art and morals she gives a vivid picture of the influence of literature on the moral stands of its audience: "Art can have a moral influence by giving us imaginative insight into other people and by inculcating values and attitudes, often in subtle and indirect ways" (1987:153).

"Moral influence" seems to be viewed the same way as didacticism. The writer admits that a literary work can play a role in creating an impact on its recipients. Fortunately, this idea goes in line with the problem of my study. So, the ideas in the text can have their appropriate use in the thesis.

Frederic Copleston, in his book *A History of Philosophy*, touches upon the concept of aesthetics in a sporadic manner. Although the approach to terms, including aesthetics, is philosophical, the explanation given on the concept revolves around art in general and literature in particular.

In discussing the origin of aesthetics Alexander G. Baumgarten is quoted as the first person to coin the term. It is stated that in the writer's translated work called "Reflections on Beauty" he defines aesthetics as "the science of the beautiful and of beautiful things" (Copleston, 1985:115).

Baumgarten is quoted as saying "the goal of aesthetics is the perfection of sense knowledge" (p.116). Aesthetics is regarded as a psychology of sensation, logic of the senses and a system for aesthetic criticism (p.117). The term, for Baumgarten, covers a large portion in the realm of art in which all psychology (sensation), logic and criticism are constituent parts. The discussion in the text broadens methodically to introduce terms like 'aesthetic intuition', which is concerned with sense knowledge.

Yuri Barbash, in his book *Aesthetics and Poetics*, talks about art with regard to partisanship and affinity with the society in which it is produced. Aesthetics, according to him, is something that is seen prominently after a harmonious integration of art and society: "Aesthetics has literally felt the full force of the winds of change – social, political and ideological" (1971:10).

The book is essentially Marxist in a sense that it underlines the organic unity between society and art: "...inherent to the very nature of art are its ties with social life, with the ideas of the age and with political conflict" (p.11). Aesthetics and poetics are seen in terms of their manifestation of the ideological interest of the society. To Barbash both concepts serve the "political" objective of the cultures of their existence; they, in fact, are meant to fulfil this purpose.

The book, which is against what it calls "hypocritical" and "anti-realistic" works, is important in a way that it gives a relatively wide scope to the concept of aesthetics and its application. However, its conservative adherence to the Marxist ideology would apparently lessen its contribution to the topic in focus.

Northrop Frye, in *the Great Code*, deliberates issues that are prevalent in the *Bible*. He argues that the Bible, as being important in history of literature, has not been properly entertained:

> The *Bible* is clearly a major element in our own imaginative tradition, whatever we may think we believe about it. It insistently raises the question: why does this huge, sprawling, tactless book sit there inscrutably in the middle of our cultural heritage...frustrating all our efforts to walk around it? (1983:xviii-xix)

His book draws attention to how this valuable work has not been considered in a relevant way. Its contribution to imaginative works is paramount. His discussion on the Bible has also paid due attention to *The Book of Isaiah*.

In trying to get rid of the traditional dichotomy between secular and religious (Biblical) literature, Frye gives historical accounts of how critics like Coleridge got the "insights into biblical typology" (1983:xix). He goes on saying that "...critical theory is coming back into focus, and many contemporary critics are well aware of the relevance of Biblical criticism to secular literature" (Ibid.).

Although the book relates in general the dynamics of the *Bible*, the study's concern with one of its constituent elements makes it useful in relating some views. Its emphasis on the literary quality and importance of the *Bible* happens to be crucial for my study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Concepts in Focus

The terms 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism' are central to this study and they, therefore, need to be given due consideration in order that the concepts they represent may come out vividly. Both concepts will be looked at briefly in order to set up a conceptual framework that would help to make things clear and lay the foundation for the chapter to follow.

## Aesthetics

'Aesthetics', generally speaking, is a term applied to the realm of beauty and is commonly used to express what is considered to be beautiful. Though much of it is used in the discipline of philosophy it can also serve a literary purpose. Different scholars of different ages have tried to give some explanations about aesthetics in accordance with their preference and outlook.

S.Pluhar, in his translation of Kant's *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, defines aesthetics as, "the...art of the beautiful and of taste, i.e., of the power to cognize beauty" (1987:xlix). The definition given goes in line with the ideas of Kant who emphasizes the position of "taste" in talking about aesthetic judgement.

Alexander Gottheb Baumgarten (1714-62) is credited with coining the term 'aesthetics'. George Friedrich Meier's (1718-77), his former student, contribution to the former's ideas was, as stated by Pluhar, significant (1987:xlix). The professor at Frankfurt, Baumgarten, introduced the term in his work titled *Reflections on Poetry*. As Frederic Copleston states, he describes aesthetics as "the science of the beautiful and of beautiful things" (1985:116). (This statement is reiterated only to show how aesthetics and beauty are intertwined.)

The concept basically appears as a "science" dictating empirical search in finding what is beautiful and what is not. But this doesn't mean that the subjective approach is neglected. Baumgarten probes into the matter to come up with a "psychology of sensation, a logic of the senses, and a system for aesthetic criticism" (1985:117). All of these attempts revolve around the human factor and make the approach individual (subjective) rather than only systematic (objective).

Sensation and sense knowledge are items that are related to stimulation. For the process to be carried out and be effective there has to be an object that is capable of stirring the faculties that are responsible for reactions. There is no question that such objects required to have attractive traits that make themselves perceptible. Therefore, for an object to be appreciated it is not enough that it is brought into light; it should exhibit some literary quality that in fact makes its presence more lasting.

Existence does not always guarantee attraction. Many things in life are overlooked for at least two reasons. One, which is not directly applicable to this study, is lack of critical inquiry on the part of assumed beholders. If a person passively or less actively interacts with his surroundings – natural and artificial – he easily overlooks things, even those that are worth looking at.

The other reason is inefficiency or lack of power of attraction on the part of the objects (e.g., literary works). If qualities that can appeal to the senses are missing, close examination becomes a distant reality. In other words there is a cause-and-effect relationship between a subject and an object for an aesthetic appreciation to take place.

Nevertheless, arguments can arise on the nature of the qualities themselves. To mark a boundary to delimit the qualities that are expected from an aesthetic object is difficult and equally controversial. Since it is challenging and very delicate to shortlist the qualities that make natural as well as man-made products beautiful, it will not be surprising to approach the matter subjectively. But to make this mostly subject-oriented phenomenon more understandable, thinkers have tried their best to come up with a definite framework.

Clive Bell, after understanding how deep and personal experience aesthetics is, argues, as Selden quotes him, in his *Art*:

> ...Though all aesthetic theories must be based on aesthetic judgements, and ultimately all aesthetic judgements must be matters of personal taste, it would be rash to assert that no theory of aesthetics can have general validity. (Selden, 1988:259)

His argument lies on the fact that though aesthetic judgement appears highly personalized, it is not notoriously individual. "Aesthetic judgement", that follows the "taste", according to him, passes through a stage at which an underlying principle is in effect. What he calls *significant form* is a yardstick in all the matters of aesthetic appreciation. His argument is based on the fact that, though people choose different objects in accordance with their taste, what makes them choose what they choose is the *significant form*.

*Significant form*, the quality that should be looked at prior to judging a work of art, is stated as something that should be examined while realizing art. "Forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws" and their effect in moving a recipient of the work are what Bell means by the term *significant form* (1988:260). But the phrase "unknown and mysterious laws" can easily lend itself to misunderstandings. One may ask how a reader or critic could talk confidently about mysterious phenomena without grasping the assumed mystery. Though it is not easy to give a satisfying answer at this point, whoever claims to have grasped the quality can simply indicate the path on which s/he traveled to get to that point.

Hence, for Bell aesthetics lies in the *significant form* and its realization is insured only if the object is considered emotionally. A critical inquiry into the object to see what could be in the mind of the author is neither sought nor necessary. According to him aesthetics experience is only insured by focusing on the object without referring to the faculty of cognition. Emotion as a criterion of aesthetics is what it is all about. Art serves as a means of transportation from the routines of life to a better state of aesthetic experience, "for a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested..." (Selden, 1988:260).

