



Library IAS, Shimla

IIAS 060.95452 In 235.68



**25767**

# INDIAN AESTHETICS AND ART ACTIVITY



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
SIMLA



TRANSACTION OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY

Vol. 2

Indian Aesthetics And  
Art Activity



INDIAN AESTHETICS  
and  
ART ACTIVITY

*Proceedings of a seminar*



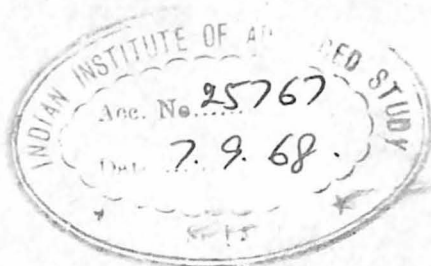
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
SIMLA ● 1968

©

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
1968

First Edition  
March 1968

Rs. 40.00 95S \$ 15.00



95AS  
060.95452  
In 235.68



Library IIAS, Shimla

IIAS 060.95452 In 235.68



25767

Published by the Registrar, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla 5,  
India, and printed at N. K. Gossain & Co. (Private) Ltd., Calcutta-4

# C O N T E N T S

## PART ONE

### Inauguration of the Seminar

Inaugural Address, Niharranjan Ray	3
------------------------------------	---

## PART TWO

### Papers Presented

#### SECTION A : *The fundamental postulates of Traditional Indian Aesthetics and their relevance to art activity in India through the ages.*

Some concepts in Bharata's theory of drama, S. S. Barlingay	11
Animals in early Indian art : a case study in the evolution of form and human sensitivity, Kalyan Kumar Ganguli	25
Indian aesthetics as revealed in Sanskrit literature, Anand Krishna	36
Traditional Indian aesthetics in theory and practice : a restatement with special reference to <i>Nāṭya Śāstra</i> and the graphic arts, K. Krishnamoorthy	42
Tantra art in search of life divine, Ajit Mookherjee	55
The nature of aesthetic experience, Nagendra	70
Testimony of a student of history of Indian art, life and thought, Niharranjan Ray	80
Indian art : artist's point of view, S. K. Saraswati	89
The aesthetics of Indian music and dance, Shyamala Sharma	92
Indian aesthetics and art activity, Kapila Vatsyayan	103

#### SECTION B : *Contemporary aesthetic thinking in India and their relevance to the contemporary art situation in the country.*

The folk inspiration in modern Indian painting, Jaya Appasamy	111
Aesthetics of Abanindranath Tagore : his paintings, S.K. Nandi	120
Revivalism and after : an aesthetic controversy, Ratan Parimoo	159



SECTION C : *Comparative aesthetics and art activity.*

Art as the will to create, N. V. Banerjee	117
Some philosophical problems arising in the arts, Margaret Chatterjee	184
Indian aesthetics and art activity: a literary critic's view, C. D. Narasimhaiah	190
Nature of aesthetic enjoyment in Greek and Indian analysis, R. K. Sen	206

SECTION D : *Modern movements in world art and their implications for aesthetic theory or theories.*

Modern movements in world art and their implications for an aesthetic theory or theories, Fatima Ahmed	225
Role of abstraction in modern art, Prodosh Das Gupta	229
Modern sciences (with special reference to modern mathematics) and its influence on new aesthetics, Bhupendra Karia	239
Modern movements in world art and their implications on aesthetic theories, Krishen Khanna	243
Observations of an artist face a face with all the aesthetic theories, Ram Kumar	246
The aesthetics of anti-art, Jag Mohan	249
The impact of modern movements on the aesthetic theory or theories, Laxman Pai	262
An inquiry into the motive behind negation of appearance in modern art, Pranabranjan Ray	265
Modern movements in world art and their implication for aesthetic theories, B. C. Sanyal	277

PART THREE

Report of Discussions

Inaugural Remarks, Mulk Raj Anand	283
Section A	290
Section B	302
Section C	307
Section D	316
Concluding Session	325
List of Participants	329
Index	332

## PART ONE

### Inauguration of the Seminar

1

100

2

100

100

3

100

4

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Niharranjan Ray

A full-length, almost fortnight-long seminar on Indian Aesthetics and Art Activity in which experts in the field of speculative aesthetics and critics and historians of art will be sitting and discoursing side by side with creative artists, is perhaps a unique academic experiment which this Institute has ventured into. In recent years there have been seminars, symposia and conferences in which artists, art critics and historians and even archaeologists have taken part, exchanged and compared notes amongst themselves. But hardly has there been, to my knowledge, at any rate, any occasion or attempt to find out if there was any correlation between the aesthetic speculation and the art activity of a given time and space.

Indeed, aesthetics as originally understood by the Greeks in the sense of intrinsic perception or later, from the 18th century onwards, in the sense of the experience of the 'beautiful', has always remained a special, almost exclusive preserve of speculators in the realm of the intellect, thinkers and philosophers as we call them, who had hardly anything to do with the creative artists or with the art-objects produced by them. From Aristotle through Aquinas, Kant and Hegel to Croce and Colingwood there is hardly any thinker who seems to have taken into account or drawn upon the evidence of experience of any creative artist or ever exposed himself to any object of art to derive his findings on the nature of aesthetic experience or the character and stages of the creative process. In our own culture also, there have been, from very early times, speculations in respect of the nature and character of aesthetic experience and the creative process, though not in a very systematic manner, it has to be admitted, since aesthetics does not seem to have been recognised in India as an autonomous intellectual discipline, but here too it seems there is not much of an evidence to show that such speculations were based on factual evidence.

But India did produce, again from very early times, a long succession of writers of technical treatises on such creative arts as dance and drama, poetry and music, architecture, sculpture and painting. That such treatises followed actual art activity and were based on factual evidence of artists and art-objects, there can hardly be any doubt; it could not be otherwise since these treatises purport in the main, to lay down prescriptions and

indicate the merit and demerit of various forms and techniques, classify the various arts and show their interrelations, analyse the various constituents of an art object so as to bring out their respective primary or secondary or tertiary significance, and indicate the inner essence and external properties of art. But on the other hand one has to confess, I am afraid, they do not throw much light on the nature and character of the aesthetic experience or the creative process itself, though certain deductions in these respects can no doubt be drawn from their technical prescriptions, classifications and analyses.

In recent years, however, increasing attention is being paid in the West to the meagre personal testimony that is being made available, of the creative artists themselves as to what their personal aesthetic experience has been in each case, and what creative process they had run through in respect of their specific created objects. Notes, letters, essays, records, etc. of artists like Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Cezanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Milton, Coleridge, to cite only a few names, are being used to find out if these could throw some light as indeed they are likely to, on the two problems of aesthetics, namely, the nature of aesthetic experience and the creative process. Then, there are such creative artists as Mathew Arnold and Tolstoy, in our country Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath, who sought to build up their own theories of aesthetics and art activity, if not in a logically systematic manner, at least sufficiently suggestively and significantly. It is worthwhile examining to what extent their theories are borne out or not by the whole range of their creative output. Does Tolstoy's theory of art explain his *War and Peace* or Rabindranath's his paintings or his poetry of the last ten or twelve years of his life ?

Then, there is the whole world of objects of art themselves, from all over the world and beginning from the dim pre-historical past down to our own times. These art objects represent the concretised ideas, thoughts, myths, legends, visions and images of all ages and climes of human culture and happen to be the receptacles of countless number of forms and techniques. They have inspired and taught succeeding generations of creative artists and delighted countless millions of men and women, and perchance also given them and the artists, on rare occasions though, an insight not only into the working of their mind and imagination but also into their visions of form and the techniques employed by them. Critics and historians of art have been attempting since the days of Vasari to study these objects of art from different angles of approach and to build up more or less consistent theories in respect of art activity of given times and spaces, and histories of the evolution of forms and techniques. Unfortunately however the creative artists themselves, except in such rare cases as those of Auguste Rodin, Rabindra-nath Tagore and T. S. Eliot have not made, generally speaking, any such attempt as to enable us have their interpretations of the nature of aesthe-

tic experience and the creative process, the forms and techniques of a given artist or group of artists, or as a matter of that of any given object or a group of objects of art of a given time and space. Is it not possible that the countless number of objects of art belonging to various ages and climes, when studied properly with an attitude of sympathy and an approach from the point of view of intrinsic perception, could give us a better insight into and understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience and of art itself as well as of the creative process? The main point is that aesthetics and art activity have upto now, in our own country as elsewhere in the world, remained separate and autonomous preserves of philosophers and scholars on one side and of creative artists on the other, critics and historians of art trying with doubtful success, to bridge the gulf between the two, and in the process incurring the indifference and some times even the displeasure of both.

It is in the context and background of this intellectual situation that this seminar has been planned and organised. We invited about fifty persons of whom about thirty-five have finally been able to come to participate in the discussions on the subject this seminar is concerned with. Amongst them are creative artists in the major fields of art activity including music, dance and architecture; philosophers, and scholars in the fields of aesthetics, criticism and history of art, archaeology, history and sociology. Our intention is to get them all together for a span of about two weeks and engage them in a commerce of facts and ideas relating to the theme of the seminar.

In the light of what I have just stated in brief I may be allowed to formulate the basic issues for purpose of a fruitful and rewarding discussion. But before I take the liberty of enumerating them, I would humbly plead that I am not trying in any way to anticipate the Director or to lay down how he should direct the seminar. All that I propose to do is, first, to repeat the precise objective of this seminar which we had stated in clear terms in our invitation letter and which we may please bear in mind. Once this is done the basic issues for discussion will suggest themselves, I am sure.

The object of the Seminar is to find out, if possible, a correlative of aesthetics as a discipline in speculative thinking and actual objects of visual arts as products of individual or group activity in one sphere of human life, specifically in the context of Indian but generally in that of world art as well. If a correlation be postulated, the seminar should aim at finding out the nature, character and extent of such correlation.

With this object in view the seminar is proposed to be devoted to a thorough critical discussion and analysis of :

- I The fundamental postulates of traditional Indian aesthetics and their relevance to the plastic and pictorial situation in India's past.
- II. Contemporary aesthetic thinking in India (Coomaraswamy, Abanindranath, Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Brajendranath, Nandalal and

Gandhi) and their relevance to contemporary experimentalists in the plastic and pictorial arts (Gagendranath, Jamini Roy, Rabindranath, Sher Gil, and the younger experimentalists).

III. Comparative aesthetics of traditional India, China and the West, and their relevance to the art works of the respective areas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

VI. Modern movements in world art and their implications for aesthetic theory or theories.

The approach to all these topics may, it is suggested, be historical and the method sociological, since, it is believed, aesthetic theories no less than objects of art are both products of given times in given societies and can be understood and appreciated better as such.

Art objects in the form of photographic reproductions, in monochrome and colour, printed or in slides, and projector and screen will be made available at the seminar, and participants are respectfully invited to make use of them whenever they want to, to illustrate the points they would like to make. Obviously the intention is to relate aesthetics to objects of art, or in other words, to make the latter yield the principles underlying their creation, if possible.

To Dr. Mulk Raj Anand we are very thankful indeed for his having agreed to direct the Seminar. We also feel very thankful to those who have contributed papers and have been able to come as participants and observers. I hope they will put in their earnest efforts to make this seminar yield some rewarding fruits.

With these words I have great pleasure in inaugurating this seminar. We should be looking forward to a fruitful confrontation of minds and sensibilities for the next fourteen days.

**PART TWO**  
**Papers Presented**





The Fundamental Postulates of Traditional  
Indian Aesthetics and their Relevance to Art  
Activity in India through the ages



## SOME CONCEPTS IN BHARATA'S THEORY OF DRAMA

S. S. Barlingay

FOR many years now, both in India and in the West, a certain conception of the Indian aesthetic theory has been in circulation. This theory makes use of the concept of *rasa* which literally means either a liquid, juice or an essence. Unfortunately the word has been rather indiscriminately used by most writers, ancient and modern. Thus, it has been used to stand for self, bliss, and pure joy. It is also thought to be something mysterious and metaphysical in character, something like *Brahman*, the absolute which is neither created nor destroyed, but can be invoked, and mentally realised in the presence of the work of art by the audience or the spectator. However, although the word has been used with such an indefinite connotation, it can be safely asserted that ever since the time of Abhinavagupta, the word has been employed to explain the nature of aesthetic appreciation. Thus the theory of *rasa* as it comes down to us centres round the appreciator and utterly disregards the process of creation in art. The tradition ascribes the authorship of this theory to Bharata, the author of *Nāṭya Śāstra*. But judging from the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, Bharata does not appear to have held such a theory. He, on the other hand, seems to be faced with the problem of the staging of a drama and propounds in this connection, what may be called, a three centred theory of art, with emphasis on artistic creation. The later commentaries of great scholars like Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta disguised Bharata's real theory and Abhinavagupta's interpretation was held to be the elucidation of what Bharata meant by *rasa*.

I have held elsewhere that by *rasa*, Bharata meant an entirely different concept which is, in fact, an essential element in this theory of dramatic art, and not joy or some kind of indescribable experience which, though essential to the theory, was expressed by Bharata by the word *siddhi*. I have held that in Bharata's view the concept of *rasa* could be roughly described as some kind of stage language. In this paper I am not going to say anything about the traditional *rasa* theory except perhaps in a very cursory way. Nor is it my object to criticise Abhinava's theory of aesthetic consciousness for it may be an accurate account of aesthetic consciousness. It is my object, however, to point out the role of concepts like *dharmī*, *vṛitti*, *pravṛitti*, *sthāyi* and *siddhi* in Bharata's theory of drama. I believe that the

study of how Bharata used these concepts is likely to reveal the context in which Bharata used the word *rasa* and thus supplement my observations about the concept of *rasa* itself.

Any art usually poses two sets of problems; one concerning its creation and the other with its appreciation. There is, however, a similarity between these two sets of problems; for a certain appreciation is invariably associated with experience prior to creation as also with the process of creating. The artist is continuously enjoying while he is creating and his creation, at least partly, is the result of certain appreciation. The process of creation, however, is far more complex than the process of appreciation. Appreciation—*qua* appreciation—does not lead to creative activity. Creation, on the other hand, is dynamic. It is beset with an urge to express; and to bring forth such a statement, however, has its own limitations. If, in some broad sense, appreciation is an impression, creation is an expression resulting from impression. Impression is essentially private. Expression has a potentiality to be public. Once an objective form is given expression to it is not governed by private law, by personal moods and imagination; it follows a public law and exhibits a capacity to communicate. This communicative element is essential for creation and connects the artist with the appreciator. The (concrete) art object is the medium of communication. I believe that almost all the important writers on Indian poetics recognised these factors and agreed that communication is an important aspect of art. Even Abhinavagupta who has emphasised so much on the enjoyment aspect of art has this element of communication in his mind when in the beginning of *Lochanu*, his commentary on Dhvanyāloka he writes: *Sarasvatya-stattvam kavisahridyākhyam vijyate*.

But though communication is an important element in the theory of art, the complexity of this element varies from art to art. In an art like music, communication has no independent status and is dependent on the artist;<sup>1</sup> in arts like painting and sculpture it takes the form of an object and has an independent existence. Both the communication in poetry and the communication in ordinary language are dependent on spoken or written symbols. Thus the special significance of poetic communication is usually overlooked. In arts like staged drama, the element of communication is not only of primary importance, but its special mode distinguishes it from poetry. Otherwise, removed from the stage, drama too, is a form of poetry. Only the stage part (*prayoga*) transforms *nāṭaka* into *nāṭya*. It is but natural that *Nāṭya Śāstra*, a treatise on stage drama, should be primarily concerned with the art of staging a drama. On the other hand, though the element of communication is significant for poetry, a treatise on poetry cannot analyse with precision different elements in communication and des-

1. With the introduction of Gramophone records, tapes and electromagnetic apparatus for recording, my statement is no more true.

cribe all the details with exactness and accuracy. For, in a sense, there is nothing very special about communication in poetry. The communicated object simply assumes the form of signs and symbols, either auditory or visual, sounds in the case of spoken language and letters in the case of written language. It is just the work of one man, the poet. It is simply a transition from the private to the public. It is translating a private experience so as to make it available to the public. There is hardly any scope for a co-operative effort, as it is in the case of a staged drama, where that which already belongs to the public sphere (viz., the drama), and which is already in one language form is translated into another language, viz., the *nāṭya* language. The essence of successful staged drama lies in translating successfully a piece in ordinary language into the stage language. The success in translating ordinary language in stage language depends upon how successfully the poet's intentions are translated in the new language and are conveyed to the audience. It should not be forgotten that translating the poet's intentions in the stage language is the essence of (staged) drama. But for this a staged drama would be only a piece of poetry or a novel. *Nāṭaka* or drama with its text or *pathya* (this will include *itivrīta* and any of its forms as represented by *Daśarūpaka*) is just one element in this stage language, only a part of the staged drama. It is the matter which has to be given another form. It will be worthwhile here to reiterate the distinction between *nāṭya* and *nāṭaka* and to remember that Bharata was primarily interested in *nāṭya*. The difference in the language of *nāṭaka* and *nāṭya* is, in fact, the difference in the form (of language).

This question of form requires a further elucidation. A drama<sup>2</sup> is described by Bharata as *anukṛiti* or *anukarāṇa* which means imitation. The questions that naturally arise here are: (1) who imitates and (2) what is imitation? I have stated earlier that *nāṭya*, like all arts is a kind of creation or production. So it will be relevant to remember here that in Bharata's use of the term it is not the poet who imitates, nor is it the actor who produces (in the sense that the poet produces). I am aware that it can be said that the poet imitates and the actor produces. But in such constructions the words 'imitates' and 'produces' are used with a slightly different shade of meaning. Before going into a detailed analysis of the concept of *anukarāṇa* it will also be relevant to point out that in an art like staged drama there are two distinct processes involved. The transition from the poet or the artist to the art object and from there to the spectator or audience, is one process. I shall call it horizontal process and is common to all arts. The questions of creation and appreciation are interlinked with this process. There is yet another process involved in drama—vertical process—where something ideal or real is imitated. The word "imitation"

---

2. Whenever I use the word 'drama,' it may be understood as staged drama.

can be used in the context of this process, though it can be misused also as it has several usages. The word "imitation" may lay emphasis on the act of imitating, that is how something is imitated. But it may also indicate a pattern that is created. When somebody imitates, there is the original as also the imitation. In the absence of any other word let me call the imitation as a picture or a copy of the original. The two Sanskrit words *anukaraṇa* and *anukṛiti* are better in this respect for they clearly bring out the difference between the two uses.<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt that the element of imitation, as pointed out by Bharata presents a very important dimension of drama.

What is a picture of imitation? I believe that picture used in this sense is only a representation of something, or a situation that is real. Even when it is concrete it tends to reduce the complexity of the original. If it is otherwise it would be difficult to use it for communication. Let me explain my point with an illustration from cinematography. A person is to be shown running. We do not take snaps of his every single movement and then project them on the screen. We do a certain selection; we take some snaps leaving out others. But when we project them on the screen the total effect is that of running. In this new presentation there is resemblance, recognition and also the act of running. Even then it is a curtailment. This happens in most arts like painting, sculpture and drama. That is why art is only a partial representation of life. It should be noted that *kalā* which is a word for art, literally means a part (*aṅśa*). When Bharata describes *nāṭya* as imitation or *anukaraṇa*, I think he is quite conscious of the implications of imitation. Bharata makes an attempt to explain imitation or *anukṛiti* with the help of (1) *rasa* (2) *dharmī*, (3) *vṛitti* and (4) *pravṛitti*. It is, therefore, necessary to understand Bharata's use of these terms.

In the first place, as I have stated above, for some reason or other not all elements of the original can be reproduced in imitation. One of the reasons is that there is a natural difficulty in the case of imitation. If the hanging of a person or a severe accident is to be described, it is impossible<sup>4</sup> to do so in the ordinary way in which it occurs. Such elements in the drama are, therefore, to be understood only symbolically. In *Vikramorvaśīyam*, Indra's chariot is described as travelling in the air. It was impossible to present it in this way at the time Kālidāsā wrote the drama. Similarly, when the actors speak to themselves, it is heard by the listeners, but it is conventionally agreed that it should be taken as unheard by other actors. Bharata, therefore, classifies all those elements of imitation which can only

3. It should not be thought that this process is peculiar to drama alone. It is also found in arts like sculpture and painting as in the case of landscape painting and portrait drawing.

4. With the aid of photo-play it is possible to do so now.

be imitated symbolically as *nāṭyadharmī*, and the other elements which are common both to imitation and its original as *lokadharmī*.<sup>5</sup>

Two kinds of questions can be asked about imitation. (1) What or who is imitated? and (2) how is he or it imitated? The second question is vague. It may mean the way something or some one is imitated or it may refer to the elements from the original that are combined so as to make a copy or the imitation. On the second alternative of the second question we shall be dealing with some aspects of the first question. But the first alternative of the second question is more important from the stand point of the staged drama. Having agreed that such and such are the elements of imitation, even then these elements could be presented in a particular style. Just as the same content (of thought) can be spoken in different dialects without making any difference to the meanings, so also the imitation can be presented in different ways. These ways undoubtedly represent a dimension of acting or *abhinaya*. But these particular styles must be present in different individuals in the actual world. Bharata, therefore, enumerates the ways in which the same content is presented by different people in their ordinary life. This is what he calls *pravṛitti* and distinguishes it from *vṛitti*. He writes<sup>6</sup>:—

अत्राह । प्रवृत्तिः इति कस्मान् । उच्यते । नानादेशवेषभाषाचारवार्ताः ख्यापयति इति प्रवृत्तिः । प्रवृत्तिश्च निवेदनैः । अत्राह—यथा पृथिव्यां नाना देशाः सन्ति, कथभासां चतुर्विधत्वम् उत्पन्नम्, समानलक्षणश्च आसां प्रयोगउच्यते । सत्यमेतत् समानलक्षणः प्रयोगः । किन्तु नानादेशवेष भाषाचारो लोकः इति कृत्वा लोकानुभूतेऽनुवृत्तिसंश्रितमस्य मया चतुर्विधत्वम् अभिहितं भारती आरभटी सात्वती कैशिकी च इति । वृत्ति संश्रितेषु अभीषु प्रयोगेषु अभिरता देशाः, मत् प्रवृत्तिचतुष्टयम् अभिनिवृत्तम् प्रयोगश्चोत्पादितः । तत्र दाक्षिणात्याः तावत्, बहुगीतनृत्य वाद्याकैशिकी प्रायाश्चतुरमधुर ललितांगाभिनयाश्च ।

But if an action (and so the imitation of the action) can be classified by the special mode of presentation of different peoples and countries, actions can also be classified by some general mode, for example, a reaction of a woman to a certain situation is bound to be essentially the same in spite of regional variations or differences in *pravṛittis*. A woman in love with a person may be eager to see him, and in the expectation of seeing the beloved may put on beautiful dress and ornaments. The dress and ornaments may vary from region to region and from individual to individual. But the essential idea behind such variations is the same because it is universal. This universal feature when echoed in a behaviour pattern is known as *vṛitti*. Bharata classifies them into four types, and calls them *bhārātī*, *ārabhaṭī*, *satvati* and *kaiśikī*. The first three refer to the general reactions of men and women. The last refers to reaction

5. Verses 65 ... 76, Chapter 13. *Nāṭya Sāstra Nirṇaya Sāgar* ed., also 189—193/21.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 216, chap. 13.



of women alone. In the context of drama or imitation these *vṛittis* may even represent symbolic feature of *nāṭyadharmī* elements. For example, the essential feature of *bhāratī* is that it is dialogue-predominated but Bharata also describes it as that where Sanskrit sentences are used. This only represents the convention of the Sanskrit drama and it cannot be an essential feature of *vṛitti*.

Drama or imitation is not an exhibition of all the *vṛittis* and *pravṛittis* but is an organization and selection of these. In classifying these behaviour patterns and their regional variations Bharata admits that the same phenomenon can be exhibited in different ways. The problems connected with *vṛittis* and *pravṛittis* are the same. We eliminate the individual variations and confine ourselves to the common features. This is the *sādhāraṇī-karaṇa* of Abhinavagupta. The *sādhāraṇī karaṇa* applies not only in the case of how a phenomenon is exhibited but also in the case of what is exhibited. If the character of Rāma is to be depicted on the stage, then the pattern of behaviour that is imitated is not necessarily that of the original Rāma. It could be of any virtuous and valorous man or a king. The process of selection and omission operates here as elsewhere. Not only can the pattern of behaviour be different but the actors also can be different. The actors can dress themselves differently, they can act differently, and the environment in which they act can be arranged in different ways. When an actor enacts or imitates Rāma, there is no one-to-one correspondence (resemblance) between the original and the imitation. The actors of different regions and times will not only enact differently, but they will also select different elements from Rāma's behaviour continuum, in order to play Rāma. The first is the *how* element and is connected with *vṛittis* and *pravṛittis*, the second is the *what* element. It is to be noted that usually in drama the imitation is based on the general elements and not on special elements. For, special elements cannot be known by any other means except perception and this, in almost cent per cent cases, is denied either because the original is an imaginary or a historical person. That Bharata had in his mind only the universal or common elements when he talked of imitation, can be verified from the qualities and powers he expected of an actor.<sup>7</sup>

I mentioned above the 'how' and the 'what' elements in drama and emphasized that it is only the *vṛittis* and *pravṛittis* which are connected with the expression in a staged drama. But this is not the whole truth. In whatever way the content is expressed, it still has a form<sup>8</sup> which is exhibited through different expressions. In fact, it is the object of any staged drama and the producer to present the matter (which is usually some story) in

7. Re 74-79; 24 N.S.

8. The form represents the 'how' element, the matter, the 'what' element. The drama, as a piece of literature is the matter for the staged drama.

some particular form. This particular form, therefore, represents the communication element and is the soul of dramatic art. When we talk of imitation we are talking of this form and it is my contention that this form is given the name *rasa*, by Bharata. This form, however, can be studied in two different aspects, the mere objective or passive and the subjective or active. In its passive aspect, it is the imitation (*anukṛiti*), in the active one it is imitating (*anukarāṇa*) What I mean would be clearer if we compare two different arts, say a painting and a staged drama. A painting is as much an object of art as is the staged drama. But in respect of painting it cannot be meaningfully said that the picture imitates the original. It is only the painter who can imitate, not the picture, for picture is not the agent but the object. In the case of drama on the other hand it can be significantly stated that actors (who are elements in the staged drama) imitate. This is so because a staged drama, so to say, is produced thrice. Its first producer is the dramatist, the second the director, and the third the actor(s). In the case of painting, sculpture, poetry or music all these roles are fulfilled by a single agent. Nevertheless, just as in the case of poetry or painting the art object can be treated in its objective aspect, so also in the case of the staged drama the art object—the staged drama itself can be treated in its objective or passive aspect. If the poet is the first producer, say, P1, then P2 (the director) and P3 (the actors) alongwith accompanying elements, i.e., the exhibited scenes can be treated as the art object. Thus as we talk of the successive producers the next successive elements would be treated as art object. This can be presented in the following formula:—

P1 (P2 (P3 (F)))

F represents everything else other than the agent. Thus for P1 (P2 (P3 (F))) will be the art object, for P2 (P3 (F)) will be the art object and for P3 (F) will be the art object. It is necessary to note two points here. First, in staged drama, whereas an art object can be separated from P1 and P2 it cannot be entirely separated from P3. Secondly, F need not be thought of as single indivisible element. It may itself be very complex. I wish to emphasise that in a complex art like staged drama, where, unlike other arts, production continues till the end (even on the stage) the active element can be treated as passive with reference to previous or earlier stage. Thus, from the view point of the artist, the successive elements could be treated as a passive art object and would represent a picture or imitation of the original, though, in another sense, the actors actively imitate or copy the original. Considered as passive element this art object—the imitation—is the projection of the poet's mind. The objective form is the translation of the projection of poet's mind.

On account of differences in emphasis arts may be classified in two

different ways. In arts like painting, there is scope for training and the art object, to a certain extent, is the fruit of certain technique. In such arts, communication or communicability assumes special significance. The artist has to evolve special techniques for communicating his ideas. This is not exactly so in arts like poetry. The communication capacity of such arts depend on the cultural level of the society and is determined by the general development of the language used. Such arts are symbolic in nature but are not pictographic or concrete and their communicability is regulated by the meaning the symbolic representation is likely to convey. As a form of art, drama exhibits the nature of both these kinds of arts. Its greatest emphasis is and ought to be in the way it is presented or staged. But as a form of poetry it does project a certain meaning or meanings. In fact, in every art the symbolic presentation and meaning are very intimately related and one cannot be considered without taking into consideration the other. Unmeaningful presentation will certainly defeat the purpose of any art. Further it is also possible that one kind of symbolic representation may lead to more than one set of meanings. Sometimes the secondary or tertiary meaning may convey a more important sense and may lead to aesthetic realization or some kind of happiness which is certainly the purpose of art. Art symbol thus produces certain ripples (*tarāṅga*) of meaning, which may give birth to the feeling of beauty, happiness etc. There is no doubt that if an art is to be appreciated it should be appreciated on the basis of these criteria. My only point is that in certain arts the art object and the meaning of the art object can be clearly distinguished whereas in some others it cannot be done so. The art like staged drama falls in the first category and pure poetry falls in the second. It is my contention that Bharata clearly distinguished the two elements in art. The one—the art object (or rather the form of the art object) he called *rasa*, in the other he located concepts like *sthāyībhāva* and *siddhi*.

Abhinavagupta and his followers did not care for the distinction and used the word *rasa* for explaining the purpose, and of meaning of art. I feel this happened because whereas Bharata was explaining a staged drama, Abhinava was interested in poetry *qua* poetry. Abhinavagupta and his followers are right when they think that art or poetry is produced for some superworldly happiness, which can be compared to the happiness of *Brahma*-realisation. But this also seems to be the purpose of art according to Bharata. Bharata has stated this in unequivocal terms. He writes : The drama is staged for the sake of *siddhi*.<sup>9</sup>

यस्मात् प्रयोगः सर्वोऽयं सिद्ध्यर्थः संप्रदर्शितः ।

Abhinava's mistake is not that he does not correctly recognize the purpose of art, but that by confusing the term *rasa* with the term *siddhi* he ignores the element of symbolic representation of art.

It is important to note that Bharata mentions the concept of *siddhi* again and again. The twenty-seventh verse in the seventh chapter of *Nāṭya Śāstra*, for example, mentions the *siddhi* as the final stage in a dramatic process—*vismaya* as the *sthāyībhāva* is realised in the place of *siddhi*, *praharsha* and *pulaka* (on the part of the audience). Similarly, the last verse of seventh chapter mentions *siddhi* though there is a pun on the word *siddhi*. He attains good *siddhis* who understands (the elements in dramatic process).<sup>10</sup>

य एवम् एतान् जानाति सगच्छेत् सिद्धिमुत्तमाम् ।

Bharata has clearly mentioned *siddhi* as the most important element in the art process and independent from *rasa* or *bhāva*. Bharata writes:—

रसाभावाह्यभिनया धर्मिवृत्ति प्रवृत्तयः ।  
सिद्धिस्वरास्तथा नाँध एव रंगस्य संग्रहः ॥

This clearly indicates that by *rasa*, Bharata meant something entirely different from what Abhinavagupta understood by *rasa*. Bharata says in unequivocal terms that *siddhi* (the final form of appreciation) arises in the mind of the appreciator or *prekshaka*. Bharata has separately defined *prekshaka* (vide verse 6-8-16=27 N.S.) and further adds that it arises out of happiness in the body (of *prekshaka*) and it has been evoked on account of several *rasas* (N.S. 75—27). It is thus clear that, for Bharata, *siddhi* was an element different from *rasa* and was the final purpose of (dramatic) art. Bharata classifies *siddhi* into two sub-classes: 1. that is human or *mānushi*, and 2. that which is divine or *daivikī*. The first he sub-divides under ten heads and the second under two (a) *bhavatisayopeta* and (b) a stage of complete calm. A dramatic art is exhibited for those two kinds of *siddhis* (vide 16-17-27 N.S.). One cannot understand Bharata's point of view, vis-a-vis (dramatic) art, without understanding the concept of *siddhi*. *Siddhi* is the last element of *āsavāda* (or appreciation) process, which is temporal. Occurrence of different shades or meaning, happiness and *siddhi* seem to form the elements of this process. That this process involves concepts like meaning and appreciation seems to be clear to Bharata. Otherwise in the beginning of the 6th chapter he would not have talked of *rasa nirmīti prakriyā* and *rasāsvāda prakriyā* and stated that without the symbolic presentation the meaning (of the drama) would not be manifest. *Nahi rasādṛite kaschidapi arthah pravartate*. Unfortunately later writers like Abhinava took this to mean that *rasa* is the purpose of

10. 130/7 N.S.

dramatic art. Had it been so, Bharata would not have separately mentioned the element of *siddhi*.

Why did a great scholar and art-critic like Abhinava identify *rasa* and *siddhi*, the two different concepts in a dramatic process? There seem to be several reasons for doing so. (1) In drama, a special technique of presenting is required. Without it there cannot be communication. As I have pointed out in the beginning of this paper this is not so in the case of poetry where the message of the poet is communicated through ordinary language. Even though Abhinavagupta writes a commentary on *Nāṭya Śāstra* he does not seem to deal with *prayoga* aspect of *nāṭaka*. He treats it only as a piece of poetry. Thus appreciation aspect becomes more important. (2) Since happiness is one of the most important factors in appreciation and since *rasa* is also used for happiness as in "*raso vai sah*" and "*anandāt eva hi imāni bhutanī jāyante*," it is quite natural that a philosopher like Abhinavagupta should identify the two factors, particularly when he could not separately locate the place of *rasa*, which has been regarded as an important factor in the art process. (3) Perhaps by the time Abhinava wrote his commentary on *Nāṭya Śāstra*, a part of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* might have been lost and the concept of *siddhi* might have been away from the public eye. (4) It is also possible that the editor of *Abhinava Bhāratī*, in editing might have identified the two concepts and the identification now goes in the name of Abhinavagupta. Whatever might be the case the fact remains that in the post-Abhinavagupta era, *rasa* was identified with *ānanda* and since the concept of *ānanda* was very similar to that of *siddhi*, *rasa* was substituted for *siddhi* and the notion of *siddhi* was altogether dropped from the theory of poetic appreciation.

One of the reasons which contributed to this *adhyāsa* must have been philosophic. India by and large, has been dominated by some form of Advaita philosophy according to which the reality is one and of the nature of *rasa* and *ānanda*. The identification of the two words *rasa* and *ānanda* could easily have paved the way for the new theory of *rasa*. The other reason seems to be the existence of certain ambiguous passages in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* itself. Bharata, for example, says that it is the *sthāyībhāva* which becomes *rasa*. "*.....sthāyīnohbhāva rasātvaṃ apnuvanti*" (p. 93 Ch. 6 N.S.). Similarly, while replying to the question whether *rasas* are born out of *bhāva* or *bhāvas* are born out of *rasa*, Bharata at one place has replied that *rasa* comes out of *bhāva*. Another passage which lends support to the above reasoning is :

".....*Sthāyībhāvanāsvādayanti sumanasahprekshakah*"

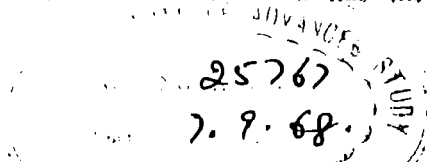
(p. 93, Ch. 6 N.S.)

These passages create the misunderstanding that *sthāyībhāva* is some kind of mental state of the spectator, say, some emotional state and that

it develops into *rasa* a kind of sentiment. Bharata also says that one kind of *daivī siddhi* is *bhavopeta*, i.e., of the kind of *bhāva* (which is evidently *sthāyībhāva*). Thus it is generally thought that *sthāyībhāva* is a mental state of the spectator and since *rasa* refers to the post-*sthāyībhāva* stage it could be no other than the stage of 'happiness in the mind of the spectator.' This is, however, a mistaken logic for the following reasons:—

(1) Those who quote these passages mix up the two processes so carefully analysed and separated by Bharata: (a) the process of creation and (b) the process of appreciation. The statements which refer to the process of creation are cited for proving the process of appreciation. And (2) the statements are usually incomplete. The *avachchedaka* or qualificant of the words are usually omitted. For example, the quotation is not *sthāyībhāvan āsvādayanti*, but *vagangasatvopetān sthāyībhāvan āsvādayanti*. The qualification changes the entire meaning of the sentence. Similarly, the other quotation is not *sthāyībhāvan budhāḥ āsvādayanti mānasa* (34, 6 N.S.), but *bhāvabhinaya-sambaddhan Sthāyībhāvan buddhāḥ āsvādayanti mānasa*. It need not be said that the qualificant changes the meaning of the passage. According to some critics the word *mānasa* in the above quotation is very significant and that it suggested a mental state. But this is nonsense for it is not true that the mental alone can be appreciated by mind. This discussion, however, leads to some important questions: What is "*sthāyībhāva*"? and Where is it to be located?

Somehow or other statements about *bhāva* and *sthāyībhāva* are very vague in *Nāṭya Sāstra*. This vagueness gave rise to a lot of confusion, and the exponents of different schools of philosophy tried to interpret the theory of *bhāva* and *rasa* so as to suit their own thought. In the first place in *Nāṭya Sāstra* the word *bhāva* occurs in the context of certain bodily expression connected with dance and acting. These are *hava*, *bhāva* and *hela*. These are defined as those which manifest the internal *bhāva* of the poet. (8/22 N.S. and 2/7 N.S.) These *bhāvas* are technical expressions connected with dance and drama. The *bhāva* is supposed to emerge out of *satya* (which in its own turn emerges from the body) (7, 22 N.S.). But Bharata realizes that the word *bhāva* has other usages also. It is not a word from the language of dance and drama alone. The word is significant in the ordinary language and in the context of actual world. Thus, in the verse quoted above, (*Kaverantargatam bhāvam bhāvayan bhāva uchyate*) the first *bhāva* definitely refers to a real state and not to a dramatic state. It may also be noted here that this state of the poet refers to the mental or internal state as has been clearly stated. But all states, of course, need not be mental. In the beginning of the 7th chapter of *Nāṭya Sāstra*, Bharata writes: The root *bhū* has the sense of make (or manifest, fill). Therefore, *bhāva* has the same sense



as *bhāvita*, *vāsita* and *vṛita*. *Bhāva*, thus, stands for meaning or expression, whether in the drama or any other art or in the real world.

In the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, *sthāyībhāva* is not defined anywhere. It is only described with the help of analogies. But the analogies simply indicate that *vyabhichārī bhāvas* and the *sthāyi* are not essentially different in nature (just as a king and his subjects are all men) though only a few of them attain the status of *sthāyībhāva*. It is, however, necessary to note that Bharata says that he had already defined *sthāyībhāva* (*Lakṣaṇam khalu pūrvam abhihitam* 107 N.S.) though this definition does not occur anywhere. In the absence of the definition, the meaning of *sthāyībhāva* has merely remained a matter of speculation. However, with some effort what is *sthāyībhāva* can be known. In music too the word *sthāyi* is used. *Saṅgīta Ratnākara* defines it. Even Bharata makes a reference to the *sthāyi* (of music). *sthāyi* is a *sthira*—unchanging sound or tune (19/29 N.S.) *sthiras svaras sama yatra sthāyi varṇah sa uchyate*. On the other hand, a *sañchārī* is that which occurs and which can be withdrawn (36, 29 N.S.). These definitions of *sthāyi* and *sañchārī* should be a guide in deciding the nature of *sthāyībhāva*. *Sthāyībhāva* should be that *bhāva* cognition or meaning which continues or persist to exist or manifest.

In the context of drama, *sthāyībhāva*, thus, should strictly mean that persistent meaning or sense which continues to be associated with the stage. It is necessary to remember that in the ordinary language, in the drama too, there are symbolic expressions and there are meanings of these symbolic expressions. If the two meaning and symbolic expression do not go together, the whole thing would be meaningless. It is really strange that most writers have completely ignored the fact that Bharata persistently uses the expressions *artha* and *sañjñā*, and adds that *sthāyībhāvas* are *rasasañjñā*, i.e., those (meanings) of which the symbols are *rasa* (p. 112 N.S. (Nirnaya Sagar). Similarly, he stated that in the dramatic process no sense or meaning could be had without *rasa*—*Na hi rasādrite kaschidapi arthah pravartate*. He again repeats the word *artha*, in describing *sthāyībhāva*, in the Karika, “*yortho hṛidayasamvādi tasya bhāvo rasodbhāvah* (7/7 N.S.). If this fact that there must be some kind of co-relation between symbol and meaning is taken into account then alone the meaning of verse 39 in chapter 6 of N.S. that the meaning or *bhāvas* (for the appreciation) emerge from *rasa* would be clear. It is unfortunately thought that *sthāyībhāva* stands for certain emotional state or sentiment. I too, in my earlier writings had thought that *sthāyībhāva* refers to mental state and ignored the fact that in *Nāṭya Śāstra*, Bharata is not interested in describing the process of poetic creation but is only describing the process of stage communication, though this process would be similar to the first. But in such a process the poetry would be taken for granted and translated in stage language. It is necessary to bear in

mind that Bharata gives the list or *saṅgraha* of elements which are connected with stage. Every symbol or art object has a meaning. But on a stage different art objects present one continuum of meaning. This meaning continuum which gives a homogenous meaning to drama is *sthāyībhāva*. Just as in ordinary language a sentence meaning is different from word meanings, so in dramatic language a totality of art objects leads to a sort of collective sense which is *sthāyībhāva*. Being of the nature of cognition or meaning, it is related with stage symbols on the one hand and with the spectator on the other. (Bharata seems to be aware of this. Re. 27/87 N.S.). It is this which makes it *hṛdaya samvādī*. That the *sthāyībhāva* as referred to in drama, is something connected with the stage will be clear from the verses 52 and the following in chapter 8 of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*.

It is the symbol or art object which undergoes a change from art to art. The meaning of different art objects can remain the same. Thus, in the context of drama *sthāyībhāva* is the meaning of stage symbol continuum; but the meaning is essentially the same as the meaning of (dramatic) poetry (*kāvya*) which is exhibited on the stage. Thus the *kāvyaṛtha* also can be regarded as *sthāyībhāva*; essentially the meaning of the poetry and the meaning of staged poetry is the same. In one sense then we convert the poetic meanings to stage symbolism though in another sense stage symbolism also yields meaning. The concept of *sthāyībhāva* then is not entirely a concept in drama, nor has it any fixed place; it is persistent meaning or sense connected with drama, poetry or any expression in the ordinary language. There is absolutely no doubt that Bharata uses the terms *sthāyībhāva* and *kāvyaṛtha* as identical. If we look to two passages, one in chapter 6 and the other in chapter 7, this would be clear. In chapter 6 he writes—*vaganga satyopetan sthāyībhāvan* (that is *sthāyībhāvas* take the form of *vagangasatya abhinaya* on the stage). In chapter 7, he writes—“*vagangasatyopetan kāvyārthān...*” (that is, it is the *kāvyaṛtha* which has taken the form of *vagangasatya abhinaya*). The loose use of the two words *kāvyaṛtha* and *sthāyībhāva* is unfortunate. For, they have different significance in different arts. Nevertheless, this loose use of the two words gives a clue to the understanding of the notion of *sthāyībhāva*. In short, *sthāyībhāvas*, being of the nature of meanings, cannot be of one kind in poetry and of another kind in staged drama. If the essential identity of *sthāyībhāva* and *kāvyaṛtha* is taken into account, some of the apparent contradictions in Bharata's writings are removed. The staged drama is essentially a translation of a form of literature into a form of presentation. This is the translation of poetic meaning in stage symbols. The stage symbols again yield a meaning which is equivalent to poetic meaning. *Sthāyībhāva*, considered as meaning then, is both prior and posterior to stage symbol, or as I understand by it *rasa*. In the process of creation of the dramatic art, *sthāyībhāva* (*kāvyaṛtha*) leads to



*rasa*, and in the process of appreciation and understanding of staged drama, *rasa* leads to *sthāyībhāva*. When the *sthāyībhāvas* (*kāvyaṛtha*) take the form of different *bhāvas* they become *rasa* (*nānābhāvopagata api sthāyīno bhāva rasatvam āpnuvanti*. N.S.--6), and it is these *sthāyībhāvas* which exist in *vaganga satva abhinaya* that the spectators enjoy (*vaganga satvo-petan sthāyībhāvan āsvādayanti sumanasah! prekshākah.....N.S. 6*). We have seen that for Bharata, the persistent continuum of meaning whether connected with poetry or stage is *sthāyībhāva*. But understood as meaning of the stage, *sthāyībhāva* evidently requires some stage symbols or language without which there could be no meaning. In my view, *rasa* is that stage language or symbol which leads to *sthāyībhāva* (of the stage) which is the meaning of the stage language and which also is connected with the stage. In order to appreciate the proposition presented in this paper it is necessary to remember that the stage is a temporal continuum with a fixed point at each end. At one end there is *kāvyaṛtha* or the poetic creation, at the other end there is the artistic enjoyment or *siddhi* which connects the stage with appreciator. Between these are *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhichārībhāva* which form *rasa*. The *rasa* leads successively to *sthāyībhāva*, the artistic beauty, by pleasure of the spectator and culminates in the indescribable artistic enjoyment or the last of the *daivikī sidhi*. Most poetic critics since the time of Abhinava think that *rasa* is the state of indescribable artistic enjoyment. I believe this was not the meaning of *rasa* as used in *Nāṭya Śāstra*.

# ANIMALS IN EARLY INDIAN ART

## A CASE-STUDY IN THE EVOLUTION OF FORM AND HUMAN SENSITIVITY

Kalyan Kumar Ganguli

MANY students of Indian art have noticed that the representation of animal figures occur in this art in a much more extensive scale than in many other arts of the world. The art form of the animals represented by them also point to some significant differences, in attitude and aesthetic vision. It also indicates a very deep and profound awareness of the society for whom this art was put forth, about its animal neighbourhood. In fact a study of arts and literature of India can reveal a very keen and close observation of the animals, domestic or wild, their forms and appearances, their habits and manners and their other distinctive characteristics. Apart from just observing the animals as useful instruments of service, enjoyable pets in household, or fearful beasts commanding deadly power, the Indian mind had probably, through evolving stages of consciousness, developed an attitude to and an awareness of the animal world not quite met with in other parts of the world. Art conditioned and affected by this mind has been an interesting index to this special awareness and the gradual manifestation of this awareness in the art monuments in India may constitute a study of absorbing interest.

In the field of art man has tried to emulate what he had found existing in nature. In attempting to do what nature has done man slowly but surely learnt to sharpen his natural creative impulse, but his emulation of nature did not come all at once. It was the use of flint that launched man in his road to culture. Gradually he learnt to shape and fashion implements of various kinds. These implements have adequate indication to prove the growth of awareness among men, of balance and proportion. These also bear evidence of human sensitivity to form. They also at this stage show awareness of quality of material and colour. The earliest attempt of man to bring about a visual representation of a thing was the likeness of animals in such media as reindeer or stag horn belonging to the Magdalenian age. The celebrated bison with turned head, curved in reindeer horn from rock shelter la Medeleine, Dordogne or the deer and salmon panel, also engraved on reindeer horn, show some of the earliest endeavours of man in the field of visual representation in plastic material.

That the animal form had fascinated the human mind from a very early age

and inspired him to get the likeness of animals in visual form, can be studied from the engravings and paintings of the Cro-magnon hunters living in the caverns of southern France and northern Spain. The chance discovery of these animal forms has opened up a particular facet of human mind at a very early stage of human culture. The animals met with upon the walls of those rock caverns are of great variety, such as the bison, reindeer, boar, wolf, mammoth woolly rhinoceros, all viewed from reasonable closeness in their details, moving in various poses and postures. Apart from great liveliness, caught in the most vigorous and forceful action of running, charging, bellowing, or ringing with pain after being mortally wounded, these animals speak of a world of man who were most sensitive to the feelings of wonderment and suspense; it was indeed a world in which the animals were the only real objects to be reckoned with and to be conscious about. Man was at this stage essentially the hunter, waging a perpetual war with his animal adversaries, a bitter and excruciating battle for survival.

It is not known exactly when man could confidently feel that the tide had turned in his favour and the peril from the wild and over menacing animals had been curbed. This however had not been achieved all at once. The struggle was long and bitter and persistent and human mind scarcely could fully obviate the fear from the animals till he was able to eliminate his adversary from regions where human domination was established beyond question. Even though this struggle was decidedly gained, yet human psychology continued for long to be conditioned by the influence of this struggle. The effect of this relationship between man and his animal neighbours has influenced the progress of man on his way to civilization, and evidence of this influence can be traced in various traits of culture that man has lived through in course of his evolution. Art is an extremely effective index of facts in this course and the treatment of animals in art by different people of the world can undoubtedly be taken as very useful and trustworthy record in this matter.

## 2

Works of art met with in every part of the ancient world were intended to bear likeness to things existing in the world of man and nature. As the genius and liking of individual groups of men constituting regional and cultural units, would have it, there has been proportionately greater or lesser use of the components constituting such imitative representation in art. However, the representation of man has, by and large, naturally enough, dominated the field of visualisation, except with people like the Semites. People of different civilizations have shown preferences for human or vegetal or animal forms in varying degrees. The art of southern Siberia is noted for its preference for animal forms, while the Egyptians and the Greeks had a much greater predilection for the human form. Indian art has shown a curious blend of awareness

of both the human and animal form since its very early stages of aesthetic endeavour.

From the earliest art remains of the civilized world outside India, those from Egypt, Crete and Babylonia one can get a glimpse of their respective attitude towards the animals. This attitude appears to have been threefold. First, there was awe and reverence for certain animals which were held with divine respect. In Egypt the apis bull, the cobra, the cat and the like belonged to this category; in Crete also the bull and the cobra were being held with reverence and fear. All these civilizations had use of and control over a number of animals that had been domesticated and are found represented in art as docile and peaceful beasts of burden. Artists had worked at those animals with a condescending mood, as useful and unavoidable adjuncts to human life and existence. Then there is a third group constituted of beasts of prey that have been depicted as being hunted and destroyed by man. The well known wild bull hunt on the pylon of the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, Thebes (XXth dynasty 1198—1167 B.C.) in Egypt or the lion hunt from a place at Nineveh (668—626 B.C. British Museum) reveal this aspect of human attitude towards the wild animal which man now goes to hunt with confidence and triumph, no longer with the primeval awe and mortal terror with which he had to put up when he was still a cave dweller and a hunter.

## 3

The art of the Harappan tradition in India has an impressive array of animal figures that speak eloquently of the Indian attitude towards the animal world even at that early stage. The primitive man in India had not been less hostile to animals than his counterparts elsewhere. But already in the Harappan tradition the attitude appears to have changed. The Harappans have left evidence of their acquaintance with animals of quite a wide variety. Among these one can trace domestic animals like the humped bull, the dog, the goat and the like; but there is also abundant proof of the knowledge of wild animals like the tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, bison, and the buffalo, deer, monkey, crocodile, serpent etc. Of these wild animals the elephant and the buffalo may have been already domesticated and put into useful service by the Harappan man.

Animals of the Harappan tradition are shown either as model pieces put up in a variety of material such as clay, stone, steatite etc. or upon the seals and scalings. The model animals are characterised by an attempt at realistic realisation of the lively forms of the respective animals. These animals were probably used mostly as toys but not unoften, as some scholars think, as votive offerings (Mackay—*Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro*, p. 283). Animal figures in clay such as an antelope from Chanhudaro (Mackay—*Early Indus Civilizations*, pl. XXV, 3), or the pottery monkey (*ibid.*, pl. XXV, 5),

or a ceramic ram (Zimmer—*Art of Indian Asia*, pl. 3b), or a monkey (*ibid.*, pl. 3d) are examples of spirited and life-like rendering of the animals depicted. The stone figures of animals however do not reach the same standard but this may have been due to the fact that model animals in stone were quite rare. Also rare are figures in bronze or copper though some examples such as the twin antler top of a hairpin in copper (Mackay—*Early Indus civilisations*, pl. XXI, fig. 10), or the bronze buffalo (*ibid.*, pl. XXI, fig. 12) can be taken as good examples of craftsman's work.

The real wonder of animal rendering in Harappan art tradition is to be met with upon the large number of seals and sealings whereupon was portrayed a remarkable range of animals in unrivalled glory. Representation of animals are not unknown; they occur quite in profusion in the art of many ancient civilizations. But Harappan tradition probably associated itself with animals in a peculiar and uncommon manner.

The seals are a significant and peculiar product of the Harappan tradition and have evoked very wide enthusiasm for their sure and unfaltering delineation of the desired object. The masterly way in which these seals were made, speak of the high accomplishment of the Harappan culture and the definiteness of purpose attained by the Harappan folk. At first the material (mostly steatite) was cut into shape with a saw, then scraped and polished to the desired smoothness. Finally the figures and the signs were carved with small chisels with a complete mastery and command over the operation. The final stage of finish of the seals was performed by immersing the seal in an alkaline liquid and heating it to a high temperature that imparted upon the surface of the seal its fine lustrous white appearance. The animal is the most conspicuous motif upon these seals though the symbols taken as scripts or occasional figures of human being, or tree may also be traced. But the predominant character of animals upon these seals cannot be overlooked nor can those be dismissed without a thorough appraisal of the form and significance of these animals.