But this argument can't be free from being contested, for it is difficult to prove that one's emotion can be effected solely without the involvement of the intellect. The human mind is a very complex organ that makes such distinctions too marginal – it is very hard to draw a line vividly between the faculties of the mind. And what Bell calls "the unconscious apprehension" looks exceedingly passive, throwing the understanding of the whole concept into obscurity.

Immanuel Kant has written much about aesthetics, reinforcing the foundation laid down by men like Baumgarten. His famous writing on aesthetics,

*Critic of Aesthetic Judgment*, gives and elaborates explanation of the terms. For him cognition or understanding has no place in deciding the particular object as beautiful. Imagination is the key concept in aesthetic appreciation.

Kant admits that this makes the whole process of appreciation or judgement subjective. Since the faculty that is involved in the aesthetic activity is the imagination, logical reasoning to the point of objectification is not called upon. It is stated that the subjective judgement answers the question: "Does this object please me" (Selden, 1988:245). However, he attempts to come up with a framework within which *universality* would be maintained.

Disinterestedness is another key factor both in approaching as well as appreciating a given work. This, according to Kant, insures objectivity while realizing a work subjectively – an equitable human appreciation. Nothing from life or experience is called upon while measuring the beauty of an object. It is an end by itself and should be looked at accordingly. According to his translated work by Pluhar he has this to say:

> Everyone has to admit that if a judgement about beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it.
>
> (Pluhar, 1987:46)

A complete disinterestedness is required as a prerequisite in determining the aesthetics in a given object. A genuine look and real appreciation, as far as Kant is concerned, are gained only when a beholder detaches himself from any possible external inferences as well as references that are alluded to the object of assumed satisfaction. And for this to happen there should be readiness, open-mindedness, on

the subject's part. To put it in another way, the given object that is meant for appreciation should attract the sense of the beholders.

To make things more clear, Kant makes a distinction in the concept of beauty: he thus speaks of *dependent* and *free beauty*. The former concerns itself in a relative manner and the merits are only specified as well as realized relatively, i.e. in comparison with other similar types existing elsewhere.

*Free beauty* is something universal in the sense that it is not equated or compared with any other object of a similar kind. It is a thing that is arrived at after a mere and 'unbiased' contemplation. Kant argues further that, "the liking involved in taste for the beautiful is disinterested and free, since we are not compelled to give our approval by any interest, whether of sense or reason" (Selden, 1987:52). The only deciding factor is the degree of appeal the object has. The more an object – be it literary or natural – appeals the more it is agreeable, and the more agreeable it is, the more aesthetic qualities it holds. In other words, the aesthetic attributes make the object appeal to the senses of the beholder who later discovers the object to be agreeable to his taste. And art, which is one of Kant's targets in his discussion, was believed to be disinterested. So, beauty, aesthetics for my concern, "is an object's form of 'purposiveness' insofar as it is perceived in the object without the presentation of a purpose" (1987:84). In the same vein, the "beautiful is what, without a concept, is like universal" (p.64).

Although all the arguments raised by Kant are essential to make interested individuals understand (or deliberate on) the concept of aesthetics, they hardly become perfect to measure the qualities of literary works which are products of humans, realized after both cognition and imagination collaborate together. Likewise, appreciation of such objects would, I presume, come into effect similarly.

In literature, for aesthetic judgement to be effected, the beholder has to use his cognitive mind. Unless one understands the object of consideration well, at least in telling what it is, s/he can't stop to ponder about it. Therefore, knowing is the first step in experiencing beauty, and understanding a literary work is a bit different from understanding non-literary works. A picture, for instance, can appeal to the senses aesthetically before an onlooker even tries to think about it. But this doesn't happen in literature, for language rightfully plays the determining factor. Similarly, it plays an intermediary role between the object to be understood and the subject, without which we would not even talk about literature.

Anne Sheppard, in her elaborate discussion on aesthetics, tries to mark the boundaries of the concept by an 'instrument' of interpretation, "If a critic wants to show us that a work is aesthetically valuable and deserves our attention, he or she must show us that there is matter there to be interpreted, that the work repays critical study" (1987:83). Here, interpretation is brought in as a sign of aesthetic measurement. If one spends one's time looking at a work, one is interpreting and the act shows an attraction on the part of the interpreter.

Critical studies follow the path of interpretations, and a work of art would be of many deliberations when given wide reception by readers. This in turn implies that there is an element of attractiveness in the work. Again, Sheppard comments on this, "In general a work which is rich in possibilities of interpretation will be a work which we find aesthetically valuable and conversely a work poor in interpretive possibilities will lack aesthetic value" (Ibid.). Hence, the 'acid test' of aesthetics in literature is in the interpretative realization, which in turn assures satisfaction. Sheppard does not deny how complex the whole idea is, and comments that, "Aesthetic appreciation is a complex matter, invoking both emotional and intellectual factors" (1987:64).

In a nutshell, aesthetics – beauty – in literary works is something that should be looked at in the general unity between the form and the content of the text. The main idea that best expresses the aesthetic quality of any work is its symmetry of composition that stands out elegantly to attract readers. By this I mean the crafty arrangement of literary devices that concretize the message to be transmitted. The passages that will be dealt with in the next chapter elucidate this claim.

One important aspect should be noted to make things more clear. Aesthetics, at least in art, does not mean there is neatness of moral or ethical quality. What is beautiful is seen in light of 'external' qualities that are not necessarily detached from the internal structure. Speaking of aesthetics, then, uprightness is not a factor to be sought. Sheppard has captured the point while discussing aesthetic appreciation, "works of art and other aesthetic objects can be ugly instead of beautiful and can arouse the reverse of pleasure in varying degrees from mild distaste to utter disgust" (1987:64).

The point here is not that of correctness of motive or message. What is thought to be represented, be it a filthy matter or a thing of choice is done in a way that is pleasing to the creator. The notion of aesthetics comes with the craft of the method or the manner in which the thought about the object is concretized. The aesthetics lies in the uniqueness and effectiveness of the execution.

Tennyson is quoted as saying: "The filthiest of all paintings painted well is mightier than the purest painted ill" (Holman, 1992:6). This observation goes with the notion of disinterestedness that is mostly capitalized by Kant. What is to be focused on is the vehicle in which the intention (message) passes through either smoothly or with some obstructions. The didactic message (in support of the problem of this paper) comes in focus to get itself safe to the point or realization.

As in the objects of nature, if more onlookers are attracted to a work of art, then it will not be difficult to tell that the given work is appealing. In the same vein, when more readers read a work, a good deal of criticism follows. Criticism of a literary work, as hinted above, tells us how valuable the work is. And the value attached to the work is a result of its aesthetic composition. The things that we mention time and again while doing a critical analysis are prominent features of the literary work. Hence, when we talk about beauty we are speaking about the symmetry of these features. Symmetry coupled with vigour makes the work aesthetically conspicuous.

What has been attempted so far is establishing a viable understanding of the concept aesthetics. The discussion thus far has, I believe, indicated that the term exists independently. But this does not mean that it cannot 'mix' with a different concept. In line with the problem of this study, then, a possible 'mate' – didacticism – will be called into attention.

## Didacticism

Compared to aesthetics it is a less difficult concept to define. On the whole, didacticism deals with instruction, and its ultimate aim is making an impact on addressees. C. Hugh Holman defines the term as "instructiveness in a work, one purpose of which is to give guidance, particularly in moral, ethical or religious matters" (1992:139). In literature, if instruction is selected as a primary goal, then the purpose of a work is didactic. Or to put it in a less assertive way, if a work reflects

considerably moral or religious values one can say that there is an element of didacticism in it.

Nevertheless, the presence of scattered elements of instruction does not indicate that the entire aim of the literary work is didacticism. An author of a given literary text can subconsciously reflect the norms of his society that are inculcated in his mind. Those reflections of values that are seemingly put for an aim of instruction can not validate anyone's claim of didactic purpose on the part of the given literary work. But for my concern, the concept is entertained in line with its full-fledged applicability, namely its conspicuous presence and usage in a given text.

Morality, as central to the notion of didacticism has secured an important position in the realm of criticism, and considerable writers and critics have commented on it depending on their level of understanding as well as moral outlook. Plato is known for his ardent stand. Regarding the moral issue, for him, "erroneous representation" is intolerable and should be refuted. On imitation he has this to say:

> If they [guardians of society] imitate at all, they should imitate from youth upward only those characters which are suitable to their profession – the courageous, temperate, holy, free, and the like; but they should not depict or be skillful at imitating any kind of illiberality or baseness, lest from imitation they should come to be what they imitate. (Selden, 1988:477)

Art (literature), according to him, should only serve a purpose of edification and no other end is targeted than that. He even recommends "censorship" to fence off the unnecessary components that may possibly 'creep into' a work of art. Hence, the didactic-oriented literary work deserves more attention and should be taken as a paradigm of better conditions of life.

In similar vein, Samuel Johnson came to the scene tightening the 'ethical belt' of literature. A writer himself, Johnson vehemently opposes what he calls "indecent" representation in a work of art. His position is that caution should be taken to guard oneself from "unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images" (Selden, 1988:482).

Examples whose purposes are well understood in effecting didactic (moral) intent are called to attention to make sure that they are appropriately used. Johnson observes:

> But if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited, and that which is likely to operate so strongly should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects. (Ibid.)

He expresses his observations on the matter in a manner of caution that dictates selectivity. Didacticism prescribes selectivity on the ground that to choose certain ways is to discard the rest. And the choice between virtue and vice is of concern to Johnson not only because it has a positive impact on the subject who acts but also because it ensures positive transformation.

Other writers like David Holbrook, also voice the need for moral expression in an effort to make literature more didactic. What he writes in his work, *The Quest for Love*, is quoted by Selden: "This [moral] sense of the relevance of art to actual living needs still to be exerted...in resistance to a new shrinking from moral energy and deep committed feeling among the literati." (1988:489). He asserts that his aim of writing is to draw the attention of writers to redirect their positive quest into "profound human truths" in an effort to bring about changes in society.

All these arguments endorse the didactic function of literature. The moral claims that are attached to literary works by known writers, as pointed out above, make the matter a real issue for deliberation. The concept of *didacticism* is taken into consideration as a result of this.

While speaking of didacticism one hardly overlooks intention. Intention, because of its nature, may call upon biographical hints. To argue one's point accordingly, then, can endanger the depth and quality of the research in focus, for it is not in the vogue of the modern critical theories to entertain such factor. However, any strict measure cannot be taken, under any circumstance, to censure the attempt because there is not an unvied authority that 'braggardly' marks a critical boundary. Interestingly enough, there hardly is a consensus in approaches to a literary work, even among those that condemn authorial references in evaluating works of art.

Conversely, if one talks about didacticism (or instructiveness) in a work of art there is no doubt that one has to speak about intention. And focusing on intention, whether we argue for or against it take us off the text to dwell, at least briefly, upon extraneous matters. Off-the-text-move does not only occur backwards, it also can happen forward into the minds of readers at whom the intention is directed. This is mostly evident in Biblical writings in which not only the author's position but also the original audience's general atmosphere of necessity warrants digging out meanings. Hence, in discussing didacticism a to-and-from movement from a text is not just a possibility but a necessity. A text serves as an all time channel connecting the author's intention to readers, known or unknown. This argument can hardly be totally refuted while didacticism remains at the center of interpretation. So, autonomy of texts would be suspended to ensure a steady flow of intentions from an author to a reader.

This argument by no means is forwarded to minimize the autonomy of the text. What is being asserted is the author's possible positional involvement with readers after the text is finished. The instruction remains, even after the death of the author, and plays an intermediary role between the author and readers. Let alone in works which are didactically oriented, even in "poem [novel] per se" – Allan Poe – (Holman, 1992:6) the author's position is marked vividly.

Both *aesthetics* and *didacticism* are components that have independent existence. The above brief discussion on them, I believe, supports this claim. However, in the case of this study, their autonomy doesn't warrant an unmitigated dichotomy. While their independent existence and function remain valid, it is possible to bring about a conceivable harmony between the concepts. Likewise, the main argument of this study is to show how the concepts would intertwine to have an aesthetic as well as a didactic impact on readers. The aesthetics helps the didactic to be transmitted 'safely' and captivatingly. In the same way the didactic frees the aesthetics from its 'bondage' (which is imposed on it declaring its only purpose is exhibition of beauty) to 'announce' its yet-to-be-reiterated function. By this what I mean is that the aesthetics has another task next to its inherent function, expression of beauty. The following chapters are designed to serve this purpose.

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Prophetic Writings: The Didactic Aim and Aesthetic Expression

Prophetic books in the *Bible* cover a considerable portion. They are divided into two groups known as Major and Minor prophets. Five prophetic books fall under the major category and twelve come under the minor category. Of those that are major *The Book of Isaiah* is one and among those that are minor *The Book of Jonah* is another.

As pointed out in the first chapter *The Book of Isaiah* is one of the Biblical writings, which stand out for its literary features. Its characteristic composition in the old times because of its size and the assumed literary types it exhibits places it among those that have come in the Old Testament section of the *Bible*. Scholars have argued that it was written between the year's 2500-2000 BC. Compared to other similar writings of the *Bible* the book is bulky (it has sixty-six chapters) and its literary feature invites appreciation of the text in unbiased manner.

*The Book of Jonah* falls among those that are called by Biblical scholar's writings of Minor Prophets. It is a small book, with only four chapters of manageable verses (narratives in the *Bible* are divided by verses, which are numbered successively). Unlike other prophetic writings it concerns itself with the ambivalent plight of the prophet Jonah. Much of it is a story rather than a prophecy. The prophetic message only covers a very limited space in the book. Jonah, being the center of the narrative, is seen in conflict with God to whom his prophetic ministry is initially accountable.

From the outset of the narrative the reader gets in touch with a packed information of who the prophet is, to whom he is accountable, where he is supposed to go, what he is up to, how he manages to follow his own ways, how he is made to stick to his commission, and how he learns the lesson the hard way. In general the instructive purpose is duly entertained via the aesthetic composition that blend story and imagery. I am not discussing the book here. Since what is done in this study is an analysis of a particular excerpt that supports the harmony of aesthetics and didacticism, giving the above summary at this stage would indicate the direction the study would follow.

Given that much of the *Bible* is written didactically, that is in a way that is both informative and instructive, passages that inform this purpose are duly selected. But the extracts that are singled out are also believed by this researcher to have aesthetic expression. The purpose of the succeeding analyses of the extracts is to show how the elements of didacticism and aesthetics can be intertwined towards a desired end, namely to give instruction in religion and ethics through pleasing.

Since the purpose of this research is to show the possible harmony between aesthetics and didacticism, it should be noted that the rational for the selection of these particular books is literature-oriented. It is not the intention of this paper to argue for or against the authenticity of the Scriptures from a religious standpoint. Both prophetic books, *Isaiah* and *Jonah*, would be looked at as narratives in their own right, and will be used to support the thesis of the study. Three portions of narratives from *The Book of Isaiah* – from chapter one, five and twenty-eight – and an extract from *The Book of Jonah* will be considered.

Before going to the analyses of the texts, it may be necessary to reiterate the fact that Biblical passages are written primarily for the purpose of instruction. Its

religious goal and orientation would validate this claim, and anyone with even a moderate exposure to the religious works would not find it difficult to see the didactic intention of such writings. Bearing this in mind, therefore, the aesthetic elements that help the didactic intention to come through will be deliberated.

## 3.1 The Oracle

In the outset of *The Book of Isaiah* the prophet tells what he sees concerning Judah (part of Israel). The nation is considered as rebellious and, accordingly, an oracle that brings about their rebellion to the fore is made known. The message tells exactly how daunting becomes the situation of the people. The beginning indicates how judgemental are the messages that follow. Isaiah stands before the people as a messenger of God to unravel the 'lofty' inequities of the nation. The declaration goes like this:

> **Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!**
> **For the Lord has spoken:**
> **"I reared children and brought them up,**
> **but they have rebelled against me.**
> **The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger,**
> **But Israel does not know my people do not understand."**
> **(Isa.1: 2-3)**

Nature – "heavens" and "earth" in the passage – is called forth to bear witness to the conflict between the people and their God. The literary trope that stands out here is personification, for both phenomena are addressed as if they have ears to hear with – "Hear," "Listen". Besides, there is an interesting notion in the line if we look at the words used to personify. Heavens being distant are only called to give a kind of 'passive' attention because the word "hear" is less powerful compared

to the word "listen". But the earth, being close to the people, and also even responsible for the existence as well as the identification of the state, is required to be particularly attentive. Since the "earth" is concomitant with the nation – Israel is part of the world – it would be called easily to testify.