The animals upon the seals cover a wide range of perception and acquaintance and speak of a close association with the animals depicted thereon. The known varieties identified from the seals are the elephant, the humped bull, the buffalo and the tiger. The rhinoceros and the bison, two wild beasts occurring frequently, show that these were also very well known as were the goat, the *gharial*, the deer, the snake and similar other common Indian fauna. The fantasy of the artists' imagination is met with in animal forms showing composite character where different parts of the body were culled from different animals to be integrated into a hybrid shape of fantastic imagination. The unicorn, though not fantastic in shape, might have been a mythical conception and a widely popular form.

The animals on the seals are examples of high grade skill and excellence in rendering of the object not only seen but visualised with a penetrating vision that brought out the inner character of the animal in a near and undeceptive manner.

The animals are not only true to life, sometimes in an exaggerated way, they also breathe an air of condensed and rarefied vitality truly significant of their form and nature as understood by the artists who had created them and infused breath in them. Take for instance the humped bull so commonly represented upon the seals. Though executed uniformly within a very small area, the massiveness and the monumental character of the bull cannot be missed by any means. Nor did the artist minimise the tension of the animal muscles beneath the skin while the protuberance of the hump with the depression upon the side, bear out the unusual creative impulse of the artist who does not want to miss even a minute aspect of the characteristic feature of the animal in order to make it true to nature. Repetition of the form in numerous seals create an impression of conventionalisation. Rarely again there is an attempt to show movement in its manifest form though the potentialities of quick and deliberate movement are inherent in the rendering of the animals in quite an unmistakable way. The artist's main aim appears to have been to render not only the vigour and the strength of the animal but the power latent in the animal form, the power that has fascinated the Indian mind for its excessive liveliness, the quantum of life that the animal possessed in excess of what was possessed by man. This unusual factor was not only deemed fascinating, but was looked upon as an additional quality that earned for the animal a supra-natural entity, sacred and superior.

A proper aesthetic evaluation of the animal art of the Harappan tradition remains yet to be accomplished. Zimmer says that they are masterpieces of an art that ranks with the best traditions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.<sup>1</sup> The style of this animal art is unmistakable and distinctive. Dr Kramrisch has also noticed this distinctiveness and the difference that exists between the sophisticated innervation of the animals on the seals belonging to Indian civilization and the brute force in the animals as treated in Mediterranean art.<sup>2</sup> Kramrisch, while noticing the difference between appearance in the western sense that is an illusion and the Indian sense that is real, stressed on the vitality of the animal at play in the art of the Harappan.<sup>3</sup> The western eye has noticed "the love of animals displayed in the clay toys and in the seals" as "typical of India".<sup>4</sup>

What is significant is the remarkable absence of human attitude of hostility to the animal. It was not merely the pet or the domesticated animal that has been delineated with love and affection; the wild and the ferocious animals like the tiger, rhinoceros, bison or the wild buffalo also get the same treatment of wholesome understanding and consideration for the beast which as a living entity was entitled to a treatment at par with other living entities, with even the human entity. The absence of a hunting scene in the entire range of the Harappan art along with the absence of a battle scene has been considered a remarkable feature of the

<sup>1</sup> Zimmer, H., *Art of Indian Asia*, vol. I, p. 30 f.

<sup>2</sup> Kramrisch, S., *Indian Sculpture*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Mahler, J. C., *History of World Art* (by E. M. Upjohn, P. S. Winget and J. G. Mahler) p. 412.

Harappan tradition. The animals exist upon the seals in a state of complete freedom, unharmed or unmolested by anybody and apprehending no fear or danger from any quarter.

In Egyptian art, the animal and the bird had become almost frozen specimens of symbolic expression. In west Asian art too, the symbolic nature of the animal is unmistakable. The animals of the Harappan tradition, however, make their appearance not as symbols but as entities in real life, animated by and effusive of their inner life force. Their mass and volume surge from within, infused with the form and character of living organism so deeply felt and realised in some of the human figures belonging to the Harappan tradition. The full realisation of this harmony and unification has nowhere been manifest with greater intensity than in the celebrated seal showing the *yogi* seated upon a raised seat in a typical *āsana* with soles of the feet meeting each other and the long arms covered with bracelets resting on two knees; four animals, a rhinoceros, a buffalo, a tiger and an elephant are represented on two sides of the seated figures and a horned animal (goat or antler?) below the throne.

The elephant and the buffalo had been domesticated by the Harappans as some of the seals showing the animals with mangers in front of those, indicate. But the wild nature of these animals as also the rhinoceros and the tiger which had never been domesticated needs no explanation. The scene represented in this seal showing a male human being sitting in a perfectly composed and unconcerned manner in close proximity of four of the wildest and most fearful denizens of the forest has evoked no small interest and enthusiasm among students of Indian art and culture. Some scholars have noticed in their person a precursor or Śiva Pasupati of the Puranic tradition while some others bypassed it by merely referring to him in ambiguous terms. It is, however, quite essential to study this seal and its background in detail and find out its proper place in the tradition of this country. Here, since we are concerned with the tradition of animal art, it is not possible to overlook the significance of the composition *apropos* the animals in the composition. The buffalo, the rhinoceros and the tiger in the seal face the figure at the centre while the elephant is seen as if moving away. The figure at the centre has horns upon his head, probably three faces, and the phallus shown. The animals are neatly portrayed bearing all the character of their animal existence but in some relationship with the human figure which sits unconcerned. The scene is repeated in more seals than one, the human figure varying in the number of faces shown, and the number of antelopes below. That the scene carried some religious import cannot be overruled and it was nothing unreasonable that Sir John Marshall had equated the figure with Śiva.

It is worthwhile to note that a number of human forms found in the seals from Harappan sites show horns upon their heads; some figures have also animal masks. In yet some other seals animals are shown in close association with trees, especially the *pippal* tree, while composite animals or such forms as man-bull,

woman-tiger<sup>5</sup> were also widely depicted upon the seals. In all these one can find a very close relationship that seems to have existed, according to the Harappan people, between man, animal and trees. Undoubtedly, Marshall's identification of the horned male figure as the more ancient prototype of Śiva, had provided useful clue to the fact that many of the features of future religion and philosophical outlook had their genesis at much earlier stage.<sup>6</sup>

Vedic literature incorporates a considerable amount of myths and legends relating to animals. The variety of animals known to the Vedic literature were quite large and the acquaintance with these animals had been coming down from a much earlier age. The survival of primitive belief and ideas relating to animals in some form or other is also traceable from these sources. But already these ideas were undergoing considerable change. In some of the passages the line dividing men from animals was not definitely drawn.<sup>7</sup> The concept of the man-tiger met with in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* (30.8) and the *Śatapatha Brāhmāna* (131, 21, 42) may be cited as evidence of such notion and would be strongly reminiscent of the man-tiger (woman-tiger) of the Harappan tradition.

Belief in totemism was not probably completely overcome by the Vedic people as a number of passages in the *Rigveda* would indicate. Frequently Kaśyapa, a seer (Rv. 9.1142) and a priestly family (AB 7.27), is related to the animal, tortoise.

This very ancient belief probably gave rise to the concept of tortoise as a cosmogonic power identified with Prajāpati, the creator or an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. In a passage of the *Sat. Brāhmāna* (7.5.1.5) Prajāpati appears in the form of a *Kurma*. As Kaśyapa was the cosmic father, it is therefore remarked that all beings are the children of the tortoise (*Kāśyapa*). In the *Rigveda* the names of a number of animals (fish and bird) are remembered as tribal names. The names of the *Matsyas*, (also mentioned in Manu, 2.19), the *Ajas* (goats), *Gotamas* (oxen, superlatives of *Go*), the *Vatsas* (calves), the *Śunakas* (dogs), *Kauśikas* (owls), the *Māṇḍukeyas* (frogs) may be mentioned in this connection. The Kurus are claimed to have descended from a hero Samvaraṇa (Rv. 5.5310). In the Epic tradition Samvaraṇa had a bear as his progenitor. It is no wonder that most of these animals were too well known to the Harappans.

The Vedic ideas, however, raised this animal affinity to a mere elevated place for man in whose image they conceived the gods of their ritual and worship. But as the higher Vedic gods became anthropomorphic in character they could not totally overcome their animal background. This was a definite stage in the development of religious conception of the Vedic people when animals were still remembered as endowed with supernatural power; many Vedic animals had thus a supernatural background being themselves considered divine or associated with divinity.

5. Mackay, *M. I. C.* Vol. I. 338.

6. Mackay, *Early Indus Civilizations*, p. 75.

7. Macdonell, A. A., *Vedic Mythology*, p. 147.



The horse in the vedic conception is one such divine animal either by itself or by being associated with some high Vedic god. The divine horse was known by many names, such as *Dadhikra* (Rv. 4.38, 7.44), *Tārkshya* (Rv. 1.896, 10.1.78) *Etasa* etc.

Indra in the *Rigveda* is found frequently designated as a bull, a term also applied to Agni, but less frequently. The goat is mentioned as the animal that draws the cart of the god Pushan. In the later Vedic texts the goat gets connected with Agni.<sup>8</sup> The boar represents Rudra and Marut.

But the frequent mention of the tortoise as the lord of waters (V. S. 13.31) or as Prajāpati gave the epithet *Svayambū* (A. V. 19.5310). There are similar references to monkey, frog, cow and many other animals and birds. Agni is said to be a divine bird through whom men go to the highest place of the Sun, to the highest heaven, to the world of the righteous (V. S. 18.51.2).

The great idea of relationship between man and animal probably found a very interesting symbolic representation in the conception of the sacrifice. In the tenth *maṇḍala* of the *Rigveda*, the Purusha through sacrifice creates the world and then becomes identical with all creation (Rv. 10,90). In the *Purushasūkta* all creatures are considered to be constituting but one quarter of him, the rest are the immortals in the heaven. From this sacrifice were born horses, animals with two rows of teeth, cows, goats and sheep. The *Atharva Veda* also indicates a common source of birth for all animals of the earth and the heaven, wild and domestic, wingless and winged alike (A. V. 11.5.1755). The most elaborate and distinctive sacrifice mentioned in the Vedic literature apart from the cosmic sacrifice of the *Purusha* in the tenth *maṇḍala* of the *Rigveda* had been the sacrifice of the horse. The earliest reference to this sacrifice also occurs in the *Rigveda* where the horse itself is found equated with the Viśvadevā (1.164). In the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* (1.1.1) the horse sacrifice is given a cosmic meaning where parts of the horse's body become identical with the universe. Gradually, sacrifice which indicated the immolation of an animal because of its sacredness assumed a more spiritual form, indicative of a more inner than external or material character.

The *Upanishads* thus turned a more primitive and worldly idea into a sophisticated and spiritual concept where consciousness and life became the manifestation of a universal consciousness and life. To the *Upanishads* the ultimate reality is conceived as one imperishable substratum of the form of existence, considered as the highest of all consciousness and existence, i.e., *Brahman*. To the *Upanishads* this was not a mere utopian realisation. The *Upanishadic* dictum tried to integrate this awareness in practice in day to day life by having these reflected in the enjoyment of *rasa* (*Taittiriya* 2.7). From this *rasa* is effused all forms of artistic manifestation like literature and also art. (*Br. Ar. Up.* 2.4.10). All songs are sung in the praise of the same supreme entity. (*Chhāndogya*—1.7.6).

8. Macdonell, A. A., *Vedic Mythology*, p. 150.

All these lead to the conclusion that the visual arts during Upanishadic and post-Upanishadic days, could not have remained independent of this trend of thought. Unfortunately no examples of visual art have been traced, that can be dated contemporaneously with the authors of the *Upanishads*. But the art of the time of Aśoka that survives in the medium of stone, could not have been much removed from the Upanishadic times. The monuments associated with the name of Aśoka are unique records in the glorification of animal forms. It is quite interesting to note that the name of Aśoka associated itself with monuments where figures of animals occur as the only form of figuration and there is a complete absence of figures representing the human form.

The animals of Aśoka were no products of uniform workmanship and do not belong to the same standard of achievement. But undoubtedly, barring a few specimens like the mutilated elephant of Sankisya, these animals rise to a great height as products of high aesthetic value. In form and character these animals behave majestically symbolising the uniqueness of Aśoka's position as a ruler and a benevolent despot. In the field of art, however, the animals of the Maurya period are found to have advanced the tendencies already noticed in the Harappan age. But at the same time the accumulated realisation of the Upanishadic age must have certainly affected people over wider areas and the artists could not have remained impervious to these realisations. Religion had always found art as a most suitable vehicle for communication and the art of Aśoka though considered as a court art, heraldic in nature; a religious import of this art cannot be overruled. The Mauryan artist had no need of nor could they accommodate a large number of animals. He made his restricted choice and stuck to the few that he chose. The elephant and the bull were taken over from the tradition already known to his Harappan predecessor while the horse and the lion were two new species which his forebears had made their acquaintance not much earlier than his time. The horse is the most significant of his animals, and a legacy from the Vedic days while acquaintance with the lion was of a superficial nature. This choice of animals indicate on the one hand a tendency towards exclusiveness towards an ascendancy in hierarchical conception where the higher and the lower planes were being sharply demarcated. Man's ascendancy had long been fully established. He had also become master of his mind controlling and realising the extent of his own unlimited power. The animals represented in the art of Aśoka may have been a visual form of his realisation of universality with an accent upon ascendancy. The Buddha had passed through many incarnations starting at a low stage of consciousness gradually ascending and finally being born as Gautama. He was Gautama, a chief among the Oxen (superlative of *go*), an idea surviving from the primitive and the Vedic age. He is also frequently called the lion of the Śākya clan, while the elephant symbolises his birth. The horse may have been reminiscent of his solar association, his clan being considered solar in origin. But now he was the Buddha, one who has known and become identical with what he has known. The naturalism of the animals of Aśoka is different from the

exaggerated naturalism of the Harappan animals. The expressiveness as visible in the Harappan animals is now being turned inwards even in the field of animal sculpture. This is where the animals of ancient and classical civilization in western Asia, Egypt and Greece differed from the animals that begin to appear in India from the time of Aśoka onwards. Rene Grousset traced this difference to lie in the Indian conception of "brotherly sympathy with all living beings, a sentiment" the source of which had been rightly sought "in the dogma of transmigration."<sup>9</sup> Grousset thought this to have been "distinctively a Buddhist and Jain" attitude or in later days "Krishnite." But it had been already realised in the lore of the *Upanishads* where consciousness, wherever it exists, has been considered as part of the same universal consciousness. The Buddhist *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* expounds this theory but in a cruder way when it states, "Here in this long journey of birth and death there is no living being who has not been some time your mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter. So men should feel towards them as to their own kin."<sup>10</sup>

Animals in the post-Mauryan art gradually find themselves relegated to a secondary position while human figures emerge to gain ascendancy in art. This transformation is not difficult to note. In the panels of Bharut and Sanchi animals occur either as decorative pattern or as mounts of human figures representing divine or semi-divine beings of various orders. The supreme position attributed in these monuments is that of Gautama, the Buddha who is formless, since he had acquired the final stage of bliss, that is *nirvāṇa*. He is above everything, above the gods, the demigods, the *nāgas* and *yakshas*, much above the animals as such. Though not fully divested of their older glory, as some animals were still being placed as crowning elements of tall columns, they have now descended to the ordinary world where they are given their respective roles in nature to play. Still glorified, one can find the elephant, *Śveta* or the *Gajottama* in the panels of Bharut and Sanchi. The horse Kanṭha moves in regal glory, the horse that was born on the same day with Buddha and had been his mount. The mysterious *nāgas* remind one of the belief coming down from earlier days. But elsewhere the animals move and act as if full of the joy of life. From the over-exaggerated naturalism of the Harappan age and the majestic aloofness of the time of Aśoka, the animals on the reliefs of Bharut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya and Udayagiri, are meant essentially for enjoyment of the onlooker as he would not be required to look upon those with reverence or suspense but feel the fabric of their joy of living expressed through all their movements and sensibility. It is here that once again the conception of the homogeneity of the consciousness asserts itself in full vigour. In the domain of the living the joy is the basic truth, the joy that effuses from the pleasure of living and existing. This art has no reflection of the inherent fear of suffering released by Buddhist thought. On the contrary it has the expe-

<sup>9</sup>. Rene Grousset. *The Civilization of the East*, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup>. *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* — p. 245.

ssion of fullness of realisation. The art attempts to achieve this fullness and as such lays the foundation of the art tradition that was to sustain life for long. This was the art that for the first time had stemmed forth as a vehicle of communication, a communication of this essential joy of life. The art here has freed itself from its predominantly symbolic aim but turned to communicate an emotion through the illustration of the anecdotes which were undoubtedly too well known at that time. Hence, it can well be understood that the stories in themselves or the characters in these stories, be those human, animal, tree, river or mountain, matter a great deal in producing the total effect. The overall impact of the total emotional content of the scenes justify the rendering of the panels and their elaborateness.

The conception of beauty is fairly old in India. The R̥gvedic poet had revealed in his superb and inimitable manner the beauty of nature and man. The *Brāhmaṇa* conceived the whole creation, a brilliant piece of divine manifestation of beauty. The world according to this idea was created out of joy and pleasure, the contributory factors of beauty. And to look at this world was to participate in the enjoyment of this beauty. The conception of beauty has no absolute standard, and no extent of literary endeavour can measure the extent and the purpose of this beauty. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* equated its perception with that of the universal (2.7). The Indian conception from a very early stage tried to formulate the norms of this realisation. Bharata of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* fame had brought about a standard formulation of this concept through the medium of dramaturgy. The visual arts such as sculpture and painting were basically allied to the art of dance and drama.

The animal forms integrated in the scenes showing various stories and anecdotes from the Buddhist legends display the basic unity of life in this universe. In the process of eternal transcendence of life from stage to stage there is endless store of beauty and joy. The artists of the Śuṅga and the post-Śuṅga period had brought out this transcendence in a resounding manner in the monuments left by them for posterity. In this there is a free flow of emotion that elevates the human mind and helps him to drink at the fountain of *rasa*. The animals in these monuments are integrated in the overall scene of life displayed at a level of high achievement.

## INDIAN AESTHETICS AS REVEALED IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

Anand Krishna

I propose to discuss in this short paper a few references in Sanskrit classical literature and early technical treatises on *śilpa*, to what may be construed as supplying us with data relating to approaches to art and art appreciation. Unfortunately there is no technical treatise on art earlier than that of the *Vishṇudharmottaram* which may be attributed to about the fifth-sixth century A.D. Evidently this text presents the results of centuries of tradition and experience which one can see in such almost contemporary examples as the Buddha figures of Sarnath, the Mahāvarāha relief at Udayagiri, and the Padmapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara at Ajanta. The *alaṅkāra śāstras* are however much richer in providing details relating to the creative process in, reactions and responses to and criteria of judgement in literature. It is permissible to speculate that these were applicable in general to music and the visual arts as well. The *Vishṇudharmottaram* states clearly that to be able to appreciate painting one must know the principles of *nṛitta*, to appreciate *nṛitta* one must know the principles of *atodya*, to understand *atodya* one must know the principles of *gītā* and so on. True, the *alaṅkārikas* in their analyses of poetry and drama, are mostly preoccupied with questions of rhetoric and prosody, but incidentally they provide significant glimpses of what one may say, their aesthetic points of view. Treatises on *alaṅkāra* may therefore be made to serve as important sources of information relating to early Indian aesthetics and art activity.

But the closest correlative of arts like painting and sculpture is to be found in *nṛitta* and *nāṭya*; indeed all authorities agree that the principles underlying these arts are almost the same. *Yathā nṛitte tathā chitre* is the clear verdict of the *Vishṇudharmottaram* which in concluding its section on painting states that whatever has not been stated in this section has to be understood in the light of what has been stated in the section on *nṛitta*. The statement of Mārkaṇḍeya to the effect that the section on painting is difficult to be followed without an adequate knowledge of the principles of *nṛitta*, is also virtually to this effect.

To any student of Indian art history what has been said above, is more than evident. When one looks at the exaggeratedly flexed forms, the twisted palms or the *netra mudrās*, for instance at Ajanta, one is reminded of the

close relationship which the Sanskrit text had established between *nṛtta* and the *chitra*. A painting was the *nāṭya* at its best (*nṛttam chitram param smṛitam*). When we come to *nāṭya*, we gather from the Sanskrit *kāvya*s besides from Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* certain important explanations regarding its nature. Kālidāsa in his *Mālāvikāgnimitram* describes the qualities of *nāṭya* as follows: (1) it has the sanctity of a visual (*chakshushā*), *yajna*, (compare *rūpasūtra* of Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī*); (2) it depicts the *lokacharitra* or the different characters of the society; and (3) it represents different *rasas* etc. Consequently it has the capacity to be enjoyed by the masses of divergent tastes.<sup>1</sup>

Another point at which the two met was that they both depicted the "three worlds" (*trailokyānukṛitih smṛitah*),<sup>2</sup> elsewhere the *Chitrasūtra* expresses the idea as follows: *jagatonukriya kārya dvyayorapi yatah nrpalah*. Compare this with Bharata's statement in his *Nāṭya Śāstra*: 'I have evolved *nāṭya* in which the society (*loka*) is depicted' (*lokavṛittanukaram nāṭyametanmaya kṛitam*). These cumulatively prove the broad outlook of the artist. Bāṇa in his *Harshacharitam* informs us of the vastness of the subject-matter of wall paintings.

As the dramatic element in painting was derived by means of exaggerated postures, the human figure was similarly derived from an idealised form, variously known as *vapur-viśesha* (*Kumārasambhavam*), *rūpaviśesha* or *akṛitiviśesha* (*Mālāvikāgnimitram*) and so on, which meant an unusual form. This was based on the theory of *rūpātīśayya* (excessive or unusual beauty) or *aṅgasaushṭhavātīśayya* (*Malavikā*: compare *rūpātīśalini-kanyānam* of Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī* or *Rūpātīśayyakṛitinam* of *Kuttanimatam*). These seem to have been the guiding principles in the minds of the people in creating human physiognomy which was reflected in their painting and sculpture. Abanindranath Tagore commenting upon the *Shāḍaṅga* of painting pointed out that the human forms in Ajanta murals showed parallelism with the imageries in Sanskrit literature. For example, the eyes took the form of a lotus-bud, the lips that of a leaf, and so on. The

1. The ancients were fully conscious of variety in popular taste: for example, a painting was enjoyed differently; according to the *Vishṇudharmottara*: a master appreciates the drawing, the critics the modelling, the ornamentations appeal to women, while the laymen like the colourfulness (*rekham praśansanti-āchāryah, vartanam cha vichakshaṇāh, striyāh, bhūshanamichchhanti vaṇādhyamitare janāh*. The *Mahimnastotra* refers to *ruchinām vaichitryād* (on account of diversity of taste); see also *bhinnaruchirhi lokāh* of Kālidāsa (*Raghuvamsam* 6-30).

2. The *Vishṇudharmottara* describes a variety of people and their proper settings like the forts, market-place, bars with people attending them, the gambling houses including the dejected losers and the happy winners, the battle-scenes with charging armies etc., cremation grounds, the highways with caravans, the night scenes and so on.....all to be based on the artists' observations although the text provides some hints to help him in these.

*Vishṇudharmottaram* again comes to our help at this point, as it classifies the eye-types into three distinctive categories: taking the form of lotus pepal (*utpala-patra*), bowshaped (*chāpākkūra*), a fish (*matsyodara*). This is what the people must have felt in ancient times as an idealised beauty or a case of *rūpatiśayya*. Because this form was achieved by a collection of *rūpa* (*rūpāchchāyena mānasa vidhinā kṛitanu: Śakuntalā, 2, 9*).

Thus the various portions or limbs in a human figure were derived from different sources to evolve an idealised figure. In the case of a painting the process was more mental than physical. Śakuntalā seems to have been created by the mental *rūpachchāyā* of *Brahma* who first drew her in a picture and subsequently endowed it with life. The Yakshiṇī of the *Meghadūtam* was supposed to be painting a mental portrait of her lord (*bhāvagamyam likhanti*).

The psychological approach to art more or less ranked equal with *yoga*; in other words, a work of art was a result of deep concentration of mind. Dushyanta, trying to paint a figure of Śakuntalā from memory, worked hard to improve the unsatisfactory portions (*yadyatsādhu na chitre syātkṛiyate tattadanyathā*).<sup>3</sup> A successful painting was thus called *sādhu*.<sup>4</sup> However, he felt that in spite of his efforts Śakuntalā's *lāvanya* was revealed only to a limited degree (see below). The same idea is manifested in the *Mālāvikāgnimitram* when looking at the *nāyikā* in life, the king felt that as a result of her *rūpātiśayya* she looked even more charming than in her image in the portrait; thus the painting was declared as *kāntivitsamvādī* and a work which lacked concentration of mind (*śīthila samādhi*). The same idea is expressed by the phrase *śunyahṛidayatā* (emptiness of mind) or *anyachittata* of the *Vishṇudharmottara*. One has to be self-possessed (*sattashta, Mālāvikā 2*) for achieving the same. It was really a difficult task (*dushpravoja, Mālāvikā*). The sum-total was that the meaning should be properly expressed (*sūchitaḥ samyagartha, Malavikā, 2*), by means of bodily postures (*angairantarnihita-vachanaiḥ, ibid., 2*).

Now we may refer to the question of *sādṛīśyam* (the likeness). The Sanskrit literature is replete with references to *sādṛīśya*. Yasodhara commenting upon the *Kāmasūtra* under painting, refers to the famous six limbs of painting in which he includes *sādṛīśyam*. Somesvara's *Mānasollāsa* in connection with *viddha chitra* defines it as an image in painting, which follows the realism of a *pratibimba* (reflection) in a mirror; the *Sthaviravalicharita* agrees to it (*ādarśa-pratibimba*). The question arises whether this type of realism was at all practised in ancient Indian art or the *darpaṇa-pratibimba* was just a theoretical concept. The abundantly available evidence

3. Compare the statement regarding *nṛitta* in the *Mālāvikāgnimitra*. (1) *Deva prayoga pradhānam* or *prayogavijnānam* of the *Śakuntalā* (1, 2) However, *prayōga* here is not experimentation but performance.

4. Compare with Bhavabhūti's statement in *Uttara: sādhutve durjano janaiḥ*.

denies the "image as appearing in a mirror" theory because it cuts across the traditionalism (see above) in artistic forms. Similarly, the profusion of later Sanskrit and Prākṛita stories mentioning stark realism in painting do not help us in the matter; for, the ideal which was followed by the artists can be actually seen in their surviving work. Thus, they evolved a human physiognomy of their own and (as already seen) by means of a psychological process. Therefore, we have to accept a particular type of *sādṛśyam* which the artist, either created by himself or derived from tradition, but was always governed by other factors like *rūpabheda*, *pramāṇa*, *bhāva*, *lāvaṇya*, and so on.

It may be further noticed that the emphasis on realistic portraiture or similar depictions in the literary evidence, is laid mainly in a later period (800-1200 A.D.) when in practice the quality of painting was fast deteriorating.<sup>5</sup> Thus the real meaning of *sādṛśyam* will be something like an *anukṛiti* (see above), which was nevertheless charming and auspicious (*saubhāgyaphala hi chārutā*). It was a *nayana-vishaya* or feast to the eyes (compare with *srotra-peyam* or to be drunk by the ear, of the *Meghadūtam* in connection with a pleasing melody). It is the same as *madhura* (*Śakuntalā*) or *priyadarśana* (*ibid*), i.e., which always gave rise to *rasa* or a pleasant feeling. In the *Mālāvikāgnimitram*, Kālidāsa calls in *nayanmadhu* (honey for the eyes) to attract Agnimitra, compared here with a bee. It could be maddening (*ummadayitri*, *Śakuntalā*, 1), but that it was realistic, cannot be accepted.

Thus, we have the term *susādṛśya* in Śūdraka's *Mrichchhakaṭika* or in Bhāsa's *Svapnavasavadattam*, which is to be distinguished from the *darpaṇa-pratibimba* concept, while it may be compared with the living term among the Mughal artists as *shabih khubsurat ho kar milana* or in other words an artist's own rendering of the form.

The qualities of a painting are very well analysed in Duryodhana's three famous expressions in Bhāsa's play, the *Dūtavākya*. The scene introduces us to his court, where Krishna arrives to seek an interview with the wicked king. To avoid showing proper courtesy to the distinguished visitor, the latter feigned to be absorbed in a cloth-painting, when he exclaims: *aho asya varṇādhyatā* (how rich is the colouration); *aho asya bhāvopapannatā* (how saturated it is with *bhāva*); and *aho asya yuktalekhatā* (how well-drawn). These may be compared with the four-fold analyses of the *Vishṇudharmottara*: *rekhām praśamsantiāchāryāḥ vartanam cha vichakshaṇāḥ, striyāḥ bhūshaṇamichchhanti, varṇādhyamitare jaṇāḥ*. The *Vishṇudharmottaram* being more critical and developed could discriminate one attitude of mind from the other ascribing each respectively to a distinct class of people, which

5. See under the short-comings of painting' (*chitra-doshah*) of *Vishṇudharmottara*: *Bṛihadgaṇḍoshthānetratvamaviruddhatvameva cha.....daurbalyam sthūlarekhātva-anbhaktatvameva cha...chitradoshah prakīrtitah*.



Bhāsa did not take into consideration. Also, in the above statement by Bhāsa, we find that the first quality in the painting which struck Duryodhana's imagination was the colour-scheme,<sup>6</sup> which has been a distinctive feature of Indian pictorial art throughout its history, which following the *Vishnu-dharmottara* school of thought did not betray Duryodhana's sophisticated taste. Reference to *bhāva* (emotion) in this connection is important, which also figures in the *śhaḍaṅga* theory. Kālidāsa in his *Sākuntalam* describes it as *bhāvadarśana*. Similarly, when the two master-dramatists entered the king's court in the *Mālāvikā*, it appeared that they were the *bhāvas* incarnate. The lack of *bhāva* as a shortcoming in an art production was also noticed. (see, *bhāvasunyā*).

Nature always played an important role in our art, as is evident from the extant examples. In certain periods or schools it is overemphasised, so much so that a particular piece of art might give an impression of a purely landscape painting. Yet it is strange that the *śhaḍaṅga* theory should not even make a mention of it. The Chitrasūtra in the *Vishnu-dharmottaram* refers to a number of pleasant settings: "the depiction of *vasanta ṛitu* should include cuckoos and bees and blossoming trees.....the *grishma ṛitu* is indicated by showing exhausted men, deer under shade of trees, buffaloes smeared with clods of earth, the water ponds dried up,<sup>7</sup> and so on. The known examples or the secondary literary sources agree in furnishing a convincing mass of evidence to prove the introduction of nature in art. When Dushyanta was busy painting a portrait of Śakuntalā, he provided a suitable background to the scene: *kārya saikatalīna-haṁsa mīthuna srotovaha Mālinī* etc., in which the scenic beauty of the environment as well as the birds and beasts played important part. In the first act of Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmachritam* the wall paintings showing the life of Rāma move, leading the spectators from one beauty spot to the other.

Appreciation of art was supported by the society, the most vivid picture of which is known from Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī*, in which the *kumāras* refer the paintings to the critics (*chitravidyopādhyāya*), in a kind of a tournament (a number of later stories on such tournaments appear in collections like the *Kathāsaritsāgara*). The *Mālāvikā*, in different setting provides a vivid picture of similar contests and yields a number of technical terms: It is a kind of *ratna-parikshā* which could be held at cultural centres in the cities (*Mālāvikā*, 1).<sup>8</sup>

6. Compare: *pratyagravarṇārgam chitralakham* (*Mālāvikā* 1).

7. Compare the pen-picture of the summer as given by Kālidāsa in (*Śakuntalā*).

8. Sometimes the artists suffered from false vanity (*mīthyā-gauravam*; *Mālāvikā*, 1) or from rivalries and decried the other (*ayam me padarajasāpi nartulya*, *ibid.*) when the report was that one was like a shallow pond (*paṭvāla* compared to the other, who was like a sea (*ibid.*). There were cases of partiality (*pakshapāta*)

Generally, a panel of judges was appointed on the basis of the theory that "even a knowledgeable judge could err without proper assistance" (*Mālāvikā* 1). During the contest they sometimes differed among themselves.

A work was required to satisfy (*paritōsha*, *Śakuntalā*, 1) the "learned men" (*vidūshām*)<sup>9</sup> and to be approved by them as *sādhu*<sup>10</sup> (good). The people who accepted or rejected a work of art on hearsay were called stupid (*mūdhā*).<sup>11</sup>

A work of art was expected to be dynamic in character (*navo navoyamakshnōh*, *Mālāvikā* 1, 11). Compare this with the famous statement by Māgha in connection with the Raivataka hill; *kshāṇe kshāṇe yaḥ navatāmu-paiti fadeva rūpam ramanīyatayah*. This particular attitude towards art gave it a high pedestal in the minds of the people. The same idea appears in Kālidāsa quoting a popular saying of his times, which provides a key to unlock the mystery of the peoples' attitude towards art; namely, "Beauty is not meant to be used for sinful act." (*pāpavṛittāya na rūpamitī*).

---

but it was as far as possible avoided by inviting experts (like the Parivrājika in the *Mālāvikā*, whose views were honoured and it was seen that justice was done (*nyāyō vyabahārah*, *ibid.*). The expert who presided over the contest was called the *praśnika*, i.e., the interrogator and the contestants (*vijñānasaṅghar-shināu*, *ibid.* 1). The verdict (*nirṇaya*) based on their critical examination (*sūkshma-darśita*, *ibid.* 2). was given after due consideration. There were certain *āchāryas* who after attaining the high position, avoided such controversies, but this was interpreted as a case of escapism.

<sup>9</sup>. Same as *vidvatparishad* of *Mālāvikā*.

<sup>10</sup>. Also see above. It was difficult to achieve it as stated by Bhavabhūti (op, cit.). How difficult it was to be achieved can be seen in Bhavabhūti (*ibid.*) as he remarks: *sādhutve durjano janaḥ*.

<sup>11</sup>. *Purānamityeva na sādhu sarvam na chāpi kāvyam nava mityavādyam santah parikshāntaratbhajante mūdhāḥ; paraṇpratyayneya buddhiḥ*.

# TRADITIONAL INDIAN AESTHETICS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A RESTATEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
NĀTYASĀSTRA AND THE GRAPHIC ARTS

K. Krishnamoorthy

## I

It is rather intriguing that we have the classical text book of Bharata on the subject of the arts, which is perhaps anterior to the extant art works. The historical approach is thus beset with difficulties even at the outset. Yet we would not be wrong in thinking that the present *Nāṭya Śāstra*, which is in the nature of an encyclopaedia on arts like dance, drama and music, represents the thought of several centuries and was in the process of growth, allowing room for additions and emendations for quite a length of time after its first appearance (100 B.C. to 500 A.D.). Bharata makes the bold claim that there is no art or science, no craft or skill, falling outside the purview of *Nāṭya* and successfully demonstrates it in his voluminous treatment of the subject.

न तज्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं न सा विद्या न सा कला ।  
नासौ योगो न तत्कर्म नाट्येऽस्मिन् यन्न दृश्यते (I. 116)

The general postulate of aesthetics underlying the *Nāṭya Śāstra* is thus unmistakable. The creation of art is not the work of an amateur but of an expert, of one who has mastered all knowledge and understood the mystery and meaning of life. He is called *kavi* because he can see behind and beyond the sensible world (कवि क्रान्तदर्शी).

The story with which the book opens is at once symbolic of the Indian concept of art and its function. The gods approach the Creator with this request: we should like to have a diversion that shall delight our eyes and ears alike (क्रीडनीयक मिच्छामो दृश्यं श्रव्यं च यद्नवेत -- I. II a). At the end of the story, we get the prophecy that the *Nāṭya* will prove a source of singular delight to one and all, whatever their trials and tribulations in the hard world of reality.

दःखार्तानां श्रमात्तानां शोकात्तानां तपस्विनाम् ।  
विश्रान्तिजननं काले नाटयमेत द्दन्विष्यति ॥ I—114

Though it is clear that art was valued primarily for its real aesthetic value, the very climate of India was such that everything was perforce to be invested with the holy spirit of religion. The genius of India is such that even the most mundane activity is naturally viewed as religious. This is a country where cooking, eating, bathing and sleeping can be regarded as religious. Cutting across the infinite varieties of religious sects and forms of worship, there is the fundamental unity of approach common to all which is generally missed by the Westerner. In this widest sense, dance and drama, music and painting, are so many ways of divine worship. It does not mean, as is generally supposed, that art was a hand-maid to religion, that the aesthetic approach was subordinated to dogmas of religion. What it means is only this : artists in India were religious in their personal lives and took their vocation very seriously, so seriously that they deemed their art work to be on par with the hardest disciplines like *yoga*. So understood, the prayerful attitude of our painters and playwrights, our dancers and sculptors will not present any problem.

The first point that deserves our attention is the common aesthetic principle underlying dance, drama, painting and sculpture. The only considerable text on painting that we have is a section called *Chitrasūtra* in *Vishṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and it states in no uncertain terms that 'knowledge of painting is impossible without the aid of *Nāṭya Śāstra*' :

विना तु नृत्यशास्त्रेण चित्रसूत्रं सुदुर्विदम्

Sylvain Levi who has made a special study of the Indian philosophy of art makes the following observation which is true even today: "Indian genius produced a new art which the word *rasa* summarises and symbolises and which condenses it in one brief formula—the poet does not express, but he suggests'" (*La Theatre Indien* p. 417).

Commenting on the nature of *rasa*, V. A. Smith points out, "Indian aesthetics are based upon the conceptions of aesthetic value in terms of personal response or reproduction. This value is known as *rasa* . . . the whole system is based upon and illustrated by literature, and cannot be applied to sculpture and painting" (*Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, p. 14).

I propose in this paper to show how the second part of the above quotation is not acceptable to traditional Indian thought. The words *rasa* and *bhāva*, the key terms of Indian aesthetic speculation are found as freely used in words on sculpture and painting as in works on poetry and drama. For example, here is a standard prescription for painting taken from the *Mānasollāsa* of Someśvara (1131 A.D.) :—

पश्चाच्चित्रं विचित्रं च तस्यां भित्तौ लिखेद्बुधः ।  
नाना भाव रसेयुक्तं सुरेखं वर्णकोचितम् ॥

This is echoed by Basavabhūpāla, author of *Śivatattvaratnākara* (1684-1710 A.D.):—

प्रगल्भै भवितस्त्रज्ञैः सूक्ष्मरेखाविशारदैः ।  
चित्रकैर्लेखयेच्चित्रं नानारख समुद्भवम् ॥

From the side of poetics we have the pregnant remark of *Vāmana* who thinks that drama is the best of literary forms because 'it is replete with various artistic elements as in a painted picture.'

तद्धि चित्रं चित्रपटवद् विशेषसा कल्यात्

(*Kāvya-lāṅkarasūtra*, I-iii 31)

Similarly, the descriptions of forms of images of Vishṇu, Śiva, Devī etc. given in the Tantras and Āgamas invariably refer to *mudrās* and *hastas* on the analogy of details of gestures explained in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*.

Just as philosophers in the West from Plato to Tolstoy regarded the artists with suspicion, thinking that the sensual appeal of the arts might encourage immorality or day-dreaming, from a strictly moralistic point of view, so too in India, we find strictures against indulgence in the arts in some of our *dharmasūtras*. But thinkers like Bhaṭṭa-Tauta (1000 A.D.) answered the objection effectively by pointing out the distinction between sensual passion and aesthetic emotion :—

विषयाभावतो नात्र रागस्याभ्यासगाढता ।  
स्थायी चेद्विषयो नैवमास्वादस्य स गोचरः ॥  
आस्वाद एव रागश्चेन्न रागो योषिदास्पदः । ...

(*Kāvya-prakāśa*, ed. S. P. Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1959, p. 9)

The main point is that there is no *real* existence of sense objects at all in art. The ruling passion which is delineated in art is not identical with aesthetic response. This is a very crucial point and it is very strangely confirmed by a quotation found in a Buddhist work, Prajñākaragupta's commentary on *Pramāṇavārtika of Dharmakīrti*:—

तदस्थत्वेन वेद्यत्वे तत्त्वेनावेदनं भवेत् ।

तदात्मना तु वेद्यत्वे रागितैव प्रसज्यते ॥

(p. 330, *Op.Cit.*)

Only when the experience of the connoisseur is that of an onlooker, there can be true awareness; if his experience is that of an involved participant, the charge of passionate excitement cannot be overcome.

## II

Having thus cleared the ground, we might try to focus our attention now on the aesthetic philosophy of Indians which we have been almost avoiding so far because of the confusion due to ambivalent meanings of even the key words *rasa* and *bhāva*. These two words in Sanskrit have been so often used and in so many senses even in works on aesthetic theory that they invite the closest analysis before erecting any structure of philosophical theory.

Pāṇini has a *sūtra* (5.2.95) :—

*'rasādibhyaścha'*

He prescribes the possessive affix *matup* in preference to others in the case of the word *rasa* giving the forms *rasavat*, etc. The other words grouped together are *rūpa*, *varṇa*, *gandha*, *sparśa*, *śabda*, *sneha*, and *bhāva*.

The Gaṇapāṭha adds that when they mean *guṇas* the affix is prescribed. It is clear thus in the time of Pāṇini, *rasa* and *bhāva* did mean *guṇas* or properties only, and the forms *rasavat*, *rasavān*, *bhāvavat*, *bhāvavān* indicated their possessors. By the time of Patañjali the position changed. There were usages like *rasiko nataḥ* where the word *rasa* has taken a different affix and where *rasa* could not be a property but an aesthetic state. So he rejects Pāṇini's *sūtra*.

The word *bhāvika* also is found used to define the over-all intention (कवेरभिप्राय) of the poet revealed through the poem as a whole.

(cp. *Dandin-kāvyaḍarśa*, II 364-66) :

तद् भाविकमिति प्राहुः प्रबन्धविषयं गुणम् ।  
भावः कवेरभिप्रायः काव्येष्वसिद्धि संस्थितः ॥  
परस्पोपकारित्वं सर्वेषां वस्तुपर्वणाम् ।  
विशेषणानां व्यर्थानामक्रिया स्थानवर्णना ॥  
व्यक्तिरुक्तक्रमबलाद् गंभीरस्यापि वस्तुनः ।  
भावायत्तमिदं सर्वमिति तद् भाविकं विदुः ॥

What deserves our special attention here is the fact that the words *rasa* and *bhāva* are used in connection with the actor and the artist, not in connection with the spectator. Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra*, if studied in this background, will show how nowhere are the words *rasa* and *bhāva* confined to describe the spectator's exclusive experience. They are invariably used to refer to the activity of the artist. In other words, a historical approach to the concept of *rasa* and *bhāva* must admit that these two words describe the aesthetic situation, the art object outside, more than the subjective state of the critic.

Before going into further detail, we might take an example of recorded aesthetic judgement. I take here an example at random provided by Kālidāsa who might easily be regarded as the best and foremost representative of artistic judgement at a time when Indian art appreciation had reached its height.

The hero in the *Śakuntalā* is in a happy mood when sweet strains of music reach him, and suddenly, he finds himself perturbed. His whole personality is shaken, and he reflects that memories from a previous birth are welling up in his mind:—

रम्याणि वीक्ष्य मधुरांश्च निशम्य शब्दान्  
पर्युत्सुकी भवति यत्सुखितोऽपि जन्तुः ।  
तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमबोधपूर्वं  
भावस्थिराणि जननान्तरसौहृदानि ॥

(Act V)

We have here a clear idea of the love song sung by the queen. The theme of the song was *Sṛīngāra rasa*. It is more akin to *nirveda-bhāva*, comparable to what Jessica says in *The Merchant of Venice*

“I am never merry when I hear sweet music.”

A *bhāva* of tender melancholy is what overpowers the heart of Dushyanta in his aesthetic attitude; but it is at the same time an aesthetic experience, not at all unwelcome. *Bhāva* thus means here the emotional complex stirred up into aesthetic delight. The emotional complex has a strong colouring of imagination and has nothing to do with his personal emotion which is here one of gaiety.

In the *Meghdūtam* we are told that the spouse of Yaksha will be found by the cloud, perhaps working at a portrait of her parted lover, not as she saw him last, but as she reconstructs his features in her imagination now :

‘मत्सादृश्यं विरहृतनु वा भावगम्यं लिखन्ती ।’

Here also the word *bhāva* clearly refers to the imaginative artistic mind. The imagined mental state (*cittavṛitti*) may be quite different from the actual mental state of the artist in life.

This is rendered clearer still when, appreciating the dance performance of *Mālāvikā*, Agnimitra observes :

‘भावो भावं नुदति विजयाद्रागबन्धः स एव’

(*Mālāvikāgnimitram*, II. 8d)

One *bhāva* is quickly giving place to another in the course of her dance. The continuity, however, of *rasa* is maintained all through.

We have equally penetrating remarks provided by Kālidāsa on the artist’s creative endeavour on the one hand and the critic’s appreciation on the other. We have a unique example in *Śakuntalā* where we see the hero both as the painter and as a critic of his own created work. The man who could not recognise *Śakuntalā* as his wife when she appeared in person and pleaded before him, suddenly becomes love-sick to the point of madness when his memory is revived by accident. He starts painting her portrait from the reserves of memory, brought into focus in his imagination. After completing his portrait he remarks :

यद्यत्साधु न चित्रे स्यात् क्रियते तत्तदन्यथा ।

तथापि तस्या लावण्यं रेखया किञ्चिदन्वितम् ॥

The painter’s job is not merely to copy nature as it is, but to improve upon it by removing imperfections in nature. But in this case *Śakuntalā*’s natural beauty was so perfect that the line could catch but a fragment of it. Again the same thing is repeated in *Mālāvikāgnimitram* :

चित्रगतायामस्यां कान्तिविसंवादशङ्क मे हृदयम् ।

संप्रति शिथिलसमाधिं मन्ये येनेयमालिखिता ॥

‘When I first saw the picture, I had the feeling that the artist might have exaggerated her beauty; but now, on seeing her, I find that his genius has been unequal to bring out her full beauty.’

We have thus from the artist's point of view two things standing out:—(1) nature as it is; (2) nature and man transformed into something more beautiful in the art work. This is what Kālidāsa means when he observed that a natural grove cannot be expected to be more beautiful than a palace-garden. But the question arises how the art work retains its living touch inspite of idealisation. This is what is regarded as the very life or soul of a picture. The picture should have a living spark about it which is the very secret of the artistic process.

We shall now consider some more examples of theory and practice in painting to pinpoint what the living spark is:—

(1) in the deserted city of Ayodhyā there are old mural paintings described by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśam*. Here is one of them:—

An elephant is seen bathing in a lotus pond with its young ones. The latter are presenting it morsels of lotus-stalks. Lions haunting those places now take them for real elephants and strike the painted elephant with their paws in vain.

चित्रद्विपाः पद्मवनावतीर्णाः  
करेणुभिर्दत्तमृणालभङ्गाः ।  
नखांशुकाधानविभिन्नकुम्भाः  
संख्यसिंहप्रहृतं वहन्ति ॥

(*Raghuvamśam, Canto 16, verse 16*)

(2) Similarly, a parrot in a deserted palace is described in a *Subhāṣita* as talking to the painted figures as if they were real persons:—

'O king, the princess does not teach me to talk. The queens are all ignoring me. O hunch-back, feed me now. O prince, why don't you have your food with your mates though it is time? Thus does the parrot go on addressing to each and every person painted on the wall of the palace of your enemy now empty.'

राजन्राजसुता न पाठयति मां देव्योऽपि तूष्णीं स्थिताः  
कुब्जे भोजय मां कुमार सचिवैर्नाद्यापि किं भुज्यते ।  
इत्थं नाथ शुकस्तवारिभवने मुक्तोऽध्वगैः पञ्जरात्  
चित्रस्थानवलोक्य शून्यवलभावेकैकमाभाषते ॥

Such examples reveal how the verisimilitude of pictures is so close as to delude even animals and birds.

While talking of an expert painter, the *Vśmudharmottaram* has the following observations:

If he can draw waves, flaming fire, smoke, flag, and clouds etc. moving in the wind, he is an expert painter. If he can show the vital distinction between a person asleep and a person dead, and freely present ups and downs, he is an expert painter.

When the canvas appears animated and shying at the gaze of the



spectator, when grace is smiling as it were and the figures are throbbing with life, when the picture breathes as it were, that is the best picture :

तरङ्गाग्निशिखाधूमवैजयन्त्यम्बरादिकम् ।  
वायुगत्या लिखेद्यस्तु विज्ञेयः स तु चित्रवित् ।  
मुप्तं च चेतनायुक्तं मृतं चैतन्यवर्जितम् ।  
निम्नोन्नतविभागं च यः करोति स चित्रवित् ॥  
लसतीव च भूलम्बो विम्यतीव तथा नृप ।  
हसतीव च माधुर्यं सजीव इव दृश्यते ।  
सश्वास इव यच्चित्रं तच्चित्रं शुभलक्षणम् ॥

The masters praise the line, while connoisseurs appreciate the bearing; ladies like decorations, while the mass is carried away by colours :

रेखां प्रशंसन्त्याचार्या वर्तनां च विचक्षणाः ।  
स्त्रियो भूषणमिच्छन्ति वर्णाढ्यमितरे जनाः ॥

What is underlying all these directions is the high place assigned to total aesthetic effect. The classification of portraits into *viddha*, *aviddha* and *rasacitra* is also a pointer to this important truth. A copy of nature, like a reflection in a mirror, is *viddha* while an imagined form is *aviddha*; but that alone is *rasacitra* by the mere sight of which *rasas* like *Śringāra* are felt :—

सादृश्यं लिख्यते यत्तु दर्पणे प्रतिविम्बवत् [विद्धम्]  
आकस्मिके लिखामीति यदा तुद्दिश्य लिख्यते ।  
आकारमात्रसंपत्तेः तद्विद्धमिति स्मृतम् ॥  
शृङ्गारादिरसो यत्र दर्शनादेव गम्यते (तत् रसचित्रम्)

In old Kannada poetry, from 900 to 1500 A.D., we have numerous examples of literary records describing detailed appreciation of Indian paintings. The name of a historical painter Cīragghaṭṭi is mentioned more than once, and his age is about 700 A.D., a period which had seen the apogee of Indian painting as in the cave paintings at Ajañtā. The verses have been noted by Prof. D. R. Bendre in a detailed article in his collected volume of Kannada essays (viz. *Sāhitya-saṁśodhane*). They show the perfect art of the painter Cīragghaṭṭi in his handling of colour shades, in his subtle drawing of nature's variety and dexterity of line and proportion. I quote here one verse from the *Ādipurāṇa* of Pampa (10th century A.D.) which links together the aesthetic concept of *rasa-bhāva* to the vital spark of a picture.

“The beauty due to *rasa* and *bhāva* was speaking out as it were, was looking out as it were, and was breathing as it were. The line revealed a unique delicacy. The colour complex was shining with the glow of *rasa*. There were ups and downs strikingly manifest. The beauty of the picture thus surpassed even the handiwork of God himself.”

It is very significant that *rasa* and *bhāva* in the art of painting represent the very life and soul of its beauty. Amidst differences due to medium and technique, the principle that remains common to all the visual arts is

*anukarāṇa* or representation of *rasa* and *bhāva*. The six constituents of *citra* are said to be :

रूपभेदाः प्रमाणानि लावण्यं भावयोजनम् ।  
सादृश्यं वर्तिकाभङ्गः इति चित्रं षडङ्गकम् ॥

These may be rendered as knowledge of form, proportion, imparting of grace and life, fidelity of representation and mastery of the brush. Similarly Bharata tells us about *Nāṭya*, that is, *anukīrtana* or *anukarāṇa* of *bhāva* in all the three worlds:

त्रैलोक्यस्यास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानुकीर्तनम् ।

The examples also show how the aesthetic object may be beautiful or ugly, real or fancied (cf. रम्यं जुगुप्सित मृदारमयापि नीचं, *Daśārūpaka*) and give the lie to the common place opinion that there was no realistic art in ancient India.

### III

What exactly is *bhāva*? *What exactly is rasa*? What is their precise relation? These questions press for an answer and cannot be further postponed. Let us proceed slowly trying to understand how they form the cream of Indian aesthetic philosophy.