The rebellion registered is so rampant that almost no one in the nation seems to bear witness for God. Isaiah is exceptionally called to pronounce the message; his task is only limited to this, he cannot be a pronouncer and a witness at the same time. The referred animals and the personified objects, earth and heavens, become eligible because they on their part have not violated the rule of law and are, therefore, being seen as 'models' of good behaviour'. Isaiah is saying to the people 'you have been found to be less than the lifeless and the dumb'.

The personification is necessitated partly because it helps the reader to grasp the 'fact' that the prophet cannot be a witness at the same time and partly because through contrast to show the intensity of the violation committed by the people referred to in the book. If need be, it is also a sign of artistry that adds beauty to the expression. A close look in the reading act which is accompanied by critical approach not only validates the literary usage but also calls forth attractiveness that insures both reading and appreciation.

In line with this, my advisor has also commented on the deliberate juxtaposition of 'living humans' who do not hear, let alone listen with 'non-living' or, to speak in metaphor "deaf-and-mute" phenomena to emphasize the acuteness of the rebellion. The same is true with the "ox" that "knows" his master" and the "donkey" which knows "his owner's manger".

It should be noted that the distinction between the use of "earth" and "heaven" as witnesses and that of "ox" and "donkey" as references is similar.

Heavens and Earth, literally the globe and the heavenly bodies, move and "behave" according to the laws of creation (elsewhere in the *Bible* it is written that "The heavens declare the glory of God – psalm 19:1. They declare glory because they 'act' fully in accordance with their purpose of creation). Similarly, the "ox" and the "donkey" are supposed to be "dumb"; but they listen. Better yet, the contrast between the men that do not hear and the phenomena and dumb animals that stand witness is, by inversion, intended to show how low the men have gone.

In the words quoted above we read the interjection "O" is juxtaposed with both the natural items. The exordium's depth is an indication of how deep the speaker's feeling is, which is of course resulted from the intensity of the violation. Because of the outcome that does not match the expectation the feeling is heightened duly to the point of calling forth all the inanimate things created.

The case that is presented like that of a courthouse is a full-fledged change that does not require further inquiry to be made. At the moment of speaking everything is evident and God's appeal is profoundly made. In a way that is not customary (or ordinary) the personified objects are informed of what the people have done to mar the relationship between God and themselves, despite all the providence.

Care is taken to its full in bringing up the nation. By inference, the 'rearing' included not only maintaining growth and development but also protection. To rear is to do whatever is necessary in securing a better state of life for the subject in care. It is evident here that who does his level best in this act of rearing – in this case God – expects a due response from that which is reared and nurtured. It is no wonder that God complains when the people turn their back on him ungratefully. They simply are

ingrates. (Let us not forget that God is jealous and that His anger knows no limits when His laws are violated. But He is also known not to punish without warning.)

Ingratitude is not the only violation done by the people; to add insult to injury rebellion becomes the order of the day. The people fail to count on the goodness bestowed upon them. On the contrary they begin to act like those who are acted upon unfairly. As a result of this we see a trial summoned duly. The inequities done to God must have stayed for long. If the rebellious acts were at the minimum the trial would not summon the inhuman characters; the righteous ones would be asked to judge between God and the trespassers. The heavens and the earth are summoned 'cordially', but strongly by the use of "O" to witness the extent of corruption before any judgement is passed, for which not God but the people are responsible. Realistically speaking, one may say that the calling to attention of both the heavens and earth is absurd. But literally speaking the trope has a role to play in foregrounding the significance of the violation committed by the people. The aesthetic aspect comes at such points.

The comparison used to vivify the picture of disobedience is sharp and effective. The people's refusal to live up to God's commandments comes up to the surface through this comparison. It is pronounced to the heavens and earth that are called as witnesses.

''Ox" and "donkey" are metaphors used to serve the purpose of weighing the behavior of the Israelites. Both are domesticated animals that are known for their 'dumbness'. Besides, both are beasts of burden which symbolize strict servitude. Their 'rigid' faithfulness is reflected in the text. This undoubtedly helps understand how the people of Israel to whom the references are made behave unfaithfully.

Character wise the animals are accounted for dumbness. Dogs, cats and horses could be cited as examples of better intelligence from the domesticated group (oxen and donkeys hardly appear in circuses). Nevertheless, their introduction to the literary scene must have an inference of dumbness on the people's part, even more. The imagery created is plain in a sense that the animals referred to are not known for understanding. Therefore, the message to be transmitted appears to be embedded highly in the contrasting implications given.

Rawlinson has observed concerning the significance of the comparison made in the passage, "the ox and the [donkey] are probably selected as the least intelligent of the domesticated animals...yet even they recognize their owner or master." (Spence, 1992:2). As the passage itself indicates the level of understanding of the people of Israel is rated low compared to the animals. It may be interesting to note here that even peoples of other nations are not entitled to be a go-between. Israel's disobedience is so grave that the animals' state suffices to foreground what is to be communicated.

Both animals are subjected to heavy tasks. Even though these domesticated animals are engaged in toils that could instigate revolt, imaginatively speaking, against their masters, they serve their masters with patience and loyalty.

W. Clarkson, in his comment on the ownership relation as existing between a man and an animal says:

> There is a legal and not unimportant sense in which a man may own an animal; the creature is his in so far as this, that no one else can lay an equal claim to its use, and no one can dispute his legal right to employ it in his service. In a far larger sense than this does man belong to God.
>
> (Spence, 1962:19)

It is further noted that God's claim is indefensible. The imagery created has many messages that can be unfolded. If a similarity is established between the relationships within animals and their masters as well as man and God, the intended message, I believe, would be unfolded. A master buys, rears, feeds, protects and makes use of an ox in whatever way he thinks is profitable. He can lay claim over it and the animal's fate entirely lies in the hands of its master.

The same is true with donkey. The relationship between the owner and the animal may even be tight than that of an ox. This is evidently seen from the nature of donkeys and their unwanted flesh make them less privileged in the feeding process. To the Israelites donkeys are not edible and unlike the ox the owner's task would only be limited to the point of ensuring a 'better' health that safeguard the act of transportation. Nevertheless "the donkey [knows] his owner's manger". Its better 'intellectual' state than the people are reflected both in its knowledge of its owner and the manger. This means upon returning it misses not its place of rest that belongs to the owner.

In the same token Israel is referred to as "reared children". God is responsible for maintaining everything that a nation requires – sustenance and defense. As the creatures belong to their respective owners so does Israel belong to God. The whole purpose of the comparison, it can be argued, is to show how ungratefully and unnaturally the nation behaves.

Neither knowledge nor understanding could be found in the people. This is not because they are not capable of figuring out things. The comparison tells so precisely that their behavior is a willful act. In other words what is being effected is ungrateful deed. The word means a breaking off of a yoke that one was under before. But a price remains to be paid not only because they have forfeited God's

providence but also because they stay out of his care. As ox and donkeys are very much vulnerable to their assailants so would be the nation. These animals with very limited capacity of protection would be in danger if they stay away from their protected environment.

Similarly Israel would be exposed to dangers if they fail to remain under God's 'shelter'. Though they still remain privileged ("my people" is the term) they "turned their backs on him" (verse 4). A mutual understanding cannot be effected as a result of failure on the part of one party. The fate of these ungrateful people would then be destruction.

The words found in the text are very few but they say enough and achieve their goal. The passage quoted above is very short as far as details are concerned, but it is very weighty. The imagery created in the comparison does play a significant role to unravel the intended messages. What would be explained with multitudes of words is done so very concisely. This, then, means the text fulfills its purpose using such aesthetic devices.