There is nature outside the mind of man. When a mind with sensibility perceives nature, it not only receives impressions as in a mirror but at the same time transforms them into different shapes according to its own temperament. When an aesthetic sensibility is involved, the impression of nature is invested with an order and design quite unique. When this aesthetic sensibility becomes creative, such creation presupposes values. The immediate value is only aesthetic of course; but in Indian thought it is not an end value. The end value (*paramapurushārtha*) is nothing less than *moksha* or emancipation as marking the consummation of three social values, namely, *dharma* (moral good), *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (pleasure). It is held in India that every art, though valued primarily for its aesthetic delight, subserves indirectly the other social values equally in its own palatable way. A realisation of this social demand will guide the creative dramatist in selecting his theme as well as in delineating *rasa* and *bhāvas*. That is how conventions are formed and rules laid down which are implicitly accepted by the artists in India. The conventions of religious art may be distinct from those of secular art. Secular art may be meant for the delight of the court or of the masses. But never could the doctrine of Art for Arts' sake take hold of the Indian mind.

Therefore we have only expressionist art in India and no impressionist schools of art as in the West. The artist would obey the ultimate dictates of society rather than be a law unto himself.

A little analysis is enough to show how the very material of art is

furnished by feelings, emotions and sentiments of men and women as they are and as they might be. The actual passions in the world provide no doubt the material for art but are not artistic in themselves. *Cittavritti* or mental states in life are attended with their pleasures and pains and govern the daily actions of men. When an artist turns to them, he puts them into a pattern of his own making in his imagination, a pattern which never existed on earth. It is these patterned mental states obeying a law of imagination, that are called *bhāvas*. The process of imagination itself is *bhāvanā*. And it is tantamount to aesthetic sensibility. Only those who are endowed with this sensibility and who have deliberately cultivated it are fit art critics. Even as the *Gītā* puts it :

न चायुक्तस्य भावना

*Bhāvanā* demands concentration as in *yoga*. This *bhāvanā* is a precondition of the artist, the actor and the spectator alike.

Now this *bhāva* may be either simple or complex. When it is too simple it is very easily grasped; but the more and more complex it is, the greater is the degree of aesthetic endeavour demanded from the creator as well as the critic. A simple picture which even a child can understand has a simple *bhāva* even like a simple song in a dance-opera and there can be no art at all without such transparent *bhāvas* atleast. These *bhāvas* by their simplicity enrich the impressions of crude nature without taking away their importance. We have art at the lowest level when *vastūsvabhāva* is thus the aesthetic object.

Generally artists are not satisfied with such a simple representation of nature. They make the *bhāva* or representation to be more and more complex if they are gifted with imagination. The more refined critic welcomes it too, and the most complex pattern thus imposed on nature and human nature by the imagination of the artist wins the boundless admiration of the most cultivated man of taste. He calls such a completely successful *bhāva-complex* itself by the name *rasa* since it means supreme delight. As Bharata states :

न भावहीनोऽस्ति रसो न भावो रसवर्जितः ।  
परस्परकृता सिद्धिस्तयोरभिनये भवेत् ॥ (VI. 36)

योऽर्थो हृदयसंवादी तस्य भावो रसोद्भवः ।  
शरीरं व्याप्यते तेन शुष्कं काष्ठमिवाग्निना (VII. 7)

When the subject of *bhāva* finds an echo in the critic, it is transformed into *rasa* then and there. His whole body will be on fire with it as dry fuel caught by fire.

The aesthetic psychology which we have been struggling to explain touches the core of the aesthetic process without taking us into the mazes of metaphysics.

But artists who cannot rise to the demands of making a complex *bhāva* pattern with a ruling unity of *rasa* will use their intellect to present complex patterns of conscious decorative work. It is here that the concept of *alaṅkāra* finds its justification. Greatness in imagination (*bhāvakatva*) is one thing and greatness in technique (*alaṅkāraśāla*) is another. They can be distinguished though they often coexist. Bharata's *Nāṭya śāstra* is concerned with rules indicating the nature of both.

The aesthetic objects may thus be brought under three heads:

1. Nature with minimum modification demanded by art (*vastusvabhāva-varṇanā*).
2. Human nature revealed in all complexity with the underlying unity of *rasa*. (*rasapratipādana*).
3. Mastery of technique preponderant over the pattern of *bhāvas* (*alaṅkāraprayoga*).

One and the same artist may combine all these in different art works in different proportions. Some critics give greater emphasis to the one or the other according to their choice and the mood of the moment, but it remains that all the three deserve to be regarded as art in their own right, though the highest place is reserved for successful presentation of *rasa-bhāva*.

#### IV

A disregard of the above considerations has led to several confusions in understanding and interpreting the philosophy of *rasa* and *bhāva* by writers; Indian as well as Western. The word *rasa* in the singular does mean aesthetic delight but the word *rasas* in plural, can only refer to heightened *sthāyī-bhāvas* like *rati* and *utsāha* and called by names *śṛṅgāra*, *vīra* etc. The *rasa* in the singular connotes the undivided (*akhaṇḍa*) aesthetic enjoyment (*āsvāda*) in the spectator which is of the nature of *viśrānti* or blissful repose. The plural expression *rasas* cannot refer to it as is often supposed. These *rasas* are related to the aesthetic object or situation which is a compound of not only abiding psychic states (*sthāyī-bhāvas*) but also passing moods (*vyabhichārī-bhāvas*) and which point to their causes (*vibhāvas*) as well as consequents (*anubhāvas*). In all these, it should be noted how the term *bhāva* is invariably occurring in one shape or another, and emphasising the role of imagination on the part of the artist and demanding a corresponding imagination on the part of the critic. If there is no harmony or propriety in the presentation of these, the critic will at once notice it and there is *bhaṅga* of his *rasa*. The whole treatment of Bharata mentioning inimical *rasas* and friendly *rasas* is intelligible if understood in this sense. That is why he could say easily:

“When, in the midst of diversity of psychic states, all transfigured by the imagination, there is one master-passion unifying all of them like a

thread, that is to be regarded as the ruling sentiment of a work of art, the rest are but momentary.”

बहूनां समवेतानां रूपं यस्य भवेद्बहु ।  
स मन्तव्यो रसः स्थायी शेषाः सञ्चारिणो मताः ॥

(VII. p. 379)

## V

Now let us turn to the classical commentaries on Bharata's theory. The first view is by Lollaṭa which does not in the least militate against the exposition given above. The second is Śaṅkuka's who also has very clearly understood the primacy of *bhāva* in relation to *rasa* and who explains the aesthetic process as a unique inference from the state of *rasa* towards that of *bhāva*. In fact he uses the analogy of *chitraturaga* to bring out the unique beauty of representation (*anukarāṇa*) in drama and maintains that art experience cannot be classed under any one of the forms known to logic like truth, falsehood, doubt etc.

The third theorist, namely Bhaṭṭanāyaka, brought out for the first time the supreme importance of imagination or *bhāvanāvyāpāra* as one of the aspects of aesthetic experience. And it was he who proved to the hilt that *rasāsvāda* or delight is only another side of the same *bhāvanāvyāpāra*. In the course of this exposition we get the concept of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. Universality is the hall-mark of aesthetic experience though it proceeds from the object highly individualised by the artist. The presented situation in art becomes aesthetic only when all the elements therein are grasped by the critic in their universal aspects. Personal considerations fade away. Even impossible things in life do not engender disbelief in art. We are almost approaching the realm of infinite *brahmānanda*, though only for once.

The last and most important contribution to the idea of *rasa* is by Abhinavagupta. He takes over where Bhaṭṭanāyaka leaves off. He identifies the aesthetic experience with corresponding mystic experience of the *yogin*. His account of *rasa* provides a philosophical, monistic, foundation very much dear to Indians.

But from those dizzy heights of philosophy the earlier ideas of *rasa* and *bhāva* will appear jejune. Patañjali could say unreservedly '*rasiko natah !*', but Abhinavagupta will not brook any such assertion. How can a mere actor, intent on his acting, be able to enjoy the bliss of *rasa*, he would ask. But if our explanation is followed, no such difficulty will arise. The actor shares as much in the *bhāvanāvyāpāra* as the dramatist and the spectator in our account. And *rasavat* as a name for aesthetic object is a

familiar usage in Sanskrit poetics, though it cannot be justified in terms of Abhinavagupta.

We have pointed out above that *rasa* is only another name for a heightened *sthāyībhāva*, when relished by the critic. It requires perhaps some more clarification. When a human situation is artistically presented, usually against the background of nature, the critic does not get himself transported to the peak of *rasaviśrānti* or repose. It is in fact the last stage of his contemplation. Leading upto it are the diverse impressions he is receiving from different angles, almost simultaneously. His imaginative sensibility helps him in reception while his intellect is at work all along sorting them out. When the intellect and imagination slide into the margin, his heart is moved to an intense aesthetic state of repose which is an end in itself. When he is conscious of *bhāvas* and their multiplicity, he has no *rasa*: but once he is lost in *rasa* he does not remember the *bhāvas* either. But never does he loose the link with the aesthetic object itself before him. The truth is we are still unable to unravel the psyche's different departments and their quick interactions. Thinking, imagination and emotional feeling are all interacting and interfused. Hence the interchangeability of the terms *bhāva* and *rasa*.

To conclude: *rasa* is the very life of the pictorial as well as dramatic art. Without *rasa* the art would remain only an artifice. Rhythm, harmony etc. are qualities arising out of the material handled by the artist. Any inventions of his genius superadded to natural forms are like ornaments. While *gunas* and *alanikāras* relate to the external body of art, the life-informing soul is provided by *rasabhāvas*. While the former are within the reach of every one, a cultivated aesthetic sensibility alone can enjoy *rasa*. But *rasa* is not like the quality as preciousness in diamonds. While it is true that the jeweller alone can recognise a precious gem which is a mere stone in the hands of a common man, the critic of art does not recognise any such pre-existing objective quality as *rasa* in art. On the other hand he is transported by it into intense aesthetic delight. That is a reason why Ānandavardhana had to regard *rasa* as a meaning suggested by an artistic work. He also made it clear that when one is enjoying the suggested *rasa*, one is not ignoring the ladder which helped him to reach that height.

न हि व्यङ्ग्ये प्रतीयमाने वाच्यबुद्धिदूरीभवति ।

(*Dhvanyāloka*)

The critic is simultaneously aware of the earlier appreciation of the parts which finally fuse into *rasa* in one instant. Appreciation of the beauty of individual parts is a precondition for the realisation of the beauty of the whole. The total grace or *lavanīya* of a picture cannot be realised without realising the perfection of each part, though beauty of the parts is certainly distinct from the total beauty.

प्रतीयमानं पुनरन्यदेव वस्त्वस्ति वारणीषु महाकवीनाम् ।  
यत्तत्प्रसिद्धावयवातिरिक्तं विभाति लावण्यमिवाङ्गनासु ॥

(*Dhvanyāloka*)

Thus though *rasa* is involved as the soul of aesthetic experience, and it never loses sight of expert appreciation of the parts, the reverse is not true, as Ānandavardhana himself points out. Mere appreciation of the parts will not ensure the appreciation of *rasa*.

Indian aesthetic theory bows down to the ethical standards demanded by society and readily dismisses as *bhāvābhāsa* and *rasabhāsa*, anything which repels a man of taste from the normal point of view, though it may be aesthetically satisfying. For example, the incident of Rāvaṇa's wooing Sītā or Sūrpanakhā's wooing Rāma are both examples of only *rasabhāsa*, because they are both one-sided and unreciprocated. But what should not be forgotten is that these imperfect *rasas* too have their places secure within the boundaries of aesthetic experience, though they are not its finest flowers. They are no doubt art, but they fall short of greatness, if taken out of their context.

## TANTRA ART IN SEARCH OF LIFE DIVINE\*

Ajit Mookherjee

VERY little is known about the Tantric art of India. What makes it important now is its sign language which symbolizes the relation between man and his universe in a more meaningful way than much of which goes by the name of abstract art today.

What is more, in abstract art we still normally think in terms of space and time. Tantra has gone further and brought in concepts of sound and light, especially in conditioning art forms. In these respects, Tantra Art deserves scientific analysis.

Tantra Art can be regarded as a form of *yoga*. To penetrate the enigmatic silence and mystery of the universe, the *śilpī-yogin* makes himself a part of the mystery and lives in it as well as with it. "By meditation on anything as self one becomes that thing."

Both internal and external practices are imperative, because long ago these revealed to the tantric artist a truth which suggested a new understanding of the world forces in which we are living, and which modern artists are trying to explain.

"As many faiths, so many paths", says Ramakrishna.

But the aim of all 'isms' is essentially the same, to realize through all form, the formless. Consciously or unconsciously every mode of expression, whether artistic, religious or scientific, is struggling to reach that ultimate reality, the One without a second.

Indian artists, or more precisely, Tantric *śilpī-yogin*, have conceived this realization in terms of dimensions—*śabda*, the primordial sound substratum as a form of monosyllabic *mantra*, the *Om* and *Brahmāṇḍas*, the vital key-form of a supersensuous world, the Egg. *Om* aims at the total elimination of subject-object by the expression of sound rhythms, while *Brahmāṇḍa* epitomizes the eternal reality in an absolute form. The formless gets a time element, a dimension, a permanent shape, the abstraction of which is aimed at incorporating spatial values conditioned by sound and light.

In Tantric thought, sound without vibration does exist; this unstruck sound or *anāhata-dhvani*, is only heard by the *yogi* whose senses are withdrawn from the external and turned inwards. The underlying idea for the *anāhata-dhvani* comes from the original *praṇava* sound, which as the aggregate of all existing sounds

---

\*Illustrated by coloured slides of Tantrik paintings.



gives birth to the cosmic process itself. Through its immeasurably powerful range and intensity, the *anāhata-dhivani* can create, destroy, and reshape the entire structure of the universe.

The basis for this concept of sound is a central doctrine described in Indian Tantras as *sphoṭavāda*. The *sphoṭa* is the *śabda brahma* or the *nāda brahma*. It means essentially that every thought or idea originates in sound (*nāda*). The moment we think, an unheard sound is formed. As an idea appears in one's mind, the sound that concurrently occurs is the ground for all forms. The artist Kandinsky observes: "Form is always temporal, that is relative, for it is nothing more than the means of the moment, whereby today's revelation is made known and given resonance. Sound, then, is the soul of form, which comes to life only through sound, from the inside out."<sup>1</sup>

The Tantra says that the cosmos evolves from the fifty *māṭṛika* sounds. Embedded within these sounds are possibilities of new forms; these potential forms materialize when, in the process of evolution, the basic *māṭṛika* sounds undergo permutation. As the Haṭayogapradīpikā says: "Whatever is heard in the form of sound is *śakti*. The absorbed state (*laya*) of the *tattvas* (evolutes of *prakṛiti*) is that in which no form exists."<sup>2</sup>

Sound, according to the Tantric view, is classified broadly into four stages: *parā*, *paśyanti*, *madhyama*, and *vaikhari*. These stages must not be understood as if they are represented in an evolutionary sequence. Rather they are a methodical scheme for displaying the structure of the continuum of manifestation. *Parā* sound, the unmanifest stage, is the starting point. This point, by another sound effect called *paśyanti* elongates the *parā* point of sound in different directions (*dik*). In other words, *paśyanti* (literally, 'seeing') sound is the sound emerging towards the visible. After the stage of *paśyanti*, sound begins to crystallize into form. At this stage sound becomes light or *paśyanti* becomes *madhyama*, the luminous sound. By creating patterns and curves, luminous sound makes the enclosure and definition of space possible. In addition, the process of evolving curves projects the original sound in forms accessible to human experience. The final stage of *vaikhari* sound offers infinite opportunities of permutation and combination arising out of the one harmonious primal sound.

"The three lower stages of manifestation are symbolized as the three sides of a triangle which represent the divine thought, the source of existence. These three stages correspond to the power-of-will (*icchā-śakti*), the power-of-knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*) and the power-of-action (*kriyā-śakti*), also spoken of as intention, formulation, and expression."

"The centre of the triangle, the undifferentiated notion, assimilated to *parā-vac*, is the unmanifest fourth stage. This triangle with its centre becomes a com-

1. W. Kandinsky, p. 47.

2. Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe): *The Serpent Power*, p. 100.

plete symbol of divinity (*īśvara*) conceived as the principle of speech (*śabda-brahmā*) or the word principle (*vāc-tattva*)."<sup>3</sup>

All the objects that we see and feel in this universe from thought or idea to matter, are sounds of particular concentration. Every object is constituted of various density of sounds more or less complex. The sound-before-sound, the *anāhata-dhvani* which is not struck because there is no "form against form" and which as *śabda* reverberates upon itself, thereby produce sound-energy that evolves as a *rūpa* (or form) enveloped in pulsation. Sound is the reflex of form; and form is the product of sound.

Every form has its norm of sound as an accompaniment of its energy. Crystals no less than plants derive their shape from their vital energy; yet, as we cannot see the minute changes that alter form, so also we cannot hear the fundamental sound of which it is the visible manifestation.<sup>4</sup>

According to Tantra, *śabda-tammātra*, "potential sound" in combination with molecules produces "atom-space". Bhartṛhari holds space to be a power or a force (*śakti*) along with time. He affirms that atoms, though themselves without parts, come to have four sides and lower and upper surfaces by virtue of association with *dik* (space).

As a matter of fact, modern physics has shown that the time dimension can no longer be detached from the space dimension. All measurements of time are really measurements in space and conversely all measurements in space depend on measurements of time.

This theory of sound is the basis for the unique and magnificent *mantra-śāstra*, where by repetition of *mantras* (thought-forms) and their *japa* (rhythmic mental concentration on them), one can remodel one's entire physical, mental and psychic nature.

*Mantra* is primarily mental sound and regarded as fundamental in both the creation and dissolution of all form. The function does not end in expressing an ordinary meaning; the very sound aspect of a word or a combination of words has the capacity to activate the divine forms invoked. A *mantra* exerts its power, not so much through expressing the meaning as we understand it, but more deeply through its sound-vibrations.

The power of *mantra* consists in the effect of its pattern of sound waves. Under vibration small particles of matter, as one can prove by experiment, group themselves into definite geometrical patterns and figures, corresponding exactly to the quality, strength and rhythm of the sound. The physical sound patterns produced by *mantras* are capable of coming into sympathetic vibrations with sound patterns which constitute physical phenomena. Seers of ancient times who knew the secrets of the power of sound composed the *mantras* by joining together symbolic syllables in accordance with certain laws laid down in Tantric texts.

3. Ramachandra Sankara Takki, *Parā aur Aparā Sakti*, Kalyana, Sakti anka, p. 477, quoted by Alain Daniéleu in *Hindu Polytheism*, p. 38-39.

4. Sir J. C. Bose's works on Plant Life.

A common practice in tantra ritual is to make *mantras* out of each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and to associate them with different parts of the body; the purpose or aim is to feel that the different parts of the body are merely the manifestation of the different aspects of the great power. The whole body with all its biological and psychological processes becomes an instrument in and through which the cosmic power reveals itself. According to Tantric principles, the individual being and the universal being are one; all that exists in the universe must also exist in the individual body.

In this very body, Buddha said, "six feet in length, with its sense impression and its thoughts and ideas, are the world, the origin of the world, the ceasing of the world, and likewise the way that leads to the ceasing thereof." If we can analyse one human being, we shall have analysed the whole universe, because it is all built on the same plane.

The first and most important monosyllabic *mantra* is the sound *Om*, generally considered to be the sound-symbol of the Supreme One. Even the conception of the sound *Om*, which is the combination of the three *mātrās*, a, u, and m, presupposes geometrical patterns corresponding to a straight line, a semi-circle and a point. Every divine form possesses a *bīja mantra* or nuclear syllable. Even in its form as the smallest sound unit, the *bīja* remains a microcosm and thus may represent the essential nature of divinity.

At the vibratory level, sound creates light, for light is sound at a particular frequency. The colours the human eye can perceive result from within a very narrow range of the existing light waves; the entire scale of light's radiant energy (for example, ultra-violet and infra rays) is not visible as colour. But in tantric thought, this wider concept of colour also exists, in that every vibrating sound has a certain colour.

Every phenomenal object is seen as the concentration and reflection of light in a certain pattern. All forms (*rūpa*) emerge in light and hence all names (*nāma*) of forms; tangible matter and energy alike are dependent upon the existence of light, and light itself on sound.

Every colour has its life sound and in turn, every sound has its form and colour. All *mantras* have their corresponding colours and forms. When a *mantra* is pronounced correctly, its corresponding form begins to manifest itself, the quality of manifestation depending upon the nature and intensity of the pronunciation. When the *agni-mantra* is uttered, the red colour and the quality of heat are evoked. This is the subtle mantric effect.

The Tantra, on the *yoga* side, gives the colours of the several vital forces observable by trance-vision. These colours are emerald (*prāṇa*), red like the evening sun (*apāna*), milky (*samāna*), white like the dhuturā flower (*vyāna*), that of fire and lightning (*udāna*). Henry Miller rightly says: "Ramakrishna, in his trances, experienced colours such as no man ever saw."<sup>5</sup>

5. *Remember to Remember* (The Bodhisattva Artist), p. 113.

Organised and channelled in particular ways, sound energy may produce or create particular results. Each *mantra* relates to the particular power or *devatā* revealing itself in that sound-form. Knowledge of the techniques is therefore as essential as knowledge of the principles. Hence, the *mantras* or “thought-forms,” to be effective must be actually heard from the mouth of the *guru*, the spiritual preceptor. This science was the traditional possession of a few initiates who formed a closed circle and who guarded it with great care, permitting none save qualified aspirants to have access to it.

Such integrated sound identifies the ensuing relation of *mantra* with *yantra*, and explains why the *gāyatrī mantra* must possess just its proper sounds, sixteen in a single relation, and no others. With them is evoked the corresponding Tantra. *Mantra* gives formula and equation; *yantra* diagram and pattern; and what correlates each system of relations with the other is Tantra.

*Yantra* is essentially a geometrical composition; but to understand its true nature, one has to go beyond the notions of geometry into those of dynamics. *Yantra* then represents particular forces, whose power or energy increases in proportion to the abstraction and precision of the diagram. Through such *yantras* or power diagrams, creation and control of ideas and physical forces are supposed to be possible.

The dynamic graph or the diagram of forces by which anything can be represented—the picture of its functional constitution—is called the *yantra* of that thing. It is not an arbitrary invention but a revealed image of an aspect of cosmic structure.

The linear *yantras* are composed of simple geometrical figures (line, triangle, rectangle, circle, etc.). They enclosed the *mantra* syllables which, when properly grouped, will cause partial aspects of a definite image to merge (germinate). Hence they are called *bījākshara* or germinal syllables.

*Rekhā* is the actual process of drawing the *yantra*. As a process, it evokes in sequence the forces which compose the network of the *yantra*. Its corners and angles fix the number and order of the nuclear syllables which it contains hidden within. It is a key to the unfolding of the visionary images. *Rekhā* is the guiding principle for all ritual achievements. As a prescriptive basis, it underlies the formal disciplines, geometry, astronomy, temple architecture, and even ritual dance and music.

Study of the *yantra* diagrams will show that each primary geometrical figure can be induced to provide a series of linear and spatial proportions each one of which belongs essentially to all figures of the same shape, whatever their size in area. From these geometrical permutations we obtain certain related series of lines. The circle, the square, or the equilateral triangle, as well as the hexagon or pentagon, do not allow the vital departure from static equilibrium that is necessary to the emergence of emanated forms. The pentagon reveals this fact most easily, also the square and its diagonals and the double square and the diagonals inherent in it. With the subtle relations shown in the non-equal

triangles—the scalene and isosceles—will be revealed some of the secrets of proportional lines in one figure. Taking the positive pentagon (and its negative ally, the pentacle) and drawing diagonals from (a) centre to angles, and (b) centre to sides, two series of ten lines, having two lengths only, appear.

From the permutations of Śrī Yantra and pentagon, especially in these primary relations to circle and square, we can derive the actual proportional series that govern the relationship of the notes with the musical scales (*rāgās* and *rāginīs*) and the derivation of the secondary *rāginīs* from the primary *rāgās*. This is the secret of Śrī Yantra with its corresponding *mantras*.

*Yantra* and the musical modes of the *rāga* system are inherently related through their mathematically-proportioned foundation. Just as the basic notes of each *rāga* are harmonised so are the visible lines in each *yantra*. And just as the musical string must be plucked in a particular fashion to sound a certain note, so must the *yantra* line be mastered and mentally plucked to bring forth its image or power. Thus, the *yantra* diagram of apparently static lines will, with mental application, vibrate in perfect relation like a finely tuned musical instrument.

“The so-called ‘male’ *rāgās* are the pentatonic ones, roughly those beginning on different degrees of the pentatonic scale; the female ‘*rāginīs*’ are six, seven, eight or nine note scales, some with intervals of as much as a third, or less than a semitone between their degrees. The *rāginīs* are grouped under the heading of one or other of the male *rāgās*, and called his ‘wives’. The scales are amplified, and their emotional qualities enhanced by the use of various turns, and patterns of chromatic or microtonal passing-notes at given places in the scale, as the music moves up or down.

“The *rāgās* thus have special spheres of motion attributed to them, just as did the modes of classical antiquity. Their spheres are often described by listing the *rāgās*, according to their overriding feeling and the time of day—sometimes even the seasons of the year—when they should be played, e.g., ‘7th watch, calm mystery’; ‘2nd watch, adoration’, or ‘8th watch, love, laughter.’<sup>6</sup>

The *yantra* form is similarly constructed to induce, bear, and convey a particular pattern of thoughts and forces. To get into that form is to get into that thought. To get into that form is to realize the impact of that force which the form creates.

The principle behind this is that just as each form is the visible product of an energy pattern rooted in sound; so, reciprocally, each visible form carries with it its own implicit power-pattern.

We find a basic *rāga* form in each of the five plane figures, each having the *śabda* (or stress) in the dual Śiva-Śakti relations of mutual interpenetration: (1) circle and square, (2) square and rectangle, (3) equilateral triangle and circle, also triangle and square, (4) ellipse or egg-form, (5) trapezoid,

---

6. Philip Rawson, in his introduction to *Music and Dance in Indian Art*.

diamond, etc. Geometrical developments in line, carefully derived from within these basic plane figures, indicate lines possessing accurate successive proportions, all relative to the matrix figure. Each series is different from any other series, because the original proportional scheme differs in its succession, and so produces different lengths. The proportional scheme which is given visual definition is Śrī Yantra, and auditory definition in the *rāga*, is the key to the relationship between art and the metaphysics of sound.

The interaction of two five-sided figures (the pentagon and the five-pointed star pentacle) illustrate two kinds of energy action. The pentagon symbolizes the collected *prāṇa* or energy while the pentacle represents the *karmendriyas* or the five separate motor organs. When we place the star upon the pentagon, five points extrude; these are the doors of action, the five lines they cross are the receivers of impact. Thus one system is receptive while the other is active; but always the same fund of energy exists whether acted upon or acting.

The five-pointed star, the *pañchakoṇa*, has a remarkable series of evolved stars, each range being capable of development to infinity, whether drawn within the original star or drawn externally, with the difference that externally five similar series of proportional areas can be produced, increasing in size. All these evolved series possess subtle musical qualities, since they are parallel to certain rhythms of the energy patterns from which chemical elements are constructed. By this inherent power *mantra-yantra* may be said to build form, conserve form, or dissolve form.

Ceilings of Western Indian temples frequently luxuriate in crystalline patterns, as those in the Dilwara on Mount Abu. They present the unfolding of *śabda* in a single field, though remaining balanced. A favoured pattern is the "square on square" development in three dimensions, repeated thrice to suggest three planes. This pattern appears often in *maṇḍala* modes. The pointed ceiling in the Minākshī temple at Madura represents the interchange between two fields of force, thus illustrating, by its radiating spiral forms, the initial movement away from static mineral balance into the plant world, especially the lotus form with its open petals as a symbol of manifestation.

As long as these figures remain completely regular, their centre of force corresponds with their centre of form; and with this total balance of matter and energy no activity results. When these two centres (of force and of form) do not coincide, stress arises, following the mutual pull, in which the two centres "try to become one." This fact becomes most evident in a comparison of the hexagonal and pentagonal figures. The hexagonal balance of forces is related to the crystalline structures of the ice and snow. The pentagonal tends to predominate in plant form, but is pulled by an external spiral force into non-equilibrium and produces forms of vital three-dimensional complexity. Thus it breaks into the sphere of life by reason of this movement of desire. In *yantra*, the spheroid can be considered as a sphere in the process

of breaking itself into separate units, each with its own centre. It represents the division of wholeness for the sake of multiplicity. Therefore, the spheroid stands for the world-egg, the incipient duality of *purusha* (person) and *prakṛiti* (nature). For each of the two units into which it separates is differentiated from the other. In tantric painting, this division is indicated by red and white colours, red symbolizing the feminine essence (*rakta*), and white, the male essence (*śveta*). Without such difference there can be no *līlā* (divine play). The creation, according to *vaiṣṇava śāstra*, is explained as the *līlā* of God, a conception that introduces elements of spontaneity and freedom into the universe. *Līlā* (the relative) is correlative to *nitya* (the absolute).

“At the time of destruction, the whole universe is reabsorbed into this power of creative illusion (*māyā*) and the world’s nature (*prakṛiti*), which is identical with creative illusion (*māyā*), is itself reabsorbed into divinity (*Īśvara*). The reabsorption of creative illusion is, however, not a complete annihilation, because, if it were, further creation would become impossible. Further, her reabsorption does not mean total disappearance because to be perceptible is of her very nature; if she were no longer perceptible she would have ceased to exist. But because inclination towards action no longer exists, she remains immobile as in deep sleep. Even when illuminated by the infinite light of divinity (*Īśvara*) which is self-supporting and devoid of false knowledge (the knowledge of difference), she remains scarcely perceptible until, through the effects of duration (*kāla*), the action of all being have become ripe and creation again springs naturally from the unconcerned God (*Bhagavān*). At the very instant at which actions attain maturity, (the immanent and the efficient causes of the universe), creative illusion (*māyā*) and essence (*puruṣa*) arise.”<sup>7</sup>

The duality that persists in *yantra* manifests itself in the magnificent doctrine of the Tantras as *śiva-śakti*, or *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, as balance of form and energy. According to *Sāṅkhya*, the starting point in the creation of a universe was the combination of consciousness with energy quanta.

*Śiva* stands for *aśabda brahma*, the unqualified one. *Liṅga*, according to *Skanda Purāṇa*, is the name for space in which the whole universe is in the process of formation and dissolution. *Śiva-liṅga*, the all-pervading space, thus symbolizes a cosmic form, serenely detached and self-sufficient, whereas *Śakti*, the *śabda brahma*, is the creative impulse in the cosmic process. *Gaurī-paṭṭa* represents *ādyā-śakti*, the energy quanta; *mahāmāyā*, the power of manifestation; *yonī*, the primal root or the source of objectivation. Hence *Śiva-liṅga* with *gaurī-paṭṭa* is the embodiment of both inaction and action. In the hands of artist, this manifestation is expressed in the form of *liṅga-yonī* or vermilion daubs. “If *prakṛiti* from whom innumerable universes issue is the total *yonī*, so also the supreme spirit who rules over these innumerable

7. Swami Hariharanand Saraswati, *The Word and its Signification*, IISOA, Vol. 5, 1942, p. 34-35.

universes is the total *liṅga*, and the eggs of the innumerable universes which spring forth from them are the creation."<sup>8</sup>

"There is no power (*śakti*) without a support and there is no support (*adhishṭhān*) without a power; but exists only in relation to each other. In this way Śiva is identified with his own power (*śakti*) and this power (*śakti*) is himself (*śiva*). From this point of view it can be said that the *yonī* is a *liṅgam* and the *liṅga* a *yonī* . . ."<sup>9</sup>

In the egg-shaped *Brahmāṇḍa*, the globe-shaped *Śālagrāma* or the *Śiva-linga*, the artist tries to release the symbols imprisoned in stone by a reduction of the material to its absolute essence. Matter is made to yield its intrinsic nature, the inert becomes lively.

Hence there is no flamboyance or associative corruption. Broad universality of impersonal form and content, and close relation to nature predestine this art to wide recognition and general acceptance. To give these figures depth and significance, they are placed under the open sky, below the banyan tree, in a serene godlike perspective.

The single static figure, like the great symbol of *puruṣa*, does not move until he unites with his *śakti*, the second figure of the standard series. From the ensuing action between these two figures, the series of mathematical proportions emerge. Their material forms, so mathematically harmonised, become clear from the abstract symbolism of the diagram.

All movement has its origin and consummation in *bindu*, or "point-limit", the invisible central point of a *yantra* which has existence, but no magnitude; for magnitude proceeds from the feminine power (*śakti*) of *bindu*. All creation, according to Tantra, is preceded by a focal tension, which is the centre of every creation.

*Bindu* carries within itself the seeds of its future, its multiple potentialities symbolically represented by the white and red points. The microcosm of *bindu* illustrates the vital impetus in all things to multiply and reproduce. Whether matter reproduces its own kind as in cell-division or disintegrates into new kinds of matter as in the radioactive process, physicists now generally believe that all creation of matter proceeds from one fundamental substance.

Every kind of living matter is doing the same thing through consecutive processes of composition and decomposition. Creation and destruction are the very essence of every existence. All objects consist of an aggregate of atoms brought together by force. Disintegration is as much a normal and necessary aspect of nature as aggregation. The collections of mass and energy are always being merged in the continual process of change which is the infinite, incomprehensible *prakṛiti*. Nevertheless they are forever under the uniting influence of *śiva-bindu*. For *śiva-bindu* must not be conceived as single point with a specific location. The truth is that there is no place in the phenomenal

8. Ibid., p. 60.

9. Ibid., p. 69.



world where the one *bindu* will not be found. So *bindu* is the ultimate point of power beyond which a thing or energy cannot be contracted or condensed. At the same time as being the nucleus of matter (*jaḍa*) it is the nucleus of radiant consciousness (*chaitanya*).

*Bindu* contains within itself the two 'poles' (zero and infinity) and all that lies between. Its inherent energy is *bindu* containing all potentialities and all polarities, subject and object, beginning and end, within and without, male and female. But for the actual creative process, *bindu* must have evolved beyond duality to the *trikoṇa*, the triangle, the first rectilinear figure to define dimension. The equilateral triangular shape standing on its base, the apex of each angle, a *laya* (absorption) point determined by the vortex, represents *puruṣa* or *śiva*, the immanent principle. Standing on its apex, with extension dominating, it represents *prakṛiti* or *śakti*, the power of manifestation. These powers, according to Tantra, are not only active but also conscious of itself.

*Śakti's* diagram as a seat of creation, symbolizing the germinal light, must have been created by vision rather than by hands. It is an organic realization of the true balance of forces in the cosmos. In recent times, when Swami Vivekananda sat for meditation, there appeared before him a very large, wonderful triangle of light which he felt was living. One day he came to Dakshinewsar to tell Ramakrishna, and the Master said, "Very good; you have seen the *brahmayonī*; while practising *sādhana* under the *vilva* tree, I also saw it; not only that, but observed it giving birth to innumerable worlds every moment."

All manifestation is based on a fundamental dualism; a male principle known as *puruṣa* (person) and a female principle known as *prakṛiti* (Nature). *Sāṅkhya* teaches that there are innumerable small parts of *prakṛiti* which, keeping a small part of *puruṣa* at the centre, move constantly around it. The most remarkable contribution of the Jains to atomic theory relates to their analysis of atomic linking, or the mutual attraction (or repulsion) of atoms in the formation of molecules. (The question is raised in *Umāsvatī's* Jaina *Sūtras*, A.D. 40).

We can thus here again evoke the image of a positive charge at rest at the centre, with a negative charge in motion around it. The negative electron is quick and moving, the positive proton at rest. Natural attraction is exhibited by opposite magnetic forces and electric charges.

These opposite poles and charges create the magnetic and electric fields of force. Sexual intercourse is also an image for the process of oscillation generating energy. What is thus said about the atom applies both to the individual self and the whole cosmic system.

The apparent dual aspect of man as well as of the universe, has been symbolized in Buddhist Tantras by the *prajñopāya*. *Prajñā* is the female aspect and *upāya* is the male aspect. When represented or pictured in anthropo-

morphic forms, "they embrace each other, touching at all points of contact." This shows a total resolution of opposite forces as the two become essentially one.

According to Tantra, the ultimate truth is the union of *śiva* and *śakti*, or *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*. *Śiva* represents pure consciousness which is inactive, the static aspect of the ultimate reality, while *śakti* represents the world force, the kinetic energy of the concrete universe. The female aspect contributes the power to respond, to evolve. Every conjunction of opposites produces bliss (*ānanda*) and ends in the rediscovery of primordial spontaneity. According to Jung the "mysterium conjunctionis" on the human scale is the supreme image for integration.

"When opposites unite, the lack of balance, the tension, from which all things are born, is removed and pleasure is experienced. Hence it is thought that the state of permanent stability is a state of perpetual enjoyment, a state of bliss. For the living being it is only in the union of opposites that the state of joy appears. Only during the brief moment when two beings become one, when desire is satisfied, is a fragment of joy experienced. This state is the closest image of the state of liberation."<sup>10</sup>

In the preface of the *Koka Śāstra*, W. G. Archer also maintains that "in sexual rapture, there is a sense of self-extinction and this is a symbol of the soul's extinction in God. To love God, the lover was thus not only to obtain a mystical experience, but to win salvation."<sup>11</sup>

Tantra also asserts that "one must rise by that which one falls". Tantra, whose technique is different, prescribes the discipline of sublimation. Physical man and woman, floating along the outgoing current of the cosmic process, are, no doubt, different from each other, but by means of the return current they can be sublimated into cosmic principles and realised as the one whole, that is, *śiva-śakti*. In reversing the outgoing current, the aspirant has to 'bring together' the complements or poles so as to realise their identity; thus the physical union of man and woman is sublimated into the creative union of *śiva-śakti*.<sup>12</sup>

The aim of Tantric ritual is to heighten forms of human power to their full expression so as to merge *kuṇḍalinī*, the unconscious form in the human body with *puruṣa*, the formless consciousness. To achieve this aim, one utilizes the Tantric *yogāsanas*, configurations of certain forces and moods. When one practices a particular *āsana* 'with the mind fixed in abstract meditation' (as the Sanskrit root *yug* for yoga indicates), he may gain that particular intensified mood or feeling. The *mudrās* (yogic postures and gestures) specifically produce physiological diagrams which fulfil the same functions as *mantras* and *yantras*, releasing particular forces and energies of the mind.

10. Alain Daniéleu, *Hindu Polytheism*, p. 264.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

12. Swami Nikhilananda: Chapter (IX) on Tantra: *A Way of Realisation of Hinduism*, p. 149.

*Kuṇḍalinī śakti*, coiled and dormant cosmic power, is at the same time the supreme force in the human body. When *kuṇḍalinī* sleeps in the *mūlādhāra chakra*, man is only aware of his immediate earthly circumstances. When she awakes and unites with the supreme consciousness in *brahmarandhra*, the reservoir of light, free from either heat or cold, man is no longer sensitive to his own limited perceptions but is instead participating in the source of light itself. *Kuṇḍalinī śakti*, when struck, shines like “millions of lightning flashes” in the centre of the *sādhaka’s* body. *Kuṇḍalinī* is the “Inner Woman.” Of her it is said, “What need have I of any outer woman? I have an Inner Woman within myself.”

“The passage of the awakened *kuṇḍalinī* lies through the *sushumnā*, which is described as the central nerve in the nervous system. A kind of hollow canal, the *sushumnā* passes through the spinal column connecting the base centre (*chakra*) at the bottom of the spine with the centre at the cerebrum. Tantra speaks of six centres through which *sushumnā* passes; these centres are so many spheres or planes, described in Tantra as different-coloured lotuses with varying numbers of petals. In the ordinary worldly person these centres are closed, and the lotuses droop down like buds. As the *kuṇḍalinī* rises through the *sushumnā* canal and touches the centres, these buds turn upward as fully opened flowers and the aspirant obtains spiritual experience. The goal in spiritual practice is to make the *kuṇḍalinī* ascend from the centres which are lower and more veiled to those which are higher and more conscious. During this upward journey of the *kuṇḍalinī*, the *jīva* is not quite released from the relative state till it reaches the sixth centre or plane, which is the ‘opening’ for pure and perfect experience. At the sixth centre (the two-petalled white lotus located at the junction of the eyebrows) the *jīva* sheds its ego and burns the seed of duality, and its higher self rises from the ashes of its lower self. It now dies physically, as it were, in order to be able to live in pure consciousness. The sixth-centre is the key by which the power in the thousand-petalled lotus in the cerebrum, which is like the limitless ocean, is switched on to the little reservoir which is the individual self, filling the latter and making it overflow and cease to be the little reservoir. Finally the *kuṇḍalinī* rises to the lotus at the cerebrum and becomes united with *śiva*, or the Absolute, and the aspirant realises, in a transcendental experience, his union with *śiva-śakti*.”<sup>13</sup>

The state of union is beyond description, as it is beyond the dual and non-dual conception; and so the *yogis* could only describe this state as “It is what it is.”<sup>14</sup>

When one fuses the separate elements of his being, he realises unity identical with the Universal Being. By yoking together the opposites within himself, the individual harmonises all experience, thereby abolishing duality and transcending the phenomenal world. As symbols for this transcendent union,

13. *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

14. *Goraksha Siddhanta Sangraha*.

the interlocking triangles of *yantra* represent the male and female principles, the static and kinetic aspects of the Two in One.

Owing to the complete intensity of embrace, the two all-pervading ones, *śiva* and his *śakti*, become as it were a single principle in a bliss which is the highest non-duality. In the ultimate reality, however, there is neither *śiva* nor *śakti*. Only the one without a second is ever existing and will ever exist, as infinite complexity in total unity.

All physical and mental forms, everything in the universe is One, appearing in various ways. This has been very characteristically expressed by the *Acar-ranga* in the following statement: One who knows *one* knows *all*, and who knows all knows *one*.

Life is one, and all its forms are interrelated in a vastly complicated but inseparable whole. Every act by any form of life from the highest to the lowest, must react on every other form. We are but links in a long series. We are made of the same element as the stars, the same substance as the gods. "All the men and women of the world are His living forms", as Kabir says. To realize the formless within one's living form is to reach the basis of all forms. If one were able to pierce through the veil of form, he would see the relativity of both form-possessing and formless experience. What we perceive and feel is in Tantra the combination of the eternally formed (*svarūpa*) and the eternally formless (*arūpa*).

Modern science is attempting to reduce the explanation of as many phenomena as possible to one single underlying principle. Such striving for unity has resulted in science's greatest achievement of this century: the dematerialization of the matter. This concept maintains that the elements composing the universe can be symbolised by mathematical formulae which have a discoverable root. The monistic spirit developing in science corresponds to a recent development in art, namely, the summarising of forces within the universe, and the mutual assimilation of corporeal forms.

Through a process of transforming corporeal forms and mass, art has become an international expression. Although the style, influenced by different traditions, may vary, the fundamental language of art expression is understood everywhere. A great work of art indeed goes beyond the individual creator and out to all times and all men; it belongs to no one and to every one.

The artist expresses something that already exists, *sarvam*, of which he is a part and which he feels impelled to give back to the world. This process of communication becomes a way of life that creates concepts and forms whereby his deepest intuitions are crystallized and conveyed to others. Vijnānabhikshu knew that the statue already existing in the block of stone is only revealed by the sculptor.

The *śilpī-yogin* has not attempted to absorb something external to himself, but to release something universal he has experienced inwardly. This unfolding lays bare the universal mental configurations; "Bild ist Seele", as Jung

says. The *ātman* manifests itself in images. The *śilpī-yogin's* concern rests not only with forms but with the forces that give rise to form. Art of this kind is firmly rooted in spiritual values. He is involved in a continuous process of discovery, not of himself, but of the roots of the universe which he has been able to discover within himself.

The artist's concern with the concept of space is an example of his probing to realise inner truths. He is telling in his own way what science informs us in another manner about our ordinary notion of space. When we are informed that the sharp point of the sharpest needle holds millions of bodies incessantly moving without ever touching one another, our everyday assumptions about space are shattered; with this mental habit and barrier removed, we are freed to see the inner reality.

Limitations are destroyed in order to attain that supreme liberation which is the aim of all true art, of religion and of science as well.

Combining art, science, and religion, Tantra indicates the way to liberation. With a basis of philosophy and physics, Tantra shows its art expression moving in the direction of meditation, toward the transcendence of differentiated forms. In the *samādhi* state, one can look into the universe as a whole. It is to rise beyond the space-time relationship, to discover the idea of past, present and future all at once. According to Tantra, only one single moment is actual; the whole universe evolves in that one single moment.

The eye, as an instrument of vision, cannot see beyond certain dimensions, namely, those of length, breadth and thickness. Forms and shapes with more dimensions are not perceived optically. Even three-dimensional forms are seen only in fraction, never in totality; the mind connects one fraction to another in order to form a picture of the entire three-dimensional form.

Moreover, the fraction seen is coloured by the manner in which it is perceived. The shape of a thing, its colour, its temporal-spatial position may be seen differently by each individual observer. Things are as they appear to the perceiver, for sensory perception by itself cannot go beyond appearances.

If one could apprehend reality under four dimensions, our concept of a stone would assume a higher degree of truthfulness, while at the same time the entire world would display an infinite series of individual histories. Through trance-vision, one sees or hears the particles moving within the stone, and one has a finer insight into the structure of the universe. Science reduces a block of wood or stone to molecules, atoms, electrons, protons, and neutrons, until the wood or stone exists as a series of electrical radiations. Such a nuclear reality as realized by modern science, has yet to be convincingly actualised in art.

It is only when we both integrate all forms and gain intuition of the endless play of *śakti*, as Tantra says, that we find reality and become free. When we close our eyes we can really look at things. We see without seeing, to be exact. In the ultimate act of vision the body meditates as well as the mind.

The *Upanishad* says: "He alone sees, who sees all beings as himself." The unknown is within every atom of our being.

To the question: "What is that which, when known, all is known?" The *Upanishad* affirms, "That art Thou", or "Sa'ham, I am She, or So'ham, I am He." If one fully understands and accepts this, it compels him to empty his mind of images and preconceptions. With a mind thus emptied, one can perceive the total impact of the work. The art work once finished, the artist's power is released and exists within the form, its force and form being accessible to the one who can see and assimilate its impact. As the author of Chieh Tzu Yuan expresses it: "When painting has reached divinity (*shen*), there is an end of the matter."

It is not surprising therefore that many great Indian artists who passed through this discipline, eventually became saints.

## THE NATURE OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Nagendra

SOME classics exist on other fine arts as well, e.g., on music and painting, on sculpture and architecture, yet the fundamentals of Indian aesthetics have been discussed invariably in the works on poetics. Consequently, the broader concepts of aesthetic experience have been defined mainly in the context of *rasa* which, by and large, constitutes the essence of poetic experience according to the Indian theory of poetry and art. Originally, *rasa* constituted the basic quality of a dramatic work; then it infiltrated into poetry and from poetry to other forms of art like music and painting. Thus, we have primarily to concentrate on the analysis of the constituents of *rasa* in order to arrive at a proper definition of the nature of aesthetic experience in Indian poetics.

For the earlier writers from Bharata to Bhāmaha etc., *rasa* was an objective concept signifying an aesthetic situation in a drama or an aesthetic expression in a poetic composition. But under the impact of the Advaita philosophy of the Saivite school headed by Abhinavagupta, it assumed a purely subjective character. An aesthetic situation, according to Abhinava, was a part of drama, an aesthetic expression was a piece of poetry, and the experience thereof was *rasa*. The views of these scholars from Abhinava to Vishvanātha, who have unequivocally defined *rasa* as an aesthetic experience, can be summed up as follows :

(i) The aesthetic experience is based primarily on human emotions.\* It is essentially pleasurable; it is a state of bliss, a state of self-realization or self-fulfilment.

(ii) The state of bliss is pervaded by a feeling of spiritual illumination and is mostly free from sensual elements. The physical emotions shake off their sordid attributes when they are converted into artistic emotions—they are freed from the limitations of time and space and are universalized. Consequently, they cease to be a part of the direct physical experience of the spectator, raise him above the petty mundane experience of the self, refine his sensibility and sublimate his consciousness.

---

\* I am deliberately using this broad and rather unusual expression because neither of the other two synonyms, the 'material' and the 'physical' can serve our purpose in the present context.

Nevertheless, it is not a state of pure spiritual bliss, because it is neither a permanent state of joy nor is it completely purged of the material concomitants.

Thus, according to Indian poetics, the aesthetic experience is a state of transcendental joy, or a state of self-fulfilment if we choose to use a more secular expression, achieved by means of art through the medium of sublimated emotions.

These concepts are, however, all exposed to criticism in the modern age and three fundamental questions arise in the mind of a modern thinker in this context almost spontaneously:

(i) What is the relationship between an emotional experience and an aesthetic experience?

(ii) Is aesthetic experience pleasurable essentially and invariably?

(iii) If it is so, then what is the nature of this (aesthetic) pleasure?

A student of art today cannot feel satisfied unless these questions are suitably answered. It is, therefore, inevitable to resolve them in terms of the modern theories of art and criticism.

(i) *What is the relationship between an emotional experience and an aesthetic experience?*

The aesthetic experience is primarily based on emotion. It is not possible to conceive of a form of beauty without some threads of emotional associations, direct or indirect, potent or latent. The majority of Indian art critics are agreed upon the inter-relationship of the artistic emotion and the human emotion, न भावहीनो ऽस्ति रसो, न भावो रसवर्जित, i.e., *rasa* is never without an emotional basis nor can an artistic emotion exist without *rasa*. Yet the artistic emotion is distinct from the human emotion and the two cannot be identical under any circumstance. The basic emotions underlying the aesthetic experience, according to Indian poetics, can be divided into two categories: emotions like love, wonder, courage and humour are pleasurable whereas the other like pathos, anger, terror and horror are painful in life. But when they form the material basis of art, they all lose their sting and the element of pain is extracted invariably. The experience of a pathetic situation in art is not at any rate painful as it is in life. The pathetic sentiment has been purged of its venom during the process of artistic creation. Thus, it does not require any great effort to prove that the artistic emotion is not identical with human emotion as such.

The normal human experience is either the experience of our own self or the experience of another person reacting on us through empathy. The experience of our own self can be twofold—(a) direct and (b) indirect or reflex. The aesthetic experience is not direct, we have just proved. Can it not be reflex experience? The reflex experience is one which recurs in our consciousness without (or in the absence of) the direct stimulus.



Broadly speaking it is the reminiscence of a direct experience. Now, the aesthetic experience is not the reminiscence of a direct experience because even the reminiscences have positive personal associations; they are pleasurable or painful according to the nature of the original experience. For example, the reminiscences of a happy union are pleasurable and those of a situation of separation or bereavement are painful inspite of the distance in time and the indirectness of the experience. The intensity is very much mitigated and the sting is considerably reduced, yet the element of pain in the latter does not disappear. Thus, the aesthetic experience is neither a direct nor a reflex experience of a personal character. For example, while watching the Act IV in Kālidāsa's '*The Abhijñāna Śakuntalam*,' the aesthetic experience comes to us not in the form of a direct suffering of the pangs of separation from our own daughter, nor is it a reminiscence of a past suffering. Is it, then, a vicarious experience, i.e., is it the reaction of another person's emotional experience, say of Kaṇva's emotional suffering presented on the stage, in the above context? This question has been effectively answered by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka. If the experience of the spectator is to be explained in terms of his reaction to the emotional experience of the dramatic character, then the whole thing will result in utter confusion. The love scenes of Rāma and Sitā, or even of any other couple, will evoke in our minds unpleasant reactions, feelings of embarrassment or even of disgust at a public demonstration of a purely private experience. Surely, that cannot be an aesthetic experience.

It is, therefore, clear beyond doubt that an aesthetic experience, though based primarily on human emotions, is not identical with our usual emotional experience; it is neither a personal experience direct or indirect, nor is it a psycho-physical reaction to the emotional experience of the dramatic characters. The aesthetic experience is based on human emotions and yet it is distinct from these; this may sound like a paradox, but it is not. The aesthetic experience is not the experience of a personal emotion, it is the experience of a universalized or liberated emotion; it is an experience of a liberated state of mind and is free from egoistic interests which ultimately 'leave a bad taste in our mouth,' and as such it is a pleasant experience. It is a feeling of self-realization or self-fulfilment through sublimated human emotions embodied in the works of art. This feeling of self-fulfilment is possible through other media as well, e.g., through fruitful action, through dedication or through meditation, but that is not an aesthetic experience. For an aesthetic experience, the basis of human emotions and art-stimuli are essential. In short, it is the experience of an impersonal emotion realised in a liberated state of the psyche.