The compactness of the narrative gives room for the reader to think a lot and participate in meaning 'reformation', which is implicit in the text. The only thing a reader does is making it active or explicit. The role a reader plays in the realization of meaning very much depends upon the nature of the text. It should be in the manner of the text primarily to attract or get readers to itself. Unless this act is ensured concretization would be a distant reality. In the same vein, in the passage in focus both compactness and elegance play the role of attraction.

Aesthetics in art is not usually realized right away at the first instance. As Ann Sheppard indicates, the nature of art makes the process a bit complicated (1987:73). A patient consideration initiated by some kind of literary attraction should

be exhibited. A work of art that seems drab at first glance may prove itself outstanding. Prejudice and bias have their role to play in having an impact on readers. A reader may be totally biased by a particular work of art or author and distance himself/herself off. Supposedly, the same is true with Biblical writings. Frye's comment is made as a result of this:

> A literary approach to the *Bible* is not in itself illegitimate: no book could have had so specific a literary influence without itself possessing literary qualities. But the *Bible* is just as obviously "more" than a work of literature.... My experience in secular literature had shown me how the formal principles of literature had been contained within literature.... But here is a book that has had a continuously fertilizing influence on English literature..." (1982:xvi)

The critic's observation somehow authorizes the claims of this study by reiterating the literary significance of the narratives in focus. What is attempted in the succeeding analyses will support this.

If Sheppard's observation, "In general a work which is rich in possibilities of interpretation will be a work which we find aesthetically valuable" (see chapter two), is taken as a true measurement then the above quoted passage and other passages that are pertinently selected would not be put into danger. Generally speaking, many explanations are given about a single Biblical passage each differing from the other in thought as well as in magnitude. She conversely argues that if a literary work has less interpretative possibilities it will lack aesthetic value (1987:83). The *Bible* has passed through varying modes of interpretations that in turn make it, in light of her argument, aesthetically oriented. It is possible to figure out, then, that the above passage has a certain kind of attractiveness after one comes across with different interpretations of the same excerpt.

The reading act itself would be necessitated because of some quality of one kind or another on the text. Oscar Wilde, as quoted by Selden, has rightly commented while speaking of aesthetics with regard to literary representation: "one does not see anything until one sees its beauty" (1994:254). There should be some element of aesthetics to 'pull' readers to a work of art. Critical reading and appreciation cannot be effected unless the reading act is carried out at full length. For works of instruction, like the *Bible*, in order that the aim and the effect would be appreciated an attractive quality is of necessity. Unless this happens the supposed instruction may be left unappreciated. The imagery effected in different manners in *Isaiah*, therefore, plays a significant role both in attracting readers and magnifying the messages to be transmitted.

Beauty of expression is realized in literature by the pertinent use of imagery and metaphors. Success in the unification of message and expression results in better reception. Since the author initiates didacticism, efforts that insure pertinent reading should be made. Otherwise, what is pre-planned would be neglected halfway without comfortably resting in the minds of the recipients.

## 3.2 The Song of the Vineyard

**I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard:**
**My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.**
**He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines.**
**He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well.**
**Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.**
**(Isa.5: 1-2)**

The song is narrated as a parable with a purpose of clarification of what is to be transmitted. It is a few lines in verse that holds enough concepts to fulfil its purpose of composition. G Rawlinson observes that "it is in a lively, dancing measure, very unlike the general style of Isaiah's poetry" (Spence, 1962:77). But this only works with regard to the form. The content, as we shall see, agrees with the general message of *The Book of Isaiah*.

In what could be regarded as a form of introduction Isaiah starts with his pronouncement. At the beginning he makes clear for and about whom he, Isaiah, sings the song. Yet, it is not clearly indicated who the subject he is in love with is. Besides, the object of the song, "vineyard", is only vaguely implied, and until the song ends and the narrative continues it is not clearly known for what it stands.

The prophet's position is expressed duly and his entire intention of singing is the "love" that he harbours for the owner of the vineyard. The cause for this composition is not a mere pressure of emotion, but, as will be indicated, a kind of mediating gestures to make a connection between the landlord and the vineyard.

The imagery of the "vineyard" speaks of a dependent, natural and care-seeking plant that bears fruit seasonally. Vine is frequently mentioned in the *Bible*. On most occasions it symbolizes the nation of Israel. Even the New Testament section repeats its symbolic function in almost the same manner. The "vine" in focus is the grapevine. This fact is almost undisputed. *Bible Dictionary* states that its imagery serves different purposes in the different kinds of literature the *Bible* contains – narratives, songs, parables, etc. "Its fragrant blossoms," for instance "are recalled in love poetry", Song of Sol.2: 13, (1996:1192). But more than this its fruit has a dominant position in image creation, not to mention the wine that gives it "place of honor among the trees" (Ibid.).

Geographically speaking, it is a common plant in the Syro-Palestine region where the climate and terrain favor viticulture. It is also stated that its wine was known in the countries of the region from Egypt to Babylon. This geographically prevalent plant therefore serves a literary purpose both in uplifting images and mitigating instructions. Its abundance in the region presumably makes it easy to understand the images. Even its stem, which has no function except burning as firewood is employed as a symbol to vivify Israel's despondent state (Ezk.5: 2-8).

The Dictionary very much in line with the Song of the Vineyard speaks of vine nature requiring heavy annual pruning, hoeing, thinning and support of fruit clusters all accounted for intensive care (1996: 1192-93). It goes on to say that, "intensive labor heightened expectations of the harvest and made loss of the vintage a bitter disappointment" (p.1193). What will be verified in the subsequent paragraph show how this mood is created between the planter, God, and the plant (people of Israel).

The importance given to the viticulture is so high that elsewhere in the *Bible* it is noted that a person who plants a vine and expects is not required by the Law to be enrolled in the military (Deut.20: 6). This shows how laborious and painstaking are the activities as well as enjoyable is the success of fruition. It is noted in the *Bible Dictionary* that vines can indicate both flourishing and devastation: "flourishing vineyards meant peacetime; war's devastation was represented by a ravaged vineyard...(1996:1193).

The song tells how painstaking the 'farmer's' efforts are to ensure better state as well as prolific result. The phrase "fertile hillside" has a double meaning in indicating how conducive the condition is both for timely growth and protection from

untimely trimming. Its "hillside" position also ensures a suitable position for appreciation of elegance, for eyes hardly bypass a towering object.

In the song the line, "He dug it up and cleared it of stones" indicates that dedication and care are shown on the part of the planter. In a place where the land is rocky much effort must have been needed to execute a countryside scheme (Spence, 1962:78). There is also an implication of erecting a fence with the stones collected from the area.

The plantation of the "choicest vines" indicates expectation of quality harvest not just abundance. Erection of a "watchtower" amidst of it enables the planter to detect even a far off possible enemy. The imagery here is very strong to the point that it attaches a very high value to the fruits expected. Nevertheless, the song ends in a tragic manner. In a completely unexpected turn of fortune the vine yields "bad fruit". The contrast between the expected "good grapes" and the resulting "bad fruit" is very sharp. In other words, the incompatibility is so grave that it cancels the possibilities of another opportunity for the restoration of that particular vine. There is no logic to justify the abominable outcome of the situation.

The imagery-laden song best captures the yet-to-be-forwarded message that is intended to be transmitted. The method of employing images to attract readers to the passage and to enlighten them is effective. The totality of the images, coupled with the symmetry of their composition, hits the target finally. Johnson is quoted by Spence as saying:

> Pictures from nature are acceptable to all, especially of that nature which is familiar to the imagination of the listener. Through the imagination we may glide into our listener's heart and conscience. The truth comes with much more power when it is made to glance from an object intermediate between the mind and its naked reality. (1962:85)

What is said above in connection with the song gives impetus to the literary undertaking that this paper is about. The effectiveness of the method used in *Isaiah* is underlined by Johnson only because it has a lasting effect on his part. The truth or the content of the message does not change, no matter how difficult the manner it is presented is. To make the communication effective the author chooses a particular type of mechanism, a song in this case, which ensures attractiveness in the interaction process.