(ii) *Is an aesthetic experience essentially pleasant?*

This is a major but highly controversial subject in poetics. It is not denied that aesthetic experience is often pleasant but the point at issue is

whether it is essentially and invariably pleasant, i.e., whether the experience of tragic emotions as well is pleasant. Although the majority of thinkers in India and the West are in favour of the pleasure-principle, yet the opposition too has been quite aggressive and is becoming more so in the present age. I have traversed through the vast regions of criticism from Plato to Richards and few other master-minds in the West, and treated this subject in detail elsewhere. But I shall save you the strain of this long and tiresome journey and present in a nutshell the most representative views on the problems:

1) The aesthetic experience is verily a state of bliss, which is broadly speaking of two kinds (a) the serene joy of the spirit or the inner consciousness and (b) the psychic pleasure. There is also a third category—the entertainment, which has developed an inferior connotation associated with things of play. Yet that too cannot be ruled out in the context of art which has always aimed at entertainment as well—directly or indirectly. In all these three shades of meaning, pleasure is the common factor, i.e., the aesthetic experience whether it is considered to be a kind of serene spiritual bliss, or a refined mental gratification or, still lower, an entertainment, is a pleasant experience.

2) It is both pleasant and unpleasant according to the theme of the work of art, pleasant themes please and unpleasant themes ruffle or depress the reader.

3) It is a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant reactions, all our emotions are a mixture of pleasure and pain in varying proportions and as such the aesthetic experience, based on them, also contains elements of pleasure and pain in its texture.

4) It is neither pleasant nor painful, it is a state of liberation of the psyche in which the joys and sorrows of the individual ego and the resultant pleasure and pain completely disappear, leaving in their wake a feeling of perfect mental equilibrium.

5) The aesthetic pleasure is not a simple experience but a pattern of experiences characterized by a subtle synthesis of several and quite often conflicting impulses.

We shall have to examine these closely before we can arrive at a tangible conclusion. I shall start with the thesis No. 2, viz., the aesthetic experience can be both pleasant and unpleasant according to the nature of the basic emotion underlying a work of art. Our first reaction is that the experience of a tragic art should be painful as a matter of course. But, there are strong reasons to refute it. The aversion of the human mind to pain is so natural and strong that nobody in his senses will spend his time and money just to gain a painful experience. It is true that quite often we face unhappy situations, nay some times even court them in our life. The craving of the mystic poets for pain is well known and the Buddhist philo-

sophers have extolled pain as one of the supreme truths, yet on a closer analysis it is not difficult to ascertain that here also pain is a means and not the end by itself. The mystic craves for pain because it provides him the opportunity for enjoying a communion with the eternal object of love. So also in Buddhist philosophy, pain has been considered a supreme truth because ultimately it is through the negation of pain that we attain *nirvāṇa*; thus, there too, it is the negation of pain and not pain itself, which is the ultimate target. And then, the reader or the spectator is neither a mystic nor a philosopher; it can never be established that he goes to witness a tragedy for the sake of a tragic experience, mystic or philosophical.

The argument that the experience of a tragic theme is by itself painful and yet the reader or the spectator is attracted towards it for the love of its artistic merits is also untenable in the final analysis. (a) The grief or terror, if there is really a feeling like that, emanating from violent tragic situations should be so powerful that all literary graces, the figures of speech, the rhythm, the musical qualities of the verse, or the embellishments of the stage, will not be adequate to relieve it. (b) Then, a divided concept of the underlying tragic emotions and the artistic qualities as separate entities, is unwarranted; poetics and psychology both would reject such a concept as out of date. The common man is not really sensible to these subtler graces of art and the art-connoisseur cannot be satisfied just with the external embellishments of the poetic or the histrionic craft. (c) If we admit of a variety in the nature of the aesthetic experience on the basis of the difference in the underlying emotions, the indivisibility of this experience is negated.

Let us now examine the third and the fifth alternatives which define the artistic emotion as a complex experience. Whereas the exponents of the former talk only of a mixture of pleasure and pain, the modern psychologists think in terms of a 'pattern of experiences.' These concepts were not unknown to the Indian thinker, but in his view this admixture or complex pattern is a part of the process of contemplation only and does not extend to the point of culmination where the diversity of psychic actions is resolved into a unified experience. In the creative process, the artist does pass through varied experiences, pleasant as well as unpleasant, but ultimately he succeeds in effecting a harmonious fusion of all these experiences—and that is called art. Without this fusion the artistic creation is abortive, i.e., art is born invariably out of harmony or harmonious fusion. Similarly in the process of artistic appreciation, we have a flux of varied experiences of different nature which ultimately formulate into a pattern, and our ultimate experience is the experience of this pattern, which, though complex, is a harmonious whole (otherwise it will be an abortive production and not a work of art). To sum up: the theories which define the aesthetic experience as a mixed experience or a pattern of experiences are tenable only so far as they apply to the process; at the point of culmination, the experience is

not mixed or divided but unified and harmonized—which has been described by Richards as ‘a systematization of impulses.’ Quite obviously, this systematization of impulses is a state of happiness or at least a pre-condition of happiness. Richards and several other significant critics don’t wish to call it a pleasure, but they admit atleast indirectly that it is a state of gratification: a state of mind when we feel gratified and fulfilled.

Thus, the argument against the essentially gratifying character of the aesthetic experience do not hold ground in the ultimate analysis.

(iii) *What is the nature of this pleasure?*

I confess that ‘pleasure’ is a weak term and mostly conveys a sordid meaning, yet there is no other word in the English language, and as such this word is being used broadly to denote the whole range of gratifying experiences of the human psyche from the sensual to the spiritual pleasures.

Quite obviously, the pleasant experience of pleasure also is of different kinds and varies in quality and our definition of the aesthetic experience will remain incomplete until we have analysed the nature of the pleasure implied therein. Here again, we have to traverse through the vast realms of Indian and Western poetics to arrive at some positive conclusions. But I shall again save you the fatigue of a strenuous journey and present in brief the results of these age-long researches of the Indian and Western masters.

i) The aesthetic pleasure is a kind of psycho-physical pleasure. Plato among the ancients and Marx and Freud among the modern thinkers have propounded this view, of course, in their own and entirely different ways.

ii) The aesthetic pleasure is a kind of spiritual pleasure. The leaders of Sanskrit poetics like Abhinavagupta and Jagannātha on the one hand and the idealist philosophers in the West, Plotinus among the ancients and Kant and Hegel among the moderns, subscribe to this view.

iii) The aesthetic pleasure is really a pleasure of imagination. This concept which has its seeds in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, was presented in a clear form by Addison in the 18th century and was ultimately given a philosophical orientation by Croce who interpreted it as a pleasure of ‘intuition’ in the 20th century.

iv) The aesthetic pleasure is a specific and unique pleasure, distinct from all other kinds of pleasures, material as well as spiritual. It is an absolute experience incapable of being explained in terms of the material experience. Although this concept is very old, it was presented from a new angle by A. C. Bradley, Clive Bell and other aestheticians in the beginning of the 20th century. There is an element of mysticism or at least mystery in this concept and Richards has discovered positive traces of the mystical theories of Kant and Hegel. Yet, it will not be correct to identify this concept of the ‘specific’ or the ‘unique’ experience with spiritual joy,

because according to the aestheticians this 'specific' experience of art is different not only from the material pleasure, but from the common conception of spiritual joy as well.

Let us now start from the end, because this last concept, in spite of the support of an age-long tradition, seems to be more vulnerable than others. All the arguments given in favour of the specific character of an aesthetic experience make it clear that it is different from (i) a direct or indirect psycho-physical experience, (ii) from a pure intellectual experience such as the experience of solving a problem or proving a hypothesis, as also (iii) from a spiritual experience, the *yogic* experience, for example. But this does not prove that it cannot be explained in terms of the usual experiences of the human mind, that it is not an experience of this world. It contains sensuous as well as intellectual elements and for those who believe in the existence of soul it also contains an element of the spiritual experience. The pattern of this experience is different from the other categories of usual experiences, but its ingredients are not essentially different. Consequently, although different in form, it does not differ from them in nature. After all, a detached experience or an impersonal or universalized experience is also a sublimated form of the psycho-physical experience. Richards has rightly argued that in the entire process of an aesthetic experience or appreciation, our sense-organs, mind and intellect serve as the inevitable media and, therefore, so long as we do not discover a separate 'specific' sense-organ for the perception of an aesthetic phenomenon, it will be illogical to conceive of the aesthetic emotion as a 'unique' experience. And, that puts an end to the aesthetic theory with all its ingenuities.

The aesthetic pleasure is a pleasure of imagination. This is only a partial truth. Here, the most significant fact in the context of art, namely, that human emotions form the substratum of the aesthetic experience, has been ignored. The basis of all art is our psychic life: imagination is its medium and an essential medium, without doubt. Yet imagination alone cannot create art unless it has got the required material basis in the form of human emotions. Therefore, the pleasure derived from art is not just the pleasure of imagination. Imagination plays a very important part outside the range of art as well, for example, in scientific inventions. But, the pleasure of imagination enjoyed by a scientist has nothing to do with an aesthetic experience. The exclamation of 'Ureka' cannot be poetry by any stretch of imagination. Besides, imagination itself is a faculty of the mind and as such imaginative pleasure is also a mental-cum-intellectual experience and cannot be regarded as a separate category by itself.

The pleasure derived from art is a kind of spiritual joy, transcendental and supersensuous. This is, I am afraid, a concept difficult to be proved or disapproved by reason because the existence and conception of soul are

matters of never-ending controversy. If I do not have necessary scientific data to prove the existence of soul, I do not, at the same time, have any unimpeachable evidence to disprove it. I would therefore, accept the traditional view. According to the Saivite School of Indian philosophy joy is in the nature of the Spirit and accordingly every form of pleasure, from the lowest to the highest, in one way or the other, is a manifestation of the Spirit. The difference between the psycho-physical and the spiritual joy is a difference of quality and not of essence, and thereby the aesthetic pleasure is different from the spiritual pleasure only in quality, or only in so far as it is not an absolute state of bliss. The Vedānta also arrives at a similar conclusion from a different angle of course, and defines sensual pleasure as a semblance of spiritual bliss : as such aesthetic pleasure which is more or less purged of the taints of nature, comes very near the reality, or the real bliss. The Western Idealists define it as a transcendental experience, a joy which transcends the sense organs and is felt by the spirit directly.

In this context, if we accept the definition of the Saivite philosophers, then, there can be no controversy because the difference between one kind of pleasure and another finally disappears in that case. But it is not so in practice, and we do make a distinction. Actually, the Idealists also do not identify aesthetic pleasure with spiritual joy. According to the Indian thinkers it is very akin to but not identical with spiritual joy, and the Western philosophers also believe that this experience passes through the psycho-physical media in the earlier stages although ultimately it transcends them all and enters into the purer regions of the spirit. Thus, the difference between the two is evident, even though it may be difference of quality and not of the essence. Whereas spiritual joy is an absolute experience of the supreme self, aesthetic pleasure has a material basis invariably. This material basis is extremely refined; it is an impersonal or universalized emotion no doubt, yet it is there because the impersonal or universalized experience also is, in the ultimate analysis, a material experience and not a spiritual experience like a *yogic* experience or the experience of religious meditation. It is a state of sublimation, a liberated state of the psyche, but it does not transcend the psyche.

Now remains the first thesis, viz., the aesthetic experience is a material pleasure. Although it has been presented rather crudely by its exponents, Plato on the one hand and Marx and Freud on the other, yet it becomes difficult to reject it. The pleasure derived from art is a material pleasure : art is a material phenomenon and its enjoyment is obviously an experience of this world. Except in the case of mysticism, the subject-matter of all art consists of the normal human experiences ; its tools and instruments also are the faculties of the mind, viz., imagination and intellect ; the media of appeal are the sense-organs on the physical plane and the imaginative

sensibility on the higher psychic plane, and lastly the recipient is the normal human being with all his impulses fully developed—and not a mystic or a devotee. Therefore, it is difficult to disbelieve that it is an experience of this world, a human experience. As such, we shall have to determine its character within the range and in the terms of psychology.

It will be more fruitful to base our observations on a concrete work of art. Here is a beautiful verse of Bhavabhūti :

विनिश्चेतुं शक्यो न सुखमिति वा दुःखमिति वा  
 प्रमोहो निद्रा वा किमु विषविसर्पः किमु मदः ।  
 तव स्पर्शे स्पर्शो मम हि परिमूढेन्द्रियगणो  
 विकारश्चैतन्यं भ्रमयति च समीलयति च ॥ (U.R. Ch. 1-35)

I cannot determine whether it is pleasure or pain, whether stupor or sleep ; whether the working of poison, or intoxication ; at every touch of thine a certain sensation comes upon me, which stupefying all my sense, now bewilders my consciousness, now paralyses it.

My experience on reading this poem is obviously pleasant. The theme is based on love and my mind passes through feelings of eros to attain this pleasant experience. Yet, the fact remains that there is an obvious difference between this experience and the actual experience of love and I am definitely conscious of this difference; every enlightened reader is. What is the nature of this difference? The experience of love in life is direct; my ego is deeply involved and as such it is more intense. The experience of the love-poem is not a direct psycho-physical experience; my ego is not involved therein and, therefore, it is not as intense. It would be necessary to analyse the whole process of this artistic experience in order to explain its character. When I read this poem, the music of its words and rhythm immediately catch my ear; then almost imperceptibly the meaning reveals itself; thereafter by the magic of the poetic diction, i.e., by force of the imaginative use of language, my imagination is activated, a number of free images are conjured up and under the stimulus of a variety of subsidiary emotions the instinct of love is roused in my consciousness which is liberated from the involvements of the ego, because this love is not directed towards any particular object and is as such impersonal and detached; and finally the whole psycho-physical process culminates in a pleasant experience.

Human experience can be divided into three broad categories: sensual, mental and intellectual: this classification is obviously very broad and no category can be exclusive because of the extremely intricate and complex nature of our experiences wherein all the faculties of the human personality are simultaneously involved. Yet it is, on the whole, a workable classification based on the primary use of one faculty or the other. The experience of a dear person's embrace is, for example, a sensual pleasure, its

reminiscence is a mental pleasure, but the experience of a successful solution of an emotional problem, say of a precise definition of this particular emotional experience in the present context, is an intellectual pleasure. Where does the aesthetic pleasure derived from the love poem quoted above, fit in? Surely, this is not the pleasure of physical union with the beloved nor is it by any chance the pleasure of a successful analysis of an amorous experience. Is it then the experience of a pleasant reminiscence conjured up by our memory? Here we have to pause for a while, because there is obviously some similarity: this experience of a pleasant reminiscence is, like the aesthetic pleasure, a reflex experience in which imagination plays the major part. Yet, the two are not identical, because a reminiscence is basically personal wherein our ego is invariably involved; it is not detached and is only partially liberated. It is an action of the memory which is a passive form of imagination and as such it is only a revival of past experience, unlike the aesthetic experience, which is an action of the active or the creative imagination and is, therefore, not just a revival but a re-creation of a past experience. The aesthetic experience is different from the experience of a reminiscence because of its impersonal and creative character, which purges it of all the baser elements and imparts a pleasurable quality. Thus, the aesthetic experience is the pleasant experience of an imaginative re-creation of an emotion, which takes place primarily in the mind of the artist and secondarily in that of the art-lover under the stimulus of art. The artist's action is primary and is, therefore, called creation in common usage although in actuality it is re-creation only, whereas that of the art-lover is secondary because it is basically inspired by the artist's action. The process of imaginative re-creation involves in some measure an action of the intellect as well, because after all it is in a certain degree a conscious and a deliberate activity at least in the later stage of composition or 'externalization,' to use Croce's expression. And this brings in the intellectual element as well within the pattern of the aesthetic experience.

So in the final analysis, the aesthetic experience can be defined as a complex experience, pleasant in essence, in which the emotional and intellectual elements are blended in a subtle harmony. It has a separate identity because it is more refined than emotional pleasure and more colourful than intellectual pleasure.



# TESTIMONY OF A STUDENT OF HISTORY OF INDIAN ART, LIFE AND THOUGHT

Niharranjan Ray

I propose to take the liberty of placing before this Seminar a few of my speculations in respect of art activity in India through the ages. These speculations are as much drawn from the evidence of art objects, that is, they are object-centred, as they are derived from my understanding of Indian life and thought in their totality. No texts are being quoted, no references made, but I may state that they are based upon or drawn from recorded evidence, literary and archaeological.

## Making, Maker and the Made

Whether the word is *art* or *śilpa* or *kalā*, basically it connotes making or doing, that is, it is a kind of human activity (cf. *kavi-karma*, *śilpa-karma*, *kalā-karma*, *kalākāra*, etc.). The process of doing or making as well as the object produced as the result of such activity are both *art*, *śilpa*, *kalā*, the former being a verb, the latter a noun.

Doing or making presupposes a doer or maker, that is, a subject who concerns himself with one or more objects, and with the tools and techniques at his disposal and according to his world-view of things, his inner 'desire (*kāma*) and his understanding of the nature and character of the object or objects, he sets out to discipline and organise it or them into another integrated and meaningful object which is intended to please, satisfy and nourish himself as well as those who happen to come into contact with it. What was thus to him unformed, that is, disorganised and indisciplined, becomes disciplined and organised, and hence form. The produced object is thus neither solely himself, nor solely the material content, but a third entity.

The object or objects referred to may be inert, inanimate matter like words, sounds, lines, colours, surfaces, volumes, stone, wood, metal etc., or animate beings, like men and animals. Organising and disciplining with a conscious creative mind, a small or large group of men, for instance, in a community, society or state, is also in a larger sense art activity. So is the conscious and creative rearing up of a child by the mother or the building up of one's life so as to improve it through discipline and organisation. These are all art activities.

In a narrow sense art activity concerns itself with inert objects. All such

objects in their natural state are more or less unformed, that is, undisciplined, disorganised matter, so to say.

Art activity, therefore, deals with the question of inter-relationship first of subject and object, and secondly, of inert object and form.

The question of the inter-relationship of object and form may be resolved by positing that all objects are impregnated with, inhibited by form which however calls for a subject to see and bring it forth from out of the object, in other words, to transmute the object into form. Something is 'thus made to come out of something, not out of nothing. The form thus brought forth is also an object, but altogether a different object, an object that meets a human purpose as distinguished from a natural purpose.

The question of the inter-relationship of subject and object may be answered by positing that for cognitive and creative purposes there is no subject without an object, no object without a subject; both are mutually interdependent. Cognition is possible with the subject and object remaining separate, but creation is not. No creation is possible without the dichotomy of subject and object disappearing at a certain point or stretch of time or other; it is only when the two coalesce that creation becomes possible. The moment of coming together is indeed the moment of creation.

The subject for our purpose is the *purusha*, the object the *prakṛiti*, the unformed natural object. When the latter is disciplined and organised by the subject in a manner that pleases, satisfies and nourishes human senses, sensibilities and mind, in a manner that helps qualitative improvement of human personality, it is form, an object of art.

Why does man make Art ?

The biological urge (*kāma*) for communication, the will to create, is instinctive in social man; he wants (*kāmayati*) to establish his communion with (*śāhita*, *sāhitya*), project himself into his fellow beings. *Kāma* is indeed the germinal seat of all creative activities.

What does he want to communicate ? Facts, information certainly, but not exclusively. More than these he wants to communicate his desires, feelings, emotions, passions, visions, dreams, ideas, images, in a word, he wants to communicate himself, his total being.

How does he communicate himself ? He does so through words and sounds (music, poetry, literature), gestures and movements (dance and drama), lines, colours, surfaces, depths, volumes, tones, touches etc. (sculpture, painting, architecture).

What makes for effective communication ? Communication to be effective must be in a mode and manner so as first to please, satisfy and nourish the senses, sensibilities and minds of those who are being communicated with; and secondly, what is being communicated must be meaningful, signifi-

ficant, that is, the perception of the communicated object must not merely remain at the level of the senses but penetrate deeper, that is, it must be intrinsic perception.

The mode and manner of communication determines the form and the meaningfulness or the significance, the content of communication. *Bhāva*, *rasa* etc. of the Indian *ālamkārikas* and *śilpa-sāstra* writers relate to the meaningfulness, and hence to the content.

Both are important for intrinsic perception; the adequacy or otherwise, strength or weakness of the one affects the other, conditions the other. In any effective communication the two are inseparable; it is only for intellectual understanding that we analyse them separately. On the plane of intrinsic perception and in the creative process they are indeed one and indivisible.

Has Art any aim or purpose?

Has art any aim or purpose beyond satisfying the natural or biological urge for communication?

Yes, it has. Natural, biological urge for communication or creation is present in both animals and man and leads both to the perpetuation of their respective species. But man is endowed with certain physical and psychic properties and a conscious mind that distinguish him from the animal. His urge for communication on the biological plane leads him to perpetuate his species; but because of his mind and the physical and psychic properties, his biological urge is also directed towards the improvement of his species. By and through experience he has found out that by doing or making of art objects or by placing himself in contact with art he can improve himself and his species. An *Aitareya* statement is specific and unequivocal on this point.

Art is thus a human activity with an aim and purpose—the improvement of the human species. Art for art's sake is therefore ruled out altogether. Basically therefore art is a moral activity of the social man.

How is this improvement (*saṃskāra*) effected?

The answer calls for a long argument. But briefly it is as follows:

- (a) Natural forces, biological urges are good enough for perpetuation of the species; but such forces and urges may be as often they are, blind and leads more often than not to disorganisation and chaos. For purpose of improvement of the species, therefore, such forces and urges have to be tamed, disciplined, organised and brought into order.
- (b) Nature's function seems to be to bring about the order of cosmos out of what seems to have been chaos. And so is the function of man—to bring about order and discipline in what he finds about him disorderly, disorganised and chaotic.
- (c) This bringing about of order and discipline can be done only in accor-

dance with certain laws or principles that sustain nature. Such natural laws are known to the experimental sciences as the laws of rhythm, cadence, balance, proportion, harmony etc., collectively called *chhandas* by our Vedic writers.

- (d) Art activity of man has therefore to be that kind of human activity that seeks to bring about discipline and order into objects that are or seem to be disorganised and chaotic.
- (e) This bringing about of discipline and order can only be done in accordance with the natural laws of *chhandas*.
- (f) It is in the process of so doing that the artist has to submit himself to the order and discipline of balance and proportion, of rhythm and harmony etc., and thus submit to and imbibe these laws in his being and becoming, for the time being at any rate.
- (g) And so with one who comes into contact with the object of art thus produced. The rhythm and harmony, the balance and proportion etc., that are in the object itself produces a similar response in his senses and sensibilities; for the duration of the contact it remains with him to enrich his experience of life, for the time being at any rate.
- (h) Thus by helping to sharpen or heighten human senses and sensibilities and affording him enriching experience art seeks to contribute towards improvement of human personality.

### Does Art imitate Nature ?

To my mind the clear and positive answer is 'no.'

All that early Indian texts and Aristotle seem to have meant is that art follows nature, that is, it follows the laws of nature, the laws of harmony and rhythm, of balance and proportion etc. And this is supported by the objective evidence of Indian and Greek art as of the large mass of world art, the only exception being what is vaguely called 'realistic' art, as in still life painting or in certain kinds of man and animal portraiture, which too has to submit to the laws of rhythm and harmony, balance and proportion etc.

Even at the pre-and proto-historic stages of human civilisation man has certainly attempted to represent nature but hardly ever to imitate it. A human being, if he be a subject, cannot imitate an object, he can only represent it; the subject and object coming into contact with each other transforms both. The object no longer remains the same and hence cannot be imitated.

Representation of nature in art is most of the history of any art, and in the very nature of life and things. But the nature that one sees in art is nature transfigured and transformed by the artist, that is, by the one who cognises nature and articulates it in accordance with his cognition and his mode and manner of rendering it. The degree of representation differs from artist to artist, from age to age, clime to clime, school to school, depending on tradition and on the varia-

tion of personal cognition and the mode and manner of transfiguration and transformation.

There cannot be anything that one does not find in nature. This find has been ever on the increase depending on man's increasing and expanding discoveries of the mysteries of nature. Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism, indeed all modern movements in visual arts have been possible because of such discoveries. Variation of cognition of natural objects and mode and manner of transformation of such objects is affected and conditioned by the degree of knowledge of the mysteries of nature (and hence of life) as much as by the degree of personal consciousness of the artist, about man's status and position in the cosmos and his view of the world order of things including the social order in which he finds himself.

Addition, subtraction, exaggeration, distortion, abstraction—these are all inherent in the very act of cognition and transformation of nature in art, and there is nothing inadmissible or illogical in it. The difference lies only in the degree of such action. But this quantitative difference may reach a stage when it becomes qualitative and determines the character of vision and cognition as well as the mode and manner of transformation. And then they take labels like representational, impressionist, cubist, surrealist, expressionist, abstract etc.

But the aim and purpose of art as well as human reason demand that cognition and transformation of the phenomena or situation in nature must not be such as to make it unrecognisable altogether, that it must have some reference to or verisimilitude (*sādrīśyam*) with nature. Or otherwise the object produced will suffer in communicability, and hence art activity will cease to be a social activity.

### The nature of Aesthetic Experience

India has no systematic speculation on the theme of aesthetic experience, nor on that of the creative process in art. No text has come down to us. The reason is very simple: aesthetics does not seem to have been recognised as an autonomous intellectual discipline, on very understandable grounds, it seems. But there is a huge mass of textual material on all the creative arts and archaeological material relating to art-activity through the ages. There are also incidental references to what may be called aesthetics in the texts of the various philosophical systems and in creative literature. Certain formulations can thus be easily made, and they are briefly as follows:

(a) Aesthetic experience is just the experience of an active process of intrinsic perception, through intent concentration (*yoga, dhyāna*) to an object or, field of object, or situation. Such experience which enables the perceiver (the subject) to have the full value of the given object, field of object or situation, may take place at various levels and in varying degrees.

(b) The active process of intent concentration is generally characterised in respect of the perceiver, as one of (i) complete detachment from practical

action, (ii) complete disinterestedness from any practical ends of life, and (iii) perhaps also a certain kind of psychological distancing. To what extent such detachment, disinterestedness and distancing are possible, is a question that has not been satisfactorily answered, I am afraid. (c) Thus detached, disinterested and distanced, and intently centred on the object, object-field of situation, the perceiver experiences a sort of intense joy and delight that has been characterised as having *almost* the same quality of joy and delight arising out of tasting the Brahman, or of copulation of the sexes.

(d) The experience, in course of its active process, is assumed to bring about certain psychical and physiological transformation in the perceiver; these are sought to be summarised in the terms *bhāva*, *rasa*, etc. *Rasa* is literally juice, a term borrowed from our *āyurveda sāstras*. *Rasa* experience is claimed to be the quintessence of aesthetic experience. *Bhāva* is just the given state of being at a given moment. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Aristotle's theory of purgation and catharsis, is also derived from Greek medical science, a theory which is difficult to sustain from the point of view of psycho-physiology. In both Indian and Greek speculations aesthetic experience seems to have been looked upon as a sort of healing experience, physiologically speaking.

(e) Aesthetic experience is an end by itself, it is no means to any further end. It may employ knowledge as it often does, and sometimes even large funded stores of it, to illumine the object, object-field or situation perceived, but it does not actively seek knowledge. Yet at the same time, it cannot be ignored that the perceiver by the very fact of intent concentration and enriching experience, acquires more knowledge, indirectly though and perhaps unconsciously, of the object, object-field or situation. One who goes through an aesthetic experience naturally sees much more in the object or situation than one who does not have the same perceptual experience. Indeed, intrinsic perception leads inevitably to increasing knowledge of the world of objects, fields of objects and situations.

(f) The funded store of knowledge of the perceiver, just referred to, depending on its quality and quantity, determines to a very great extent, the nature and character of the perceiver's 'seeing,' that is, of his intrinsic perception. It may range from a very simple, flat and straight to a very complex web of impressions left on the senses, sensibilities and the mind of the perceiver.

### The Creative Process

Once an aesthetic experience has been gained and imprints received the perceiver desires to communicate his experience and imprints to others. Such communication amounts to be the articulation or concretisation of some-thing that is still purely personal or subjective, in terms of a material (words, sounds, colours, stone, human body itself and so on) which he thinks, according to his training and experience, is of intrinsic perceptual interest. With the confrontation of the perceiver-subject with his material begins the articulation or concreti-

sation, that is, the making of the public object, the object of art, and hence the objective phase.

But between the aesthetic experience and the beginning of the making, that is, the objective phase, there are a few points to consider in relation to the creative process even at the subjective phase.

*First*, the perceiver who is capable of an aesthetic experience, is distinguished by a sensitivity more heightened and sharpened than that of others. He is also a being with creative imagination (*bhāvanā*). This sensitivity and this creative imagination are the two basic principles of his inner consciousness, both conditioned and controlled by his personality that determines the value-depth of sensitivity and creative imagination.

*Secondly*, this personality of his, in its turn, is conditioned, in varying degrees, by the social order in which he finds himself, and a social order is always a very complex thing.

*Thirdly*, the sensitivity and the creative imagination, indeed his aesthetic impressions, are also conditioned by the interaction of the perceiver-subject and his material, the latter itself suggesting ideas and visions.

*Fourthly*, the nature and character of human consciousness is such that there is always a critical or evaluative judgement even at the initial stage of the creative process; at all later stages critical construction and guidance are ever-present. To say that creation is spontaneous, unconscious, is to be romantically disposed towards or blindly ignorant of the process operating in creation. The line that divides consciousness and unconsciousness in creation is very thin indeed. A musical composer or painter can only afford to be less conscious than the literary artist.

The objective phase involves consideration of: *first*, the aesthetic or perceptual character of the material itself; *secondly*, the technical process, or processes dictated or conditioned by the material; *thirdly*, the material acting as a creative collaborator at all stages of the creative process; and *fourthly*, the process of articulation, concretisation or objectification helping the artist to clarify his aesthetic vision to himself, mature his personality, expand and deepen his imagination and experience, evolve his technique etc. The objective phase in the creative process is thus as important as the subjective phase, and it is on the adequate operation of both that rests the quality of an art object.

### Content and Form

The sharp sensitivity and heightened creative imagination of a person, both lent significance by the depth of his personality, may have an aesthetic experience leading to the formulation of ideas, visions and images in his mind, but so long as he does not have the ability and skill to and cannot articulate, concretise and objectify them, he is not an artist. There is nothing called a silent poet, for instance.

Objectification calls for technical knowledge and experience and skill as

well as knowledge of the material, both conditioning each other.

The process of objectification, that is the creative process, conditions and affects the ideas, visions and images and the latter may be revised and refashioned as often they are, in course of the creative process.

Ideas, visions, images, symbols, feelings and emotions etc. go to constitute the content of art, figuration being the vehicle of this content. The mode and manner of objectification of the content determine the form.

Just as the choice of the form is conditioned by the nature of the content, so is the content viewed from the view point of form. Both interact and affect the other. There is a constant, ever active commerce between the two.

The dichotomy between form and content cannot be sustained on the creative level; they are separable only for purposes of analysis and understanding.

### Art and Science

Perceptual activity is in operation in science as well, especially with fundamental research workers in science. But whereas the joy and delight of intrinsic perception in aesthetic experience is an end in itself, that of the scientist is employed as a means to a further end, namely, to derive the facts of the observed object or situation. Apart from it there does not seem to be any difference between the perceptual experience in science and aesthetic experience.

Science deals with space-time structure of the world, and by seeking to explain this structure they deepen and expand our knowledge of nature and hence our knowledge and experience of life. This in its turn helps to enrich our sensitivity and creative imagination and thus condition and affect not only our perception but also our ideas and visions, indeed our total consciousness.

Technical and scientific innovations too contribute to enlargement of art-activity, qualitatively and quantitatively, and have always been most welcome.

But the large-scale technological-industrial civilisation of today has posed a problem to contemporary art-activity in the world. It is leading ultimately to alienation of souls and hence to dehumanisation of art. Much of contemporary world art has no human reference. De-humanisation in art, to my mind, is negation of art.

### Art and the Social Order

The artist is a social being of a given time and space, and howsoever un-social he may be, or socially unconscious, he cannot escape being conditioned and affected by the social order in which he finds himself. He has to work in the context of this social order.

The social order of a given time and space is a very complex thing. But basically it is constituted of (a) tradition and inheritance; (b) contemporary contacts, challenges and responses; (c) dreams and visions, aspirations and stri-



vings for the future. Ethnic and cultural pre-conditioning, environment and training determine the attitude and aptitude of the artist in respect of the relative importance of these three basic constituents.

This attitude and aptitude in their turn not only determine, depending on relative emphasis, the choice of the artist of his themes, and the character of his ideas, visions, images, symbols, *rasas* and *bhāvas*, that is, of the content of his art, but also his mode and manner of objectification, that is, his tools and techniques, in a word, the form of his art.

This attitude and aptitude, also determine, again depending on relative emphasis, his label, that is, whether he is a traditionalist or revivalist, or a modernist or futurist. India's art has witnessed all the three attitudes in their various grades and worn all the labels at different times of history. Our own times are witnessing it today. It is the dialectical operation of all the three labels that go to shape the culture of a given era.

I pointed out a while ago, that art activity from the Indian point of view, is a moral activity, moral in the sense that it aims at improvement of the human personality. It is therefore also a purposeful activity. Any socially responsible and purposeful art activity informed by a consciousness of the total social order must aim at improvement of human beings of the given social order by sharpening their senses and sensibilities, their mind and imagination, so as to enable them acquire a wider and deeper awareness of the time and space in which they find themselves. An artist if he claims to be true to his vocation and wear the badge of an artist cannot escape this responsibility.

These are the lessons I have learnt from the total history of Indian life and thought on the one hand and Indian art-activity on the other.

## INDIAN ART : ARTIST'S POINT OF VIEW

S. K. Saraswati

To many of us, not excluding persons of education and culture, Indian art seems to be strange, or to contain some elements of strangeness. A creation of art may attract or impress one by its rhythmic composition, expressive form, charming line, colour and skilful workmanship. This, to a certain extent, is an emotional reaction; but there still remains something else which one tries to comprehend, but fails. This comprehension depends on an understanding of the idea and meaning a particular form and accessories thereto are intended to convey. This involves, on the part of the spectator, an intellectual operation akin, in some measure, to that of the artist on whom devolves the responsibility of giving visual form to a particular idea and to endow it with an easily understandable meaning.

E. H. Gombrich, in one of his recent works,<sup>1</sup> has said that "There really is no such thing as art. There are only artists." What has been written so far on the ideas and principles of Indian art and its nature leaves the reader with the impression that in India the contrary is true. In such writings there has been always an emphasis on metaphysical or a philosophical bias<sup>2</sup>. Philosophy or metaphysics has, no doubt, a certain part to play in an art which is largely religious; but it would be wrong to suppose that the form or character of Indian art was determined entirely by metaphysical or philosophical dogma. The artist has his own means of expression and it is governed, in a large measure, as much by the technical problems of representation as by his own awareness, experience and understanding. It is good to hear that the Indian artist was a *yogin* giving form to a divine concept as visualised by him in an intense mental and spiritual concentration (*dhyāna-yoga*). This view is undoubtedly very edifying as a theoretical proposition. In practice, however, such a situation is untenable, since apart from other considerations, all art work was confined to guilds of artists who had to be commissioned to produce images of various religious affiliations whatever their own might have been. It is difficult to understand how an artist belonging to the Brahmanical faith could engage in contemplation and concentration in order to visualise the form and concept of Buddhist or Jaina ideology, and vice versa. Again, a philosophical speculation as Indian naturalism consisting of "innerva-

---

1. E. H. Gombrich, *Story of Art*, London, 1951, p. 5.

2. A. K. Coomaraswamy, H. Zimmer, Stella Kramrisch and a few others are the exponents of the metaphysical and philosophical view of Indian art.

tion as well as transubstantiation"<sup>3</sup> is at best subjective in approach and can hardly help the average individual in the understanding of Indian art. We have cited only one instance of philosophical approach and this will suffice to show how puzzling and bewildering such speculations can be.

It has been stressed often that Indian art, specially of the ancient period, is essentially religious and as such bound by canonical prescriptions that leave the artists very little scope for individuality or originality. It may be true only to a certain extent, but not wholly. Religion was, no doubt, the principal factor in Indian life; but Indians also thought in terms other than religion, and Indian art records the sum total of all Indian experiences. An idea or a concept was certainly dictated by religious beliefs and experiences. It is for the artist, however, to give shape and form to it. The role of the artist is, in no way, insignificant in the study and understanding of Indian art. One has to discover the mental alertness of the artist, his desires and aspirations, his concept of art and of its functions in life, his conception of man and nature, his theory of art and point of view in criticism, if he had formulated any, and his treatment of the subject matter and what it meant to him. A fuller understanding of Indian art would require a comprehension of all these.

This, however, is not an easy process. Indian art, it is well known, is largely anonymous. The number of art works that have survived from the past is by no means inconsiderable. Indeed, they can be counted by thousands. Contrasted with this, there remains the fact that we know the names of barely a dozen artists. Indian tradition divides the artists into two categories—celestial and terrestrial. It is with the former that art is said to have originated and it is to them that the authorship of many of the extant texts of the *śilpaśāstras*<sup>4</sup> are usually ascribed. No author of old has cared to describe or recount the achievements of the so-called terrestrial artists. According to E. Panofsky,<sup>5</sup> art history is a process of re-creation of the works of art and whatever literary data is available, when properly studied, is likely to help in this process.

A close scrutiny of the extant *śilpa* texts would lead to their division into a number of schools of thought. It is not impossible to recognise in the various texts the different schools of thought that originated with the terrestrial artists of masterly ability and experience, *āchāryas*, as they were called. Unfortunately, no detailed study of these texts has been made so far from this angle, and the difficulties of such a study are many and obvious. It cannot but be admitted that the *śilpa* texts record the collective experience, not of the theorists, but of the practising artists, and as such their information, supplemented by the data supplied by the extant art works, may be of immense value and interest in exploring the mind of the artist and his ideas, his manner of treatment of a subject matter and

3. Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 136.

4. T. P. Bhattacharya, *Canons of Indian Aesthetics*, Calcutta, for a list of the relevant *śilpa* texts.

5. E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, New York, 1965, p. 1 f.

such other matters concerning his creation. This is a vast field of study and it would be necessary to confine our attention in the present instance to one particular, but none the less important aspect, we mean the insistence in Indian art of certain basic types and concepts.

Divested of the metaphysical and didactic material, the extant *śilpa* texts are found to contain elaborate rules and formulae for the artists to follow, both as regards technique as well as iconography. In the delineation of the form, again, certain schemes were prescribed for the suggestion of proper moods, emotions and actions. The schema constitute a big *repertoire* and it is interesting to find how often they recur throughout the vast range of Indian art as suggestive of the same meaning and imports. There are reasons to suppose that the schema consisting of certain basic types and concepts, were devised by the artists themselves as aids to the psychology of representation. Their persistence in time and space would indicate how effective and expressive they were.

We may quote here a passage from the *Aṭṭhasālīnī* which is found to be very apposite in this context as emphasising the important role of the artist. "A mental concept (*chitta-saññā*) arises in the mind of the painter, that such and such a shape (*rūpa*) must be made in such and such a way. . . . . All the various arts (*śilpa*) are produced by the mind."<sup>6</sup> The author of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* (11, 117, 118) repeats also the same maxim when he says that "a painting exists in the mind, not in colour, nor in the surface, nor in the representation" (*raṅge na vidyate chitram na bhūmau na cha bhājane*). The *Aṭṭhasālīnī* makes it clear that such concepts (*saññā*) arise in the mind nor of the saint or seer, but of the painter, i.e., the artist, and it is he who decides in what manner a particular *rūpa* should be made. The aesthetic intention of the artist along with his problems and his definitive role, seems to be fully emphasised in this passage and there is no need to under-estimate his place in Indian art activity.

It is clear from the above that the artist played a decisive part in the evolution of Indian art and its march from one achievement to other. He, and not the metaphysicist, nor the philosopher, was responsible for determining the form and character of Indian art. The basic types and concepts that distinguished Indian art from that of the other countries were his inventions, so were the canons of proportions. Each type had its particular use and application, each concept, its specific meaning and import. Elsewhere we have referred to instances of certain types and concepts along with their aesthetic imports. Space and time forbid mention here of further such instances. That the types and concepts remained valid for centuries and spread even beyond the confines of India speak of their effectiveness and expressiveness. We have had enough of metaphysical and philosophical interpretations of Indian Art. One should plead now for an interpretation of Indian art from the artist's point of view.

6. As quoted by Coomaraswamy, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, New York, 1934, p. 173, n. 1.

7. S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 120-31.

# THE AESTHETICS OF INDIAN MUSIC AND DANCE

Shyamala Sharma

INDIAN music and dance have a long tradition and are as old as the *Vedas*. Even though the science of music and dance developed through the centuries, the Indian thinkers till recently, have scarcely enquired into the aesthetic aspects of these arts. This is not only true about music and dance, but true about all arts as such. The artists, while busy creating their works of art have never consciously thought of producing a work of 'art' and 'beauty'. They were all possessed by one single desire which was to convey the religious message in some concrete form.

The philosophers who could have and ought to have asked this question, were more interested in epistemological and ontological problems and that is why the question of 'art' and 'beauty' was never discussed as a philosophical problem.

The awareness that music, dance and drama are works of art with certain potentiality to have deep influence on the people, is expressed by Bharata Muni in his *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the first book of Indian aesthetics. Yet we cannot call it a book of aesthetics, because it does not discuss theoretically the powers and pleasures of art. But the important feature of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* is its recognition of dance, music and drama as works of art and granting them the status which the four *Vedas* enjoyed. The *Nāṭyaveda*, says Bharata Muni, is a creation of God Brahmā—

*Vedōpvedaihi sambaddho nāṭyavedo Mahātmanā  
evam Bhagavatā sṛishto Brahmaṇā sarvavedinā*

(Verse 18, 1st Chapter)

It is referred to as the "*Pañchamam Vedam*"—the fifth Veda, and this shows how the author of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* was anxious to keep the *Nāṭyaveda* on the same footing as the other *Vedas* which were held in a very high esteem.

He further points out that the *nāṭya* is meant to present to the audience the feelings and situations in the lives of different people—

*Nānābhāvopsampannam nānāvasthāntarātmakam  
Lōkvrīttānukaraṇam nāṭyametanmayā kṛitam*

(Verse 112, 1st Chapter)

Further the purpose of the *nāṭya* is to recreate the fatigued, aggrieved, miserable and the sages—

*duḥkkhārtānām śramārtānām śokārtānām tapasvinām  
visrāntijananam kāle nāṭyametadbhavishyati*

(Verse 114, 1st Chapter)

These arts are not only capable of affording recreation to the above class of people, but they are further claimed to have the potency of educating their minds and increasing their intellectual powers, life and success etc.

*dharmyam yasasyamāyushyam hitam buddhividardhanam  
lōkōpadeśajanānam nāṭyametadbhaviṣhyati*

(Verse 115, 1st Chapter)

Again the term *Rangapiṭham* for the stage is very significant. There is no doubt that Bharata Muni wanted to signify that the stage was a source of recreation and that this recreation was not an insignificant part of life, as the God Brahmā himself had devised it and took care of it.

Even though the *Nāṭya Śāstra* provides us with the attitude which an Indian mind bore to the arts of dance, music and drama, it seems to take the aesthetic effects ascribed to them for granted. There is no clarification on the point as to how the *nāṭya* can have the effects which are claimed for it and what is it in these arts that can claim this credit.

The later thinkers did try to point out the possibility of producing the *rasa* in these arts and also in literature, poetry etc. and the requisite conditions for its enjoyment. The schools of *dhvani*, *alankāra*, *rīti* and *vakrōkti* developed to elaborate and interpret the concept of *rasa* in poetry. Subsequently, there has been a lot of thinking and literature on these problems.

Yet the fact remains that there has been hardly any serious thinking in India about the philosophy and psychology of the aesthetic effects of music and dance, to be more correct, art in general. This is particularly surprising when we see that music and dance are the most popular arts, admired by almost all.

Music and dance have enjoyed a great prestige in India. This is to be witnessed not only from the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, but also by the concepts of deities like Nārada, Sarasvatī, Gandharva, Yakshas, Naṭarāja, Naṭvara and so on. This makes it clear that these arts were deified by the Indian thinkers. Actually, the very birth of music has been found in the religious activity of chanting the *Sama-Vedic* hymns. The Vedic text provided the content, and the form suggested itself to these singers as a matter of discovery. They found out that the sound produced from the different parts of the body—the abdomen, lungs, throat and head made a system by itself. The ratios and proportions which the sound pattern displayed were discovered and the science of *śyutis* was developed. The musical scales were standardized after certain controversy and laws were framed to regulate the practice of singing. The forms of melodies were further evolved and the system of *rāgās* established.

We have a large number of works on music written by various authors like Nārada, Dattila, Bharata, Śārṅgadeva, Subhankara, Vidyāraṇya, etc. These works deal with the science of music rather than music as an art.

In modern days, attempts have been made to compare Indian music with Western music, and to point out the characteristics of each. Indian music is generally described as spiritual, contemplative and meditative. We must however see that there is some vagueness in such description. The meaning of spirituality is not very clear and the question that is often raised is this: viz., the music with definite religious devotional literary compositions can be called spiritual, if spiritual means religious, but the present form of Hindustānī music is not necessarily devotional, and in that case it is not proper to call it spiritual.

The term 'spiritual' is very ambiguous. The philosophical thinkers divide the known world into body and spirit, spirit representing all that is non-material. Mind being non-material is further called a spirit and the word spiritual is meant to cover all mental function. In Indian philosophy, however, the word spiritual not only suggests what is mental but it is further associated with all the cravings and aspirations of the mind for the transcendental. The Indian philosophers have always stressed the distinction of mind and body from the soul—the *ātman*. The *ātman* transcends even the body and the psyche and aspires for a unity with the *Brahman*—the ultimate reality. The goals like self-realization, liberation, reward after death are therefore treated as spiritual goals, implying that they are the things aspired by the soul and not the mind associated with the body.

This Upanishadic teaching has brought into existence the different schools of Indian philosophy. If the Advaitic philosophy would have predominated and overpowered the other schools of thinking, there would have been no art of any kind in India. Yet the Advaitic school does teach spiritual goals. The Advaita Vedānta believes in the reality of the *Brahman* alone and the appearance of the *Brāhmaṇa* as the world is called illusory. The *Brahman* is treated as a static reality, perfectly capable of being realised by the *ātman* in an intuitive knowledge. The common man cannot get an access to this reality because the phenomenological knowledge cannot come to know something that is beyond time and space and other categories of knowledge. He therefore conceives the *Brahman* as a God with certain specific qualities—the *saḡuṇa sākāra*. But this can be justified only for practical reasons while theoretically no reality can be granted to such a God. The Advaitic philosopher, ultimately, will never think it worthwhile to realise this God. The ultimate end is the knowledge of the identity between the *ātman* and the *Brāhmaṇa* through intuition.

Such a teaching would be hardly a source of the arts as we find India is rich in. First of all, the knowledge of the ultimate reality implies theoretical activity, and there is no encouragement for any practical activity like art.

Indian art on the other hand does accept the reality of a *saḡuṇa sākāra Brahman*—the God with certain forms and characteristics. It is this God who is conceived either as Śiva or Vishnu or Śakti and had it not been

for the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava schools of *bhakti* cult, we would not have had the huge architectural constructions of temples and sculptures. The dancing also is a way of realising the God and we must see that the different schools like Bharata Nāṭyam, Kathak, Manipurī, etc. are the creation of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava schools. Without the devotion to a God in whose reality the devotee believes, there would have been no effort to express him through dance, music, architecture, sculpture, etc. Buddhism and Jainism have also served as important sources of artistic activity in India. The very being of art in India is religion—the various forms of it are Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaktism, Buddhism and Jainism. Those who judge the merits of these arts by abstracting them from their mainsprings, are creating artificiality and trying to trace their aesthetic merits in some superficial qualities. The aesthetic value can never be traced in the form alone nor in the content alone, but in the organic synthesis between the two. A beautiful art is always a meeting ground of the sublime and the particular—the ideal and the sensuous.

I shall make this point clear in the following paragraph.

If we analyse all our experiences, we find that some of them are purely physiological, some biological and some psychological. All our physiological functions are bodily functions, physico-chemical in nature, governed by the laws relating to matter. The biological functions are governed by the laws of evolution. The basic urges of self-preservation and reproduction evolve the social relations which are governed by the socio-political laws. Mind with all its unconscious, semi-conscious and conscious levels is found to be functioning by certain teleological laws.

These three concepts, viz., matter, life and mind are intelligible to human understanding in three different ways—first as individual objects in themselves, then unified by scientific thinking in different systems and then as values at the speculative or philosophical stage. Mind, considered as a value is found to be most flexible as it allows itself to be organised fully according to the laws of self-conscious reason. Matter and life offer more resistance, even though they conform to certain rational ideals. Matter conforms to the norms of reason when it can be reduced to the mathematical unities like symmetry, proportion, balance, etc. The biological experience at the human level hardly remains purely biological. The instinctive behaviour leads to the formation of society and social laws. Reason sets the norms for social relations by postulating the Ideal State where there will be best harmony and coherence. The social philosophy thus culminates in the political philosophy.

When reason begins to operate in the field of psychological functions of mind, it begins to mould the mind by organising the different elements in an integrated whole. The mind thus becomes the self and functions as a whole. This self is the presupposition of moral life and we find that it



is at this level that reason can have its best operations. The moral ideals guided by reason are the independent ideals of the self and in this sense they are the spiritual ideals of the organised mind. The sublime—the most rational state—for the spiritual experience is posited in the religious experience. It is, in other words, realising the ideal moral experience in the form of God. God becomes the symbol of that which is highly rational—the epitome of all values. The religious experience is to be understood as the realisation of the God in theory and not simply as an expression of institutionalised codified form of religion.

The concept of God is not static and fixed, and it changes as the values change. The evolution of this concept shows a certain dialectical order. The history of religion shows that God was conceived in the first stage as the theoretical expression of the sublime in nature, i.e., as the principle of unity, maintenance and order in nature. Gradually, the social values were symbolised through God and only at a more developed stage God has become the symbol of spiritual values like truth, benevolence and other moral ideals.

If religion realises the sublime in theory, art realises the sublime in practice by embodying the universal abstract concepts in a concrete particular objective situation. In other words, it is the representation of the sublime in practice. While religion conceives the ideal experience through which the rational values can be represented, art makes something that can be presented to sensuous experience.

The duality between theory and practice is not peculiar to rational experience alone, but exists at all the levels of experience. At the perceptual level, this distinction is hardly noticeable. Yet it exists in the form of cognition and reflex actions. At the scientific level it exists in the form of a scientific discovery of a uniformity and invention of an artifact that can embody this uniformity. For example, the discovery of physics of the laws of sound has brought into existence several artifacts like telephone, telegraph, radio, etc. At the rational level, the duality exists in the form of philosophical understanding of rational values and making artifacts which can represent these values. It is at this level that art becomes beautiful. Beauty is a value that can be ascribed only to those artifacts which are meant to represent the sublime—the highest values. It is to be judged by finding out in what organic degree the synthesis between the sublime and particular has been effected by the artist. The more intense is this synthesis, the more beautiful the art is.

We do not measure the artifacts and crafts which embody the scientific principles by the beauty value. Here the measure of judgement is utility. Engineering is an art based on the sciences of physics and mathematics. The building constructed according to the science of engineering is, first and foremost, meant to be useful. But in addition, it may fulfil the conditions

of beauty value also in being symmetrical, proportionate and balanced. But as soon as we bring in the question of symmetry, proportion and balance, we realise that the artifact is an embodiment of the sublime at the level of matter, over and above being the practical representation of a scientific truth.

At the perceptual level, we measure the value of reflex actions and instincts by the standard of hedonistic pleasure and pain.

In all these practical activities, the law of contrary-negation operates and this differentiates the practical activities from the theoretical. The theoretical activities are governed by the law of non-contradiction. The knowledge is either right or wrong but cannot be neither right nor wrong. Right and wrong are contradictory terms mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. They imply a conceptual negation. But an art may be good or bad and neither good nor bad. Good and bad are not conceptually negating terms but two concrete positive situations, involving in between many degrees of goodness and badness. In theoretical activities the element of verification is very important while in practical activities, there is no question of verification. The negation between pleasure and pain, useful and useless and beautiful and ugly is contrary and that is the reason why we may not have either the beautiful or the ugly arts, but arts which have varying degrees of beauty and ugliness. The arts like architecture and sculpture try to realise the sublime at the level of matter, and that is why symmetry, proportion, balance are the measures of beauty of such works. Painting shares the aspect of these dimensional arts but it also depicts the social values through proper themes. The literary arts like epic poetry, drama, novel, essay, story, etc., try to represent the social, political and moral values.

The spiritual values like the devotion to God, faith, submission, and the identity with the divine and such other subtle spiritual aspirations of human mind are best represented through lyrical poetry, dance and music. The highest religious experience lands in a mystical apprehension of God and the poetic works like *Gītāñjali* by Rabindranath Tagore are marked with this mysticism.