In the song the "vineyard" represents the House of Israel. This is clearly stated in the continuing verses of the passage. The relationship between the farmer and the vine at first was very intense. The 'farmer', God, does whatever is necessary for the "vine" the people of Israel. The "watchtower" itself indicates how the God of Israel is engaged with the welfare of the people and the ethical fruition that is expected of them accordingly. However, the "bad fruit" that has come from nowhere marred the relationship totally. So, the case is taken to a tentative court: "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard" (v.3). Now that the end result of the song is revealed instructively, the people will not find it hard to comprehend the whole message.

In the following verses the people of Israel (Judah) are told that they are under severe judgement. The allusion in the song is directly referred to in the manner of correspondent relationship:

> **The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. (Isa.5: 7)**

There is an inference that the people of Israel are represented as a 'treasure' of God. In his brief analysis in *Bible Dictionary* Roger S. Boraas mentions the Song as an illustration of the term, *vineyard*, "Isaiah's 'Song of the Vineyard" is a masterful review of standard viticulture applied to the life of a people" (1996:1194).

To fence off any misunderstanding the messages are made clear through imagery. Since what matters is the appropriate transmission of the intended message, there is no point in taking risks at the expense of clarity or vivid comprehension. Here, as in other similar narratives, the beauty of expression or aesthetics serves to support the message, which is the point of the utterance. The aesthetics plays its role not in calling every attention to itself. It is there to better show the instructive ideas. Or else, it can stifle the total purpose of the utterance like a glaring object dazzles an onlooker to shift his/her eyes from the object without getting into the thing itself; it is very hard to look and examine an extremely shiny object.

The song captures the attention of the audience and forces it to imagine what it is about without letting them into the 'secret'. After a neutral interaction with the song what follows naturally would be sympathy towards the vine keeper. When the allegory is unraveled at the end they could not help being drawn to the 'real' intended object – they themselves. Once they are pulled into the matter it would be too late to let them go before they are fully addressed; the more the manner of expression is poetic the more the attraction, the more the attraction the more the peoples' attention to the message.

## 3.3 Warning Against Ephraim

**Woe to that Wreath, the Pride of Ephraim's drunkards,**
**To the fading flower his glorious beauty**
**Set on the head of a fertile valley**
**To that city, the pride of those laid low by wine!**
**See the Lord has one who is powerful and strong.**
**Like a hailstorm and a destructive wind,**
**Like a driving rain and a flooding downpour,**
**He will throw it forcefully to the ground.**
**That wreath, the Pride of Ephraim's drunkards,**
**Will be trampled underfoot.**
**That fading flower, his glorious beauty,**
**Set on the head of a fertile valley,**
**Will be like a fig ripe before harvest--**
**As soon as someone sees it and takes it in his hand he swallows it.**
**(Isa.28: 1-4)**

Isaiah is seen here engaged with another situation, which is different from the previous one but has a similarity with it regarding the essence of the message. He finds himself pronouncing judgement against those with whom he shares identical religious as well as social values. His firm stand on the convictions he is up to enables him to act way above the moral standards of the people whom he informs of their wickedness time and again.

The extract above is one of such exhortations. It is addressed to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. These people who were cut off from the religious and political capital, Jerusalem, are known under the general designation of Samaria. And often times, in *Isaiah* and elsewhere, they are called by the name Ephraim.

The extract contrastingly delineates the state of Ephraim and the dreadful fate that is due to happen. The message that ought to be forwarded to the people, though judgement-oriented at its full, is not overtly transmitted. Under normal circumstances woeful statements are uttered rather overtly and blatantly. But in the

extract some literary features like simile, metaphor, irony and repetition are used as devices in an effort to emphasize the messages that are meant to be grasped.

Realistically speaking, there is no point in using flowery terms while telling someone or a group of people that they are good-for-nothing and will bear the consequences of their sinful acts. But the case here is completely different, because there is a real lesson that these people (as well as those that pay attention to the message) should learn both in identifying where their wickedness lies and in learning how vices are not left unpunished.

Likewise, the instructional purpose that also accompanies judgement is dealt with aesthetically. As in the cases of other related narratives of the *Bible* straightforward manner of addressing a message is not sought because the point prolific is one of getting the audiences in touch with the intention. The beauty of expression that is clothing the narrative would help get the whole message along without calling any attention to it. In literature where form and content are concomitant with one another – they complement to one another – the aesthetics lies on the form basically to reveal the content well. This does not mean that aesthetics is exclusively applied to form alone; it can be found in the nature of the content as well. The kind of story that an author chooses determines one way or the other the attractiveness of the whole thing, e.g., a captivating but very plainly written story can attract readers.

The narrative begins with a warning, "woe", against "that wreath," a metaphor that stands for Ephraim's state of being. The implementation of the metaphor has a purpose to fulfil in unfolding the totality of the people's state on the inside and on the outside. Wreath is something that is carefully made to appear beautiful. It is made of flowers to give it colour as well as beauty. Its preparation is

usually carried out to fulfill a purpose – usually to celebrate a hero or pay respects to the dead.

Here the metaphor lasts only for a moment before meaning is made explicit. The use of "wreath" has some value when seen with respect to the short-lived function it has. It only shines and attracts for a little while before it withers away. Ephraim's pride is of identical nature. The pride is sprung from drunkenness. What should beget shame and humiliation is seen on the contrary triggering "pride" in Ephraim or the people.

In the first line of the poem the contrast is evenly presented to emphasize the undesirable position of the people and the bitter consequences that are about to happen. They take pleasure in a dreadful act that should otherwise be avoided. If their acts were triggered by temptations that are beyond their level of ethical maturity, they would not be censured. The wreathe comes to scene because there is a certain occasion that demands its presence; its function is usually short-term. The phrase "fading flower" goes with the above-mentioned wreath in giving more pictures to its nature. What comes next is a sharp contrast between "fading flower" and "glorious beauty". It is not hard to see what fading implies here. A thing of pride wanes as time goes by without letting the users, the people in this case, satisfy their need.

There is some degree of irony in the qualifier "glorious" for it communicates deeply how unheeded is the situation on the part of Ephraim. The beauty that is taken as a thing of pride, no matter how glorious it looks to the character, Ephraim, is only provisional. What is accumulated and cherished due to the drunken situation only serves to unravel the disdainful nature of the people's state and the dreadful consequences to come.

W. Clarkson has this to say on the state of the city in which Ephraim lives:

> The proud city, which was, alas! a [sic] city given up to drunkenness, should be brought down to the very dust. Intemperance causes the man who has held the highest position to become despised by every neighbour that has the common virtue of sobriety; it takes the crown [wreath] of honour from the brow; it humbles even to the ground the pitiable victims of vice. (Spence, 1962:460)

For him, Clarkson, the whole system that is inflated by pride should be trampled down. The imagery in the narrative is well understood and expressed accordingly. Any observer of the "glorious beauty" which is noticeable because of the high 'physical' position – "head of a fertile valley" – would anticipate the downfall.

The aesthetic composition in the passage lies here. It shows the state of Ephraim to the addressee (be it a hearer or reader) by a careful but laconic way of combination and amplification of the message by the limited yet effective literary devices it employs. The intention that is embedded in the juxtaposition of the words "head", the "fertile", and "valley" can help unfold the existing position of the city visually.

Valley represents low condition. Geographically speaking it would be the least selected place for human settlement. Yet the valley is made green. Green symbolizes fertility. In the same vein, the fertility implies abundance. And abundance results in good harvest of grapes. But the drunkenness caused by "wine" is not the desired outcome. In other words, the providence – fertility, abundance, and good harvest – should have resulted in sober satisfaction and thanksgiving. But wine is taken too far in 'breeding' hollow pride which in turn results in judgement.

The prophetic utterance is directed to the city, and its inhabitants that are overcome by wine are "laid low by wine". The whole city is weighed and found

worthless in the sight of its God. However, the people take pride in almost everything rather than seeing to themselves upon which their haughtiness is founded. Again we see a contrasting image between the word "pride" and being "laid low by wine"; the relationship between the terms shows the hollowness of the people's pride.

Repetition, one method of foregrounding a message, is employed in the narrative. "That wreath" is called into attention again not to simply reaffirm the warning but to adduce to judgement. This time what follows is a consequence of the "pride". It is doomed to be "trampled underfoot". The expression reveals how poorly made the wreath is, for it would not resist being "trampled". Again the image asserts the incapacity of the state of the people.

There is another repetition in the text:

**That fading flower, his glorious beauty**
**Set on the head of a fertile valley**

The repetition foregrounds the message through emphasis. This is done to magnify the beauty of expression called into light. For such repetition to be justified there should at least be two motives; if a thing is repeated for nothing, then its insertion is a failure not a success; what follows would be boredom. To repeat one thing there should be another reason that is not met previously. The repeated item should communicate an extra thought that would otherwise be unheeded.

Here we see a correlation between two images, a "fading flower on the head of a fertile valley" and "a fig ripe before harvest". What has come initially is repeated in a different atmosphere to bring into light the result. The simile-based representation (like...) makes the impiety more clear. It is duly connected to the message it stands for; the image of a plant – "flower" – is consolidated by another image of a plant – "fig". The phrase "a fig ripe before harvest" is fairly powerful

enough to magnify the meaning to be transmitted in the final analysis, the 'cut' that will be done on the people of Israel.

The imagery is formed in a captivating manner by calling forth a customary plant, tree, to the land of the Middle East. Fig grows in arid places and is fairly known to inhabitants of such regions. In the same vein "fig" is not uncommon in the *Bible* with its figurative usage. Similarly, a fig ripe is something that could well be considered as a treasure because of the condition of its natural 'habitat'. Literally no one can bypass a ripe fig which is both seasonal and mouth-watering. The fact that its period of growth is fairly long makes it a longed for 'treasure'.

The conjunction "as soon as" helps magnify the vision. In a way that is almost exactly the same, "takes it in his hand, he swallows it", the fate of the people would be of that sort. It is interesting to see the correspondence between the end result of the fruit and that of the people that the text tries to bring into forth. If one looks at the word "someone" and thinks a little about it s/he can easily find that the character is not entitled to realize the fruit of the fig tree. The narrative structure at that point tells that, if not explicitly; an alien subject takes action briskly to take to 'itself' what 'it' has not invested in.

That who is "powerful and strong" would execute the judgement that is pronounced in a manner that capitalizes on the figures of speech. Natural phenomena are called forth to describe the might and swiftness of him who "swallows" Ephraim. The metaphoric description is vigorous and is put symmetrically. "Hailstorm" and "destructive wind" not only correlate but also intertwine to have a lasting effect on anything in their way. "Driving rain" and "flooding downpour" are also concomitant phenomena that help each other in the display of power to 'swallow' anything without any viable chance of retrieval. One other point that should be made

here is the seemingly unrealistic natural phenomena in a region of hot weather. Since the setting of the narrative is not in the tropics a critic may ponder about the use of such literary tropes in the text. But what makes the real difference, I suppose, is their unusualness to that setting. Neither "hailstorm" nor "flooding downpour" is a 'season-to-season' activity. The rareness of these climatic happenings helps capture the attention of the hearers to realize the full message of the brief narrative.

The "strong" and the "powerful" subject whom the author lauds is too swift to back off and would consume Ephraim in the twinkling of an eye. The suddenness of the happenings symmetrically match with the speed which is tacitly expressed in the phrase "as soon as". As there is only an instant span of time between seeing and swallowing a ripe fig, so also is a moment between coming into contact with the "destructive wind" (and "flooding downpour") and getting overwhelmed.

On the whole, the passage brings to light systematically how injustice is met equally with punishment. The most privileged, like the underprivileged, is not immune from punishment triggered by malpractice. It is methodically revealed that favouritism (Israel being a favoured nation by God) has no position in the execution of judgement. And for every ethical transgression there is equal castigation, irrespective of whom the person, community or nation is.

## 3.4 Jonah and God

The conflict-oriented narrative of *The Book of Jonah* takes readers in brief journeys from land to sea on a ship and to the depth of the sea inside a "great fish", and back to land at Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which trip is the focus of this analysis. A brief framework of the story would look like this. God wants to send the

prophet Jonah to a heathen nation's capital, Nieneveh, to preach against the people's wicked actions. But Jonah thinks otherwise, and for his own sake decides to go to Tarshish on a ship. This possibly happens, as pointed in chapter one, because he does not want to see the city spared with its 'intimidating' greatness.

Despite this God follows him through indirectly to disrupt the whole voyage. A strong storm creates a problem to those on the ship. They try to calm the ship by throwing cargo into the sea. Jonah was cast into the sea after his confession to redeem the ship and the people. A "great fish" swallows him and after 3 days spit him ashore wherefore he unwillingly and negatively preaches. Unlike his aim the whole town, including animals, fasted for three days to avert the day of destruction. Jonah, on the contrary, chooses a place for himself to watch the whole city consumed by God's anger. His ambivalence is seen while he is watching what is to come after conceding to God that he is angry with Him because of His unending compassion that can even save a people of no-covenant. The following narrative, the nub of this discussion, comes next:

> **Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."**
> **But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"**
> **"I do," he said, "I am angry enough to die."**
> **But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight." (Jnh. 4:5-9)**

In the passage quoted above God and Jonah are engaged in some arguments that result from the former's insistence on the completion of the mission and the latter's insistence on the city's destruction. After the forced mission aimed at saving the great city on the ground of the people's penitence, Jonah still has not retreated from his old ideas, a wish to see the city ruined. He becomes obedient only on the outside, thanks to an interference by God. But things do not stop there. The prophet's calculation is not yet terminated. He resolves to choose a good spot to watch what he imagines is justice. His selection of the place ensures safety from any possible danger that can be disseminated when Nineveh is struck.

The quality of the book is reflected in the plot structure it exhibits. By speaking of quality what I mean is elements of attractiveness that are evident in the story. Content wise the book is attractive enough to get readers to the end partly because it is sketched briefly and partly because its story is full of dramatic actions. The impact it makes on attracting readers to itself can only be guaranteed by the power of literary devices it employs. And the totality of the sketch in the narrative plays its role to mean what it should mean in a smooth and appealing way.

In this story of adventurous instances didacticism is rooted in the text in a dual manner. In the story itself the major character, Jonah, is dealt with didactically, he himself is made to learn through the incidents that happen against him. In due course, a reader is encountered with similarly both in an empathetic way and by looking at and learning from the incident going on between God and his prophet. If one identifies himself with Jonah he would learn what the prophet is supposed to learn in the passage. The other instruction could be about human frailty and God's ingenuity as well as sovereignty. But for all of this to happen there should be a viable vehicle that makes the process executable.

First of all "vine" serves as a tool to bring back Jonah to a state where peace of mind is maintained. Its instant growing over Jonah's head initially seems a good fate that possibly justifies his position and undertaking. His comfort is in God's mind when He provides the soothing atmosphere that would not be naturally available to the prophet. There is no doubt that they are at odds with each other at this point. A plant that requires a year at the minimum grows to its full 'at a sitting'. In the story we read "Jonah was very happy about the "vine". In a place where nothing of its kind that gives better shelter is available the unexpected appearance of the plant must be an indication of the genius of his God who has been following him even to the belly of the "great fish" in the depths of the sea. The sudden growth is seen as a miraculous deed at this point.

Therefore, Jonah's assumption of God's providence as a token of goodwill is a possibility. And if this happens to be true (it is highly probable) it is easy for him to be deceived by the situation thinking that God himself is on his side with regard to the fate that awaits the "great city". However, after all that exciting and hopeful experience of the first day, Jonah gets up to witness the realization of his desire. However, God's genius is so effectual that a "worm" sets out at dawn to chew the vine ferociously. The timing is so sharp that Jonah could not even protect the plant from that worm. How could he? He is totally helpless.

The awful announcement that he made earlier, "forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (3:4), vividly shows how he abhors the Ninevites. His woeful denouncement is most probably born of his most and cherished hateful attitude towards the city. Jonah pronounces judgement only to 'stifle' humbleness on their part, because we see a noticeable contrast between what is initially told to him to prophecy in the first chapter and what is told by him to the Ninevites in the third

chapter of the story. But their immediate penitence towards an alien God – they are pagans, so they do not worship the God of Israel – is amazing. These people to whom the prophet is sent act so humbly that Jonah becomes disappointed.