In fact, there is no other art except music which can particularise so well this mystic feeling of identity of self with the divine, the reason being the suppleness and liveliness of the medium of music, the sound. Religious thinkers discovered the potentiality of sound, and they made use of it to express their relation to God. The system of *śrutis* is a well planned science, and epitome of rational principle of balance, ratio and proportion. The melodies in the form of *rāgās* try to combine the notes which bear a relationship of balance and proportion. Every *rāgā* has its own *vādin*—the sonant, the *samvādin*—assonant, the *anuvādin* and the

*vivādin* notes. It is these notes which grant a certain form to each *rāga*, and an individuality.

The different *rāgās*, thus, are based on the mathematical proportions among the various musical tones and microtones. Actually, this mathematical principle is the very ground of the science of music. Music in all parts of the world, is a science of harmony, balance and rhythm. The harmony in astronomical spheres is said to have inspired Pythagoras. The fundamental truth about music is its tremendous potentiality to raise man to a spiritual height of experience. Plato also talked of music as the form in which divine beauty could be traced. He condemned all arts but upheld music as the means of realising the Supreme Beauty.

Our ancient literature bears enough evidence of the fact that people in India were fully aware of the influence of music. The flute playing of Lord Krishna had a magical effect on men and women and also on the cattles. This is not a legendary account of music. Even today we find that there is hardly any person who is not moved by the musical sound. It is true of course that all of us do not seek the 'mystical identity.' Music serves the requirements of different types of people. At one extreme, it tries to retain its pure classical form having an appeal to a selected few, and at the other extreme the "Hamam" and "Aspro" music serves the commercial purpose of the business community. The latter is to be called music only by courtesy. In between, we have all sorts of music—the didactic, devotional, music of joy and mirth, music inspiring courage and valour, music expressing romance, miseries, hopes and desires, frustration and pleasures, etc. The specific character which music has is due to the literary content which gives to the music a concrete particular meaning and note.

The classical music in the South is out and out devotional and more rigid in form than the Hindustānī music. The poets like Tyāgarāja, Purandardāsa, Svati Tirunal, etc., have been also the composers of *rāgās* and good singers themselves. They have combined poetry, music and singing in one piece. This combination has elevated the prestige of music and music in turn has beautified their devotion.

Hindustānī classical music till recently has been devotional mainly. The *dhrupad* style of singing continues to stick to this devotional character of music. But the *khyāl* form of Hindustānī music shows a deviation, which is the result of Persian influence in the North. If the light classical music, i.e., *thumrī*, *dādrā*, *gazel*, *tappā*, etc., gives more predominance to romance, the pangs of separation, the feminine jealousies and such other allied emotions, the *khyāl* form does not give much importance to the literary composition. Its direct concern is with the modulations of the musical notes themselves. This raises a problem whether music requires the body of word-content at all, and if not, what makes it aesthetically valuable?

The music which contains this literary text is more specific in its effect, and it concretely vocalises the mute words. By lending the musical voice to these words, the singer increases the potency of these words and that is how the lyrics of Mīrā, Kabir, Tulsi, etc., have become immortal. Perhaps the mere recital of these poems would not have such great effect. The latest evolution in Hindustānī music exploits this potency of the musical notes to its full extent. Without any specific word-content, every *rāga* has a capacity to produce a certain image of form and mood, and a feeling tone. A sensitive mind catches this feeling tone and passes into the mood the *rāga* is trying to create. The *Malkosh*, for example, has a note of sobriety and weight, but just by a change in the *nishāda*, the tension is relieved and the mood is lightened. The *Todī* by all consent, is highly dynamic in its effect with its peculiar combination of the *komal risabha* and *tivra madhyama*. A *Bhūpālī* would never tolerate mirth and fun. *Bāgesrī* is more suited for the light mood of romance. The *desa* and *khambaj* with their grace notes depict before us the delicate feminine wooings and grumbles. The *Pūriyā* and *Pūrvī* with their soft notes remind us of all the delicacies and gentleness of life. A good musician knows how to modulate and stress the musical notes. In fact, the aesthetic effect is due to the successful synthesis between the image of the concept of the *rāga* and the actual rendering of the notes. Even though the different *rāgās* handle the same notes, one way of handling them can bring about a definite image different than the one produced by a different way of handling the same notes. A very subtle deviation in one single note changes the whole mood.

This is true of the instrumental music also. Every music lover is fully aware of the enchantment brought about by the instruments like *sitār*, *violin*, *vīṇā*, *sarod*, *flute* and *shehnai*. The credit goes to the success which the masters of these instrument-players have achieved in employing their skill and the depth of their musical personality.

Can we say that the experience of enjoying these moods is a mere association we have been taught to make in our minds? The psychological theory may explain this by the principle of empathy, the deliberate projection of the subjective states of mind into the inanimate patterns of sound. It is by this projection, we may say, that we see the submissive mood in one type of *Bhairavī* and the romance in the *Bhairavī Ṭhumrī* sung in a different way.

Leaving aside all these particular effects, we can go to a more fundamental effect of Indian music. With the *Tānpūrā* in perfect tune, when the singer attunes his voice, he himself passes into a trance and so does the sensitive listener. We seem to share the joy and pleasure with the first Vedic singer who discovered the sound. It is not a mere contemplation and meditation, but a positive feeling of a mystical identity with the

divine in pure abstract form. The meaning of the word *nādabrahma* reveals itself through such an experience. As the singer develops the melody, the listener experiences different types of emotional tensions and surges. The rhythm provided by the *tablā*, *mṛidangam* or *pakhvāj* reveals again how this flight of the musician in his notes to create such tensions and moods is bound by this principle of unity and order. The total effect is profound and stirs up the whole being.

It is not, however, to be believed that every singer can work out this magic. To talk in the philosophic language, the law of contrary-negation operates in the field of artistic creation and therefore the effects are not merely beautiful and ugly, but varying in their nature. Very few musicians may be having all requisite conditions to make themselves successful—the imagination, spontaneity, technical skill and a good voice. Many are lost in mere technicalities, and in their effort to make music a matter of mere technical perfection, they make music as repulsive as possible.

Sound is not a spatial entity like colour or any other material. It is temporal, and each note has a limited time-span. The effect vanishes as soon as the stimulus vanishes. The combination of the notes involve the mathematical principles of ratio, balance and proportion in the auditory field. The vanishing note lingers in memory. The retrospective effects along with the progressing juxtaposed notes in succession evolve an integrated whole pattern of the *rāga*.

The media of the other arts are spatial and they are more inert on this account. The sound being dynamic by its very nature, finds a closer tie and affinity with the dynamism of the imagination, which is the real ontological principle of creation of art.

Now the moods expressed through the *rāgās* are not the ends in themselves. We certainly do not express the hedious moods—the agitative, irritative and aggressive. We also do not consider the animal pleasures of food, warmth, lust, etc., worth expressing at all. In other words, we do not give a vent to our private self, which may have innumerable states of consciousness, but we always make an attempt to convey the longing of the rational self—the longings for harmony, unity, order, nobility, devotion, faith, submission, love, etc. For expressing these rational aspirations of human mind, it is not necessary always to give to music the body of words, since the sound by itself is able to achieve it.

Indian dance also seems to have the same spiritual aspiration. Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism have brought into existence the forms of dances known as the Bharata Nāṭyam, Kathak, Maṇipurī, etc. The author of *Nāṭya Śāstra* includes in *nāṭya*, dance drama and music and guides the dancers by describing 108 poses of dance. Actually, the *nāṭya* provides both visual and auditory pleasures.

The purpose of the classical dances of India is never to expose the

human body. Rather, the human body is treated as the medium which can be moulded in such a way as to express religious feelings. The Indian artist exploits every means to express this purpose. Music and dance have a great affinity between themselves. Both presuppose the principles of symmetry, harmony, balance and rhythm. While music presents these principles in auditory field, dance presents them in visual field. Dance, thus, becomes a spectacular art, and conveys its message through rhythmic gestures and movements of the body.

Śiva as a dancing God is called "Naṭarāja"—supreme dancer. The dance of Śiva is called the Tāṇḍava-Nṛitya and it is a dance of ecstasy. It represents the rhythm and unity of the universe and thus it represents the sublimity of nature.

Indian dance involves three elements—*nṛitta*, *nṛitya* and *nāṭya*. The *nṛitta* is the rhythmic movement of body for its own sake. The *nṛitya* element adds *abhinaya* or expression to it and the *nāṭya* is the drama or the theme presented through the rhythmic movements and expressions. No dance is complete without these three elements. This shows that the dance has a certain theme and purpose which it tries to reveal through movements and expressions. Mere movements of the body have no significance, however rhythmic and balanced the poses may be. Like the musical notes, the movements themselves become potential and dynamic to express the theme of the dance. But yet music forms an important element in the dance. The purport of the theme is provided by the word-body of the song to which the dance corresponds.

Dance, as it has been said, was born out of religious urge. Even to this date, Indian dances are woven around religious themes. The relation between man and God may be conveyed through different forms and this is what we find in all the dance themes. In fact, Indian dance allows a tremendous scope to use the imagination and invest deep meaning and representativeness in the movements, gestures and expressions. The science of dance has regulated and codified the symbolic meanings of the different gestures and movements. Through these symbolic gestures and poses, the dancer can produce a very rich drama of life, and visualise before us a divine form of love, devotion and submission to God.

The poetic works of Jayadeva have provided a great treasure of themes to be expressed through dance. The Vaiṣṇavite thinkers conceive of Lord Krishna as the "Naṭavara" and the Kathak and Manipurī styles of dances present various forms of the relationship between Rādhā and Kṛishṇa, predominantly the romantic aspect of it. The poetic beauty of *Gīta-Govindam* is transformed into a musical and spectacular beauty. Even the Kathākali school borrows its themes from *Gīta-Govindam* even though it takes its themes mainly from the *Purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*.

The chief characteristic of Indian music and dance is the originality

and uniqueness found in every performance that is made. The music and dance are bound by several rules and regulations regarding the combination of notes and rhythm etc. Yet the artist enjoys a full freedom to render the *rāga* or the *varṇam* in Bharata Nāṭyam in his or her own way. He can show his richness of imagination in every performance. The artist is like the painter who objectifies a figure and a form of his dream and imagination in some concrete sensuous form. The image emerges gradually through the musical notes and the movements and gestures of the artist. It is not necessary that the second performance of the same artist will produce exactly the identical image. He is guided by the inspirations and intuitions he receives at the very moment when he is creating this picture. And that is the reason why there is a uniqueness and freshness in every act of the artist's creation.

To appreciate Indian art, one must understand how poetry, literature, music, dancing, painting and sculpture go hand in hand. Jayadeva was a poet, singer and dancer. The Rāmāyaṇa is not only a piece of literature, but it is also sung, danced, dramatised, painted and frozen into stone. The 'karanas' described by Bharata Muni are not only meant for the dancers, but also for the architects and sculptors who have carved out these poses in the gopuras surrounding the Naṭarāja temple in Chidambaram, and other places. The *Jātaka* stories are not merely to be narrated through prose writings but they are dramatised and painted. The Ajanta and Ellora caves have become the rich heritage of Indian art and brought the mute stories into a permanent visual form.

The very spirit of Indian art is religious. That is why every art is intent on conveying the same message through its respective medium. But yet we must see that gigantic changes have swept over the whole world of art everywhere, and India cannot be immune to it. Poetry, literature, painting and sculpture have undergone tremendous changes and exposed themselves to what is called modernism in art. They show a susceptibility to digest the latest evolutions in modernism. But this modernism has not, somehow or other, influenced Indian music and dance. These two arts do not show any tendency to deviate from the traditional motives and forms. One can yet make an effort to visualize as to what kind of music and dance we shall have when modernism takes them in their sweep! What will happen if surrealism captures music and dance and makes the artist incumbent to express the pervert personality—the diffused, chaotic and irrational urges of the animal in man? Art is the expression of the sublime in a particular concrete form and we can hope to enjoy the aesthetic pleasures of music and dance so long as it remains the expression of the sublime—and not of the pervert.

## INDIAN AESTHETICS AND ART ACTIVITY

Kapila Vatsyayan

THE discussion of aesthetics has been a discussion either from the point of view of metaphysics or logic or on the nature of aesthetic experience from the philosophic or the psychological point of view; sometimes it has also been an enunciation of the technique of art creation by theoreticians. There has also been some discussion of art activity, mostly contemporary art activity in the context of visual arts, in fact largely painting and not even sculpture.

My attempt today is to relate the Indian aesthetic theory with the practice specially in the field of performing arts. A theory of aesthetics can have meaning and significance only if it is shared by the creators of artistic forms. The Indian aesthetic theories when they evolved and when they were followed had a validity both for theoreticians and artists as also for the spectator because they shared a common body of beliefs. It is these beliefs that gave them a language of communication.

What were these beliefs then, and one might ask the question that why were they never stated by the aesthetician? Further, one may also ask the question that do these beliefs and assumptions guide the creative mind even today? The only answer that one can give is that the writer of Indian aesthetics did not believe that he was also a philosopher. He had fully accepted the hypothesis of the philosophic works. In some cases the same author had written on these assumptions, but in the work on aesthetics he had confined himself to a statement of how the artistic form may be created in order to evoke a state of being. The Sanskrit texts on aesthetics, specially the *Nāṭya Sāstra*, etc., are singularly silent about the nature of the aesthetic experience which resulted in the artistic creation. This is not to say that they did not have a view-point on the nature of aesthetic experience. Going back to the question of what these beliefs were in a lay-man's language as he understood it and in the lay-man's beliefs as he practised them, they may be stated as follows:

The first and foremost was his attitude to death. The scriptures had taught him, the philosophic works had asserted it, the *Purāṇas* had manifested it through allegories and analogies that death was not a finality. He, like his forefathers, did not believe that life ended with death. It



was on account of this belief (which the traditional Indian even today shares with his forefathers) that the drama of climax could not be conceived of in this country. Life was a varied manifestation of the end and death was a mere passing.

He did not view Fate in the same manner as perhaps the Greeks did. The Indian did not believe that there was a superior super-human Fate which was crushing him and that he had to find his identity only by giving an answer to that Fate which was constantly opposing him. Instead, he was aware that the Gods could themselves take human forms to play with him. Even the apparent contradictions and ironies of life were only different manifestations of a bigger greater unifying power. The greatness of the human being lay thus, according to the Indian, in holding contradictions or apparent contradictions together. The counterpoising of opposites or of two completely contrasting forces in order to arrive at a third force was a conception which was known to him but which did not become the central principle of his life. He did not thus believe in conflict as a central principle. One may call this an amazing acceptance of life and one may think of this as the Indian's incapacity to face a superior crushing force. Be that as it may, this attitude to life determined his aesthetic theories and his art creation.

Resulting out of this was the consciousness that for a cultivated man both pain and pleasure were equal if not unreal. He, therefore, did not consider pleasurable relief as an end to be striven for. *Sama duḥkha kshamī of the Gītā* was an ideal before this man and what he saw or experienced was indeed to be taken from a plane in which his identification was not on the same level as the identification of a person looking at another person conquering evil in order to get at happiness. He was indeed looking at life as a conglomeration of different moods and aspects which were after all the different forms of the detached one.

The aesthetician and the art creator both accepted these assumptions. To them also life was a series of happenings through which detachment was to be achieved in the very process of playing one's part as an involved but not an emotionally attached person. The treatment of pain, therefore, could not be on the same level as it is in the art of the West. It had necessarily to be different. Indeed, the word 'pain' could not have the same dimension as the words 'pain' and 'suffering' in the western context. The word 'suffering' cannot be equated even with the word *saṅgharsha*: two different areas of consciousness were being explored.

All these resulted in the aesthetic writers and the art creators consciously and deliberately setting out to embody states of being through the artistic creation rather than intellectual conflicts which could be resolved through the artistic creation. They consciously believed that the world of art was a world of cultivated feeling and that their business was to

embody this world of feeling through states of being rather than to manifest the process of becoming of man. It has been argued by some that intellectually one cannot come to the point of dealing only with feeling and of banishing the intellect from the sphere of the artistic creation. This is in fact the greatness as also the weakness of the Indian artistic tradition. The Indian theoretician as also the Indian creative artist so completely believed in the rightness of those assumptions that in his artistic creations he did not seek to challenge them or to find new answers for the meaning of life. His was an attempt to give new interpretation to the known collective consciousness of the people. He was not intellectually finding new values but was through a systematic use of the intellect finding the new shades of meaning in the world of cultivated feeling; this is specially true of the plastic and the performing arts. In the field of creative literature, the statement has to be restricted to the sphere of the *kāvya*s and the *nāṭaka*s.

The feeling that he sought to embody and the states of being which he wanted to evoke had nothing to do with subjective feeling or emotion as it is understood in the context of western aesthetics. This was abstract feeling, devoid of personal emotion where individual character had no part to play. Indian drama is thus almost static from the western point of view because character does not grow as in western drama.

In aesthetics, this concern with feeling with states of being which would ultimately take one to the ideal state or that ideal experience which would be akin to the supreme experience of bliss, namely *brahmānanda*, gave rise to the theory of *rasa* both as a theory of transcendental experience and as a system of technique. A review of Bharata's successors and commentators will show that in the aesthetic world there was an unchallenged acceptance of the primacy of literature. All other arts were perhaps only illustrations of the content of the literary pieces.

In the tradition there was also an unchallenged recognition and acceptance of the inter-dependence and inter-relationship of the arts. Indeed, no art was considered in its isolation and at no time was it accepted that the artist in one medium could be effective without a technical knowledge of the other media.

The acceptance of the primacy of literature within a frame-work of inter-dependence and inter-relationship of the arts led to the evolution of a system of technique equally applicable to all the arts. The theory of artistic creation in an art became merely a set of rules for evoking particular states of being in that art, a technique to help the artist to put together in a certain order specific constituents in order to build a homogeneous mood or a state of being. The principle of *sthāyī bhāva* became a guiding principle for artists working in any medium. This incorporated another vital concept which determined the form of the artistic creation: the

concept of *vyabhichārī bhāva* or what is known as transitory state. These may be translated more accurately as states which can be transferred.

The creative artist being a highly self-conscious, sophisticated and cultivated person tried to conform as far as possible to these basic tenets because he believed in them and accepted them.

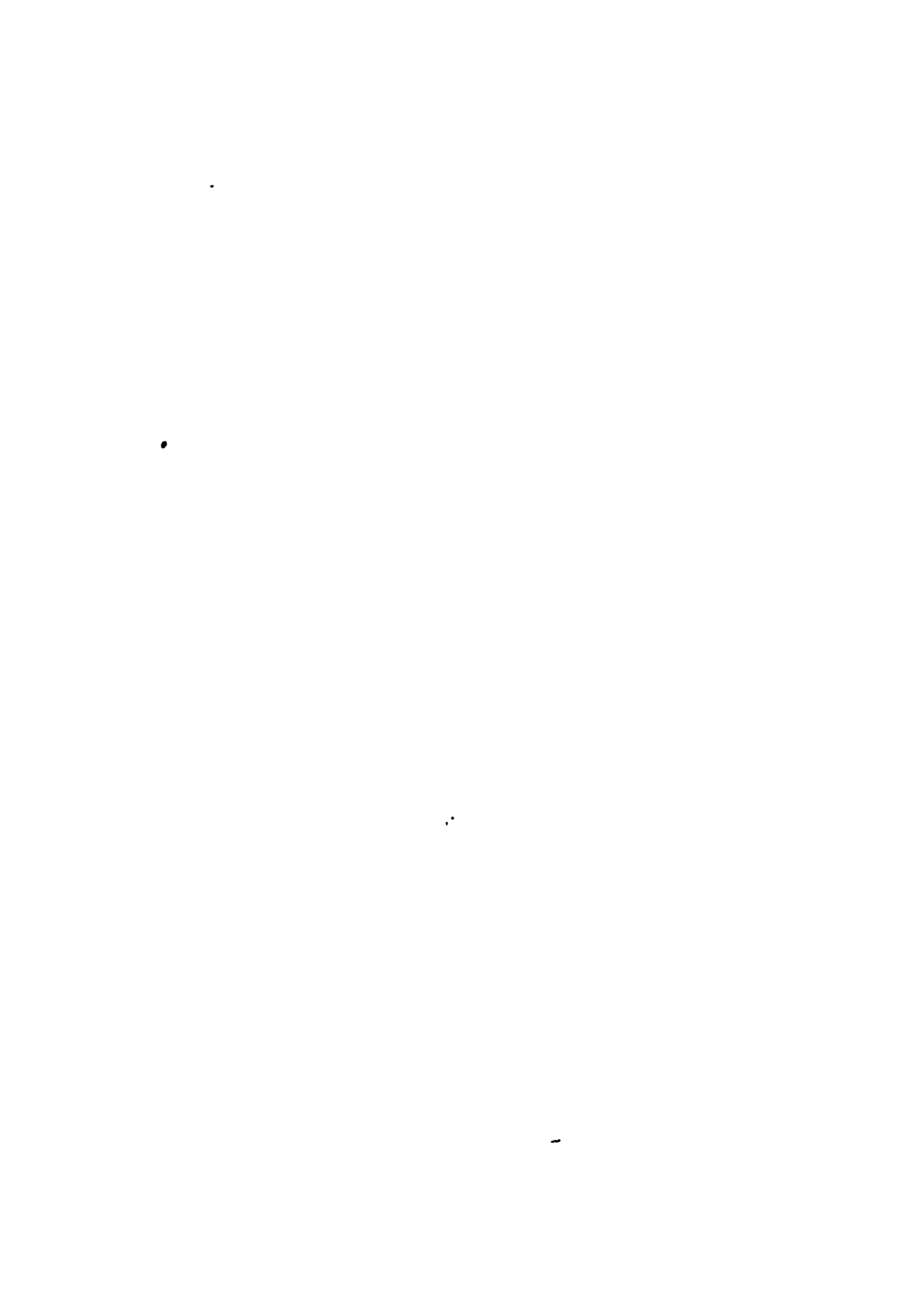
The question which may still be asked is: how did the Indian artist find it possible to conform to these principles and follow this system of technique for nearly 14-15 centuries? Apart from other answers, there is one in the theory itself to which I should like to draw your attention. This was the concept of *vyabhichārī bhāva* or the transitory state. It appears to me that the Indian artist would have felt completely suffocated had he not received the freedom which this principle provided. Through the *vyabhichārī bhāva* or *sañchārī bhāva* he could interpret permanent or the dominant state (*sthāyī bhāva*) in as many ways as he liked and show the picture of the world with his particular view-point without departing from the overall structure of the aesthetic theory. Character types were thus never stagnant in drama. The images, although they were within the organised system of proportions and weights, were never identical. Although the notes of the *rāga* were set, there were a thousand ways in which it could be interpreted. It was this principle which gave the Indian artist a unique avenue of freedom. He could in short improvise endlessly on a given theme.

To day, the modern man in India has begun to question the basic assumptions which we have mentioned above. It naturally began in literature first, followed by the other arts. In India 'modern' man began the moment he ceased to believe that Death was not a finality and to recognise that there was a Fate which crushed him and that he had to establish identity as an individual. In artistic creation, therefore, his concern was naturally with the individual man and not with an abstract feeling. In the visual arts the break-away from the tradition came when the Indian artist ceased to share the beliefs and began to look upon himself as a thinker and as one who had to formulate new answers. In technique he moved away from the creation of abstract images to the creation of either individual forms or to the expression of subjective feeling. Ironically enough the tradition continued only in the ephemeral arts of music and dance. The classical musician and dancer perhaps were not exposed to external influences in the same manner and his very lack of education helped him to be the custodian of an older Indian tradition. He did believe that through the concentrated activity of his art he could have the experience which was akin to the supreme experience of bliss. He continued to believe that preparation for salvation could be his if he could touch the right note, perform the right dance and evoke the right state. Through the '*sādhana*' of the art he could be the *satpātra* of the

mystical experience. In technique he felt no need to depart from the tradition because the system of the *rāga* and the *tāla* in Indian music gave him an uncommon freedom. The concept of *vyabhichārī bhāva* and the *sañchārī bhāva* can be seen at its best in these arts. The artist could impose upon himself the limitations of choosing one scale, that is one *rāga* and one *tāla*. However, once he had chosen the *rāga* and the *tāla* he had endless freedom within this self-imposed limitation. The tonic in music wherever he had established it and the *sama* of whatever metric cycle he had chosen, were sacrosanct and thereafter there was freedom. In dance, on the recurrent line of music or the recurrent *tāla* the dancer could create images in movement both in the *nṛtta* and *abhinaya* portions. *Sāhitya* set to music and the *sangīti* set to *tāla* were only take-off points for him and this concept of *sañchārī bhāva* gave him the fullest freedom to interpret the line of poetry and the musical melody.

It was the principle of *sañchārī bhāva* which allowed these time-bound arts to preserve the tradition and keep it alive and vital in a manner in which it could not be preserved and kept vibrating in stone or paint, in words or in architectural design. The artist followed the convention, but the convention was followed through a creative use of the principle of improvisation.

This principle can be elaborated fully in the context of classical music and dance, whether Karṇāṭak or Hindustānī and whether Bharatanāṭya, Kathākali, Oḍissi, Mañipurī or even Kathak. True that the musician and dancer alone amongst the artists were the followers of the assumption mentioned, but is it also not a fact that the Indian musician and the Indian dancer are trying to get away from the bondage of the word and the bondage of the *rāga* and *tāla*? This desire to break away from these limitations is not only a superficial desire, but it symbolises the dancers' and the musicians' doubt in the basic assumptions. To the extent that the musician and the dancer wish to get away from these limitations, to the very extent the musician and the dancer are 'modern'. The question then is: will the custodian of these arts be able to assimilate the opposed attitudes and hold these contradictions together or will he too break and disintegrate in the process? Perhaps I might end on this note of inquiry.



Contemporary Aesthetic Thinking in India and their relevance  
to the contemporary art situation in the country



## THE FOLK INSPIRATION IN MODERN INDIAN PAINTING\*

Jaya Appasamy

INFLUENCES generated by the indigenous art of India contributed a distinct strain to modern Indian painting over a period of roughly half a century. Arising in a period of eclecticism and experiment the folk inspired style became very acceptable for a time though it is now superseded by more modern forms. Looking back it is possible to trace and evaluate its variations; the style itself can now be seen as a historical phenomenon which was part of a period of transition and reorientation.

Europe discovered the East, an interest that resulted in Sanskrit studies, in the fashion for Chinoiserie and in the discovery of the Japanese Woodcut print. The great exhibitions of London and Paris celebrated the triumphant spirit of man in scientific and material advance. But developing industry and large-scale production created many new problems—including a reaction to mass produced goods. William Morris urged a return to handicrafts and some artists like Millet painted pictures of the peasants giving them a new mobility. In India with its immense diversity many types of change appeared. The impact of British Imperialism resulted not only in imitations of the West, but also in reactionary trends and again in discerning and imaginative synthesis. New and vital forms of art arose especially in literature and drama. This era also saw the rise of Indian nationalism.

A repercussion of the excessive sophistication of the 19th century was its yearning for the unsophisticated—for the pure and elemental. Scholars have pointed out that highly developed cultures tend to lose the meanings of symbols and the sharpness of their forms. In such ages creative workers feel the need to return to the biological reservoirs of man and to find strength from primitive sources. These sources may be the people nearest to the soil in a rural economy or the distant or primitive cultures. In England the pre-Raphaelites wished to return to the “innocence” of the early Renaissance while even within “classicism” such painters as Puvis de Chavannes reached towards an Arcadian ideal. Among post-Impressionist artists the most important “Seeker” was Paul Gauguin; in the 20th century Picasso and Matisse both successfully implemented in their styles the vigour

---

\*Illustrated by colour slides.



and animation, the simplification and magic of primitive art. I do not wish to discuss the qualities of the achievement of these artists here, but I would make the point that artists were anxious to find new ways of seeing and expression and this to an extent expresses a discontent with their past. Secondly, one notices that these artists while incorporating new and vigorous strains into their work do so as a result of their sophistication. They do not abandon their styles but enrich them, they do not "imitate" the fetish figures but use their principles to impart new strength to their own art which is irrevocably part of its own time.

The discovery of folk art is a 19th century phenomenon. In more ancient times while folk art undoubtedly existed there was hardly any consciousness of it. It was considered the more popular version of fine art and where no fine art existed we find it as the embellishment of useful products or of toys and trinkets. The discovery of folk art is linked to the development of national consciousness: provinces, isolated pockets of territory and regional areas now regarding their own folk art as a special and unique heritage.

The environment and conditions suitable to folk art are generally those of undisturbed isolation; for the local genius tends to express itself however humbly when cut off from other sources of sophisticated art. Folk art also exists in certain social strata which though juxtaposed, with a fine art by its existence in towns and cities is separated from it by its economic level. That is, it subsists among the poorer and less privileged classes. The folk artist is generally a craftsman and his activity is mainly the production of utility objects. These objects are called art only on account of the aesthetic qualities they possess. Further, the same craftsman who makes functional objects, uses the tools, skills and materials towards other ends. First, he tends to elaborate and decorate his work and later to create other objects with these materials whose function is marginal or whose real use is simply to delight or amuse. Entertainment in provincial and rural localities is self provided and the craftsman caters to the need of the community by making toys, kites, puppets, protective images and so on.

In folk art the direct effect of the environment emerges in the form, style and material of the product. People living in mountainous and forested areas for instance are adept at handling wood, while those in deltaic plains create fired objects from clay, especially terracottas. Pith is used where available as also palm leaves and fibres, while weaving gives rise to woven and embroidered clothes. Painting on floors, walls and paper varies from place to place and may be connected to myths, special festivals, rites and other specific occasions.

Folk art has been described as communal and the result of 'cumulative originality.' The people of a particular region develop the art that is

meaningful to them and these patterns or forms are repeated with only slight individual variations. The community continues the inherited tradition from one generation to the next. The symbols or shapes of folk art generally have a meaning to begin with, later the ancient or adopted idea is reduced to a formula, becoming more and more schematised. The greater simplification or elaboration is intelligible to the group and is recognised by them without any explanation or detail. Thus each community has its own repertory of symbols and decorations. As long as this art is isolated it continues to possess its own identity but any historical development which tends to bring it in contact with other art styles such as urbanization, commercialization or better communication becomes a sophisticating factor. Thus the existence of a genuine folk art does depend on its isolation, way of life and the fact that it is continued within an insular world.

Dr. Stella Kramrisch has described two kinds of folk art, the time bound and the timeless. In the time bound she refers to the variations of form that may appear in history while in the timeless kind she includes those forms that repeat themselves with little or no variation. The latter are generally ritualistic objects.

In India some form of folk art is found in most provinces in local variations. The range of work is immense: terracottas, wooden and clay toys, dolls and images, paintings, objects of pith and cane, rag, embroidery, metal objects and objects of miscellaneous materials. Most of them require some form of craftsmanship, and show a lively imagination and an uncluttered understanding of the materials. The basic characteristic of folk art is that its forms are simple, bold and clear. Their strong living shapes and bright colours contribute to a vigour and animation not to be found in more complex art.

Among some of the stylistic characteristics of folk decoration have been listed

1. preference for simple outline, choice of typically representational lines, and rejection of accessory elements;
2. a simplification of colours and volumes so that shading is eliminated;
3. exaggeration of gestures for expressive reasons and primitive use of relative size;
4. stylization of motifs to create decorative elements; and
5. repetition of lines, of entire figures, of dots for intensive or rhythmical purposes.

Folk painting is generally in flat areas finished with strong lines tersely delineating the form. For our discussion the most relevant types of art are the painted dolls and toys and the painted pictures found in rural areas. Though variations in the type of painting occur in different provinces we may cite as example the folk paintings of Bengal which were in

point of time the earliest to be discovered as art. The folk paintings are either single sheets or paper mounted as a scroll. An example of the former are the famous 'Kālighāt paṭs' known for their strong simplified brushwork and their lively depiction of religious and social motifs. The painted scrolls generally illustrate the epics and function as the visual accompaniment to the recitation of a story. The composition is not continuous but divided into picture areas in each of which some episode occurs. In the illustrations the heroes and heroines are the largest in size which by their gestures and actions impart animation to the scene. The figures are generally painted in tempera, in flat colours enclosed by strong brush lines. There may be some surface decoration or indication of landscape but in most cases the paper itself functions as a background and scenery is left to the imagination of the spectator. A parallel obtains in *Yātrā* folk drama, where properties are negligible or minimal. Painted folk toys made of wood or terracotta show the same characteristics. Each part of the figure has a ground colour and is finished with bold brush strokes. The finishing is generally restricted to details such as jewellery, folds of the drapery, the facial features, hands and feet. There is no colour gradation except sometimes for a red line accompanying the back line forming a transitional 'modelling' line. One notices in the toys especially the strong frontality characteristic of primitive art, the figure faces the spectator, the back is often ignored. Also the head is comparatively large and special attention is paid to the eyes which are large and staring.

In India 'folk' art was discovered in Bengal and began to be collected by the Tagores, Ajit Ghosh and other artists and connoisseurs early in the 20th century. It was very different from the idiosyncratic and delicate art of the Bengal School but nevertheless was recognised by the artists of that time to be a lively and living art. Some traces of this admiration is seen for instance in the work of Nand Lal Bose, whose Haripura posters are in a folk idiom using similar flat spaces and strong finishing lines. Nand Lal's work however is not as limited as folk art for he treats the human figure with a power and freedom beyond the reach of the genuine folk artist. He uses the style for a particular function, i.e., the decoration of the Congress Pandal where it is essentially a kind of art addressed to the masses. He uses mineral colours and paints these anecdotic pictures in a vigorous and spontaneous style.

The first Indian artist to consciously model his work entirely on folk art is Jamini Roy. To begin with he invented a style derived from the Kālighāt paṭ consisting of sweeping brush strokes modelling a figure over an area of grey or other monochrome. His figures filled the page and tended to be compressed into the frame. Jamini Roy's palette in this phase was very limited and austere. Details were confined to the eyes, jewellery and other points, which functioned as highlights. There is no background

or environment. The figures themselves however were heroic or romantic, that is, the subject matter continued to be in the tradition of the Bengal School. Jamini Roy's second phase resembled folk painting or even the folk toy style more closely.

However, his compositions were more complex and crowded and he used a wide range of bright opaque powder colours available in the Calcutta bazaars. The subjects included legendary and pastoral themes, Christian illustrations and animal motifs from indigenous sources. This phase of his art is very decorative ; the stylised elements are handsome and somewhat unemotional. Later, Jamini Roy painted in several manners : one was a return to monochrome with the emphasis again on lines and their pattern. Some of the designs of this kind as well as a few free calligraphic sketches have more liveliness than his highly finished works. His paintings have a greater spaciousness, though they still have a 'spread out' quality reminiscent of textiles. There is no doubt that Jamini Roy's oeuvre did call attention to folk art as a source, though his own influence in modern art has been limited. Though folk elements are seen in the work of later painters this may be attributed to the rediscovery of folk art itself rather than to what Jamini Roy did with it. When one compares Jamini Roy's style to an artist like Gauguin, one sees an immense difference. Gauguin did not refer particularly to any folk sources in his art but to the primitive life of the peoples of the South Seas. The subject matter of his pictures is the exotic landscape, the lush women, the flora and fauna of these islands. Gauguin's style of painting was not seriously affected by his discoveries ; indeed, the direction his art was taking had already been formulated before he left for the South Seas, and he is only stimulated by his themes into painting richer and more complex works of his own style. He is much less imitative than Jamini Roy, and aesthetically breaks new ground by introducing arbitrary colours and art *nouveau* patterns. The originality of his work led him to be accepted by the Symbolists and the Nabis as their leader. When one compares Gauguin with Jamini Roy one sees that Gauguin's work is informed by a passion which is absent in the decorative work of Jamini Roy.

To a certain extent the national movement in India also called attention to things pastoral or rural. One sees both a genuine love for the simple life as in Nanda Lal Bose and Binode Behari Mukherjee and a romanticising of the peasants, craftsmen and fisher-folk painted by urban artists throughout the 1940's and 1950's. Such captions as 'Santal Dance' or 'Harvesting', or 'Village Well' are typical. Works by Haldar, Masoji, Ramen Chakravarty, Mukul and Manishi Dey show this "back to the people" subject-matter, if not their technique : It was as if a rural subject matter was itself the only and most valid theme. Art was indeed concerned

with poetry, and the poetisation of the pastoral. The later painters of the Bengal School tend to repeat these themes *ad nauseum*.

The painters of the period of transition to modern art include artists like Hebbbar, Chavda, Sanyal, and Sailoz Mookherjea, for example. These painters' styles grew into more modern idioms, but a certain phase of their early work includes figurative compositions with more or less flat areas finished with line. This method, originally a folk device and adopted by contemporary tempera painters, is taken over and used in oils. Rathin Moitra and Nirode Mazumdar also show folk periods. Sailoz Mookherjea compiled an album of folk toy studies and some of his paintings show the effect and technique of folk decoration.

The 1940's and 50's see the continuation of folk elements incorporated into various personal styles. The most attenuated and highly elaborate type of art deriving from folk art is seen in Rajiah, Almelkar, and K. Sreenivasulu. Almelkar's lines are wiry and sharply reminiscent of Jain miniatures, for example, in "Kings Birthday" (1959), he distributes the flat surface with various decorative elements. Another artist, Paidi Raju indulges in a too exuberant decoration, as for example in 'Broken String' (1957). One notices also the continuation of romantic themes in these artists. Sreenivasulu carries the attenuated linear display to its limits. The lines on the surface of the paintings while making forms and shapes have an overbearing rhythm of their own. The lines are reiterated and reinforced with subsidiary lines and colours, this feature of repetition also being a folk characteristic.

The folk flavour spreads in a wide circle of more modern painters contributing a charming decorative element to Indian art of the late 50's. Though the artists themselves are quite sophisticated and art school-trained their choice style is part of a continuing romanticism; the folk style now is no longer pure but combines with other Indian influences, such as Jaina illuminations, Rajasthani miniatures and even with some elements of commercial art. The new styles have a chic modern garb. The romantic subject matter continues as well as the dominance of line, large eyes, stylised figures, etc. In some examples an archaic stiffness is affected with a rejection of naturalistic drawing (see Sultan Ali's 'Bride and the Monk', 1958, or Laxman Pai's 'Village Dance', 1954, for example.). Pai's figures are reminiscent of the Southern wooden dolls with their oblong heads and immobile limbs. A less complex variation is adopted by D. Badri, a more sweetly decorative one by Jyoti Bhatt, Bhagwan Kapoor, P. Khemraj, Jeram Patel—in all cases a passing phase. The popularity of the style is seen at national exhibitions. When one looks at the present work of these painters, it is obvious that they adopted the "folkish" style because it was the current fashion. For they also abandon it without a qualm and arrive at a new style in which no vestige of it survives.

Sunil Madhav Sen and Badri Narayan are two artists who continue a folk-oriented manner, with modern treatment. The art of this period is quite complex and shows overlapping, distortion, fragmentation, symbolism and so on. However, a sense of decoration seems to be the major factor. Whereas in genuine folk art the meaning of the work is important and its aesthetic form incidental, here the decoration itself is an end and reaches a stage where this is the sole function of the design. The chief change from folk art is the change in the intent, for the new art seems to be curio-like and illustrative in its aim. A major artist like Husain is able to use or control his folk inspiration adequately, and does not deny his indebtedness.

“My paintings, drawings and the recent paper work has been directly influenced by my experience of traditional Indian dolls, paper toys..... shapes galore. The experience of being with them, and the inspiration to create them are inseparable. A painter is a child in his purity of feeling for only then he creates with authenticity of his being” (1955).

But in a great many of the folkish artists there is a certain artificiality which is not overcome. This enumeration of folk art-inspired artists does not claim to be exhaustive. I cite examples only to make the point that at times folk elements have inspired fine arts proper. Again, they do provoke a style which call attention to some nationalistic features. In fact, this efflorescence is part of a larger revivalist tendency and the desire to establish a national identity.

Folk art has also influenced artists like Sheila Auden, Nivedita, Parmanand and Kamala Mittal who are concerned with its illustrative qualities. Folk motifs extend into applied art especially textile design, toys and children books though here more with the intent of being artless, naive or quaint. A folk style is often seen in interior display, or in decorations of exhibitions and even of murals. Satish Gujral has a successful folk-primitive wall in Rajdoot Hotel; Devyani Krishna used a folkish style in *batik* hangings, especially in her animal subjects. A number of artists use folk-like drawing though very few have continued folk painting into modern art. It would seem that the trend towards abstraction and the contemporary preoccupation with textures is primarily responsible for the loss of interest and the gradual lapse of folk subjects. Though some artists like Paritosh Sen have successful modern works remotely reminiscent of folk origins, a young artist Gautam Vaghela has been able to make fresh use of the folk inspiration. He uses traditional subject-matter, especially gods and goddesses, and a few flat colours and line. But the colours though even, are very sophisticated and their distribution and juxtaposition quite unique. He freely uses gold and distortion, and his line while delineating the symbols of gods and demons, has a waywardness, strength and exotic charm. Among modern painters Vaghela's work creates a new

aesthetic, using very limited ancient idioms. There is no reference to the source but a rebirth of its elements in a new way.

Thus the influence itself has come full circle finding a varied expression over a period of fifty years. A stage of assimilation is reached where the new 'discovery' is absorbed into the body of contemporary art.

In each period the folk inspiration plays a distinct role: firstly, it is paradoxically a part of the revival though a reaction to the Bengal School; secondly, it enters into a decorative phase getting dispersed and adulterated, and lastly, survives only as a memory that has been suitably resolved into modern art.

Evaluating the whole occurrence of this influence which has arisen, we see that in its early phase its inspiration is the result of its discovery and a reaction to the art that exists or precedes it. In an effort to free his art from the romantic directions of the Bengal School, Jamini Roy turns to the more robust clarity of folk art. The paradox of this selection and rejection of the past is that this selection is itself romantic.

When one compares authentic folk art with its modern counterparts one sees that the differences between them are probably deeper than their superficial resemblance. Folk art, as has been stated earlier, is the result of a collective consciousness; it is the expression of the community whereas modern art which is non-traditional is individual and idiosyncratic, and each work expresses the temperament of a single artist. Secondly, folk art is comparatively organic; its forms are created in a semiconscious intuitive way unifying nature, people and an attitude towards life. Even if the modern artists' work is also organic, it is so to a limited extent, for a major part in the creation of present day art is played by processes which are intellectual. The ritualistic nature of folk art causes it to be repeated again and again, so that there is comparatively little change or originality whereas the modern artist even where he borrows from the folk is concerned with the new. Again folk art is predominantly symbolic; in its own context its meaning is important; but in the folkish forms of modern art its validity is in its visual appearance. It refers not to an idea but to the form that idea has already taken and as such is essentially derivative. Though it is accepted that great art can and does result from influences; in other cases it is also true that sometimes influences have only a superficial impact and fail to create a new reality.

Matisse turned away from the extreme romanticism of his teacher, Moreau, towards the clarity, simplicity and clear decorative colours of Fauvism. Picasso incorporated in 'Les Demoiselles d' Avignon' the sharp planes and distortion of Negro sculpture, and through his experiments built up classical Cubism. But the role of folk inspiration in India has not been so positive. After Jamini Roy the folk influence enters on a phase where it is valued as a decorative quality for its own sake; later in a chic garb it

is even more debased, resembling a commercial fashion. Apart from a very few contemporary painters its dissolution in modern art is complete and un lamented. This shows that the elements which were of true value in folk art were not incorporated in modern art in a living way. Because even today folk art objects in our country survive in forms which are powerful and of immense aesthetic interest wherever they have not been corrupted by the influence of 'civilisation.'



# AESTHETICS OF ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

## His Paintings

S. K. Nandi

I propose to present and examine some of the salient aesthetic concepts as conceived by Abanindranath Tagore and formulated in his writings on aesthetics. My attempt has been to rediscover them in his paintings. The task has not been very easy. For, of the two groups of writing on aesthetics, as was classified by George Santayana, Abanindranath's exact position was in the second group and as such it is rather difficult to make a rounded system out of what he wrote and said on different occasions. But the importance of his aesthetic ideas could easily be acknowledged when we discover that through his writings and observations on the nature of art-activity he wanted 'to recall those fundamental aesthetic feelings, the orderly extension of which yields sanity of judgement and distinction of taste.' For Abanindranath is known to be the father of modern Indian art movement. He drank deep at the fountains of both eastern and western art, and, as a result, he could imbibe all that was noble and fine in both the hemispheres. Old Indian traditions inspired him. The western savant, E. B. Havell, initiated him into the mysteries of ancient Indian art. He could also enter into the excellence of Chinese and Japanese art and did not hesitate to follow them in some of his sketches and drawings. The Japanese savant and artist, Okakura, made a deep impression on his mind. His association with this man from the land of the rising sun, helped him a great deal in understanding the true spirit of Japanese art. The visiting Japanese artists Taikwan and Hisida furnished him with the technique of repetitive *colour wash* that was to become thereafter the hall mark of the Bengal School. The most striking effects of the Japanese influence on his work are a spatial quality, a breadth of pattern and an organic simplicity.

Abanindranath also found good guides in Gilherdi and C. L. Palmer. Palmer taught him the technique of oil-painting. Abanindranath had a relation of anti-thesis (if we could use the word in the sense of opposition in the aesthetic field) to Ravi Verma, the popular Indian artist in the last decades of the nineteenth century. His paintings (issued in brilliant oleograph) used the western technique and according to some, "the western attitude as well."

Ravi Verma appeared not to have any knowledge and idea of the earlier

art of India, including even that of South India itself. His paintings were invested with an element of "theatricality and imitative quality" which resulted in the "violent oscillation from phenomenal popularity to an almost general condemnation," in so far as the aesthetic evaluation of his works were concerned.<sup>1</sup> Abanindranath sought to steady the tilting equilibrium and dispel the confusion, gripping the contemporary Indian mind. He headed the new movement in art in twentieth century India. In the words of R. V. Leyden: 'The early years of this century saw the first big and effective protest against the deplorable corruption of India's arts. The small band of pioneers round Abanindranath Tagore opened their eyes and minds wide to all sorts of impressions. Not only did they turn back to the traditional arts of India—rather in their awakening national enthusiasm they lifted them to their hearts—but they also learned from the arts of further Asia and from the modern movement in Europe.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus, many an artistic tradition mingled at the confluence of a noble soul and that was Abanindranath's. He sucked at the breast of the universal muses of fine arts and became a 'syncretic' in the true sense of the term. Thus Abanindranath was not a revivalist in the strict sense. The technique of Abanindranath got its ingredients from Mughal, Japanese and European traditions. The techniques of the master was of the realistic type. But this realism cannot be considered to belong to the British academic type nor to the Japanese type nor even to the Mughal type. It is a brand of realism absolutely his own. It may be linked up by some stretch of imagination with the exalted realism of the classical Indian epics and that linking up we have attempted in the pages to follow. We might say that he presented the decorative form of the Mughal School with all its meticulous delicacy in a light more real, and the technique he adopted for this purpose did not belong to any specific tradition. Nor was he the founder of any tradition in painting. He only evolved a new style. The problem of absorbing the western technique without detriment to the character of their own art-tradition, has been a serious one to the modern artists, not only in India but also in China and Japan. The success with which Tagore solved this problem is the index of his great craftsmanship. (And according to Tagore, talents could be found even amongst the craftsmen.)

Before Abanindranath, both the Indian and European styles of painting remained static and in Abanindranath, for the first time, they found a common home and got fused into the genius of the artist and became a living force. We may note in passing that Tagore broke away from the decorative extravagance of the flickering Delhi and Patna Schools, degenerate in their lifeless conventions. He kept away, with precocious vision, from the banal academicism of western art and its seductive realism. But his works never showed up a style absolutely indigenous and Indian in character. That is why some people found an anomaly

- 
1. Dr S. K. Chatterjee: *Abanindranath: Master Artist and Renovator* (Golden Jubilee volume of the journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art).
  2. Indian Painting, *The Times of India Annual*, 1952.

in his writings on art and his art-creations. In his book entitled *Bhārat Śilper Shāḍaṅga* he pleads for an Indian ideal of art. But in practice, he was alleged not to have adhered to it. But our submission will be that although he never adhered to any of the pure Indian art-styles (as we all know he was a syncretic in this regard), he followed unwittingly the aesthetic ideals as found in our classics. As a teacher he wanted to lead the minds of his pupils to the world of imagination and idea. Yet he did not dictate the mode of expression. The master was not slow to rescind any such dictation to his pupils if ever held out to any one through inadvertence<sup>3</sup>. He did not consciously follow any ideal, national or otherwise, while creating his famous works. But man does not live in a vacuum. His social context gives him certain ideas. In Tagore we find some such contemporary aesthetic ideas as well quite convincingly linked up with the traditions in which he was placed by birth and training.

The words of Coomaraswamy regarding some of Tagore's famous paintings may be quoted: "Their significance lies in their distinctive Indianness. They are, however, by no means free from European and Japanese influence." Thus what we mean by 'tradition in which he was placed by birth and training' has been specified by Coomaraswamy as 'Indian,' 'European' or 'Japanese' influence. How Tagore could get fused in him all these different techniques is a matter of anybody's guess. O. C. Gangoly, the noted art-critic, calls it a mysterious fusion. The leading traits of his wonderful miniatures are an intensely romantic and lyrical quality and a dreamy and mystic treatment of his subjects which lift them to a far higher level than the plane of a merely literal naturalism. To us it appears that there cannot be any pure naturalism in art. Kuntaka's distinction between *Svabhābukti* and *Vakrokti* is a pointer to the right direction. Mammata's formulation of the concept of *Prakṛiti-kṛita-niyama-rahitam* leads one to the problem of relating nature and art. This inevitably leads to the issue of relation inter se obtaining between art, beauty and truth. For the purpose of this paper, we may formulate the following problems and try to answer them from Tagore's point of view.

- (a) Are beauty and art identical? If so, has it any necessary reference to truth?
- (b) Does the identity of truth and beauty lead to the idea of imitation of nature? If so, the nature of this mimesis and its relation to Aristotelian mimesis may be determined.
- (c) If this mimesis is selective and interpretative, how does it affect aesthetic universality?
- (d) Lastly, if art work is considered as modified imitation, how does it accom-

---

3. Reference to Abanindranath's suggestions re: 'Umār Tapasyā' to his disciple Nandalal Bose.

moderate freedom in its compass? In this context how far is the concept of *līlā* compatible?

The possible answers to the question posed, strictly from Tagore's point of view, may be found from a perusal of the whole paper but for our own convenience we have marked four sections in the essay corresponding to the problems posed above, and the method, taken recourse to, has been the historico-comparative method, as defined by Āchārya Brojendra Nath Seal in his famous book entitled *New Essays in Criticism*.

(a) If art and beauty are taken to be non-identical, it gives rise to different sets of problems relating to their relation and it would be difficult to determine the place of the ugly in the scheme of aesthetics. Moreover, if the relata were taken to be heterogenous, the problem of infinite regression as involved in the relation of such relata (as stated by Bradley) would have faced us.

Let us consider the problem analytically. If A stands for art and B for beauty and if they are taken to be non-identical and as such heterogenous in character, we are faced with the problem of relating the two

A	R	B
—————		

Now what is the nature of R as distinguished both from A and B? It is neither identical with A nor with B. Its meaning and significance as R discounts the possibility of its either being identical with A or B. So in order to relate R to A we have to posit a series  $R_1 R_2 R_3$  and to go ad infinitum. Similarly another infinite series had to be brought in to relate R and B. These difficulties were involved in the postulation of non-identity of art and beauty. So Tagore through the artist's insight knew that they were identical and they pertained to a pattern of truth which was of a different order from the truth either in the sense of correspondence or ordinary coherence or from the pragmatic truth. The art work presents a peculiar type of coherence, a coherence that involves the creator, the art-content, nature or the objective world and the appreciator. As would be evident in the lines to follow the type of coherence as obtained between the work of art and nature is peculiar in every piece of art worth the name. And the coherence between the work of art and the appreciator is also absolutely peculiar to the training and temperament of the appreciator. Of course, the type of coherence that obtains between the different parts of an art-work is more or less defined objectively. Even then this coherence may appear differently to different connoisseurs of art.

So Tagore instinctively felt the identity and unity of these three and attempted to rationalise the artist's instinct in his famous *Bagésvarī Lectures*. We have deliberately omitted to mention the technique of the artist in the coherence scheme of the art-work as we believe with Abanindranath that technique is no

aspect of the aesthetic achievement. Tagore told us that to be a good artist one needs to master the technique. But one must transcend the sphere of technique and get into the realm of the beautiful where art has been installed.<sup>4</sup> Technique is just a means with which both the artist and the craftsman are concerned. One with whom the technique is every thing, he is just a craftsman. Both Abanindranath and Rabindranath spoke against this single-minded devotion to technique so very prevalent in modern art and literature of to-day.<sup>5</sup> Rabindranath's clear directive was embodied in that famous line of one of his Bengali poems: *Sudhu bhangī diye jena nā bhulāy chokh*. Abanindranath tells us in unambiguous terms that the technique involves labour alone; it has no element of joy or *ānanda* in it. This element of *ānanda* in his work distinguishes an artist from a craftsman. One who labours without *ānanda* is a craftsman and the artist though moving through that strenuous discipline and labour of a technician or craftsman ultimately transcends them and reaches the realm of *ānanda* or pure joy and there he is an artist.