Regarding the mode of representation, the "vine" is important in terms of indicating Jonah's trials. W.D.Deane observes:

> ...God's purpose in [the vine] was to deliver Jonah from his grief. So far as supernatural, a pleasant tokens [sic] that God hadn't forsaken him. Natural effect to ward off sun, cool the air, prevent feverish irritation, keep mind and body calm and cool. Jonah probably suffered much before it grew up, but would feel immediate relief when it came. (Spence, 1963:93)

It is interesting to note that the "shelter" that Jonah makes for himself (before the "vine" is provided he has made one for himself) is not sufficient enough to prevent the sun and gives him a better stand as he watches the city before and after the vine, for we read that the vine improves his condition in a pleasant manner. Had his shelter served the whole purpose, he would have been emotionally disturbed. The vine by giving a better relief also incapacitates, at least implicitly, his ability to give easiness to himself. So, due to this and the above mentioned reasons it is not hard to notice the significance of the vine both in making the narrative attractive, by giving flavour to the story, and the intention didactically communicative.

The provision of the scorching "east wind", to add insult to Jonah's injury, is timely and makes the story more interesting. But apart from its captivating instance, the main purpose – the instructive intention – is dealt with also. The wind coupled with the blazing sun totally changes his condition culminating in his regret about the loss of the vine. His insistence on witnessing the destruction of Nineveh worsens his own state; the more he stays at the place that day the more he is exposed to the natural phenomena.

At that point, the prophet wishes that he were dead, "It would be better for me to die than to live". This deep and frustrating expression of feeling creates an opportunity for God to step in. In a manner that dictates coherence a gambit dialogue is formed to bring to completion what is intended in the framework of the story: But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." (4:9).

The dialogue creates an ample opportunity for God to finally say what He intended to say:

> **But the Lord says, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (4:10-11)**

God refers to the vine this time to back up his argument. Jonah's anger at a loss of two things – the destruction of the vine and the rescue of the city – has prepared him, though he does not realize it at the outset, for the lesson that he is forced to learn. His conscience is stimulated to imagine how the vine got into that state in which he took great pleasure. God acts cynically against Jonah's wish because of the prophet's immature behaviour. The real purpose is unfolded, "it sprang up overnight and died overnight", and calling into attention how instantaneous and gracious was the growth (as well as the loss). God wants to show to Jonah how his challenge is only meaningless.

One important lesson that should enter the 'biased' mind of Jonah is God's care for the hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants of the city who do not literally know what they are doing – "they cannot tell their right hand from their left". What is

communicated is not written literally and that shows that there is an aesthetic (figurative) usage. The 'backgrounding' of the literal or its substitute means there is the figurative in use and aesthetics, in literature, lies *mostly* in the metaphoric execution.

Ninevites are portrayed completely different from what Jonah could have expected. His patience reflected in his waiting instance is a clear sign of his expectation of destruction at Nineveh. We are told back in chapter one that their inequities have reached the throne of God. Such people of low moral standard then cannot be cherished sympathetically. Besides, Nineveh is the capital of the then super power Assyria, which was a potential threat to the people of Israel of which the prophet is one. Despite this God refers to them as babes who do not tell the ABC of ethics or morality.

The expression's sharpness informs Jonah as well as readers that the way God and men value people are very different. It is evident from the passage that the Lord weighs motives, if relevant, irrespective of actions but men focus on actions even in deciding motives; this possibly leads to misjudgement. Many a time people, because of their limited attributes, get deceived by actions which may or may not go parallel with motives. It is one conceivable instruction that can be extracted from the text. One may argue that this is an over reading. But the difference in attitude between God and Jonah that is reflected in the passage hints to the above interpretation, which is a characteristic feature of the *Bible*.

Fairness plays a pivotal role in the narrative and both Jonah and potential readers who can pursue the story to the end would learn how God's actions are just. As a corollary to this His command over all creatures, animate and inanimate, is also communicated fairly enough. As to the dealing of God with people the extended

mercy to the gentiles, Ninevites, repudiates the thought that the God of Israel is only concerned with the covenant people. The thought that underlines equal dealing with every human under the sun becomes more conspicuous as the Ninevites are compassionately driven to enter to the religious practices that are seemingly exclusive to Jewish people.

With regard to his ambivalent expectation God interferes with the simplest thing that most concerns Jonah. The instruction that is unfolded at the end of the passage (God's care for those that are works of His hand) does not come directly for fear of, I believe, vagueness as well as lack of interest on the part of Jonah in particular and addressee in general. In parallel with this, for other lessons to pass through without telling what they are directly the scheme used in the making of the story is prolific, for a succession of lessons 'oozed' without 'inundating' the minds that are targets of instruction. Almost every incident, the excerpt and the rest, tells how God is in control of the animate – people, worm, fish, plant and inanimate – wind, sea, sun – things. In the aim of its composition and transmission *The Book of Jonah* accomplishes its task and the success of its effect can only be justified by the coming into completion of its composition.

# CONCLUSION

What has been tried so far is to show the possible harmonious relationship between aesthetics and didacticism. The argument of the study is that the dichotomy between the two terms is not inherently given. It is only triggered externally without exhausting the nature of both the concepts and the works of literature known to us. In simple terms, as reflected throughout the pages, aesthetics complements didacticism and the latter is magnified through the former.

Didacticism – instruction – as pointed in the preceding chapters, can remain unrealized if it lacks a pleasant vehicle. Aesthetics with its literary devices gives life to a message and helps it make its way through to the minds of readers. The passages that are duly discussed show that when the aesthetic factor is involved the instructive message would reveal itself more; readers get the message with artistic satisfaction.

In the passages cited literary devices serve the purpose of foregrounding meaning. The metaphoric execution of the ideas helps readers to dwell on the passages to realize, directly or indirectly, the potential instruction that is situated in them. For instance the "vine" plays its symbolic role in most of the passages selected for the study. Its familiarity to the people of the setting, coupled with its desired selection, makes it important in the making of imagery.

Biblical passages, the prophetic ones in particular, are taken up to mirror this act. The narratives are obviously didactic, but this does not mean that the didactic messages are always taken for granted. They have to be probed into behind the literary devices used to transmit them. There are instances where the didactic content may be determined by the form in which it is presented. For instance, in "The

Oracle" (Isa.1: 2-3) discussed in chapter three the personification of "heavens" and "earth" brings out the message that ingratitude and disobedience are trespasses which have negative consequences.

The imagery of the "vine" also has a significant role to play in determining the didactic content. In both *Isaiah* and *Jonah* it serves the purpose of bringing to light the instructions without causing boredom on the part of readers. In "The Song of the Vineyard", for example, the imagery of "vineyard" represents the people while at the same time concretizing the message of how bad the people behave despite all the care and diligence that are 'invested' in them. In other words, the imagery helps to foreground the abstract ideas of corruption and ungratefulness.

The imagery created by the "vine" in Jonah's case does also concretize the message. Its (the vine's) full growth "overnight", very much to the contrary of its nature, and 'death' unfold how the message – God's powerfulness and man's frailty – is communicated effectively via the literary devices. The symbolic representation helps understand the whole notion which is didactically tuned.

The conclusion I have arrived at in the course of examining the passages is that no permanent 'wall' could be erected between aesthetics and didacticism because they have a historic, if need be a pre-critical and pervasive co-existence. Before critics took up their pens to 'build' the dichotomy the concepts co-existed and still go hand in hand to play a doublefold role in satisfying a literary appetite – aesthetics – and guiding a human mind – didacticism. The Biblical narratives are used to illustrate this basic assumption.

This study is only a modest attempt. Lots of studies can be done on the topic. Mine is meant to pave the way for further and mature research on the relationship between 'aesthetics' and 'didacticism' with regard to religious texts.

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# DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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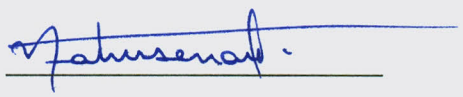
Signature — 

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