Abanindranath in the formulation of his ideas on technique vis-a-vis aesthetic activity is in the happy company of Buddhaghosa of the fifth century A.D. What we popularly call mind is taken to be *chitta* by Buddhaghosa. While writing the commentary on Dhammasangani, he says that it is the artist's mental creative attitude, his imaginary representation and his mental intuition that constitute his art. Art is not something external, but is spiritual and identical with the formative and creative spirit of the inner intuition. The objective expression is only an accidental translation of it.<sup>6</sup> His concept of mind as in a state of flow has two constituent elements, the mental action and its results, the mental consciousness. The consciousness of the moment dissolves itself into the flow and through the

4. *Bagésvari Silpa Pravandhāvalī*, p. 159.

5. While discussing this particular problem at a seminar of noted Indian artists and art-critics, Sri Laxman Pai, the noted painter opined that technique gives new direction and dimension to the originally intuited mental image. So it was important to give it an honoured place in the art-activity itself. Sri Prodosh Dasgupta, the noted sculptor, observed that in so far as sculpture was concerned, there was a confrontation between the artist and the material to be moulded. This was a sort of challenge from the material and the artist could meet this challenge only with the help of his superior technique and ultimately the material is given significant form. Ernest Cassirer, the noted philosopher, goes so far as to say that the technique was also intuited.

We may point out in this connection that the technique does not create and is, as such, no part of art-activity. It simply translates into a visible form what is already there. This form already intuited may be a developing form like the 'craggy hill' of Wordsworth. The ever active imagination of the artist intuits some image which is evergrowing. This growth is not a contribution of his technique. It is absolutely confined within the aesthetic boundaries and technique is strictly speaking, out of bounds, for aesthetic considerations. Tagore told us that there could be talents amongst the craftsmen as well but they should not be taken as artists. In sculpture or in painting, the artist tries to externalise the intuited vision which is never complete. The material and the technique are changed again and again because it is felt that they will not be equal to the task of bringing forth the artist's superb and gigantic vision. It is gigantic because it was ever-developing. This refutes also the position of Cassirer that the technique was also intuited. From the memoirs and evidence of master artists on record, Cassirer's position is not borne out.

6. *Atthasalinī*, p. 64.

energy of the flow the consciousness of the creative motion merges in the consciousness of the second moment. Thus the consciousness and the flow combine in producing the third moment of consciousness and that again, being associated with the flow, produces the fourth moment and so on. Buddhaghosa sought to explain this position more clearly with the illustration of a painting. He says that the real picture is nothing but the mental one (*chittam chitténéva chintitam*).<sup>7</sup> An objection may be raised that the pictorial representation is a reality of the objective and the external world, whereas in the mental imagination the picture or the intuitive creative flow is a subjective state; so there is no way in which we can identify the two. The reply to this objection is that in the mind of the creator there is the desire for intuitive creation. In consequence of this creative impulse there is produced a corresponding state of imagination, visualisation of the mental state, which is directly responsible for the objective representation of it through lines and colours. This creative impulse induces with it various suggestions which respond internally to the creative flow and it is by this way alone that the creative process of the mind realises itself. Even if the mental imagination and intuition had not been externally manifested, yet we should have considered that the artist could have attained his mission by the internal flux of the mind. What we experience externally is merely a translation of the mental conception and imagination. For this reason the mental picture could be considered as some art even though it was not translated in external forms. The external representation is merely an imitation of the internal state.<sup>8</sup> So Buddhaghosa brings out clearly in philosophical language what Abanindranath tries to articulate in terms of *ānanda*. For him, an object of art (beauty) is a joy for ever. In this world of art he is face to face with Him who is *raso vai saḥ*. So Abanindranath identifies beauty and art and he thought that they had truth for their pedestal. He postulated a continuity from one to the other. In some of his lectures, he again identified them. The truth of an art-work consists in expression. Truthfulness, in the ethical sense when applied and considered in the field of aesthetics becomes anachronistic. Following the logical positivists like Neurath and Hempel we might attribute to Abanindranath the view, that for him, truth was syntactical and not a semantic concept, i.e., aesthetic facts do not correspond to empirical facts. They simply cohere to the rest of the system to which they belong. That is why while speaking of truth of art Abanindranath does not rely on senses to be the only determinant of truth in art. He believes in a syntactical concept of truth.

He tells us:

“It is clear then that mere sense of sight will never lead you further than women differently dressed and differently occupied, old or young or middle-aged, fat or thin, fair or dark. Sight will never give you the spirit, the soul dwelling in

7. According to some other indologists this refers to ‘*caran-citra*,’ a form of didactic art. (See Dr N. R. Ray’s *An Approach to Indian Art*)

8. Dr S. N. Dasgupta, *Fundamentals of Indian Art*, p. 109-110.

the form; it will always parade before you a number of dressed up puppets posing and simulating a mother or a savant, a queen or a sweeper; it will never give the true mother or the true queen, but always the actress, a wooden toy amusing, sometimes amazing, to look at. The difference that exists between outer forms give us only the variety and not the verity which underlies all *rūpa*.<sup>9</sup>

Here Abanindranath tells us that verity or truth underlies all *rūpa* and in another context calls it the pedestal. Sight or the senses alone cannot get at this truth in art. Intellection is always there to give artists' truth its syntactical form. In his idea of *Rūpabhēda* this element of intellection is too prominent to be missed.

The so-called ugly life, or object of experience, could be an object of art and consequently beautiful, if properly reoriented at the hands of a true artist. Art is beautiful and it is true. False pretensions are ugly. Truth and beauty were identified by Keats, and Abanindranath by identifying them, followed in the wake of this great English poet. We also had similar views from a savant like Romain Rolland, who said categorically that if art had anything to dabble in falsity, we would better say good-bye to all arts. Many a modern critic, however, denounces such identification of truth and beauty, and does not consider it essential for any true work of art to express the true. He considers it to be an epiphenomenon of the age of science, and looks upon Keats as only representing this age when the latter pleads for the non-duality of truth and beauty. But the single-minded devotion to truth only made Abanindranath's art all the more fascinating, and it had its appeal to all who knew to read the cryptic language of fine arts. Of course artistic truth is different from facts. In Abanindranath, truth had a different connotation. According to him, when we identify beauty and truth, we do not take art to be a mere photograph of what we see all around us. Here truth is not taken in the sense of correspondence with facts. They are different. Artistic anatomy is different from medical anatomy. Artistic anatomy fluctuates and changes. It is a chameleon, and changes its colour so often. Anatomy of an art-object is entirely dependent on the vision of the artist. In the Hindu Pantheon, Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning is full-bosomed with heavy hips and that is why the artist creates her accordingly only to convey her motherhood potential. Thus the anatomy of the goddess of learning had to depend on the idea of the artist who conceived her image, and that too according to *Śruti*.

History and art are different. Gibbon is an historian while Caesar is an artist, one wrote the history of Rome and the other created history. One is a chronicler of facts, with no freedom of his own, the other is an artist, enjoying the full freedom of creation. Caesar made history and Gibbon recorded it. One obeyed his will to create and the other obeyed the rigid dictation of brute facts. So truth in the artistic sense should not be confused with the commonsense notion of truth. Fictions and fairy tales also enjoy prestige as works of art. They have a different standard of evaluation and it is not in correspondence with factual details. This view of Abanindranath had the approval of Rabindranath

9. *Shāḍaṅga : Six Limbs of Painting*, by A. N. Tagore, p. 13.

Tagore. Rabindranath characterized art as *māyā*. It does not follow reality, nor does it care for any faithful representation thereof. It is deceptive. It creates a world of illusion. It is a sort of magic, of course not in any derogatory sense. The seedling is made to sprout without a seed. Man is made out of the moon and the moon out of man. That is what the artist actually does.

Bertrand Russell told us that a student of philosophy should not be afraid of paradoxes. Paradoxically enough, the world of art and the world of experience though different in their very nature, are not completely divorced from each other. They are somehow related in the broad compass of an appreciating mind. Art is not thoroughly segregated from experience of all descriptions. There is a continuity from the world of experience to the world of art. Art is unity, and this unity is a type of coherence obtainable in its different parts or aspects and with others concerned. The artist sees unity in the diversity of nature. The many is harmonized into a rounded whole and the appearance of unity becomes a reality with the artist. He sees nature and also creates it. For an artist, seeing is creating, and his creation does not follow the natural laws. That is why Abanindranath told us that art is *niyatikṛita niyamarahita* (where the natural laws are inapplicable). It follows nature and surpasses it. There is a continuity, a passage from one to the other. This coherence is not only vital for any true work of art, but is also necessary for a proper appreciation of it. Without an agreeable feeling towards a work of art, no one can appreciate the beauty in it. If it grates on your imagination, Tagore tells us, the work of art is rejected as a failure. Thus, it must cohere, it must agree with the appreciator's mental set-up. So, in a sense, coherence in art involves the 'others.' Thus a work of art must cohere in its different parts, somehow cohere with nature and also with the appreciating mind. All these demand true talent to make art what it really is. The artist, to quote Abanindranath, 'brings the life that is pulsating in the diversity of natural forms to bear upon his creation. His brush becomes the vehicle of his will to create and unites the artist's universe, the artist, and his creation in a rounded whole.'<sup>10</sup>

Abanindranath believed that the six laws of painting, as prescribed by our Śāstras, were meant for bringing about a close harmony between the creator and the creation, the appreciator and the content of creation. We referred to the fact that art imitates nature and surpasses it. On the one hand, we have the shackles that nature offers in the form of her laws, on the other hand, we have the freedom of the world of imagination. Art attempts at a synthesis of the two. It creates an image that sometimes looks like natural, and sometimes does not, and yet it outshines nature in point of perfection. For an artist, nature might be the starting point, not the goal. This office of art has been ably described by Bracquemont (as quoted by Abanindranath). He says that the art has been pursuing the chimera, attempting to reconcile two opposites, the most slavish fidelity to nature

10. *Bhārat Silper Shāṅga*, p. 11



and the most absolute independence, so absolute that the work of art may claim to be a creation.

This mimetic element (as understood by Tagore) in art does not in any way affect its character as creation. Artist creates a *tertium quid*, a novel quality, which makes art what it is. Man, as an artist, becomes a second creator. He puts up shapes and forms in a world where there were none. Rhyme and rhythm are his own creation and he imparts life to the inert and the dead. That is the business with which the artist busies himself.

Let us understand the nature-art relation in greater detail. To make art a true creation, we must be selective and interpretative. We must have ears to hear and eyes to see. To see what was never on sea or land is not ordinary seeing; to hear the whispers of the spirit of the woodland, we need a Wordsworth's ears. All that we see and hear cannot be brought forward in the domain of art. Life cannot be reproduced verbatim in this world. If it is so reproduced, it flags, becomes stale and tiring. This view of Abanindranath had a wide support in many quarters. Weirtz writes: 'Nothing is so tiring as a constant close imitation of life. One comes back inevitably to imaginative work.'

This world of imagination gives us relief from the boredom of repetitive experience. It is Andre Malraux's 'musée imaginaire,' or the museum of imagination that makes an artist what is supposed to be. There he finds all the treasures left to him as a legacy by men of talent and taste. He selects materials and form therefrom, and gleans crude facts from nature. His aesthetic sense would teach him what to select from nature and how to do it. Like an adept gardener, an artist is to select the materials for his work of art. Artistic reality is to be picked up from a world of inartistic realities. This realization of the artistic and the inartistic is innate in every true artist. This realization can hardly be acquired. This concept of innateness which we find in Abanindranath, is shared by many well known artists and art critics. To quote one of them; 'There is true and false realization, there is a realization which seeks to impress the vital essence of the subject and there is a realization which bases its success upon its power to present a deceptive illusion.'

This realization which seeks to impress the vital essence of the subject helps an artist. Art is to supplement nature. Nature is handicapped by matter and art is the handiwork of the spirit. In art, spirit speaks to spirit. The philosophy of the Upaniṣads inspired the Indian minds for ages, and Abanindranath had initiation into this great philosophy at an early age. He believed that the Absolute mind touched all true works of art, and made them what they were. Rabindranath shared his belief. Rabindranath defined art as the 'response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.'<sup>11</sup> Similar definitions of art may be found in the West. Van Loon, for example, writes: 'Man, even at his proudest moments, is a puny

---

11. *Religion of Man*, p. 139.

and helpless creature when he compares himself to the gods. For the gods speak unto him through creation. Man tries to answer, he tries to vindicate himself, and that answer, that vindication is really what we call art.<sup>12</sup> This response of man is a new creation, a new entity pitted against the divine creation. It plays with empirical data and brings forth the light that never was on sea or land.

Abanindranath considers art to be interpretation. It interprets nature and suggests a new meaning to all the drab and mechanical ways of nature. This suggestiveness is the business of art. Gilbert (as quoted by Tagore) says: 'Art interprets the mightier speech of nature. It is a poetical language for it is an utterance of the imagined, addressed to the imagined, and to rouse emotion.' So also Abanindranath believed that art was selective and interpretative. It does not copy nature. Mere copying of nature entails servility to crass matter and a consequent lack of freedom. Without freedom, art is not possible. That is why Margaret Bulley said that the depiction of real life is no concern of art. Life as it is, with all its rigid determination, is far removed from the world of painting and poetry. No rule of life is applicable in that world.

Though not a revivalist, Abanindranath had some intimate relation to Indian aesthetic traditions which will be evident from the fact that in the enunciation of the above position vis-a-vis art and nature he comes close to the Sanskrit classics. In explaining the Indianness in Abanindranath's paintings and in those of his followers, Coomaraswamy observes: "The work of the modern school of painters in Calcutta is a phase of the national reawakening. The subjects chosen by the Calcutta painters are taken from Indian history, romance and epic and from the mythology of religious literature and legends, as well as from the life of the people around them. Their significance lies in their distinctive Indianness." We know that in ancient Indian arts human beauty had the beauty of nature for its ideal although nature was not copied verbatim. The ancient legends as found in *Citrakāṣāṇa* and *Vishṇudharmottara* led Zimmer to think that the genesis of art was in magic and the inner vision of the painter is bodied forth in the painting. Portraits were not directly copied from a sitting model. Art should be the projection into susceptible materials of a mental vision.<sup>13</sup> In Kumarasambhava, Pārvatī is described as having been formed with all the elements of beauty that are usually found in nature. This naturalism was not the last word with the great poet. The yaksha of Kalidasa's *Meghadūtam* in pouring out the effusions of his love-laden heart to the cloud, which was asked to bear his message to his long separated wife, says as follows:

"I try to satisfy my soul by trying to discover the expression of your beautiful limbs in the beauty of Nature, but your beauty excels them so much that I fail to do so. I look at the creepers to discover the grace of your form and movement. I look at the eyes of the startled deer to find similarity with your lovely glances.

12. *The Arts of Mankind*, p. 25.

13. Zimmer—*The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. I, p. 383-384.

I look at the moon to discover in it the shadow of your face, the feathers of the peacock for their similarity with your hair, the fine ripples of the river for their similarity with your dancing eyes, but I am sorry that they are so inferior to the beauties of your limbs and expressions that I can discover no similarity between your beauty and the beauty of Nature."

Here we could pick up some suggestions for the transcendence of nature. This transcendence or transmutation of nature could be better understood with specific reference to Amarāvati Art (2nd century to 3rd century A.D.) in contrast to the arts of Sanchi (1st century B.C.) and the Bharut (2nd century B.C.). We fail to discern any foreign influence in the Amarāvati art; the natural flow of life which is the characteristic feature of Indian art found its full expression in this art-form. Herein we find a fusion of natural likeness and "a full expression of the internal and the spiritual as dominating the natural." A scene depicted in this style tells us how a mad elephant was trying to attack the Buddha. The on-looking crowd was naturally afraid of the beast, but the Buddha was pacifying the whole situation by his calm self-consciousness. The awful ferocity of the animal and the fear reflected on human faces were strikingly natural. The calm of spiritual self-consciousness had been wonderfully delineated. In Sanchi we find the deep sympathy of the artist with the whole of the animate world and therein we discover the natural likeness in the figures. They follow stories from the Jataka mythology. In the Amarāvati Art, we find the artist attempting to express independently his spiritual ideals and conceptions through the stone materials. We may recall with profit what Rene Grousset said in point:

"The purely naturalistic art of Sanchi has now become spiritualized by a higher influence, raised to a higher plane and attained an idealism of the highest order."<sup>14</sup>

In Bharut, we notice this naturalistic style and in some of them at least a conscious endeavour to overcome this naturalism. A trend towards idealisation of the real in art was gradually gaining momentum. Nature as it is, really as it is known, was gradually being transcended. But before the Guptas, one may contend, the Indian ideal of expressing the spiritual (or mental) through the material had not attained its perfection. In the older epochs the spiritual ideal of Indian art had not become self-conscious; it was more or less mute and the tendencies of an objective view of art and objective motives of religion were determining the spirit of art. In consequence thereof, in the artistic representation we find a greater tendency towards simulating nature and to portray religious events in an objective manner. We may refer to Sanchi to illustrate our point. On one of the walls of Sanchi carvings, we find animals, buffaloes, lions, tigers, wolves, serpents, deers, elephants, all assembling underneath the Bodhi tree. The pantheistic ideal suggesting negation of alienation and otherness has been the binding force of the human and the animal world. But herein we find the use of natural

14. *The Civilization of the East*, p. 137.

symbols too dominant to suggest boldly what was done in the Gupta period. This process of transcending nature was visible in the Amarāvātī art and became pronounced in the Gupta period (4th century A.D.) wherein we noticed this tendency mounting the peak. The artists of the Gupta period (it is on record) thoroughly knew the anatomy of the human body and could create efficiently a natural likeness. But in trying to represent a natural likeness they did not follow the geometrical canons of the Greeks. The Greek sculptors conceived the plastic space as polygonal where a number of planes meet together in large obtuse angles and by a gradual melting away of the sides gave an expression of the plastic art. For the Chinese artist, the conception of space was elliptical. But for the ancient Indian artist it was internal and intuitional.<sup>15</sup> The space representation of Indian artists was the internal and intuitional space which may be regarded as a dynamic psychological volume than as a static polygonal or elliptical plane. Their ideal was to recreate the inner rhythm (*chhandas*) of the natural flow of life, that permeate life itself. This they did with curved baggy lines. It is for this reason that the artists of the Gupta period represented human face in an oval shape; the forehead and the eyeballs were drawn in the curve of a bow; the eyes were drawn in imitation of the eyes of a gazelle or a fish or a bird; the neck was drawn in imitation of the neck of a goose; the thighs were drawn in imitation of an elephant's trunk; the hands were made in imitation of the stalk of a lotus and the fingers like a budding *champakā*. Thus they realised the inner unity between the world of nature and the human world in the creation of these wonderful art forms. In plastic art the movement of life was only shown by curvy lines drawn in imitation of similar lines in the world of nature. Gradually, idealisation of nature was realised in fantastic proportions in the arts of this period. Art drifted away from nature-reference (at least in certain cases) and virtually became embodiment of intuited visions or ideas. Rene Grousset bears testimony to this total transcendence of nature when he refers to the figures of the Buddha of the Gupta period as preserved in the Mathura Museum:

"The limbs are pure and harmonious, the faces have a tranquil suavity and it is inspired by an art so steeped in intellectualism as to be a direct expression of the soul through the purely ideal beauty of form. Perhaps we shall understand the character of these works better if we consider that they are contemporary with the luminous and fluid metaphysics of the great Indian idealists of the fifth century, an Asanga or a Vasubandhu."<sup>16</sup> Dr S. N. Dasgupta describes this transcendence of nature as the idealisation of nature. To quote his very words: "With the Greek, the idealised human body was the standard of beauty, while with the Indians it was the idealised Nature that was regarded as the highest standard."<sup>17</sup> Dr Dasgupta goes on to describe the genesis of this creative acti-

15. Dr S. N. Dasgupta : *Fundamentals of Indian Art*, p. 75.

16. *The Civilization of the East*, p. 141-142.

17. *Fundamentals of Indian Art*, p. 16.

vity. According to him, the ancient Indian artists drew inspiration from Nature for their conception of beauty and on the other they tried to externalise in plastic and colour forms the subjective ideals and spiritual longings. For this reason the form of the deity (found in ancient paintings and sculptures) as realised in meditative intuition was verbally recorded as far as possible and it was the duty of the plastic artists to represent in it visual forms also. Thus the meditative intuition on the one hand translated itself into visual forms and on the other, the visual representation on the basis of the mental intuition was sought to be realised through meditation by the novice who proceeded on the path of meditation. Kalidasa in describing the beauty of Śakuntalā, says:

“The creator must have first conceived the form of Śakuntalā in its entirety and then had inspired the intuited image of the heart with life, and externalised it in the visible form of Śakuntalā; and he must have assembled together in mind all the elements of beauty and created her by the assemblage of them all as a mental creation.” In keeping with the spirit of the above observations we may suggest that nature-inspired intuitions made are what they were. These intuitions often transcended nature. May we again refer to Kalidasa to illustrate our point. The great poet in describing the nature of the painted representation of Śakuntalā by Duṣyanta, says that by graceful delineation Duṣyanta has been able to give an expression of his personality and emotion with which the form of Śakuntalā was intuited in his mind and that this was the secret of the charm of painting. We thus see that one of the most important elements of plastic and pictorial art is the “mental intuition or vision by which anything is conceived and intuited in the mind with emotive personality of the artist.” We may note here that this intuition is of the nature of *dhyāna* or meditation in which the artist melts his personality in the emotive vision or intuition of the object of his representation which may be a spiritual idea or a physical form. Abanindranath also suggests this artistic activity (at the inception level) to be of the nature of *dhyāna* when he holds that the apparently inactive artist sitting by the window-side and gazing out leisurely is the most active in the literal sense of the term. When he is apparently idle, his whole being has been the most active in concentrating on his possible contents of art-creations and the concentration is akin to *dhyāna*. We are conscious of the fact that the so-called art content is of no special significance apart from the form—the duality of the two is a matter of distinction without difference. Imagination of the artist gives a new form to the old and the content of common experience is changed beyond recognition in the artists’ experience. His imagination does the trick.

Let us try to understand the function of imagination from another viewpoint. In further elucidating the idea of imitation and its transcendence in artistic creations stated earlier we may quote at length from Tagore’s lecture entitled *Sādṛśya* in the *Bagésvarī Śilpa Prabandhāvalī*. It will help us to understand how this transcendence works by referring the full moon in the sky to the face of a damsel, how often and in the most peculiar manner the referent assumes

new dimensions in the poets' or artists' imagination. To quote Tagore's words:<sup>18</sup>

"Ever since the Vedic times the creation of beauty has always been based on likeness to the figures, resemblances between various forms and expressions. . . ."

There is always a general outward resemblance between man and man as well as between man and ape. We also notice that at the same time there exists a dissimilarity of feature and form. When we consider gestures and movements, there too we observe various likenesses and similarities emerging. One walks like the stately elephant, the other sways like the swinging leafy creeper. The painted portrait resembles the person one has actually seen.

This is the first stage—that of likeness in outward shape. At the next stage the pictured person takes on the form of a lion or *garuḍa*, the king of birds; here we are concerned with likeness in mood or nature. In the first instance the likeness is brought out wholly by imitation or copy. In the second instance, one must consider the resemblance in mood and expression, between men and lower animals.

In both likenesses there operates the artist's notion of form as born of visual experience. Thus sometimes the picture copies and makes an imitation of a person's ways and manners as seen by the artist; sometimes the ways and manners of the person one has observed are compared with the ways and manners of some animals one has observed and thus a new shape emerges from the combination. Although we have never seen what Buddha really looked like, we can easily recognise him in a stone image by the suggestiveness of the various traditional lines of nose, mouth and eyes.

So in this discourse Abanindranath has been attempting to bring out the function of imagination in discovering likeness between two disparate entities or situations or modes. The comparisons at times are far-flung and they could be well understood or properly grasped only when imagination is brought to bear on the whole situation. From the presented to the referent (as in the case of a work of art) there is a far cry. Similarly, in the far-fetched similes, we speak of a similitude which could not possibly be discovered without the help of imagination. Tagore speaks of "the ear-rings of pearls, the bits of precious stone give out that they are as pollen from flowers which have dropped from the rainbow or as drops of tears."<sup>19</sup> Such are the similes and comparisons that are suggested by the poets' imagination. When we try to understand the meaning and purpose of the creator of the universe in terms of aesthetic enjoyment, we exclaim: *Raso Vai Saḥ*. He is himself *rasa* (may be said to be the height of aesthetic joy). So herein the referent is unknowable and he is imagined in terms of aesthetic joy of the highest order. So imagination, according to Tagore had an important place in the aesthetic activity: *Tadbhinnatve Sati tadgata bhūyodharmavattam*, i.e., they differ and yet have much of a sameness. The disparate objects compared

18. Translation by Smt. Leela Majumdar.

19. *Ibid.*

in a simile have a common participation and this common ground has somehow reference to both. In the case of nature being transformed into art—in very many cases—the reference to nature becomes historical events only. The aspect in nature as event in life could not be directly traced to an art-work by any canon of similitude. This is true at least in some cases. There in such cases we get a particular poem, song or painting etc. referred to a natural event or phenomenon on the strength of biographical evidence. However, the point remains that there is reference either to a physical event or mental phenomenon or some relation inter se, when we go to make a painting or write a poem. The element of transformation and transcendence are so great that there remains very little similitude between the stimulus and the response. But it is there and on the evidence of the testament of great artists we may assume this stimulus and response to be casually connected. (This can neither be proved nor demonstrated. This may roughly be illustrated.)

Abanindranath Tagore has given an interesting account of how reality is transformed and transmuted, given a new habitation and a name in the artist's imagination. The account is really fascinating and opens up a new vista of the working of the artist's mind. His imagination obeys his own laws. No set rule is there for him which demands abject surrender. Set rules are meant for the art students and not for the artist; classical images of gods and goddesses demand a rigid conformity to all that is laid down in the *Śāstras*; but with regard to image-making of other varieties, the artist must enjoy complete freedom. In an introduction to his Bengali essay entitled *Mūrti*, Abanindranath requests his readers and fellow-travellers<sup>20</sup> not to take these aesthetic canons and form-analyses of our art-treatises, with all the rigours of their standards and their demonstrations, as representing absolute and inviolable laws nor deprive their art-endeavours of the sustaining breath of freedom, by confining themselves and their works within the limits of *Śāstric* demonstrations. Till we find the strength to fly we cling to our nest and its confines. But even while within our bounds, we have to struggle for the strength to outstep them; and then to soar away, breaking through all bondage and limitations, realizing the full significance of our struggles. For, let us not forget that it is the artist and his creations that come first and then the law-giver and his codes of art. Art is not for the justification of the *śilpa-śāstra* but the *Śāstra* is for the elucidation of art. . . . . He who realizes *dharma* (the law of righteousness) attains freedom but the seeker after *dharma* has at first to feel the grappling bonds of scriptures and religious laws. Even so, the novice in art submits to the restraint of *śāstric* injunctions, while the master finds himself emancipated from the tyranny of standards, proportions and measures, of light, shade, perspective and anatomy. The true artist's mind is like a stream overflowing its bank on one side, where there are the rules of law. But just as a river forms new lands and pastures on one bank while destroying every-

---

20. Published in *Pravasi*, Poush & Magh 1320, B.S. (Translated by Sri Sukumar Roy)

thing that it comes across on the other, so is the artist's creative energy. It breaks through the age-old traditions only to create new ones. It disobeys the traditional do's and don'ts only to obey his own inner laws. In this sense, the artist must be free. Abanindranath considers this freedom from all outside dictation as essential for the creation of true works of art. That is why he repudiated the copy theory again and again. In his brochure entitled *Bhārat Śilper Śhaḍaṅga*, we come across copious quotations from Bowie's noted book entitled *On the Laws of Japanese Painting* and these quotations are meant to show that art does not reproduce what we see in nature. Bowie says: 'They paint what they feel rather than what they see. . . . It is the artistic impression which they strive to perpetuate in their work.'

Artist's work is complete when the subjective impressions are objectified. That is why Benedetto Croce, the noted Italian philosopher, defined art as 'desubjectification of subjective feelings.' There we find Croce and Abanindranath agreeing to a large extent. The land of neo-idealist Croce today showed signs of a definite swing towards realism. The neo-realist school was gaining ground there, and the leader of this movement was Luchino Visconti. Cesare Zavattini, another exponent of this school, explains their mission thus: 'We want to show the wonders of reality. Our idea is to show people things that happen under their own eyes, to enable them to savour, to enjoy the flavour of every day.' But this craze for presenting the crudely real in art has already shown signs of a decaying influence. People do not like to face the same ugliness of life in the world of art. Lack of sound and constructive optimism in their productions has made the neo-realist movement unpopular in Italy. An exact copy or a close proximity to reality alone does not make any art great. And herein we have been answering question (b) posed above. We observe that though himself a realist, Abanindranath did not share the views of these neo-realists. He stood for selected and embellished nature. Nature, so reoriented, could find a place in the world of art. Illustrations of this theory could be found in quite a large number among the works of Abanindranath. Paintings and sketches like *Śājāhānér mṛityu* and *Mid Sea*, could be cited as instances in point. The pathos in the painting styled as *Śājāhānér mṛityu* came from the bleeding heart of a father who lost his beloved daughter only a few days earlier.

For comparison we may refer to the paintings of Madame Chiang Kai Shek, as a representative of that tribe of artists whose landscape paintings bear the hall-mark of a peculiar type of realism. Madame Chiang's paintings showed her faith in an aesthetics akin to that of Abanindranath. But she was not always successful in desubjectifying her feelings in the right way. Often she grew over-realistic, and her paintings lost much of the charm and beauty that we find in her less real works. Her two paintings styled *Looking Up Miao Kao Terrace* and *Winter Pine*, appeal to a casual visitor to an art gallery. When these two pieces are contrasted with another group of two paintings styled *Autumn Garden Party* and *Four Occupations* by the same artist, the truth of our contention becomes apparent. It has been said of Madame Chiang that she paints from memory;



but it does not hold good of the last-named pieces of painting. There we find that an allegiance to reality has taken away much of the charm and suggestiveness that we find in the first-named pieces of painting. Herein we get the empirical evidence in support of Abanindranath's contention that art should not copy nature blindly and mechanically. Moreover, according to him, the artist's business is creation of a different world of values, which is different from the world of mundane existence. His mind's eye far surpasses the capacities of the most powerful telescope, and discovers fairy lands which we common people could never possibly see. It is only an artist who finds Alice in that Wonderland. This artist is everywhere. He might live here as an Abanindranath, and there as Bacon in a different perspective. It was a Bacon who could discover his New Atlantis far away from the din and bustle of this world of ours. Bacon was sure of his place there. He knew that when he put to sea, there would await him, undisturbed by the tides of time, a great island of utopia, his own New Atlantis—one of the dreams of his philosophical system—glittering in the sunshine of eternity. His pen immortalized his dream. Thus, the visions of all these visionaries testify to the veracity of Abanindranath's observation that the business of art is creation of a different set of values and not mere mimicry. So Tagore's contention of a 'selective and representative nature' in art is quite consistent with his peculiar brand of realism, which we ascribed to Tagore. This type of realism demands that thorough exposition of his concept of mimesis should be presented and incidentally we propose to compare Tagore's ideas on imitation with those of Aristotle. But initially we may bear in mind that photographic representation was neither possible nor was seriously meant in the context of art by Aristotle and Abanindranath. For we know of the celebrated painter Ludwig Richter writing in his Memoirs, how once when he was in Tivoli as a young man he and three friends set out to paint the same landscape. They were all firmly resolved not to deviate from nature. They wished to reproduce what they had seen as accurately as possible. Nevertheless, the result was four totally different pictures, as different from one another as the personalities of the artists. So mimesis could not mean an exact copy either for Abanindranath or for Aristotle (even if they had accepted the word in its ordinary use) as it was not possible for an artist to bring forth a copy faithful to its original in every detail. Let us refer to Aristotle.

Aristotle appeared at a time when proper assessment of the Hellenistic ideal was possible, as it was the post-Platonic period. The gloom that was inspired by the prevalence of amusement art among the Greeks, was not real for Aristotle as it was for Plato. The fifth century Hellenistic optimism struck a new note in Aristotle, so different from what we find in Plato; and this made possible a reassessment of Plato's theory of mimesis at the hands of Aristotle. Mimesis made Plato's art doubly removed from reality. It meant abject surrender to the phenomenally real; and a copy, as has been rightly pointed out by Plato himself, can hardly suggest any other value than one absolutely vitiated

by servility. Aristotle considered imitation to be the imitation of the ideal. The presented is represented in art with an element of ideality introduced in it. 'Art-content' and 'object-content' are different for Aristotle. In art, the object is not imitated but represented. It would be prudent to remember that representation in art is not identical with naturalism. By naturalism, we do not mean liberal representation as such, but the liberal representation of the common sense world of things as they appear to a normal and healthy eye. Breughel's pictures of animal demons, Strindberg's spook sonata, Poe's thrillers, Beardeley's fantastic drawings, and surrealist paintings are strictly and literally representational; but the world they represent is not the common-sense world. This representation is not a complete literalness in the sense of a native or non-selective representation, whose specimens we find in the paleolithic animal paintings or Egyptian portrait sculpture. It has been found that the same emotional effect can be produced even more successfully by bold selection of important and characteristic features. These features are selected for, they are thought to be capable by themselves of evoking the emotional response.

Art, for Aristotle, is intellectual virtue. It is creative activity under intellectual direction. If therefore an artist, contends Aristotle, is not guided by intellect in his creative activity, if he is concerned with the real of the senses only, if he presents the sensuous and completely ignores the idea, which can be grasped only through the intellect, he is not an artist at all. Artifacts representing the original in this sense have sometimes been branded as the symbol of the original. However, symbol conveys a meaning which is different in kind from that conveyed by representation. According to Aristotle, the function of representative art is to rouse emotion. The true definition of representative art is not that the artifact resembles the original, but it is the feeling evoked by the original. This is Aristotle's sense of representation. It means idealization; the presentation of things, not as they are but as they should be; not as they are known to the sense, but as they are to be known under the controlling force of ideas. Thus imitation, for Aristotle, does not consist in the faithful representation of objects as they are actually found in nature, but in idealization, in presenting them as they should be under the control of the ideas which are immanent in them. It aims at the mean. It is the presentation of an advance on a given reality... It is not confined to the perceptible. It extends to the mental. According to Aristotle, both narration and assimilation are manners of imitation, while Plato rejected narration as a manner of imitation. Quite consistent with the new meaning, he considers some kinds of music to be representative. He considered dithyramb and epic as representative. He agreed with Plato that drama is representative, as it was essentially a means of arousing emotion. We should bear in mind that Aristotle's *Poetics* was a defence of representative poetry, and he brought to bear his metaphysical, psychological, and ethical concepts on his concept of aesthetics.

Mimesis or imitation is the pivotal word of *Poetics*. According to Aristotle,

poetry does not only imitate, it imitates human actions with a definite plan or purpose. The poet is to turn away from himself and his own emotions and work, like the painter, with his eye on the object. Aristotle wanted the poet to be intensely objective, but, at the same time, he tells us that the artist should imitate things not as they are but as they ought to be. His imitation is an ideal imitation and he expects of the artist a selected truth raised above all that is local and accidental, purged of all that is abnormal and eccentric, so as to be in the highest sense representative. Art corrects nature and such art which makes good the imperfections of nature has been characterized by Aristotle as industrial. The artist, according to Aristotle, holds up a mirror to nature. But this mirror is not an ordinary mirror. Neither does it exactly reproduce, nor does it distort the objects which confront it. Indeed, its object is the exact opposite of distortion. According to Aristotle, it presents a picture in which the confused, and, therefore, unintelligible facts of life are reduced to coherence. It transforms a blur into a picture, and in order to perform this miracle of giving form to chaos, the dramatist's first business is to make his story one coherent whole. It is the artist's selection, and the consequent effect of inevitable sequence, which achieves this. Experience presents life as an irrational, tangle of incidents. The artist's mirror makes sense of the tangle and represents life with a pattern distinct in the threads. There is unity in it, the need of which has been so much stressed by Aristotle. The imaginative imitation of the artist presents to us not the confused and confusing details but the governing principles of human life. He gives us not the particular but the universal. The 'value of a universal is that it reveals causal connection.' So we see that to have unity, the story in a drama must be universal and to this end the incidents must be so selected that they seem to be bound in a strict sequence of cause and effect. It is selection that gives art its own reality and it is delightful on this account. To quote Aristotle: 'Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation. And it is natural for all to delight in works of imitation.'<sup>21</sup> And imitation is also an inexhaustible source of delight, as is proved by the fact, that, though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight nevertheless in viewing the most realistic representations of them in art—the forms, for example, of lowest animals and of dead bodies. Aristotle describes this delight rather as a theoretical than as a specifically aesthetic experience. 'To be learning something,' Aristotle declares, 'is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosophers but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g., that the man there is so-and-so'.<sup>22</sup> At first sight this principle seems to apply to the representative arts. It could, however, easily be transferred to all the other forms. Music itself became a picture of things.

21. *On the Art of Poetry*, p. 28-29.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Even flute playing and dancing are after all nothing but imitations, for, the flute player or the dancer represents by his rhythms men's characters as well as what they do and suffer. Aristotle gave a new meaning to imitation and his embellished<sup>23</sup> imitation comes very close to Abanindranath's ideas which he expounds with reference to art-nature relation. Like Aristotle, Abanindranath also told us of the comic delight that is derived from comic situations. Both were opposed to photographic imitation. For both, nature as represented in art was 'nature idealised.' Apart from Aristotle, Tagore has a parallel in George Santayana, one of the aesthetic bedonists of modern times. Let us quote him when he exactly<sup>24</sup> tells us when this imitation has got to be condemned. "Many half trained observers condemn the work of some naive or fanciful masters with a sneer, because as they truly say, it is out of drawing. The implication is that to be correctly copied from a model is the prerequisite of all beauty. Correctness is, indeed an element of effect and one which in respect to familiar objects is almost indispensable, because its absence would cause a disappointment and dissatisfaction incompatible with enjoyment. We learn to value truth more and more as our love and knowledge of nature increase. But fidelity is a merit only because it is in this way a factor in our pleasure. It stands on a level with all other ingredients of effect. When a man raises it to a solitary pre-eminence and becomes incapable of appreciating any thing else, he betrays the decay of aesthetic capacity. . . . . When we see a striking truth in any imitation, we are delighted and this kind of pleasure is very legitimate and enters into the best effects of all the representative arts. Truth and realism are therefore aesthetically good but they are not all sufficient, since the representation of everything is not equally pleasing and effective." Abanindranath thought like Santayana that this all sufficiency of realism will have to be abjured. Imitation, when given disproportionate eminence, cannot be considered to have acquired any aesthetic value, except some comic element. Being comic, it may become delightful and this aspect of imitation giving delight has been recognised by Santayana. Abanindranath, Santayana and Aristotle ruled out photographic imitation. And Abanindranath's advocacy of freedom negates at the outset the very possibility of a servitude to crude reality. Art is neither photography nor mimicry nor imitation; they have been condemned by Abanindranath in no uncertain terms. Imitation is mechanical and, as such, inartistic.

We may note here that the ghost of Platonic legacy influenced Aristotle, and it lingers even today in some form or other; that is why, aesthetic thinkers of Abanindranath's eminence could not go beyond the spell of utility considerations in art. Although it is evident from Abanindranath's writings on art that he did not consciously consider art to be subservient to utility. He distinguishes, in one of his lectures, the necessities of an ant from that of a bee, and opines that the bee's necessity is akin to that of an artist, because the bee is not a slave to

23. Quoted in Ernest Cassirer's *An Essay on Man*, p. 138.

24. *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 27.

its material necessities while the ant is so. The bee's honey-hunting is inspired by the *nimantraṇa* (invitation) from the beautiful, while the ant is prompted in his *sandhān* (mission) by physical considerations, such as hunger and thirst. But Abanindranath's surrender to subtle utilitarianism is pronounced. His pedagogism favourably compares with that of Aristotle. The historical necessity that obsessed Plato against amusement art, was not present either in Aristotle's or in Abanindranath's time, and yet they thought on utilitarian lines, in spite of repeated assertions to the contrary. The uniqueness of art forms has been considered to be a product of much selection and rejection from nature by the artist. The *svayamrūpa* of the object in nature, Abanindranath contends, cannot be imported into an image by any means. The image falls far short of the real and, as such, cannot enjoy the dignity of the real. Such images cannot be considered artistic because art is an improvement upon nature. The dignity of art is superior to that attributable to natural phenomena. An image being a copy of nature is thus doubly removed from the world of art. Art is an improvement upon nature. Abanindranath borrowed the classic definition of art and considered it to be *niyatikṛita niyamarahita* as has been already pointed out. Complete freedom of the artist, considered so essential for artistic creations by Abanindranath, rules out any possibility of a surrender to crass matter, and, as such, imitation is inadmissible in his theory. The *svayamrūpa* of the artistic object, Tagore tells us, is a complete and harmonious blend of the form, the content of art, and its excellence; it is judged not by a reference to what is there in nature but by what it could possibly be. Art not only does not imitate nature, it cannot even be considered as symbol of the 'unformed and unseen Being.' Even this type of subjection of art to the *arūpa*, the unformed, has been discounted by Abanindranath, for it implies a reference to something beyond the level of art while adjudging its excellence as art. Art forms are adjudged by a reference to the ideal (which is subjective in character) and the artist corrects nature in his creations, and such corrections are never guided by any objective standard.

Art corrects nature. That is what Aristotle believed in, and Abanindranath subscribed to. Memory is a great aid to artistic creations. The artist's memory, according to Abanindranath, while remembering past experiences, goes through a process of selection and rejection, and that is why, what he remembers and retains of his aesthetic experiences on a moonlit night, does not tally with those of another belonging to the same tribe. Remembrance implies a fidelity to the original which we remember, and even in such cases, Abanindranath discovers certain elements not found in the original, and considers them to be marks of artistic ability, and as such, deviations are pardonable. Memory and imagination make art what it is. The true artist hardly takes into account the beaten track. All that is done in the past might inspire him to new creations but not to a copying of what is already there. That is one of the reasons why Abanindranath considered art to be indefinite. The form is unique and the content unspecified, and as such, its goodness or greatness is unimportant for the

artist. This indefinable character of art guarantees its absolute independence, and eternally cancels imitation as an art-theory. This imitation implies abject surrender to what is imitated. Imitation, qualified by selection and rejection from nature in the sense of ideal construction, is acceptable to Abanindranath and he, in fact, considers art to be an improvement upon nature. Art interprets nature and gives it a new meaning which was never on sea or land. He quotes Gilbert's observation in point which we have already quoted. Psychologically considered, aesthetic creations have unique individuality. No two people could see and say the same way. Reference to the epic incident in Māhabhārata where all the princes see differently the bird which Dronacārya wanted them to shoot down. That is why art has been described by Abanindranath as *ananya paratantra*, and artistic creations have been attributed unique individuality. This rejection of the copy theory of art led him to believe in the finality of the aesthetic judgement by the judging 'I' in the form, 'I judge it to be beautiful and it is beautiful.' Aesthetic excellence, according to Abanindranath, is independent of objective guidance. Suggestiveness in art is the soul of art and this cannot live and thrive in an atmosphere of absolute determinism. Imitation prescribes determination which was considered by Abanindranath to be contrary to the essence of art. Imitation of traditions was also discouraged by him. As imitation of nature was detrimental to the production of artifacts, so was the imitation of traditions to the progress in art. Imitation has been characterized as the 'quick sand in the domain of art,' and Abanindranath holds out a word of caution against this quick sand. In this context, he inadvertently 'in spite of all his earlier protestations' becomes somewhat Platonic in adjudging all art-forms as mere copies of divine art-forms; and here he treads in the wake of the vedic seers. This indulgence in traditional theorizing was short-lived and temporary, and he repudiated all forms of imitation in no uncertain terms in his subsequent writings.

That is why even the young Abanindranath had no regard for the principle of 'anatomy, perspective and cast shadow,' so very religiously followed by the British realists in their works. The contemporary educated Indians, as a legacy from the British realists, had a great faith in this 'exact copy of nature and cast shadow' principle. That is why they could not appreciate Tagore's paintings. A specimen of contemporary criticism will bring out the deviations discerned in his painted characters from their referents in nature. 'Is it the underlying principle of Indian pictorial art that they will not resemble in any way the real objects or that people will not be able to recognize them? In other words, is it the soul of the so-called Indian painting to contradict nature? . . . . Any work that defies rules of anatomy becomes eligible for the gallery of Indian paintings. Imagination that in its recklessness shrinks not to elongate endlessly the heads and feet is not worth its name. Why the pictures painted according to Indian

tradition are so much contrary to nature.'<sup>25</sup> This criticism of Abanindranath and his followers ably brings out Tagore's ideas on art's reference to nature. Nature is never intended to be copied in art. Thus, Abanindranath agreed with Aristotle in denouncing imitation in the sense of producing copies of the original. They gave new meaning to the concept and made it worthy of being considered as the essence of art. Rejection and selection from nature and an implicit reference to the ideal, are common to their thinking. Thus, they struck similar notes on this crucial issue, though intellectually and physically they belonged to two different epochs of human history. This brings us to question (c) posed above and we answer it from Tagore's view-point.

The wide deviations from nature (or the outside world) and the peculiar relation of correspondence (if we may call it so) between them raised another important problem in aesthetics, viz., the problem of universal communication. It is often asked whether art has universal appeal or not? The concept of mimesis as found in Abanindranath raises the most controversial issue of its acceptance by one and all objectively. If it is demanded of art that it must conform to the various tastes of a living generation, or to all the varying tastes in different periods of time, we are expecting the absurd. Art never caters to the needs of a generation of men all at a time, and it is idle to expect that it should live through all the ages as a living force. Paradoxically enough, sometimes we find good specimens of art surviving the onslaught of time. How does it happen? What is the meaning of universality in art? If there be any such universality in art, how is it effected? All these are baffling questions indeed. It is quite difficult to explain and account for the universality that good specimens of art enjoy. This universality has a limited application, and as such, it stimulated the introduction *adhikāravāda* in the field of aesthetics by the Indian *alamkārikas*. Art, according to them, cannot be looked upon as the rendezvous for all. It is meant for those gifted with that rare capacity for appreciating art proper. Education and training are aids to such art appreciation. Universality in art does not mean its democratization. If art is to be democratized, it can be effected through mass education and regimentation. This type of regimentation is harmful, for in course of time, it would encourage one particular form of art, and art would lose its variegated form and colour. The art movement of a country would reveal one pattern and it would ultimately spell disaster for art.

It is interesting to note how Abanindranath understood the problem and solved it. Art, as a matter of fact, is expected to bear the impress of the individual mind, for, it is the response of an individual. It is not a creation of the social mind but is an individual creation, stamped with the hall-mark of an individual's peculiar way of seeing things. His illustrious uncle, Rabindranath Tagore, considered art to be the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real. Abanindranath also considered this subjective element in art to be of permanent importance.

---

25. *Sāhitya*, April-May, 1910 (Translation by Sri Binodbehari Mukhopadhyaya).

'The stream of objects is there outside me and independent of me. A relation between this objective world and the world of art is undeniable.' But the objective stream is viewed by the artist through his own glasses; and his way of permutation and combination of factual events which are in nature produce a world of make-believe for other people as well. This is the world of art. This claims universality. It bears an impress of eternity. It is temporal and at the same time its bid for transcending the time category cannot be lightly brushed aside. The mural paintings at Ajanta, the murals of the Tunhuang caves, defied time in the sense that they lived through time and weathered all its travails. All such works of art are creations of individual minds, and at the same time, universal. How this happens is beyond all human comprehension. This mysterious character of art has led some people to dub it as indefinable. Our *Tantras* likened this process of artistic creation to the flight of a bird from one tree to another, leaving no trace whatsoever of its flight across the blues. This mystery has enlivened aesthetics, and we referred to academic art, foreign art, and adapted art in order to explain and understand the diversified art traditions of the world. An artist worth the name must liquidate his individualistic preoccupations by the constant hammering of a universalistic bias. The de-individualizing is necessary for making the work of art acceptable to other minds. If it is to be made palatable to other palates, it must not absolutely conform to the taste of its creator. In order to explain this phenomenon, Abanindranath cites the example of a community dinner. When we invite a few of our friends of similar likings and tastes, we may opt for a specialized menu, exclusively suited to our taste. But when the invitees are large in number, and they come from far and near, the menu must be broad-based. Our peculiar individual bias and likes and dislikes must be disregarded in order to accommodate the varying tastes of a vast number of men and women. As it is in a symphony, so it is in a work of art. In a symphony all the notes must harmonize, and the process of harmonization may only take place when the different notes agree in accommodating one another. None of the notes could be so struck as to destroy the total effect. The toy instruments employed in toy symphony, for example, are a cuckoo, a trumpet, a drum, a whistle, a triangle and a quail. They respect one another's right to exist in the whole and the resultant effect is the symphony.

Thus, Abanindranath contends that in the case of all good art, the artist must not allow his individualistic bias to work too much on his creations. If it is so allowed, art appreciation on a wide scale becomes an impossibility. That is why he prescribes the liquidation of individualistic tendencies in the field of art by the sledge-hammering of a universalistic outlook. We must remember, Abanindranath points out, that the work of art is the meeting ground for the artist and the art-lovers. In *Gharoā* he tells us that art is a three-storeyed building, in which craft has been accommodated in the ground floor. The first floor is the rendezvous of artists and lovers of art. That is where the communion is done. There they meet and the art-work is reviewed. Herein we find true art—an





A work of art, in the true sense, is not assigned the task of introducing its creator to the wider public.<sup>26</sup>

This element of self-effacement or de-personalization of the artist is rather confusing. When the artist looks at the object, he definitely looks at it from his own point of view. That view-point is his personal view-point, and that personal view-point gives the art-creation its uniqueness. Without this uniqueness, a work of art becomes stale and stereotyped. Art loses its freshness when it becomes a copy of what people created in the past. So naturally, the artist's endeavour should be to create something novel and unique. This assertion normally entails a reflection of the peculiar traits of the artist's personality on his art creation. But this has been discouraged and the artist has been asked not to betray his personal likes and dislikes, not to expose his personal identity through his creation. His individuality should be buried under the captivating form of his art-creation. This seems to be preposterous. Art, on the one hand, should be unique, and on the other hand, it must be universal. To put it bluntly, art, in a sense, is to be personal and impersonal at the same time. They get mixed up and make good art what it is. How is it effected is not within the knowledge of anybody. Elsewhere, Abanindranath has explained how one of his master pieces, *Gaurīr Tapasyā*, had its inspiration from the flight of a bird across a hillock lit by the last rays of the setting sun. The *tantras* came to his aid; they explained by comparing the artist's creation with the flight of a bird which left no trace of its air-lift in the air. To common men and women, these types of problems are very difficult to grasp. They are guided by the conventional laws of thought, and as such, when art wants them to forget all about the operations of the law of contradiction or excluded middle, they are completely lost in a maze of bafflement.

Abanindranath understood this problem and he categorically tells us that art is deceptive. The artist is more than a magician. He creates a deceptive world and claims it to be true. Abanindranath's insistence on art being true might look meaningless in the context of the present discussion. But, if this truth is to be the truth of the form and not of the content, the contradiction disappears, and the controversy is laid to rest. Through some unmarked passage, the artist reaches his kingdom wherein he gets the appreciator along with him for a taste of beauty. There he is a master magician—his seedlings and flowers and foliages come out of no seeds, he makes a man out of the moon, and makes a full moon out of an ugly man. Here black art and good art share a common rendezvous. We may note in this connection that the ancient legends of Citralakṣaṇa and Viṣṇudharmottara specially reveals the magical purpose of art and the ancient Hindu art was definitely purposive. Platonic legacy more or less compares favourably with the Hindu legacy in this regard. The modern tendency has been to outgrow these age-worn influences. This illusive element in art points to its indeterminate character. This characterization of art as indeterminate is by no

---

26. *Bagéswarī Lectures*, p. 242.

means escapism. Rabindranath Tagore also noted this indeterminate character of art and characterized art as *māyā*. This indeterminate character of art fits in well with Abanindranath's conception of art as play. This conception again amply explains his concept of reality in art, his ideas of content and form of art, and his notion of the artist's freedom. Once Abanindranath remarked: 'Infuse *bhāva* in the picture.' We do not know what he meant by this *bhāva*—idea or feeling or something else. What he possibly meant was an enlargement of the emotive content of the art work. Any artist worth the name, often does it successfully and when he fails to do so, his work lacks that 'light that never was on sea or land.' If we care to look at the pictures<sup>27</sup> drawn by the master from 1902-1915, we find them steeped in emotion (may be *bhāva* quoted above). His noted disciple Nandalal Bose told us that they breathed 'the simplicity of a child, the bashfulness of a village bride and the pathos of a pastoral flute.' They are small water-colour paintings, their subjects are Indian and Eastern. They depict stillness and a listening to the within. They have names and shapes of the past and their appearance is of the present. Their lines halt in their movement. Their figures seem an act of evocation. It is personal and intimate. They are simply embodiments of ethereal beauty. They were, in a sense, beauty incarnate. Both in content and form, they are syncretic. They are individual, stamped with the individuality of the artist and at the same time they suggest a process of de-individualization which gave his paintings a type of universality, so rare even in the best specimens of art. In some of the paintings, we find the known nature peeping through the wonderful forms of bright colour schemes, as employed by Abanindranath and soon we discover that nature there has been completely transcended. The known forms or aspects in nature with a little twist and being presented in an imagined perspective gave us completely new effects. We feel fascinated and the element of too much familiarity, as we find in nature, gives place to a sense of seeing novel things. In some of these we find the human emotions being bodied forth. Pathos of a parting, the pensive heights of an imaginative ambition or the righteous indignation of a wronged lady—they are all there in one or other of these paintings. We find in them Tagore's imagination (and the role of poet's imagination has been given a permanent place by Abanindranath in his scheme of aesthetics) playing unfettered.

However, in this context we may examine and analyse one by one some of the paintings of Abanindranath. In the portrait of Abdul Khalik the face is aged with the miniature care of the Mughals and heavy with naturalistic record. Around it are the dark outlines of things of the past, ewers and icons, a closed book and his hands grown shapeless holding a rosary. The rest is dim with suggestion, indistinct movements mount into space, the foreground remaining empty. The revival of Indian art by Abanindranath is a resuscitation of Indian types in the climate of his soul. The background is indefinite; clouds, thoughts and objects

27. Reference may be made to the reproductions of the early work of Abanindranath Tagore, edited by R. N. Chakravarty and published by the Indian Museum, Calcutta,

dissolved in opalescent tints which have depth and convey memories of western observations. They respond to the arrested movements of the figures and to their nostalgic delicacy (*The Traveller and the Lotus, Dewali, and the Siddhas of the Upper Air*). It has thinned them through filters of self-consciousness. Tenuous and elongated, the figures hold the surface (*Abhisārikā, Spring, and Dewali*). By intended distortions fingers are lengthened and linger (*Spring, The Traveller and the Lotus, and Rukminī writing letter to Krishna*). They pause. They hold the mood of the moment as their permanent attribute; flower, flute, light and style are by way of illustration only (*Spring, Dewali, A Scene from Omar Khayyam, and Rādhā and Krishna*). They have no weight. The lines stay, they do not flow, the outline traces the thought of the shape after it has touched it. In that interval, emotion looks at itself and withhold its gesture. Nothing is spent nor carried away even though the scene is open on the side towards which the figures turn, facing beyond, outside the painting, that would answer their dream of themselves (*Spring, Dewali, and the Siddhas of the Upper Air*). It is indicated by the bank of a pond, suggested by a modulation in the colour (*Spring, Dewali*). The inner content of the figure and the ground of the painting is made more explicit by architectural or scenic phantasies, conceived like a musical accompaniment (couple of scenes from *Omar Khayyam*) or filling the picture with illustrative invention (*Buddha and Sujata*).<sup>28</sup> "L'art nouveau" yields to the rhythms of Omar Khayyam, played in an Indian mode. Curves are brittle, lines are traced by a brush of nerves; where horizontals predominate, they bend under the weight of invisible load (*A Scene from Omar Khayyam*), or the haze charged with sentiment is dispelled. Rajput paintings clarify the scene, the walls of their buildings offer rectangular surfaces that are background to the figures (*Summer, and Rukminī writing letter to Krishna*). Their conventions balance the details of the Mughal miniature and the dim spaces of his dream world. For these discoveries of Indian styles and periods, researches in technique prepared new ground. The Jaipur technique of wall-painting reduced to the surface the encumbrances of

28. About the painting 'Buddha & Sujata' Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the eminent scholar and indologist writes : This picture was inspired by Sir Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia' and two lines from this book were quoted at the bottom of the picture : 'So thinking him Divine, Sujata drew trembling nigh.' Here we have the huge gnarled trunk of the Bodhi Tree—the big *Peepul* under which Buddha attained his supreme wisdom (Bodhi) and at the bottom of the tree trunk which presents a symphony in the brown, we have the figure of Buddha in yellow robes, his thin ascetic face after his long fast, spiritual, calm, and pensive, shimmering like a golden haze, beautiful as an angel's. Sujata is kneeling in front of Buddha with a vase of water by her side and with bowed head she is folding her hands as a token of her great respect for the Master whom she has not as yet been able to recognise and thinks of him only as a sylvan God. Buddha's left hand is held up in the attitude of blessing her and in his right hand he holds the bowl with the rice-milk which Sujata took so great pains to prepare as an offering of gratitude for having been blessed with a husband and a child and a joyful married life. The figure of Sujata has been done in the most exquisite manner. She is dressed in the ancient Indian way as such as we find in the earlier Indian sculptures—a sari-like embroidered cloth draping her lower limbs, an *uttariya* or upper garment hanging loosely over her right shoulder. The two faces are wonderfully conceived. For Dr Chatterjee the painting 'seemed to concentrate in itself the beauty and poetry, the spirituality and the devotion to Ancient India.'

western representation. *Kaca and Devayānī* is Indian in form and technique. Stella Kramrisch points out that none of the later paintings by Abanindranath surpasses the quality of this panel. According to another artist and art-critic,<sup>29</sup> the unique genius of Abanindranath was revealed for the first time in his Rādhā-Krishṇa series of paintings (1895). These pictures, according to him, introduce a new epoch in modern Indian painting. We see in the Rādhā-Krishṇa series the decorative forms of Indian and foreign paintings. Tagore's previous training in European technique had influenced the work and did not allow in them the Indian decorative frame to remain absolutely pure. As a result, these pictures had become something which was neither a true European miniature nor an Indian decorative painting. Tagore as a syncretist reveals himself here, in so far as technique was concerned. This syncretism in style gave Tagore's art a peculiar language of its own. That is why the devout vaiṣṇavite scholar, Mahatma Sisir Kumar Ghose was rather disappointed with the unconventional appearance of Rādhā and he wanted to see her a little more plump. But an Indian vaiṣṇavite's reaction was not the same as that of an erudite christian moralist (Mr. Lefevre), whom Dr S. K. Chatterjee quotes as saying 'What do you find in this picture of Rādhā and Krishṇa?'<sup>30</sup> Mr. Lefevre was completely ignorant of the myth of Rādhā and Krishṇa as symbolising the all-engrossing love of the human soul for the Divinity, a love which would rise superior to all social and man-made obstacles. On the other hand Dr Chatterjee considered this series of Bengal Vaishṇava lyrics on the love of Rādhā and Krishṇa 'as being some of the best paintings ever painted on this great theme of mystic love.' In contrast to Lefevre's appreciation of Tagore's works quoted above, we may cite the comments on Tagore's art by another great missionary who helped mould the renaissance Indian culture during the last century and early this century. While writing on Tagore's famous painting entitled *Shah Jahan dreaming of the Taj*, Sister Nivedita writes<sup>31</sup> "The last reflection of the sunset has not yet died out of the eastern sky. The young moon is high behind the clouds. And the emperor rides alone by the riverside to pray. Weeks, perhaps months, have gone by since that terrible moment of severance, when the two who were as one, were divided for a time. The heart still quivers under the freshness of the wound, and yet serenity is at its dawn; within the soul we behold the meeting place of pain and peace. Yonder on the far side of the river, lies a grave, her grave. O flowing stream! O little tomb! How icy-cold to-night is the tent of the heart! Awhile hence, when the moon is gone, and all the world is wrapped in secrecy, Shah Jahan will ride across the fort and there dismount to kneel beneath the marble canopy and kiss with passionate kisses, the cold stones, that silent earth, that are as the hem of her garment to him who loves. Awhile hence, despair and longing will

29. Sri B. B. Mookerjee, in his 'Introduction' to the Indian Museum edition of the early works of Tagore.

30. *Abanindranath : Master Artist and Renovator* (Golden Jubilee volume of the journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art).

31. *Modern Review*, January, 1910.

have overwhelmed him. But now he prays. With all the gravity and stateliness of a mohammedan sovereign, he paces up and down on horseback, bowed, hands quiet on the reins and lost in thought. The healing hand of his own strong religious faith has begun to make itself felt, in the man's life. The gleam of white marble speaks to him of rest. A throne could not lift her who is gone, as she is lifted in this shrine of death. How far has she been removed, above all the weariness and pain, the turbulence and mischance, of this mortal world! The soul that came to him out of the infinite, like a great white bird, bearing love and compassion on its wings is withdrawn once more into the bosom of God. The presence of this dust is in truth a conversation. The lamp of the home is extinguished but burns there not a light the more, before the altar? The wife, the mother, the queen is gone, but in heaven there kneels a saint before God, praying to Him for the beloved on earth."

This quoting in extenso reveals how a dedicated life could very well understand the significance and meaning of a love-theme in its aesthetic excellence and metaphysical import. In her review of Tagore's *The Passing of Shah Jahan*, Sister Nivedita<sup>32</sup> writes about (in the first two paragraphs) some a priori ideas (both historical and philosophical in nature) helpful for understanding the painting itself. The third paragraph describes the picture content: 'Jahanara weeps at her father's feet. All others have withdrawn, for no service remains to be rendered to the august captive. On the edge of the carpet lies only the shoes and regal helmet, put off for the last time. For Shah Jahan the uses of the world are ended. Silence and the night and the mourning moon, half-veiled in her scarf of drifting cloud, envelop the sad soul of the gentle prince.' Sister Nivedita reads a new meaning in the face of the dying monarch. She writes: 'But Shah Jahan himself? To him the moment is glad with expectation. The sucking sound of the river below the bastions fills him with the sense of that other river beside which stands his soul. Yonder, beyond the bend, like some ethereal white-veiled presence, stands the Taj—her Taj, her crown, the crown he wrought her. But to-night it is more than her crown. To-night it is herself. To-night she is there, in all her old-time majesty and sweetness, yet with an added holiness withal. To-night, beyond the gentle lapping of the waters, every line of the stately form speaks tenderness and peace and all-enfolding holiness, waiting for that pilgrim—with weary feet, bent back and head so bowed, alas! who comes leaving behind alike palace and prison, battlefield and cell of prayer, to land on the quiet shore on the yonder side of death.' The concluding lines of the review are intensely philosophical in nature and reveals a *sahṛīdaya hṛīdaya samvādī* in the critic who understands sympathetically and most profoundly the dignity of love that sustains man and woman in its mundane bearing. She concludes: 'Truly a royal passing this of Shah Jahan! King is nothing so truly as in his place in a woman's

---

32. Ibid., May, 1907.

heart-crowned in this, the supreme moment of her to whom he gave the crown of all the world.'

Sister Nivedita, while reviewing Abanindranath's famous painting entitled *Bhāratmātā*,<sup>33</sup> tells us: 'we have here a picture which bids fare to prove the beginning of a new age in Indian Art.' Abanindranath, in his famous book *Gharoā* told us that this painting was done at a moment of national resurgence when the whole nation was in ferment. The national outlook, the resurgent patriotism inspired the artist to scale new heights. To quote Nivedita again: "using all the added means of expression which the modern period had bestowed upon him, the artist has here given expression nevertheless to a purely Indian idea, in Indian form. The curving line of lotuses and the white radiance of the halo are beautiful additions to the asiatically-conceived figure with its four arms, as the symbol of the divine multiplication of power. This is the first masterpiece, in which an Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging, as it were, the spirit of the Motherland—giver of faith and learning, of clothing and food—and portraying Her, as she appears to the eyes of Her children. What he sees in Her is here made clear to all of us,<sup>34</sup> Spirit of the Motherland, giver of all good, yet eternally virgin, eternally rapt from human sense in prayer and gift. The misty lotuses and the white light set her apart from the common world, as much as the four arms and Her infinite love. And yet in every detail, of *shankha* bracelet, and close-veiling garment, of bare feet, and open sincere expression, is she not after all, our very own, heart of our heart, at once mother and daughter of the Indian land even as to the *rishis* of the old was Ushābālā, in her Indian girlhood, daughter of the dawn."

Her review of Tagore's *Captive Sitā*<sup>35</sup> is equally engaging. The lore of Sitā comes down from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the great Indian epic. Sister Nivedita's opening remarks are worth reproducing: 'The outstanding impression made by the picture is one of extraordinary mental intensity.' Then she goes on telling us analytically the physiognomy of the painted Sitā: 'The face is not perhaps chosen from amongst the most beautiful Indian types. The brow retreats and the neck is thick, features not usually characteristic of a Hindu woman.' But the epic frailty discernible in the Sitā of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is conspicuously absent in Tagore's creation. That is why Nivedita congratulates Tagore on the strength of his portrayal. It cannot be said too often that Sitā, as depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is first a great woman and only afterwards a great wife. In this picture, with its noble proportions and splendid vigour, we see that Sitā who could laugh at hardships and burn with her disdain Rāvaṇa himself. We catch a glimpse even of the woman of the last great scene of wounded withdrawal, before the popular insult.

33. See Pravasi, *Bhādra*, 1313 B.S.

34. His image of Mother India could be compared to the celebrated images of Mother India as conceived by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore.

35. *Modern Review*, March, 1908,

Then Sister Nivedita goes on to describe the composition of the picture and tells us of the uniqueness of the same. It was the vision of the artist which gave it the singularity for which it was widely acclaimed. Let us quote Nivedita again: "Mr. Tagore has wisely chosen his own setting for the captive Sitā. He has placed her behind bars, looking out, in the infinite longing of the dawn, over the water of the ocean. This visualises her imprisonment and sadness, as the garden of Asoka trees on the bank of the river could never have done. It is impossible in the photographs to catch the extraordinary beauty of the sunrise sky, as it is given in the original." Then the reviewer discovers the tone of ideality permeating the whole composition: 'But the ideal lives for us at last. The Indian Madonna has found a form. In ages to come, each great painter may create his own particular presentment of Sitā, even as in Europe we can tell from something in the manner of the picture, whether a Holy Family is by Raphael or Leonardo da Vinci, by Correggio or Botticelli. But at least nothing can ever again be accepted, which is not psychologically Sitā. In the strong and noble womanhood, in the regal pride brought low and the hoping yet despairful wifehood, of this Sitā by Mr. Tagore, we have achieved something too deeply satisfying for us again to be contented without an effort in its direction.'

In Tagore we found a syncretic style compounded of the delicacy of Mughal portraiture and the spatial quality of Japanese painting exquisitely balanced by the discipline of the western technique. The Japanese technique of the repetitive colour wash is too pronounced in the *Yakshas of the Upper Air*. Illustrations of the *Rubaiyat* also bear the stamp of the Japanese influence. The English technique of the colour wash has often been combined with the Japanese. A study of the sculpture of Orissa induced a further plasticity in his maturing style: the colour works attained more body and the figures became further quieter. The well-known specimens illustrative of this new direction were *Tiṣyarakshitā* and the *End of the Journey*. Thus we found in Tagore a fusion of many a stream and yet his stamp of originality was there claiming the creations to be his own. He evolved a new style of painting as is evident in the paintings quoted above. Where his technique was concerned, he could be alone. But he was not even alone there. He founded a school. Where he was an aesthetic thinker he had many parallels amongst the contemporaries and the ancients as well. But his intuitions as an artist were unparalleled. This unique intuition gave him all the grandeur that he could claim as a creative artist. This gave the final shape to his technique and style. That is how, having many parallels, he could claim some novelty in his style as well. (Here it is evident that we do not believe in the Crocean identity of intuition and expression.) The expression, as we find in Tagore, was either done through words (he was a great literary artist) or through picture-language and the conveyed ideas which could be traced to or compared with ideas of people belonging to different periods of history and different schools of thought; yet his originality was accepted on all hands. However, while attempting to determine the unique nature of this creative activity of the



artist (so eloquently demonstrated in the paintings quoted above),<sup>36</sup> we may examine Abanindranath's postulation of the hypothesis of art as play and this brings us to question (d) posed above and we essay an answer from Tagore's view-point. This art as play theory is well-known with the thinkers in the West. Abanindranath could not accept this western concept of play to be compatible with the autonomous nature or art qua art. His formulation of the idea and determination of the relation between art and play bore the hall-mark of his peculiar aesthetic thinking. We may consider him, while enunciating the *lilā* theory, to have taken a position (re: purpose of art) analogous to the Kantian concept of "purposiveness without a purpose."

Having a different intellectual and cultural context from that of Kant and Schiller, Abanindranath Tagore formulated the principle of *lilā* as contradistinguished from the concept of *khēlā* on the one hand and work on the other. In attempting a proper appraisal of the genesis of art, aestheticians have delved deeper into human psyche, and some are of opinion that art has its origin in the region of the silent mind as opposed to the verbal mind. There are others who think that the urge for artistic creation is conscious, and as such, art is brought forth as a result of the artist's conscious effort. If we consider art as a conscious creation or as some form of active creation, then certainly the question remains to be answered:<sup>37</sup> What urged this creation? The motive of the artist remains to be explained. If the artist has any motive extraneous to the nature of art, then art suffers in its virtue as art. Masters like Tolstoy who believed in the missionary activities of people's art are no more heard with interest now-a-days. So a principle of explanation had to be found quite consistent with the autonomous nature of art.

Benedetto Croce<sup>38</sup> found a principle which virtually reconciled with the art for art's sake theory with theories having a moralistic or didactic bias. We quote Croce at length:

"We must rather hold firmly to the doctrine of art for art's sake, yet at the same time emphasise a vital condition, not always made sufficiently clear, but often overlooked because it was implied as a presupposition. This oversight has never been remedied because the keen intellectual climate in which the truth was first recognised, mentally, vigorously and normally, made it seem something so obvious and so natural that there was no need to insist upon it or to elaborate it in formal arguments and defend it on philosophical and critical grounds. The vital conditions of art's autonomy is simply the essential unity of the human spirit which, in its various activities, is never disintegrated so as to let each drift in isolation, but is itself always present as the pilot at the helm. A man would not be moral without the capacities for reason and imagination, for intellectual

36. Sri B. B. Mookerjee, in his introduction to the Indian Museum edition of the early works of Tagore.

37. A. E. Housman and others considered art to be some form of passive activity. (See Housman's book *The Name and Nature of Poetry*.) This characterisation of art adroitly sidetracks the issue of the artist's real motivation in his creation.

38. *My Philosophy*, p. 141-142.

and artistic experience; he could not philosophise unless he had a strain of poetry and a strong and delicate conscience; each activity draws its specific energy from the spiritual unity, morality purely moral, rejecting the inroads of sophistic logic, the other, purely speculative, uncontaminated by misplaced edification. So too, it is impossible to be a poet or an artist without being in the first place a man nourished by thought and by experience of moral ideals and conflicts. Though art is neither the slave nor the handmaid of morality or philosophy, it always busied with both, for its business is that of the spiritual unity which comes to its own as a necessary and unique manifestation. This is the reason why we find in all genuine poets, in all ages and all nations, that breath of sublimity, that *spirare tragicum* which lifts us on its strong wing to the universal and eternal, an elevation and expression lacking in the sensual impressionistic art which leaves the spectator on the earth depressed and disillusioned, mainly seeking for something that constantly eludes him. . . . . When shall we meet again or do we ever meet the whole man with his search, which is already a finding for purity and goodness? Only when we again turn our eyes to the heavens and love again the things that are lovely and know how to work and suffer and sacrifice for their sake. Until we do that we may have the desire but not the realisation of the joy of beauty.”

Croce’s formulation of the view of art as being the expression of the whole man, his realisation and his joy make it easy to synthesise the freedom in art and its moralistic, didactic or utilitarian character. Thus he offers us a principle of explanation which would go a long way in reconciling many of the conflicting and warring views of art. Likewise the play theory as formulated by Tagore accommodated many conflicting ideas. It may be noted that there were objections raised against the identification of art and play<sup>39</sup> or against the consideration of art as play. But play looked upon as the mysterious activity which occupies the working and waking hours of children has great resemblance to art, considered not as magic art nor as amusement art. Children play and this play is indefinable and mysterious.<sup>40</sup> So the artists also play with their different art-forms with a purpose undefined and indefinable. Freedom from practical ends binds together art and play. Their common tendency to simulation, or in the very largest sense, the ideal treatment of reality, links them together. The play impulse, writes Bosanquet,<sup>41</sup> is in short only aesthetic where its primarily negative freedom is charged with a content which demands imaginative expression, and any impulse which takes such a form is aesthetic.

So Bosanquet’s idea of negative freedom in his concept of ‘play’ as ‘charged with content which demands imaginative expression’ leads to the domain of aesthetic values. Tagore did not believe in the idea of negative freedom as he

39. See collinwood’s *The Principles of Art*, p. 80.

40. Dr Margret Lowenfeld’s noted book *Play in Childhood* has discovered strange facts about child’s play. Her discoveries go to show the identity of art and play.

41. Bosanquet’s *History of Aesthetics*, p. 296.

considered art to be a conscious activity. So *lilā* for him, was conscious too. As such it was for him to be free as an artist was to enjoy positive freedom, i.e., *ānandam*. That is why Abanindranath distinguished this *lilā* from sport (*khelā*). According to Tagore, *khelā* or sport is not the true characterisation of art, as men take to different types of sport at different age-levels. Sport has a reference to age-group, and a fondness for a particular<sup>42</sup> sport at an earlier age is overcome at a later age. Thus self-transcendence is the character of sport, whereas *lilā* or play in Tagore's view has a stability through changes and a universal appeal. Art as sport (*khelā*) has been decried by pedants and was unacceptable to Abanindranath as well. Abanindranath's *lilā* was the fountain head of pure sensuous forms. Herein he comes close to Ernest Cassirer<sup>43</sup> who speaks of three kinds of imagination: the power of invention, the power of personification and the power to produce pure sensuous forms. In play (especially that of a child) we find the two former powers but not the third. The child plays with things; the artist plays with forms, with lines and designs, rhythms and melodies. In a playing child we admire the facility and quickness of transformation. The greatest tasks are performed with the scantiest means. Any piece of wood may be turned into a living being. Nevertheless, this transformation signifies only a metamorphosis of the objects themselves; it does not mean a metamorphosis of objects into forms. In play we merely rearrange and redistribute the materials given to sense perception. Art is constructive and creative in another and deeper sense. A child at play does not live in the same world of rigid empirical facts as the adults. The child's world has a much greater mobility and transmutability, yet the playing child, nevertheless, does no more than exchange the actual things of his environment for other possible things. No such exchange as this characterises genuine artistic activity. Here the requirement is much more severe. For the artist dissolves the hard stuff of things in the crucible of his imagination and the result of this process is the discovery of a new world of poetical, musical or plastic forms. To be sure, a great many ostensible works of art are very far from satisfying this requirement. It is the task of the aesthetic judgement or of artistic taste to distinguish between a genuine work of art and those other spurious products which are indeed play-things or at most the response to the demand for entertainment. A closer analysis of the psychological origin and psychological effects of play and art leads to the same conclusion. Play gives us diversion and recreation but it also serves a different purpose. Play has a general biological relevance in so far as it anticipates future activities. It has often been pointed out that the play of a child has a propaedeutic value. In art there is neither diversion nor preparation. The function of fine art cannot be accounted for in this manner.

When art was taken to be *khelā* or sport, there came religious sanctions against painting; it was condemned for it was considered to be some form of

---

42. *Bagésvarī Lectures*, p. 258.

43. *An Essay on Man*, p. 164.

sport prompted by a love for frolic.<sup>44</sup> This crusade against fine arts has been a recurring feature in human history. How then art survives the onslaught of all these opposing forces? In Tagore's opinion, this crusade against art is a crusade against art as sport (*khelā*), and not against art as play (*līlā*). When art is looked upon as a favourite pursuit to fill up one's leisure, it is not the *līlā* or play in Tagore's sense; it is mere *khelā* or sport, as it implies no inner necessity, the necessity, that makes the artist restless and without peace. (The classic example of this restlessness may be found in Valmiki, the epic poet, when he was blessed with the maiden rhyme.) Pursuit of art as sport might be a temporary phase in the individual life, but art as play-impulse is laid deep in our nature and its roots have struck into the very being of our existence. That phenomenon explains the survival of art through the ages. Appeal of art is universal and this universality in art also distinguished this play form from other forms of sport. The spirit that prompts human hobbies is absent in *līlā*, whereas it is the guiding force in all forms of *khelā*. *Līlā* is characterised by internal necessity, whereas *khelā* may be prompted by a necessity external to it.<sup>45</sup>

We would do well to recollect how George Santayana<sup>46</sup> distinguished between work on the one hand, and play, in its twin types, on the other: "We may call everything play which is useless activity, exercise that springs from the physiological impulse to discharge the energy which the exigencies of life have not called out. Work will then be all action that is necessary or useful for life." Evidently if work and play are thus objectively distinguished as useful and useless action, work is a eulogistic term and play a disparaging term. It would be better for us that all our energy should be turned to account, that none of it should be wasted in aimless motion. Play, in this sense, is a sign of imperfect adaptation. It is proper to childhood, when the body and mind are not yet fit to cope with the environment; but it is unseemly in manhood and pitiable in old age, because it marks an atrophy of human nature and a failure to take hold of the opportunities of life (cf. Tagore's concept of *khelā*). Play is thus essentially frivolous. Some persons (and certainly Abanindranath is one of them) understanding the term in this sense, have felt an aversion which every liberal mind will share, to classing social pleasures, art and religion under the head of play by that epithet condemning them, as certain school seems to do, to gradual extinction as the race approaches maturity. . . . . At the same time there is undeniable propriety in calling all the liberal and imaginative activities of man 'play,' because they are spontaneous and not carried on under pressure of external necessity or danger. Their utility for self-preservation may be very indirect and accidental but they are not worthless for that very reason (cf. Abanindranath's *līlā*). On the contrary, we may measure the degree of happiness and civili-

44. Tagore refers to Islamic scriptures which uphold such sanctions. To quote Tagore : 'There was a time when Islam laid strict injunction on portrait working.' He also refers to similar sanctions in Hindu scriptures (*Bagésvarī Lectures*, p. 258).

45. *Bagésvarī Lectures*, p. 259.

46. *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 30-31.

sation which any race has attained by the proportion of its energy devoted to force and generous pursuits, to the adornment of life and the culture of the imagination. For it is in the spontaneous play of his faculties that man finds himself and his happiness. Work and play, according to Santayana, take on a different meaning and become equivalent to servitude and freedom. While play (*lilā* for Abanindranath) means freedom, work means servitude.

Tagore's *lilā* is not the spontaneous outburst or overflow of excessive energy, (as has been sought to be made out by Schiller<sup>47</sup> and Herbert Spencer<sup>48</sup> in their play theories). This *lilā* of Abanindranath is all consuming. It bears within itself the eternal dissatisfaction of the artist with the existing limited forms. He seeks to express the eternal all-abiding forms of beauty. Any recognition of his failure leads him from old forms to newer forms of expression. He is always experimenting with newer techniques of externalisation of his subjective feelings. This failure is accompanied by a feeling of pain, the pain that paradoxically sustains the artist through all his failures, past and present. This pain characterises all great works of art. Man's intense thirst for beauty aches and inspires his creation.<sup>49</sup> The primitive men, Tagore points out, in the aurignacian age drew human faces in order to satisfy this urge for creation. These were specimens of crude drawing. This primitive art-tradition came down to us through the Solutrian and Magdalenian ages and underwent radical changes in course of human history. This evolution in art was mainly due to conscious human enterprise.<sup>50</sup>

In this context of *lilā* as art we may note that none of the specific qualities and conditions of the work of art (as conceived by Abanindranath) was missing in *lilā*. Konrad Lange<sup>51</sup> and some other modern thinkers may be taken to be approximating Abanindranath in this regard. According to these thinkers, there is not a single characteristic of such games which could not also be found in art. But we may note here that all these arguments are negative in their inception. Psychologically speaking, play and art bear a close resemblance to each other. They are non-utilitarian and unrelated to any practical end. In play as in art we leave behind us our immediate practical needs in order to give our world a new shape. But this analogy was not sufficient to prove a real identity. Artistic imagination always remains sharply distinguished from that sort of imagination which characterises our play activity (even when it had some inner necessity). In play we have to do with simulated images which may become so vivid and impressive as to be taken for realities. To define art as a mere sum of such simulated images would indicate a very meagre conception of its character and task. What we call aesthetic semblance is not the same phenomenon that we experience in games of illusion. Play gave us illusive images and art gave us a new kind of truth, a

47. See Bosanquet's *History of Aesthetics*, p. 294.

48. *Psychology* ii, 627 (quoted in Bosanquet's *History of Aesthetics*).

49. *Bagésuvarī Lectures*, p. 259.

50. Spearing : *The Childhood of Art*, p. 76.

51. See his *Das Wesen Der Kunst* (Berlin 1901) 2 vols.

truth not of empirical things but of pure forms. But Tagore's *lilā* gave us such a truth of pure forms that it was identical with aesthetic activity. In another context<sup>52</sup> Abanindranath describes art as *śakh*, which comes close to his idea of *lilā* in so far as its free purposiveness was concerned. It spoke of no didactic purpose; nor was it instructive. *Śakh* comes from within and had nothing to do with the stimulus from without. It had no set rules or procedures to follow. Tagore illustrates his *śakh* by citing the case of his taking lessons on *esraj* from Ustad Kanailal Dehri. This went on for some time and Tagore gave it up as it did not come from within. What prompted him to play the *esraj* was a desire to be a master in the line. It was ambition and not *śakh* and as such it was purposive. So it had no roots in the nature of the artist and as such it faded gradually. But in so far as painting was concerned it was a matter of *śakh* and it came easy with him. So art was *śakh* and art was *lilā* with Tagore, both connoting a rooting into the fundamentals of the artist's being qua artist.

When aesthetic activity is thus related to and rooted into the very being of man, it cannot be considered to be some sort of unconscious activity. For in that case, the artist will not have much of responsibility in matters of artistic creations. If it is not a conscious activity, the responsibility of the artist ceases in creating the art forms. This point was repeatedly emphasised by the existentialists and that is why they were anti-Freudian. Tagore, similarly, held the artists responsible for their work and as such admits an element of conscious effort as a logical corollary to his theory of art as play which is essentially active; he again calls it *sādhana*. It ceaselessly aims at creating beautiful forms wherein he wants to instal his response to the call of the real.<sup>53</sup> So Tagore's *lilā* is characterised by some inner necessity which makes the production of artistic forms inevitable. An artist must create, if he is capable of creating, i.e., if he is an artist at all. Here Tagore comes very close to Sartre in the enunciation of this position.

### CONCLUSIONS

Now we may summarise our observations regarding Tagore's notion of art as *lilā* or *śakh*. (a) The inner necessity in *lilā* is not contrary to the artist's freedom. If self-determination is considered compatible with freedom then certainly<sup>54</sup> Tagore is not inconsistent in his play theory by the postulation of the internal necessity. (b) His theory of *lilā* makes artistic creation an intensely conscious activity, thereby accommodating proper aesthetic detachment<sup>55</sup> without which no artistic creation was possible. Tagore distinguished between interested and disinterested<sup>56</sup> outlooks on life, and in his opinion, the artist's outlook was disinterested or detached. (c) *Lilā* is unmotivated. The instinct of

52. *Gharoā*, p. 15.

53. See *Bagésvarī Lectures*, p. 264.

54. See Tagore's *Gharoā*, p. 1-2.

55. Lecture entitled '*Dr̥ṣṭi O Sṛ̥ṣṭi*' (*Bagésvarī Lectures*, p. 27-52).

56. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

possession and other self-regarding instincts are totally dormant when the artist creates. Self-interestedness is contrary to the nature of art as a free activity. (d) This detachment and absence of self-interest in art on the part of the artist do not save him from a gripping pain of frustration and failure when his artistic forms look inadequate to the prototype in his imagination. Curiously enough, this sense of intense pain due to his failure sustains him and inspires him to take to fresh experiments. Thus art evolves new forms and all these transitions from one form to another are fraught with painful tales of the agonised mind of a Picasso or an Abanindranath. Rabindranath very well expressed Abanindranath's artistic pain when he wrote:

“This is no mere play,  
This is the intense pain  
When my heart burns.”

The artist's eternal thirst for beauty<sup>57</sup> makes him unhappy. (e) The ideal treatment of reality by the artist helps this identification of art and *līlā*. *Līlā* entails much selection and rejection from the storehouse of nature by the artist<sup>58</sup> to enable him to play with the form as he chose them to be. We may say with Abanindranath that artist presents an 'ennobled nature,' 'the real idealised' and thus guarantees artist's freedom. His notion of art as *līlā* prompted his denial of copy theory in art.<sup>59</sup> The artist, to quote Tagore, is like an adept gardener whose skill rests on selecting the right type of flowers for the bouquet and for the garland. (f) Beauty is the realm of play and appearance. It is the unification of the spiritual and the sensuous. The sensuous comes from nature whereas the spiritual is the significant form given by the artist to the selected and embellished nature. (g) Tagore's unqualified acceptance of the *niyati kṛita niyamarahita* dictum finds in him the unification of Kantian necessity and freedom.<sup>60</sup> Tagore's *līlā* theory and his idea of *śakh* is a guarantee of this freedom so essential for art.<sup>61</sup> Schiller, another great exponent of play theory, writes in his Letters upon the aesthetical education of man guaranteeing this freedom of art and of the artist: 'The idea of an instructive fine art or improving art is no less contradictory, for nothing agrees less with the idea of the beautiful than to give a determinate tendency to the mind.'<sup>62</sup> This determinate tendency of mind is alien to the autonomy of art.<sup>63</sup> This idea of freedom necessarily determines his idea of beauty.

57. Ibid., p. 259.

58. Ibid., p. 259-60.

59. See *Bhārat Śilp Śhaṣṭhāna*, p. 54.

60. See *Bagśwarī Lectures*, p. 77.

61. Ibid., p. 80.

62. See I Knox's *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer*, p. 73.

63. Ibid., p. 92.

## REVIVALISM AND AFTER an aesthetic controversy

Ratan Parimoo

'THE destruction of Indian art which is going on under the British rule is a loss to civilization and to humanity which could and should be avoided,' declared Havell in a lecture<sup>1</sup> in 1901. With these words he started his attack on the English system of art education that had been introduced in India by the colonial administrators with its emphasis on training of the hand to reproduce what was kept in front of the eye, referred to as the South Kensington system. Pained to see the plight of arts in this country and moved by the urge to rehabilitate Indian art, Havell began a campaign which had taken him into the realms of aesthetics and art criticism. His provocative writings were largely responsible for initiating the aesthetic discussion which is the topic of this essay.

Havell believed that Indian traditional art was not based on visual images but on memory images. Therefore, it was inconsistent to teach the Indian artist to paint cheap pastiches of the Royal Academy. Another inconsistency he pointed out was regarding the Englishmen's view: "Indian Art is only admirable when applied to industrial purposes, and barbaric or underdeveloped in the higher flight of artistic expression, which we call the 'Fine Arts'."<sup>2</sup>

Such double standards, Havell warned, would only hinder and not help in achieving the goal of improving arts in India and felt the British official approach to this problem to be misconstrued. Analysing the disastrous effects of this approach he observed: "The decay of Indian art is mostly due to the fatal mistake which has been made in Indian public building in supplanting the living traditional styles of Indian architecture by imitations of modern European scholastic styles. Architecture is the principal door through which the artistic sense of the people finds expression. If that door is mostly choked with rubbish as it is in India, it is not surprising that art industries should decline."<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. See Havell, *Revival of Indian Handicrafts*, (A lecture delivered before the Indian Industrial Association—July 1901), in *Essays on Indian Art, Industry and Education*, Madras.
  2. Havell, *Art Administration in India*, *Journal of Royal Society of Arts*, London, Vol. LVIII, 1909.
  3. See f.n. 1.



He laid the proposition that the soundest basis for the industrial regeneration of India was to be found in the revival of the great hand-loom industry. He suggested that production of industrial arts in India should be geared to the requirement and needs of the people as a necessary measure for economic progress. Opposed to mechanization he held the view that 'nowhere in the world is there a splendid field for the development of hand industries than there is in India.' In this context, he felt, art schools had an important role to play and campaigned for a complete revision of the whole set up of the government-run art schools.

Havell's argument about the high design value of Indian crafts was not new. It had already been recognized at the time of the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851. It had also been noted down by Sir George Birdwood in his handbook to the collection of Indian art formed for the first time in the South Kensington Museum.<sup>5</sup> Birdwood had himself pointed out the influence on him of Ruskin's ideas regarding the supremacy of all oriental and medieval European designs over those prevailing in the Victorian time.<sup>6</sup>

It may be noted that Ruskin, followed by William Morris, had taken up the work of improving industrial designs in England. Morris in particular had been vehement in criticising the machine-made objects of his time as crude, vulgar and overloaded with ornament, which he considered to be the outcome of ill-effect of the industrial revolution.<sup>7</sup> Incidentally, the activities of Ruskin and Morris had also resulted in the reshuffling of schools of design in that country.

Havell apparently was familiar with their teaching and their example seems to have encouraged him in his campaign against Victorian phillistinism which the colonial administration had brought into India. Like Morris, Havell too thought the distinction between 'fine arts' and 'useful arts' to be only arbitrary.

A necessary corollary to his campaign was to refute the Victorian prejudice against the existence of Fine Arts in India. The Victorian point is exemplified in the following quotation of George Birdwood.<sup>8</sup>

"The mythology of *purāṇas*... has had a fatal effect in lighting the growth of true pictorial and plastic art in India. The monstrous shapes of the puranic deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representation; and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India." He added,—“the decorative art of India, which is a

4. Ibid.

5. Sir George Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*—handbook of the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum, London, 1880.

6. Birdwood—Comments on Havell's paper 'Art Administration in India,' J.R.S.A. 1909

7. See Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, London, 1960.

8. See f. n. 5 & 6.

crystallized tradition.....cannot be ranked...with the fine arts of Europe, wherein the inventive genius of the artist, acting on his own spontaneous inspiration, asserts itself in true creation." Surprisingly enough, these views, which were first written in 1880, Birdwood continued to hold even in 1909 when they were reiterated with greater force !

It was in opposition to Birdwood and with a view to vindicate the position of Indian art, Havell propounded the theory that Indian art was closely bound with the religion and philosophy of the land and that only a deeper knowledge of these other two fields could enlighten one about the aims of Indian art, which he bemoaned, hardly anyone had attempted to do. It was this thinking that led him to write his two famous books<sup>9</sup> toward the end of his official career in India.

According to Havell, it was the Indianness of Indian art which made it unique and it was its abhorrence of the strictly material which made it superior to European Art. Hence the Indian artist was again capable of becoming an artist, which right, the Victorian British administrators responsible for art education, had denied him.

In *The Ideals of Indian Art* he wrote, "Indian art is not concerned with the conscious striving after beauty as a thing worth to be sought after for its own sake; its main endeavour is always directed towards the realization of an idea, reaching through the finite to the infinite."<sup>10</sup> And that, "Throughout Indian art, and throughout the Christian art of the Middle Ages we find the same central idea, that beauty is inherent in spirit and not in matter."<sup>11</sup>

He added further, "The whole spirit of Indian thought is symbolized in the conception of the Buddha sitting on his lotus-throne, calm, impassive, his thoughts freed from all worldly passion and desires, and with both mind and body raised above all intellectual and physical strife, yet filled with more than human power, derived from perfect communion with the source of all truth, all knowledge, and all strength. It is the antithesis of the spirit, which comes not by wrestling nor by intellectual striving, but by the gift of God, by prayer and meditation, by *yoga*, union with the Universal Soul."<sup>12</sup>

Havell's interpretation of Indian Art and his own theories of art are intermingled in the following passage: "The true aim of the artist is not to extract beauty from nature, but to reveal the life within life, the noumenon within phenomenon, the reality within unreality, and the soul

9. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, London, 1908, and *The Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911.

10. Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art*.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

within matter. When that is revealed, beauty reveals itself. So all nature is beautiful for us, if only we can realize the Divine Idea within it.”<sup>13</sup>

He sought to support this by referring to *Silpaśāstras* :

“Therefore, it is, as the sage Śukrāchārya says, that in making images of gods, the artist should depend upon spiritual vision only, and not upon the appearance of objects perceived by human senses.”<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that Havell's ideas like that art is not a straight-forward transcription of nature, are but similar to those current in post-impressionist circles at the close of the last century. For example, Gauguin had said “Painting must come from the head...”<sup>15</sup> But it is surprising that Havell should have remained indifferent to the later developments in European art (i.e., during the first two decades of this century while he was still alive) and to their relevance to Indian art situation of the time. In fairness to Havell, I may add, that there is more in his ideas than we commonly know to-day and it will be doing injustice to him to associate him with all the unfortunate qualities that are ascribed to revivalism.

Havell's writings gave rise to the notions of what could be called the ‘racial character’ and the ‘metaphysical view of art,’ that were subsequently perpetuated by the so-called Friends of the East societies, which were established in many parts of the West during the first quarter of this century. The theosophists too, had joined in this foray.

In India, the first native to respond to Havell's writings was Ananda Coomaraswamy, in whom Havell found a like-minded Indian with tremendous intellectual calibre. Coomaraswamy, in his first essays concerning the revival of Indian crafts, repeated Havell's arguments with the same forthrightness, and in an early essay<sup>16</sup> he sought to justify the Bengal School painters (at that time called the Calcutta painters) for their Indianness, irrespective of their technical defects.

Like Havell, Coomaraswamy too was familiar with the role William Morris had played in the improvement of design in England. For, he asked, “But if Abanindranath Tagore and his followers stand in this art revival of ours, to a certain extent in the place occupied by the pre-Raphaelites in the history of English art, where is our William Morris? Probably the time for his coming is not ripe. When he comes, he will do more for Indian applied art than all the schools put together ; but it

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Gauguin, Letters.

16. Coomaraswamy, *The Modern School of Indian Painting in Art and Swadeshi* (A Collection of Essays, Madras).

is the function of the schools to make his path no harder than it need be."<sup>17</sup>

The true function of schools of art in India, he visualised 'is not to introduce European methods and ideals but to gather up and revitalize the broken threads of Indian tradition, to build up the idea of Indian art as an integral part of then national culture, and to relate the work of Indian craftsman to the life and thought of the Indian people.'<sup>18</sup>

More than Havell, Coomaraswamy was convinced about the role of tradition in the revival of arts in India. Countering Cecil Burn's suggestion that Indian students must for a time be brought back into close relation with nature, Coomaraswamy observed whether tradition has even been so 'divorced from nature' as to make it possible to speak of 'return.' He recommended two things: "One, that he (Indian) should be saturated with the traditional art of his race in order that he may know *how to see*; the other, that he be saturated with the traditional culture of the East, that he may know *what to see*..."<sup>19</sup> He concluded that 'the arts of India must retain their Indian spirit, or become altogether worthless.'<sup>20</sup>

These views have also a bearing on Coomaraswamy's interpretation of Indian Art. Like Havell, he too considered the religious character as a virtue of Indian art which for Birdwood had been its greatest (hurdle) drawback. Coomaraswamy reasoned, "Indian art is essentially religious. The conscious aim of Indian Art is the portrayal of Divinity,"<sup>21</sup> and invoked the support of Ruskin who had said that, "... Michel Angelo... (had) the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest."<sup>22</sup>

Birdwood's attack that Indian art lacked great individuals and that another of its weaknesses was its conventionalized character, was answered by Coomaraswamy by pointing out that Indian artists revered tradition and strictly followed canons. According to him, individualism in art was hardly possible as 'the craftsman is not an individual expressing individual whims, but a part of the universe giving expression to the ideals of its own eternal beauty and unchanging law,'<sup>23</sup> and that 'patterns... are things which live and grow, and which no man can create, all he can do is to use them and let them grow.'<sup>24</sup>

He further added, "Traditional forms... represent rather race con-

17. Coomaraswamy, *The Function of Schools of Art in India* (A reply of Cecil Burns) in *Art & Swadeshi*.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Coomaraswamy, *The Aims of Indian Art*, Broad Campden, 1908.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

ceptions, than the ideas of an artist or a single period. They are vital expression of the race mind."<sup>25</sup>

Defending tradition, he proclaimed, "...tradition is a wonderful expressive language, that enables the artist working through it to speak directly to the heart.... It is a mother-tongue."<sup>26</sup>

Strict adherence to canons' as mentioned by Coomaraswamy, was an unworkable principle in connection with the actual practice of art, had been realized by no less a person than the greatest revivalist painter himself, Abanindranath Tagore. In the preface to his essay *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*, he stated that 'these "aesthetic canons" should not be considered as representing absolute and inviolable laws' and exhorted the artists 'not to deprive their art endeavours of the sustaining breath of freedom, by confining themselves and their works within the limits of Sastric demonstrations.'<sup>27</sup>

Aurobindo Ghosh, in the first decade of this century, was the third thinker alongwith Havell and Coomaraswamy, to campaign for the revival of art in India. He made a very important observation that in the heat of the current political struggle too much concentration had been on the problems of mechanical and economical aspects of Indian life and its regeneration, while scant attention had been paid to the synthetic and the spiritual side of Indian nationalism. This, he suggested, could be best remedied by giving proper place to art in Indian education (which was "mercenary" and "soulless"),<sup>28</sup> and by realizing the value of art in the training of intellectual faculty.

Aurobindo was responsible for taking Havell's metaphysical view of Indian art to loftier heights and developed his aesthetic creed thus:

"..... that will be the highest and most perfect art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses the inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation."<sup>29</sup>

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. See, A. N. Tagore, "Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy", *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1961. (First printed in *Modern Review*, 1915.)

28. Havell and Coomaraswamy too had criticized Indian educational system of the time for its neglect of the study of Indian Art, yet it seems Havell was equally concerned with the problem of providing the hundreds of traditional craftsmen with means of livelihood, thereby economic progress had a primary place in Havell's scheme of things, to Aurobindo.

29. Aurobindo Ghosh, *National Value of Art*, (Reprint of essays published in *Karmayogin*—Nos. 20-25, Nov-Dec., 1909) *Chandranagar*, 1922, P. 49-50.

This, according to him was what Indian art alone had attempted thoroughly and he, therefore, considered European art to be inferior to the Indian, precisely because of the absence of these elements.

He observed that art had flowed in two separate streams in Europe and Asia, so diverse that, 'it is only now that the European aesthetic sense has so far trained itself as to begin to appreciate the artistic conventions, aims and traditions of Asia.'<sup>30</sup> He visualized that future development in Asia's art would unite these two streams in one deep and grandiose flood of artistic self-expression perfecting the aesthetic evolution of humanity.

The metaphysical and racial views propounded by the above three thinkers had a profound influence on art criticism of the time. In the early 1920's, in the writings of the Theosophist James Cousins for example, one can also note the same mystical stream as had been expressed by Aurobindo before, Referring to Asit Kumar Halder's painting 'Rāsīlā,' he wrote statically, "... the thrill of *ānanda* (joy)... seems to flicker through every line of this work,"<sup>31</sup> and exclaimed, "... what perception of the mystery of the universe moved the artist to this exquisite integration of mythology and nature."<sup>32</sup>

Attempting to analyse the Indian mind, he said, "... to the inner eye of the Indian artist the cloud is not an objective manifestation of a quality of the Creator, but is essentially himself, *Purusha*, the Divine energy, giving out the music of his creative desire, and nature (*prakṛiti*) in all the alluding variations of one substance moves rhythmically in response."<sup>33</sup>

He further noted: "The Bengal artists (indeed, one might say, all true Indian artists) are the natural expressors of the higher mental and spiritual aspects of humanity and nature."<sup>34</sup> Agreeing with Aurobindo's interpretation of the fundamental difference between Indian and Western attitudes, he said, "Western Art represents things as they are viewed from the outside. Eastern art interprets things from the inside."<sup>35</sup> There is a hint of expressionism in the following comment of Cousins's to be noted in relation to Rabindranath's "... the pictures of Bengal School are not to be classified as 'drawings.' They are visual expressions of moods

30. Ibid., P. 51.

31. James Cousins, The Art of Asit Kumar Halder, *Rupam* No. 9, Jan., 1922.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Special interview with James Cousins, published in the "Chronicle", Madras, reprinted in *Rupam* No. 11, July, 1922.

35. Ibid.

and visions of the soul, in which there is a higher accuracy than that of inch-tape."<sup>36</sup>

While being vague as to the form that national art could take, he had similar high expectations of Indian artists, as had been harboured by Aurobindo. Indeed, more than Aurobindo, his claims for the new Indian art seem too tall. He said in an interview that 'not only will (the neo-Bengal School) exert a considerable influence on the art of the world but has already done so!'<sup>37</sup> Again, "The direction in which these pictures will influence the art of the world will be upwards, by which I meant that it will have the tendency to direct Western art towards the finer impulses and the suggestions of the spirit. The present confusion in art outside India arises from the exhaustion of the eye and the lower emotions. This exhaustion cannot be relieved through fantastic variations of the things seen and felt, such as has been attempted by the Cubists, Futurists and similar groups of revolutionaries in art; it can only be relieved by raising of the consciousness of the artist to a higher level, the level of the spirit. This, the work of the Bengal School is helping to do."<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the above claim, Coomaraswamy was not so sure about the achievement of the Bengal School. He said, "Important as this movement has been, its main significance belongs to appreciation rather than production. It may be compared rather to the work of the pre-Raphaelites than to that of the great post-Impressionists; the time for these has not yet arrived."<sup>39</sup> Coomaraswamy saw revivalism as fundamentally a process of creative introspection preparatory to renewed activity. He envisaged the birth of a new tradition out of the wreck of the past and the struggle of the present, when new vision would find expression in the language of form and colour.<sup>40</sup>

If the metaphysical view of art had its source in the Upanishadic—Vedantic philosophy, it also seems to have been influenced by the platonic ideas. At least this is the case with the conception of "revelation" as mentioned by both Havell and Coomaraswamy. "Revelation" is quite akin to Plato's 'divine inspiration' which had been substituted by a different name, i.e., 'shaping force,' by the neo-Platonic thinker, Plotinus.<sup>41</sup> These terms are probably akin to what in modern aesthetics is regarded as "intuition" or "creative force," though there is a distinction in that the ancient

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Coomaraswamy, *Young India*, in *Dance of Siva* (Collected Essays).

40. Later in his life, Coomaraswamy seems to have shifted his position with regard to the role of tradition in the artistic revival of India compared to the position taken by him in his early writings.

41. Carritt, *Philosophies of Beauty*.

view connects the term with a supernatural force, whereas in the modern view it is connected with the individual human being. Yet the role of "revelation" in art activity as considered by the revivalists is one of the positive aspects of their thinking.

In spite of this fact, it can be observed retrospectively, that if the emphasis on the metaphysical and the racial character of art was supposed to serve as a source of inspiration and a guiding path for the revitalization of arts in India, then their failure to achieve the desired end is becoming only too obvious now. The usefulness of these concepts for the understanding and upholding of a tradition could be conceded, though even that is open to question. As far as the practice of art is concerned, the metaphysical view would have been helpful, if it had attempted to lay bare the nature and character of creativity (which Rabindranath was to do later), and so also the racial view, if the works of art had been analysed in terms of formal pictorial means which would have benefited the artists directly. This was attempted by B. K. Sarkar.

It is curious that the aesthetics dealing largely with the upholding of a tradition should have dominated even the artistic circles, so that the practice of art too remained under its clutches, from which the Indian artist has found it difficult to free himself to take a path of his own, free from the dictates of anyone, solely depending on his instinct and understanding of the nature of art. That it could not be possible to establish a separate philosophy of art for upholding and understanding a tradition, and another which would have guided the contemporary practising artist, seems to have been the fundamental weakness of revivalism.

An almost complete neglect in theoretical discussion, of the role of the mind, imagination and personality of the artist in the creation of art, had had disastrous effects. In this connection, what Havell had expressed in the following quotation, seems to have gone unnoticed by the other propounders of revivalism: "Change there must be in Indian art, that is both inevitable and necessary, for there is no life in an art which never changes. But the change must come from the quickening, not from deadening, of the creative faculties; from the stimulating of thought and the strenuous upholding of higher ideals, not from the substitution of one academic formula for the other."<sup>42</sup>

Agastya, a critic writing in the nineteen twenties, might seem to be thinking in the same vein as above when he wrote;

"It is the racial flavour, the provincial accent, the regional and national twang, echoing the very body and soul of the individual artist which delight the connoisseur, the aesthete, and constitute the peculiar contribution of the artist, his enrichment of the general fund of the

42. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and painting*.



aesthetic stock of the world.”<sup>43</sup> Elucidating this argument further he wrote; “He (artist) could never have suppressed his own personality, his racial individuality, his regional or environmental peculiarity. If he could succeed in suppressing these, he could not express himself and all that he is made of, and incidentally, he could produce no art... At all places and all periods of art history it has always been “Art and I.””

Agastya formulated his views against the attacks of Binay Kumar Sarkar, and was actually concerned with the defence of revivalist aesthetics or what he termed as the “aesthetics of young India.” Sarkar had raised the question whether it was still wise to boycott the West in matters of theory and practice of art, and continue to move in the narrow groove of nationalism? Sarkar had in mind the new modern movements in European art and aesthetics. While Agastya displayed remarkable acquaintance of movements like Cubism and Futurism, of artists like Picasso and Matisse, and was aware of the Western enthusiasm (rūpollās) for the newly discovered Negro, Peruvian and other forms of primitive art, he still felt (conceding that the lessons from the West are destined to play their inevitable part) that ‘before the lesson can be imported—the racial and the national heritage have to be claimed, possessed, appropriated and used as our own.’<sup>45</sup>

Agastya’s was a weak defence, for he realized that ‘in these days of quick intercourse and consequent interchange of ideas, complete isolation for the purpose of an intensive study of a racial culture is almost impossible.’<sup>46</sup>

In 1922, Binay Kumar Sarkar was the first Indian to launch an organized assault on the prevalent views on art.<sup>47</sup> He challenged the methodology of art-appreciation of the time which for him was observed with studies in history, literary criticism and anthropology. He asked reading the story and subject-matter, analysing the ideals, the message for the soul, and how much of all this was genuine art criticism, real analysis of *rasa*? He pointed out that the talk of race ideals or that of Eastern genius being so different from West, be ruled out as of questionable importance.

Well-versed in world literature and art history (remarkable for an Indian of that time to know even all the recent trends in Western Art), Sarkar brought into question nearly all the promised ‘aesthetics of young India.’ In the *Aesthetics of Young India*, he proclaimed, contact with

43. Agastya, The Aesthetics of young India (a rejoinder) *Rupam* No. 9, Jan., 1922.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Binay Kumar Sarkar, The Aesthetics of Young India, *Rupam* No. 9, Jan., 1922.

the West had a chief place and he strongly deplored the isolationist mentality of the Indians. He argued; "For young India today, to appreciate and assimilate the new achievement of mankind in aesthetics (he refers to the European developments of the 20th century) as in the utilitarian sciences and arts is not tantamount to inviting an alleged denationalisation."<sup>48</sup> That, he felt, was 'on the contrary, one of the chief means of acquiring strength, in order that Indians may push forward the creative urge of life and contribute to the expansion of the human spirit, as the off-springs of Māyā and Viśvakarmā should be able to do.'<sup>49</sup>

Well-acquainted with the formalist<sup>50</sup> school of aesthetic thought, he attempted to explain its importance to Indian public in his exhaustive essay "Aesthetics of young India." Campaigning for purity of art, he pointed out that our aim should be "Swaraja in Shilpa," that is 'emancipation of art from the despotism of literary criticism, historical or philosophical analysis, ethical or religious studies and democratic, bolshevistic or nationalistic propaganda.'<sup>51</sup>

"These Arts (painting and sculpture) are regulated by the science of space, geometry, the *vidyā* of *rūpam*, the knowledge of form, morphology."<sup>52</sup> Analysing the work of art, or "Alphabet of Beauty," he observed that 'the language of the painter and the sculptor is, therefore, point, line, angle, cone, square, curve, mass, volume. The creators of beauty speak the vocabulary of positions, magnitudes, dimensions and perspectives.'<sup>53</sup> Sarkar's assertion that 'to a *shilpin* there is only one organ of sense, and that is the eye,' is very significant. "The artist creates whatever his form-sense, his *rasa-jñāna*, dictates to him as worth creating. He is solely interested in the juxtaposition of forms, in the intermarriage of shapes, in the permutations and combinations of masses and surfaces, consistent with sculptural or pictorial reasons."<sup>54</sup> To these aesthetic grounds he added another 'structural composition,' which he considered to constitute the 'spiritual' basis of painting and sculpture. Analysing the role of space in painting, he said, "Space on the canvas is naturally to be divided into different sections and sub-sections. The problem is to divide it in such a manner that the different parts form one harmonious whole, limbs of an integral entity."<sup>55</sup>

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. See Woffling, *Principles of Art History*, 1915; Roger Fry, *Vision & Design*, 1922 and Clive Bell, *Art*, 1914.

51. Sarkar, *The Aesthetics of Young India*.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

Such statements reveal Sarkar's deep understanding of the nature of work of art, and represents a radical departure from the aesthetic thinking of the time, as he believed that the form-sense, the *rasa-jñāna*, that is the sense of 'composition,' could be analysed exactly and objectively which does not defy analysis as mystics would say have us believe it. Also, he observed that 'the mechanism of colour construction, colour harmony, spacing and grouping are among the universal laws of *rasa-vidyā* or aesthetics which one finds both in East and West.'<sup>56</sup>

The achievements of modern art, Sarkar evaluated thus, "It is the exclusive employment of the brush and the consequent manipulation of paintings, *without the support and background* of drawing, which is one of the greatest contribution of the modern, especially of the contemporary Occident to the achievements of mankind in *rūpam*. In such 'pure painting,' the idiom that the artist speaks is that of colour and nothing but colour. Colour alone has thus been made to evolve the dimensions of sculpture on canvas and to produce the harmony of structural composition."<sup>57</sup>

The significance of these developments for Indian art lay, according to him, in the fact that in Indian painting colour was secondary as it did not have the mass, the depth, the volume, the 'architectural' or 'sculpturesque' quality.

Though Sarkar's essay does not seem to have made much impact on the existing beliefs in the country, it remains a landmark in the history of Indian art and criticism. In it, for the first time, an Indian had discussed the revolutionary movements in European art and aesthetics, and had asked for readjustment of our values and beliefs in relation to them. It is parallel to Sarkar's article that the first great break with the narrow revivalism was first manifest in the work of Gaganendranath Tagore. His Cubist-Romantic paintings of around 1920 are the first truly modern paintings in India with which begins a new phase of art out-dating Abanindranath's wash-phase. Indeed, Sarkar's essay could be regarded as a revolutionary manifesto composed as vehemently and with the same fervour as the Futurist manifestoes, but sadly enough, his views did not get the attention that they rightly deserved.

Next in line to break the deadlock in Indian aesthetic thinking in the twenties, was Rabindranath Tagore. He expressed his impatience with the Traditionalists thus, "I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny their obligation to produce something that can be labelled as Indian Art, according to some old world mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be

---

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

herded into a pen like branded beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows."<sup>58</sup>

Taking objection to the view that individualism was irrelevant in art (Havell and Coomaraswamy), he said, "If it is a fact that some standard of invariable formalism has for ages been following the course of the arts in India, making it possible for them to be classified as specially Indian, then it must be confessed that the creative mind which inevitably breaks out in individual variations, has lain dead or dormant for those torpid years."<sup>59</sup> Urging for a more open mind he said, "All traditional structures of art must have sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile; to grow with its growth, to dance with its rhythm."<sup>60</sup>

Being a creative artist himself, Tagore in his writings is much concerned with the individual personality of the artist, something that had been a taboo in the racial-metaphysical view. While Sarkar showed a keen understanding of the constituents (or the body) of a work of art, Tagore displayed a deep insight into the creative urges of the human personality. The fundamental tenets of Tagore's aesthetic theory, therefore, are 'individualism' and 'self-expression,' in which one can trace a flavour of Bergsonian<sup>61</sup> ideas. Instead of asking the question "what is art?", he said it was more proper to consider its origin and source. Answering the question that he liked to pose, he noted, "Of all living creatures in the world, man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need, which urges him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake."<sup>62</sup> The difference between animal and human being lies in that man has a surplus emotional energy which is not occupied with his self-preservation. This surplus sought its outlet in the creation of art.

Developing his expressionist theory, Tagore said, "Man feels his personality more intensely than other creatures, because his power of feeling is more than can be exhausted by his objects. The efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore, in art, man reveals himself. . ."<sup>63</sup>

The principle object of art for Tagore was the expression of personality. Defining "personality" and its relation to expression, he said, ". . . as a person, he (man) is an organic man who has the inherent power to select things from his surroundings in order to make them his own. He has his forces of attraction and repulsion by which he not merely piles

58. R. N. Tagore, *Art and Tradition in On Art & Aesthetics*, New Delhi, 1961.

59. Tagore, *Art & Tradition*, 1926.

60. *Ibid.*

61. See Henri Bergson, *Laughter*, 1913.

62. Tagore, *What is Art?* 1916.

63. *Ibid.*

up things outside him, but creates himself. The principle creative forces which transmute things into our living structure, are emotional forces..."<sup>64</sup> Man's personality is also revealed in his activities of utility, but there, self-expression is not his primary aim. Continuing his line of argument, he said, "When our heart is fully awakened in love, or in other great emotions, our personality is in its flood-tide. Then it feels the longing to express itself for the very sake of expression. Then comes Art..."<sup>65</sup>

And when Tagore himself started to paint, he talked about creative activity as 'play of forms... purely for the sake of assembling different forms together,'<sup>66</sup> Like Sarkar, Tagore too denied that paintings carry any philosophical concepts or claim to solve any problems of the day or impart any moral lessons. He felt that in work of art, "All else is irrelevant. If it conveys some message, moral or ethical, it is something over and above, a surplus."<sup>67</sup> (Note that Havell had thought it the birth right of art to be ethical teacher and spiritual helper of mankind.<sup>68</sup>) Giving an analogy with music, Tagore observed that music had thrown off its bond of subservience to words, and this right of independence had given music its greatness. In the same way Tagore thought that 'pictorial and plastic arts were aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incident.'<sup>69</sup>

Again, like Sarkar, Tagore too gave prime importance to pictorial means in art. While Sarkar had emphasised the structural and geometric aspect of pictorial construction, Tagore moved further. He saw pictorial elements as vehicle of expression (like as we find in the recent aesthetical writings of, for example, Rudolph Arnheim.<sup>70</sup>) He said, "some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter..."<sup>71</sup>

More and more, Tagore talked of loosening all restraints in creative activity. "It is the element of unpredictability in art which seems to fascinate me strongly,"<sup>72</sup> he said.

And, in one of his last letters, we have his final words on creativity: "The art of painting eludes me.... (am) reminded of what the *Vedas* say: *Ko Vedah*. Nobody knows, perhaps not even the Creator. Probably in no other scripture do we come across such a voice of doubt-daring even

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. R. N. Tagore, Letter, 29th Nov. 1928, in *On Art & Aesthetics*, P. 91.

67. R. N. Tagore, Letter to Jamini Roy, 1941, in *On Art & Aesthetics*.

68. Havell, *Indian Sculpture & Painting*.

69. Tagore, *My Pictures II*, 2 July, 1930.

70. See Rudolph Arnheim, *Art & Visual Perception*, 1956.

71. Tagore, Letter, 20th Nov. 1928.

72. Tagore, Letter, 7th Nov. 1928.

to assert that the Creator himself does not fully know his own creation. It is the tide of creation itself which bears it along its own current."<sup>73</sup>

---

73. Tagore, Letter, 1941.

The first three decades of the 20th century have been very rich in aesthetic ideas while later years have been rather barren. During the first and the second decade was propounded and elaborated the philosophy of revivalism. The third decade represents a reaction. In the first group are the thinkers like Havell, Coomaraswamy, Aurobindo Ghosh, James Cousins and Agastya, etc. In the second group fall those who pointed out the limitations of the above thinkers and introduced new concepts. One of these critics was Binay Kumar Sarkar, probably the first to come out against narrow nationalism and high spiritualism and the other was Rabin-dranath Tagore. This paper is an attempt to enumerate the ideas of both the groups and their points of dispute. In this limited space ideas of each thinker can be dealt with only sketchily and also this should be regarded as a tentative presentation of this complex theme.



## Comparative Aesthetics and art activity





## ART AS THE WILL TO CREATE

N. V. Banerjee

AESTHETICS is really unfortunate in spite of the position of importance and dignity it has been occupying through the centuries as one of the philosophical disciplines. The bewildering variety of the theories of art in which the history of aesthetics abounds points to the fact that, in their attempts to understand the nature and significance of art, philosophers do not usually keep in view the distinction between art as an activity of the human mind and works of art, but on the contrary, labour under an inexcusable confusion of the two. And herein lies the misfortune of aesthetics. In the event of such a confusion the nature of a theory of art would obviously depend upon what kind or kinds of work of art the author of the theory has particularly in view. Accordingly, a certain theory of, say, painting or music may pass for a theory of art in general. And the situation may undergo further deterioration on account of the theorist's individual preference for a certain kind of work of art and his indifference to, or even dislike of certain others within one and the same field of art. In view of such predicament of aesthetics, it is necessary to investigate the nature of the activity of the human mind which underlies art as such. Such investigation would not only help the cause of appreciation and criticism in the field of art in general, but would provide an answer to the question as to what art is, the question which has so far been answered only differently but not satisfactorily or conclusively.

What, then, is the activity of the human mind which is essential to art? The answer is simple. It is the *will to create*. But this is obviously in need of clarification, not because the meaning of the word *will* is unclear—this word, as is likely to be admitted on all hands, can only mean the tendency or disposition to do something or other—but because the implications of the meaning of the verb *to create* are not usually taken into consideration. 'To create,' according to the English dictionary, is 'to originate,' to 'give rise to,' or 'to bring into existence.' And this is enough to show that there is hardly any ambiguity about the meaning of the verb 'to create.' But creation is obviously not an automatic action nor can be said to be unmotivated. Indeed it is willed and the will is an impossibility apart from the feeling of a need which calls for its own fulfilment, and the fulfilment which is dependent upon the product of creation. Thus creation implies immediately the feeling of a need and mediately some product or other. This distinction between the *immediate* and the *mediate* implications of creation

should not, however, be taken to mean that the former is essential or primary and the latter inessential or secondary. On the contrary, both are equally essential and so should be treated as equally primary. What the distinction then serves to do is to emphasise the centrality of the feeling of a need in creation and at the same time to draw our attention to the undeniable fact that the will to create is nothing but for its creation of something or other.

Now, obviously it can never be the case that the will to do is not motivated or, in other words, is not actuated by the feeling of some need or other. But it is certainly not the case that the feeling of every need can serve as a motive to the will to create. Thus, for instance, my feeling of the need for lying down consequent upon my being fatigued may induce me actually to lie down. But my lying down is plainly no product of my will to create. And instances may be multiplied with a view to show that we may feel needs, the fulfilment of which would merely consist in bringing about changes either within or outside ourselves, but would demand no creation on our part nor could be ascribed to the agency of our will to create. What, then is the nature of the need, the feeling of which may serve as the appropriate motive to the will to create? The answer to this question seems to consist in stating that all our needs do not concern us wholly and entirely, and that no feeling of a need can motivate the will to create, if the need does not concern our whole being. But, then the question remains: what exactly is the need which is thus characterized?

In dealing with this question one should not be so unrealistic or unduly idealistic as not to realise that the need we are required to ascertain is basic or fundamental and so universal to mankind or, in other words, that it is presupposed by, instead of presupposing other needs that man may have to feel. Taking this into account and at the same time keeping it in view that the need under consideration must concern our whole being, one perhaps has no option but to find the answer in demand in the need for man's adjustment to his environment as required by this struggle for survival. It is necessary to observe, however, that the need thus understood not only bears upon the will to create, but also upon the will to believe and the will to adjust in different ways in the three cases. Now as regards the bearing of this need upon the will to create, with which we are immediately concerned, it is necessary to note that the basic need should be considered as a whole and not in any of its specific aspects, say, the need for food or shelter or procreation, lest the nature of the will to create should be completely misunderstood. And this must be so, for the simple reason that the need in question is none other than that which concerns our whole being. The more important point to be taken notice of in this connection, negatively speaking, is that the need under consideration, viewed in its purely biological aspects, cannot serve as the motive to the will to create; because in this aspect it may only actuate the will to create in the usual ways, namely, to produce and gather food, to build houses, to procreate children, etc., which

obviously are not acts of creation. The point negatively stated thus may be positively brought out as follows.

Man's struggle for survival is a continuous process held in the temporal series before—now—after. So far as any individual is concerned, the process is, of course, brief and comes to an end with the termination of his existence in his death. But in relation to mankind the process is unending. So man may come to realise that human adjustment to the environment as demanded by the biological struggle for survival is not, nor can ever be, an accomplished fact, but must remain an unrealizable goal or an idle dream. But since man is not a mere animal, it is given to him to have the vision of perfect adjustment or order or harmony, which is not subject to the mutations of time, but which he finds lacking in his relation to the environment as well as within his animal existence. This vision is indeed a need of man as a human being, as distinguished from the mere animal, and the feeling of this need contributes to and in fact is central in the motive of his will to create. Hence it is evident that the activity of the human mind that underlies art is none other than the will to create thus motivated.<sup>1</sup> For what else can art be but the attempt to translate, in one manner or another, the ethereal vision of perfect adjustment or history into some perceptible form or other?

Now the vision of perfect harmony which is essential to artistic creativity implies transcendence on the part of the artist's mind from the world of change of which he himself is a part and especially from the affairs of his day-to-day life which, in the final analysis, betray conflicts, discords or disharmonies. Thus in art man finds a way of escape from the tyranny of time in the sense of the temporal series. His refuge, however, is not the timeless or the eternal, but the specious present which is but the syncopation of the temporal series through the absorption of before and after in the now. But then, the transcendence that is essential to art is not divorced from all reference to the actual world of our ordinary experience. On the contrary, it is this world which, on the one hand, presents the occasion for man's transcendence to the vision of perfect harmony and, on the other, provides the medium of translation of that vision into a perceptible form. Thus, for example, the sight of an object of nature, say, a flower, may awaken the painter to the vision of perfect harmony and a piece of marble may be the medium for the sculptor to use for producing a work of art. Hence it is evident that art, while being essentially a transcending activity does not relate exclusively to the world of nature nor exclusively to the world of aesthetic vision, but is an attempt to build a bridge between the two. And this brings in the whole question of psychology of artistic creation, which is rooted in the feeling of the need resting upon the vision of perfect harmony and culminates in the production of works of art.

<sup>1</sup> Poignant depiction of discord or disharmony in sounds or colours or bodily movements or in any other medium may also serve the cause of art. But it does so, not on its own account, but on account of the need for perfect harmony, and it may succeed in emphasising in an indirect, and perhaps, more effective manner.

As regards the psychology of artistic creation, it is, roughly speaking, concerned with the emotional aspect of the mental life of man. But then, emotion in its ordinary sense, the sense in which empirical psychology understands it, comprises various kinds of excitement of the human mind, and mental excitement is more often than not a hindrance rather than a help to creative work, especially artistic creation. Further, although it is ordinarily held that a work of art is an embodiment of the artist's emotion, the fact seems to be that it is the artist's vision of perfect harmony made into a finished work of art through the medium of some material such as sound or colours or body movements. Of course, the vision of perfect harmony from the point of view of artistic creation is not sufficient unto itself, but is in need of being given a definite and well defined shape so that it may be suitable for translation into a perceptible form. But what is necessary to this end is that which, for want of a more significant word, may be expressed by the word enjoyment. The importance of enjoyment in artistic creation can hardly be exaggerated. On the one hand, it contributes to the distinctness and vivacity of the vision of perfect harmony; on the other hand, it serves to release the artist from his individual limitations, from the boundries of his ordinary circumscribed existence so as to infuse into him a kind of compelling force or spontaneity which unavoidably culminates in the presentation of the vision of perfect harmony in some perceptible form or other. This does not, however, amount to ignoring the importance of technical skill in artistic creation. What is suggested is that in the field of art, unlike in the field of technology, technical skill is ancilliary to the role of enjoyment.

#### **THE WORLD OF ARTISTIC CREATION AS A DISTINCT DIMENSION OF REALITY**

Now as regards works of art, they obviously form no part of the world of nature, nor would it be any more reasonable to treat them in the manner of Plato as copies or imitations of any part of this world. And since they are essentially perceptible they cannot be regarded as merely imaginary either and this notwithstanding the popular insistence on the importance of imagination in artistic creation. In view of all this, works of art may be said to belong to a peculiar order of being so as to be most appropriately called symbols such as configurations of colours in painting, of body movements in dance, or sounding words in poetry, or sounds in music. That being so, works of art should not, like words in ordinary use, be treated as symbols of meaning, but as embodiments of meanings or 'significant' objects in which symbol and meaning are indistinguishably held together. And as such they are in a class apart from the objects of our ordinary sense-experience as well as from ordinary verbal language. Moreover, and this is especially important, works of art, while being bridges between the world of fact and the world of aesthetic vision, constitute, in virtue of their symbolic character an independent world of their own unavoidably characterised by insularity.

The paradoxical character of works of art thus brought out should be accepted as something inevitable, instead of being resented or taken exception to, lest the nature of artistic creativity should be completely misconstrued. The point here is that, while all animal species, including the *homo sapiens* live by adapting themselves to the world of nature in which they are unavoidably placed, man has discovered a new way of adjusting himself to his environment, viz., by means of his symbolising activity. And this is but a testimony to the fact that he not only lives in the wide world of nature, but can find a place for himself in a circumscribed or insular world, in a new dimension of reality made up of diverse symbolic systems, including the system of artistic symbols.

It is of interest in this connection to take notice of the ordinary religious view that creativity is peculiar to God and that God is far from suggesting that divine creativity is of the artistic kind or that God as the creator of the world is an artist. The reason is that the world supposed to be created by God is not perfectly harmonious, as is evident, among other things, from the prevalence of an unending struggle for survival in the biological world, and that, since God, *ex hypothesi*, is above the need of adjustment to the environment, the vision of perfect harmony is out of question in His case. If it is held, as one may find it reasonable to hold, that creativity is exclusively related to art, then the conception of God as the creator of the world would be arbitrary and unwarranted. In any case, it would follow that the will to create regarded as being essential to art is exclusively human; it cannot be superhuman or divine, any more than it can be sub-human. As regards the sub-human species of animals, it is necessary to add that it is given to them to be immersed in the biological struggle, whether to survive or to perish, with no will to create and no vision of perfect harmony. And this must be so in view of the fact that man, in a sense, is in a class apart from animals as well as the inanimate world, and, consequently, that art is the special prerogative of man.

#### ART IN TRAVAIL

Now while it is true that art is exclusively human, it is not a fact that every man is or can be an artist. The artist is one who has the capacity to create or invent new configurations in some medium or other. This capacity may to a point be cultivated, but it cannot be acquired by trying for it. It is a gift which one must be lucky enough to be born with. Moreover, the capacity for artistic creation is not of the same kind in the case of all artists: some are endowed with the capacity for creating new configurations in sounds, others in colours, still others in words and so on. Furthermore, artists in one and the same field of art, whether music or painting or sculpture, may differ among themselves in style so as to be different from one another. Are we, in view of all this, to conclude that the artist is an isolated being who may at best deserve our admiration but not our sympathetic attention. If the answer be in the affirmative, then the priceless opportu-

nity which, owing to his release from the boundaries of his ordinary circumscribed existence, the artist has of communing with others must be said to go in vain. And this brings to light the real crux of the situation of art.

This at least needs to be conceded to the artist, that while his medium may be lifeless and mute, his work of art is alive and vocal in all cases, conveying an invitation for its appreciation. Indeed, no work of art is properly so called which does not bear a demand for its recognition. And this opens up a vista to the communion of the artist with his fellows. But the most obvious difficulty here is that every man is not an artist. He may not also be able to play the part of an appreciator of art, so that the invitation of a work of art for its appreciation may not always meet with a favourable response. And that being so communication between the artist and his fellows may be out of question. But apart from this, the appreciation of a work of art presupposes social and cultural community between the artist concerned and his prospective appreciators. And this holds good especially in the case of music, as is evident from the fact that occidental and oriental people find it hard to appreciate one another's music. The difficulty of artistic appreciation is also evident from that the artist himself or someone else on his behalf is sometimes required to play the part of an educator with a view to creating an appreciative public.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that works of art somehow find a way to their appreciation, no matter how they come to be appreciated and how big or small is the public that appreciates them. And it is with this that we are especially concerned inasmuch as our main business here is simply to ascertain whether artistic appreciation may be a way of communion in the sense of the appreciator's sharing of or rather admission into the experience of the artist as embodied in his work of art. So far as this question is concerned, it is immaterial whether the artist is alive or dead and whether he is near or far away from the appreciator in space or time, because what is important in this connection is not the physical presence of the artist but his experience, and because his experience is to be found embodied or treasured up in his work of art. However, artistic appreciation seems at first sight to have the promise of fulfilling the condition of communion which is the synthesis of mutual self-assertion and mutual empathy. But can this promise be really fulfilled?

Artistic appreciation by its very nature is a way of communication, the communication between the appreciator of a work of art and the artist as represented by that work. And communication in this case is different from ordinary communication in that, whereas mutual self-assertion is not essential to the latter, the former is inseparable from this factor on account of the fact that artistic appreciation is a product of self-assertion on the part of the appreciation as is a work of art on the part of the artist. But then, artistic appreciation is bound to fall short of communion for it makes no room for mutual empathy and, consequently, that it is more likely than not to preclude the possibility of the synthesis of mutual self-assertion and mutual empathy, which is essential to commu-

nion. It seems that the experience of an artist as the creator of a work of art is peculiarly his own, which he can only live, but cannot introspect, far less, can communicate to others. In any case, it is not sharable by anyone else, not even by other artists, not to speak of the ordinary appreciator. But that does not mean that a person in his capacity as the appreciator of a work of art has no experience of his own in relation to that work. On the contrary, he, in this capacity has some experience or other, but an experience which must be different from the experience of the artist whose work of art he happens to appreciate. And this serves as the key to the understanding of the peculiar nature of artistic appreciation.

The conclusion to which we are driven by the foregoing discussion is that artistic appreciation brings about an extraordinary and indeed a unique relation between the appreciator and the artist. But the two are external to each other, with the result that the problem of the conquest of otherness is left unresolved. And this is ultimately due to a reason deeper than any that we have so far had occasion to take into account. Art, as previously suggested, is a protest against, and a search after the remedy for the dehumanising influence of the temporal series before-now-after. In this respect it is indeed a human demand. Its merit also lies in that it does not take refuge in the timeless or the eternal and thus prevents itself from withdrawing the protest and giving up the search, which would amount to liquidating the problem of the conquest of otherness. But this negative merit is rendered ineffective by the positive step it takes by way of substituting the specious present for the temporal series on the understanding that the remedy in demand may be secured through the vision of perfect harmony, which the specious present is competent to yield.

As regards the specious present, it is as unable to overcome the dehumanising influence of the temporal series as is the timeless or the eternal. For both of these are equally divided from time as it is for us, that is, time as 'after' and so are equally foreign to us.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the specious present is a convenient fiction and a most useful device which is primarily concerned with the promotion of the cause of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> And since knowledge is inseparable from the notion of otherness, art in its attachment to the specious present betrays an escapism from, instead of offering a solution to, the problem of the conquest of otherness despite the fact that art is a human demand and resists the liquidation of this problem.

---

<sup>2</sup> Vide my *Language, Meaning and Persons*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Vide *infra*.



## SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS ARISING IN THE ARTS

Margaret Chatterjee

THEORISATION about the arts, the whole field of aesthetics in fact, has tended to suffer through over concentration on only one of the arts, usually painting, or at most on a special group of arts, sometimes the visual arts or may be literary art. The wider we cast our net the more our problems multiply, the more wary we need to become of generalising at all. The language of criticism has been partly to blame, perhaps for the frequent overlooking of essential differences between the arts. Words like 'form,' 'fluidity,' 'rhythm' and the like are the common stock in trade of the art critic, dance critic and the music critic, associations criss-cross each other; the original metaphors, shorn of their sources, performs, sometimes dangerously, an independent ballet of their own and the result is that bug-bear of all criticism—jargon.

In an attempt to short-circuit these difficulties I have chosen a set of problems which are philosophical especially in their linkage to well-known problems in epistemology. All, however, are connected with the arts and some serve to pinpoint differences between the arts, differences which I feel increasingly we need to take account of. I introduce these problems in random order below.

### SENSORY CUES AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL OBJECT

Not every perceptual object can be said to possess aesthetic quality. Perceptual quality is the gateway to aesthetic quality however hard further analysis of this may be. So far we are on familiar ground. Going further, we find that the status of the perceptual object seems to vary considerably from one art to another. In some we have physical movement, in others fixity. In some physical spatiality, in others 'virtual' space. The contrast between the plastic arts on the one hand and music and drama on the other calls for special reflection. What is a drama unperformed or a musical work unplayed? It is not on all fours with a painting unperceived after the gallery's closing time for I can still read the musical score although I am not playing it myself or hearing it played (this distinction too requires analysis). From this it would seem that although the plastic work

of art appears to have an advantage, a 'thatness,' the work to be performed can have a perceptual status even though it be unperformed.

A drama or musical score is *ab initio* perceptually an organisation of symbols on paper. If I do not know the script or the musical notation it will remain for me a mere sensible object with no further meaning. This will be like the case of the observer who looks at a canvas, sees an agglomeration of reds and yellows and for whom it is 'nothing more.' Understanding the work of art in the case of drama, music and dance involves understanding a language or conventional system of symbols (there are differences even here, of course, for one can appreciate a musical performance without being able to 'read the score,' follow the gestures in the drama or opera but not the words and so on) which in each case involves going beyond the sensory cue. I cannot fail to perceive that Michael Angelo's David is a man because such perception does not involve being *au fait* with any particular system of conventional language. Understanding a particular *mudrā* does however involve this. But again, what is the status of a musical score? Is it a work of art or a recipe for a work of art? The choreographer can create in imagination the whole ballet from the diagrams he has made. The diagrams are recipes rather than maps. They are cues. But then, in a different sense the entire performed work is an elaborate cue to the appreciative spectator. The musical score perhaps resembles both a recipe and a map. But what about a drama? It may only be read silently and never performed (if the playwright is unlikely) in which case it is neither a recipe nor a map. But the play or musical work we say is 'meant to be performed.' Its full status as a perceptual and as an aesthetic object is only attained when it is performed. The performing arts are four-termed (artist, work, performer, spectator) whereas the plastic arts are three-termed (artist, work, spectator). No doubt there are other important factors like the social milieu of the aesthetic experience, the entire "setting" and so forth. There are many threads to follow through here. I am only for the moment trying to focus on the difference between the arts in respect of the weightage and the role of sensory cues concerned.

### THE QUESTION OF ORIGINALS

Another big difference between the arts arises over the question whether one can speak of an 'original' or not. In the case of the plastic arts one obviously does. Everyone knows what is meant by distinguishing a genuine Vermeer from a fake Vermeer. Of literary works we can say 'the original was in English' (say a Shakespeare play). But what are we to say when the original is itself a construction? We are up against the peculiarity of drama and music again. From time to time there is in musical history a craze for performing early works on the 'original' instru-

ments and such performances are usually regarded as more 'authentic' than others. As against this, utilising the whole paraphernalia of high fidelity sound equipment we may sometimes say, 'This is not what Bach intended but it is undoubtedly better.' We may even go on to say 'This is the authentic Bach.' Apart from the variation of instruments and styles of performance there is the question of various editions, some of which may not have been the work of the composer himself and yet which musicologists may regard as more authentic. The question of 'arrangements' for instruments other than the ones for which the composition was originally scored complicates things further. The 'original' score may not in any case be the one that the composer himself finally decided upon, nor may the original style of performance at any given time in history be regarded as the authoritative one and this for the reason that in the case of musical compositions, performance varies with such factors as the techniques of instrument making and changing fashions in style.

A similar family of problems confronts us if we think of the 'original' way a particular role in a drama was performed. There are those who think that Shakespeare's plays should be performed as near as possible to the styles of acting prevalent in Elizabethan England (Shakespeare had given his own warning about this in *Hamlet*). To such as these Shakespeare in modern dress is anathema. In drama, as in ballet, the concept of the 'original' is often tied up with a standard set by a dominating figure of the past, an Irving, a Burbage or a Nijinsky. The stamp of approval may be further attached to such standards by the use (or misuse) of the word 'classical,' a word which itself tends to have a normative connotation. So we find that though the word 'original' has a definite undisputed meaning in the plastic arts its counterpart in the performing arts is more like a historically-conditioned norm setting itself up as 'authenticity' or 'authoritativeness.'

Another thing too. In the case of the plastic arts there is no question of a borderline between the fake and the genuine. When there does appear to be a borderline what we actually have is absence of identification. There might, however, and here I hesitate, be a borderline in the sphere of dramatic or musical performance where the question was not that of fake or genuine but the question whether the performance was authentic Ibsen, Bach, or not. There may be hazy boundaries of permissibility or fittingness, governed by the taste of the times, which would determine, say, the degree of rubato permissible to a pianist. We would here have almost a coherence criterion, to use the philosopher's language, rather than a correspondence criterion.

#### ON BEING WRONG

The discussion of permissibility and the difficulty of defining the 'what'

from which departures may or may not be made in some of the arts leads to the question whether or not there be any family resemblance between the various sorts of 'being wrong' that are to be found in the arts. In the arts which were for centuries representational, it has now been generally recognised that in most innovations an advance has been made by the introduction of elements which the ordinary man and even the 'academic' artist would regard as 'wrong.' So familiar has this process become that even in the art where representation would seem to be a necessity, namely that of portrait-painting, we are no longer alarmed by the apparition of the non-representational. That expression of the inner world (as against depiction of the external world) bound to involve a fluidity of forms is now something we take for granted and that such expression can take place even through the medium of photograph (seemingly representational *par-excellence*) is the final vindication of this way of thinking. What was once regarded as 'wrong' becomes in course of time eminently right. So we have Debussy breaking away from established 'grammar of music' with his use of consecutive fifths and the cult of dissonance (as distinguished from the interplay of dissonance and harmony) becoming for composers succeeding him an eloquent instrument for the expression of the tortured inner world of twentieth century man.

But let us consider a different sense of 'being wrong.' A *mudrā* may be wrong in the sense that it does not express what is intended to be expressed. Apart from a specific mistake of this kind, however, there is, in all the arts, the phenomenon which I describe as that of 'not quite coming off,' something indefinite and yet unmistakable. Music can illustrate this well. A technically faultless performance may still fall short in comparison with another which, although not faultless technically yet has that indefinable something more. A work may not quite come off for a variety of reasons. The most "unsatisfactory" of reasons, if I may use this phrase, is when a work fails to conform to a preconceived norm, e.g., this work is atonal and therefore wanting. Unfamiliarity is a hurdle which most creative artists come across in the circle of communication. But apart from this kind of situation a work may fail to come off on its own terms, that is, without there being any superimposed criterion. I would in any case not equate 'coming off' and 'not coming off' with the dichotomy 'good' and 'bad.' Furthermore, there may be special criteria of 'coming off' and 'not coming off' in what I have called the four-termed arts owing to the vexed question of styles, versions, ways of interpretation and the like. Two undefined thresholds relevant both to the performer and the spectator are expressed in the formulae 'It could have been worse' and 'It could have been better.' These formulae reveal criteria which need not be explicit at all but which stem out of formed taste, something without which there can be neither creation nor appreciation.

The spectator's sense of a work not having come off may, on reflection, be analysable into factors like (1) the overcrowding of a canvas so as to

produce an impression of surfeit; (2) an unresolved dissonance which leaves the listener 'in the air;' (3) a tailing-off of dramatic intensity by a weak fifth act in a play and so on. In each case, however, we are not in the realm of the downright bad. Of course the reason why a play or *avant-garde* composition does not quite come off may lie in the audience rather than in the work. The artist may himself know perfectly well that something is wanting. In all this my reason for drawing attention to the phenomenon of not coming off is, I must confess, a philosophical one. Here I feel we have a concept, not even akin to borderline concepts but rather akin to concepts like 'misleading' and 'suggestive', concepts which take us far from the simplifications of 'good' and 'bad,' 'beautiful' and 'ugly,' 'true' and 'false.' Feeling that something does not come off is an experience very familiar to the critic. Also I would even say that those of us who deal in criticism sometimes find ourselves admitting that a work has come off although we would hesitate to equate this with excellence. This again, *a la* G. E. Moore, would suggest that 'coming off' is not synonymous with goodness.

#### NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE

'Not being able to see' has a family resemblance to what I described as 'not coming off' in that both might be classified as in some way failures. We have here a problem which concerns the artist in so far as the 'spectator' may not be able to see anything in his work of art (allied to this, and here again, I hesitate, may be the case where the spectator, reader, listener, appreciates something for the 'wrong reasons') and it concerns the appreciator in so far as he comes up against a blind-spot in himself, an inability to respond to the work of art. The nature of the 'can't' in both cases is interesting. Let us compare the example of ordinary perception. Given standard sense endowments I cannot but perceive this as yellow, hear this sound as high-pitched, etc. What is happening when I fail to respond to a particular work of art? I perceive the simple sensory cues all right, the gyrations of the body, the sounds, the pigmented surfaces, but I fail to discern in this any supervenient quality which could be described as aesthetic. There is reason to believe that unlike the case of simple perception (where of course there may be an element of learning), the discerning of aesthetic quality is something which requires *cultivation*. There is such a thing as the education of taste. So the 'can't' of the blind man or the stone-deaf man. The situation is in principle remediable. Comparison is also possible with the moral 'can't,' but into this I will not enter here. I must likewise forbear comparison with the behavioural 'knowing how' to which Gilbert Ryle has in recent years drawn philosophical attention.

The analysis of 'not being able to see' is, I suggest, very relevant to the whole discussion to the extent to which genuine difference of opinion is to be

admitted in judgments of taste. Why are we willing to admit contrary opinions about works of lesser moment but unwilling to admit contrary opinions about the really great? Some philosophers (those of the anti-Shafts-bury school) have always disliked the analogy between judgements of taste and moral judgements because they thought that the former were open to dispute whereas the latter were not. To see the relation of the aesthetic 'can't' to the whole field of the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility is, *inter alia*, to put philistinism in its proper place.

All that has been attempted above is to raise certain questions which break away from the usual coinage of the vocabulary of aesthetics and which have philosophical import. We cannot think of aesthetic experience apart from sensible experience. There is however an immediacy about the plastic arts (and to a certain extent about the dance too) which is not there in the symbolically-mediated arts. Salvador Dali's 'Crucifixion' confronts totally in a way which the mere score of the St. Matthew Passion does not. I can recall vividly Rembrandt's 'Rabbi' in the National Gallery. Am I to compare this to running through a Bach Fugue in my head *without* the score or running it through in my head *with* the score? There are some epistemological tangles here. My immediate point was limited: to point out at least one big difference between the arts.

The discussion of originals brought in another difference. In the plastic arts the word 'original' has a clear meaning. I do not think there is a problem here unless there be one concerning replicas. 'The Burghers of Calais' are to be seen on Victoria Embankment and in the grounds of the Kunst Museum in Basel. I do not know if they are perfect replicas, or if they were one would speak of them as being the 'same' work of art or not. The search for originals outside the plastic art on the other hand, reminds me of the will-'o-the-wisp controversy concerning the thing-in-itself in philosophy. The authenticity of a work of art may not need establishing in any recondite manner but this authenticity may be disclosed by allowing the work to speak in all its urgent contemporaneity, whether this involves presenting 'Oedipus' in an Indian setting or Bach's music in stereophonic sound.

Finally, my purpose in talking about 'being wrong,' especially about a work of art not quite 'coming off' and about aesthetic blind-spots, was to divert discussion away from the paradigmatic concepts with which aesthetics usually deals.

# INDIAN AESTHETICS AND ART ACTIVITY

## *A literary critic's view*

C. D. Narasimhaiah

*An understanding of the problems of one art is often of great service in avoiding misconceptions in another—*I. A. RICHARDS

I VAGUELY know that Indian aesthetics has a past, I am even encouraged to concede a future, but what of the present? Precisely in the effort to explore its possibilities should the Seminar find its justification. What it promises, I hope, is not a sterile academic discussion. The very term art activity forbids it. It abhors and challenges any such complacency; it vibrates with urgency and calls for action, action in the present, for the present is in labour and we shall fulfil our responsibility towards it.

It augurs well for both Indian aesthetics and art activity that some of its best exponents and practitioners can ask themselves and others outside the charmed circle, certain questions which, I am afraid, induce in us all the sad realization of the little done and the undone vast. It is common knowledge that whenever a people have gone down they have invariably sought to revitalize themselves in two ways, with varying degrees of emphasis on one or the other. They have turned in nostalgia to the sources of their own culture and looked round elsewhere for guidance and strength. In all her epochs of resurgence India has had the benefit of both, which is the secret of her vitality and endurance. No one who takes a close look at the 19th century can miss the tremendous stir caused all-round in Indian society—in politics, religion, social reform, educational thought and practice, to an extent in art and literature. Thanks to our intense preoccupation with political activity which absorbed the energies of the best minds of the day all that we achieved in art and literature was to win some kind of attention to the past of India and by that means gain a national identity.

Did I say national identity? I am not sure, for in literature at least for a whole century before Independence, we should now have the courage to admit, one only witnessed a series of beginnings, historically very important no doubt, but intrinsically not very great. How else can one account for the Indian Shelley that was Tagore, the Indian Scott that was Bankim, the Indian Milton that was Madhusudan Dutt and, till only the other day,

the Indian Chekhov that was R. K. Narayan. I am not sure that those concerned liked these left-handed compliments but this is true that these labels seemed to carry with them a suggestion of derivativeness and indeed they did. That a people with a unique love poetry—love in the epics, love in the lyrics and love on the walls of caves and temples and, divinity in every stone, tree, tendril, bud and blossom, mountain, stream, sunset and moonrise—should have looked to the crude love and nature poetry of the English Romantics and gone into raptures over the heroics of Byron, the self-pity of Shelley and the mental bombast of Wordsworth, and the tales of Scott in preference to the matchless stories of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Jātaka* tales and the *Kathāsaritsāgara*—it is all most intriguing. I am alive to the merits of these romantics but I am now thinking of the easy susceptibility of our men of letters, the giants of the previous generation, to minor merit abroad without building on the monuments of their own magnificence and continuing their immemorial tradition. Their faith in their literary heritage was not as abiding as, shall we say, that of Gandhi in his religious inheritance. Sri Aurobindo seems to me to be a solitary exception and yet his medium was English, not an Indian language, the reason why his greatness has not been sufficiently realised. Let me at once add, I do not belong to the esoteric Aurobindo cult; my concern is with art and literature.

It is interesting that Indian art of the early masters seems to have escaped from the widely operative colonial complex, or so it seems to an outsider like me. I at least haven't heard of an Indian Constable, but then there were incomparably greater sculptors, painters, and musicians on the continent of Europe who had dwarfed their British counterparts. I said early masters because as in literature so in art while the Tagores, a Jamini Roy and a Nanda Lal Bose in Bengal and a Venkatappa in the South revitalized the Indian tradition as came from the Ajanta, the Pallava and Hoysala, the Rajput and the Mughal schools. Art of a subsequent period has run through the entire range of Western art movements all in a short span of a little over a quarter of a century or so: classicism, romanticism, impressionism, post-impressionism, expressionism, so on and so forth.\* The point I wish to make is, we have been much more fortunate in our art and art criticism than in literature and literary criticism. There might have been sporadic efforts of a sort but if one may say so modern India hasn't produced to date one literary critic of the order of the late Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy and others who followed him.

Having thus paid my tribute to art and art criticism I now feel bold

---

\* I would ask my artist-participants not to pin me to a facile statement like this. They won't be far wrong if they accuse me of not having the foggiest notion of modern art; my art education has been sadly neglected.



to present the average educated Indian's position in respect of our art activity. Of course it is not fair to blame art critics who do not enjoy a fraction of the privilege and opportunity that men in literature do. Literature, Indian and English, is read as a compulsory subject from the primary to the university stage and discussed in the classroom, on the public platform, in Sunday papers and periodicals, not to speak of its dissemination through libraries full of books on literary criticism of diverse kinds. Sri Aurobindo is moved by a sense of urgency when he remarks on this scandalous neglect of art education: "The system of education which, instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists frankly introduces it as a part of culture, no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education." Again, "The spirit of the Indian art must be revived, the inspiration and directness of vision which even now subsists among the possessions of the ancient tradition, the inborn skill and taste of the race, the dexterity of the Indian hand and the intuitive gaze of the Indian eye must be recovered and the whole nation lifted again to the higher level of the ancient culture—and higher."

My ambition is more modest than that of Sri Aurobindo, because I am shocked by the appalling ignorance and insensitivity of the educated youth of India to the opulence that surrounds them, but who nevertheless reproduce assiduously from textbooks and 'standard reference works' useless lumber-room information and get First and Seconds in University examinations and set the standard for culture. The primrose by the river-brim is a yellow primrose and nothing more, may be the utterance of an annoyed poet but that the cream of a country's youth should be strangers to the culture of their own people bespeaks a completely lost generation. The symbols that surround them at home and outside in streets and public places are so many withered stumps told upon the walls; the music that has come down to them from the time of the *Vedas*, that inviolable voice, is merely jug, jug to these dirty ears. Being caught in something unimaginably worse than Yeats' sensual music they all neglect monuments of unaging intellect. Consider all the poetic names of Indian men and women; those beautiful names of our mountains, rivers, flowers and fruits, seasons and months. Look at the figures of our gods and goddesses. What do they mean to these young people? When Confucius was asked 'what is the first thing you do if you become an emperor?' the reply was: 'to call men and things by their true and proper names.' While this is still the answer one would repeat in India today in the sphere of art, however, the questions that confront us are: what does this mean? why does it mean what it means? and how did it come to mean that etc? And unless we learn to

answer these questions we simply live on the surface, living and partly living.

We observe a festival every other day ; we celebrate *Jayantīs*, we fast, we pray, we rejoice but we know not why? The late Mr. Nehru asked children in a message to *Shankar's Weekly* if they could tell a bird by its note and a flower by its scent, and asked the adults assembled at a university college in Bangalore if they could name the trees in the precincts of their college in whose shade they have played, rested, sung songs and heard speeches day after day. What would these innocents say? Giggle at him and giggle among themselves! What would they say if an inquisitive visitor from abroad should ask why our gods have four hands and why not all of them four ; why Brahmā has four heads and Rāvana ten ; why Ganeśa and Narasiṃha are half-man and half-beast, while Ívara is half-man and half-woman : why does Śiva alone have a third eye ? Why he holds a *damaru* in his hand, while Viṣṇu has a conch : why does Kṛiṣṇa play on the flute and Sarasvati on the Vīṇā? A sight even more familiar but a question more bewildering is : why the gods have made vehicles of birds, reptiles and animals : the bullock of Śiva, the buffalo of Yama, the Peacock of Shanmukha, the eagle of Viṣṇu and the mouse of Ganeśa ? Why does Lakshmī stand on a floating lotus while her less affluent sister Sarasvati sits on a solid rock ? No less puzzling is why Krishna tramples on a serpent while Viṣṇu makes a bed of it. It will be fascinating to know why the Lotus is dear to Lakshmī and Sarasvati ; the Pārijata to Satyabhāmā ; Saugandhika to Draupadī and a mere Tulasi petal to Krishna ? Why do we have saffron, green and white for our national flag?

Well, it is a depressing story and I can fill an impressive volume with such random questions, let alone answers to them. Sri Aurobindo has perceptively remarked : 'Behind a few figures, a few trees and rocks the supreme Intelligence, the supreme Imagination, the supreme Energy lurks, acts, feels, is.' If art and literature do not sensitize us to our surroundings and increase our awareness of life and its manifold possibilities one will be constrained to say that so much of what goes on in the name of art activity is so much dilettantism if not downright fraud. For after all the artist has to weave a myth into his work, if he doesn't have one ready to hand he will have to create it, just the thing that Western artists are doing today. Belonging as they do to standardized society they go for motifs all over the world to Asia, Africa and to Australia.

And yet in this country our people are cradled in myths and sustained by symbols which in spite of our increasing urbanization and all its ills, still constitute the basis of thought and action and become in Nehru's words 'the living element in their lives ever pulling them from the drudgery and ugliness of their everyday existence to higher realms, ever pointing

towards the path of endeavour and right living even though the ideal might be far and difficult to reach.'

I have so far only named a few of our sins of omission. I shall not be so naive as to dwell on our share of ugliness and monstrosity in architecture, sculpture, portraiture, music, drama and film, in the colour of our walls, indeed in the colour of our costumes and of our book-jackets, our vulgar advertisements, the shapelessness of our suburbs and the drabness of our so called functional office-buildings, in the effeminate gait of our youngmen and the abominable showiness of our youngwomen. All this Europeanizing and Americanizing just at a time when Europe and America are coming to loathe their own grossness. And yet art must remove grossness; only art can do it.

This brings us directly to aesthetics and criticism. For what some call ugly many call beautiful, otherwise they wouldn't be seen enjoying them and paying for what they enjoy. What then are our assumptions when we describe a work of art as good? My endeavour is to seek clarification, to do anything else would be intellectual vulgarity, from the artists and art critics present here as to how valid is the literary critic's kind of approach especially of one (not me) who comes to a work of art fully equipped for his task and believes in *the completeness of response* to it.

In doing so I am aware of the unique expressive potentialities and the peculiar limitations of each medium, however much I may be inclined to share the view of Schopenhauer and Peter that all arts ultimately aspire to the condition of music. As against these two critics of art we have Hegel who claimed that literature is the highest of arts. Perhaps such a claim is grounded in the belief that 'precise communication' is possible in literature because of the 'symbolic clarity of the primary medium' (words) and because of the vast contribution of literary criticism to art appreciation. This is true, however, that critics of both art and literature especially today have to develop an omnivorous appetite; they have to assimilate the discussions of the scientist (we are told that Leonardo da Vinci applied to painting the knowledge he had gained from the scientific investigation of anatomy and colour), the anthropologist, the psychologist, the linguist and the specific insights and evaluations of the critic. I am particularly encouraged to extend the validity of the literary critic's kind of approach to works of art (subject, as I said earlier, to certain modifications demanded by the inevitable propensities of each medium) by the critical efforts of three of the most distinguished critics of our time—already part of the establishment—namely, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis and even earlier by Matthew Arnold's human centrality, the function of criticism according to Arnold being to propagate the best that has been thought and said in the world. T. S. Eliot's historical

sense, I. A. Richards's 'Our whole sense of the history and destiny of man is involved in any judgment as to value,' and F. R. Leavis's 'a real interest in literature is interest in man, society and civilization'—all have helped to bring the artist out of the ivory tower and put him at the most conscious point of the race in his time, a phrase which now sounds platitudinous by over-use.

Generally speaking, I am inclined to allow myself to be influenced, I say influenced, not amputated, by their approaches both because of the essential adequacy and soundness of their standards of judgment and more, because of the striking similarity of their critical standards to the traditional Indian approach to literature which makes it possible to assimilate the critical criteria of a contrasting culture into our own without much fuss. As educated men we have need of coming in contact with at least two other cultures in addition to our own—a comparable culture like the Chinese or Japanese and a contrasting one like the English or American. If the one confirm our faith in our own culture, the other acts as a corrective. It will be seen that by such means we shall be working towards some sort of universal standards in the judgment of art and literature, which I take to be a very desirable thing in this world of ours.

To come back to art and literature, I am not saying anything new in pleading for interaction between art criticism and literary criticism. There has always been interaction between the arts and between art and literature. As example of the latter, there is the famous instance of Jamini Roy who after having used oil and water colours long enough to discard them 'in favour of tempera as a medium' 'best suited to his special talent' and not being satisfied even with that he is said to have sought for the expressions of the Bengali spirit in literature and made it 'a habit to turn over the pages of some Vaishnava text or other before going to bed every night.' We have it on the authority of Mr. I. A. Richards that 'close analogies can be discovered by careful analysis between all of them.....'. For an understanding of the problems of one art is often of great service in avoiding the misconceptions in another.' He assures us that such a comparative approach involves 'no attempt to make one art legislate for another, no attempt to blur their differences or to destroy their autonomy.' It may sound paradoxical but the facts bear me out when I say that as specialisation advances the frontiers of knowledge fade. Indeed it almost seems a condition precedent to progress in any specialism that it should come into fertilizing contact with other disciplines; otherwise, as in the human species, so in the arts as well as the sciences, inbreeding will in course of time result in exhaustion of the creative energy. I must add that when I said progress, I simply meant an attempt to recover what is lost, and found and lost again.

Let me try to give a few instances of interaction between painting and

poetry. I regret that my illustrations are mainly from English poetry as that happens to be the only one where my ignorance is not so appalling. It is commonplace to say that painting and poetry belong to two different categories: one spatial, the other temporal; one stills the emotions and teaches 'restrained delight,' while the other moves the emotions and sends one to raptures. But there is no one way, for the opposite is true too. Consider how in that magnificent 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' the young Keats starts by apostrophising the neglected Grecian Urn as 'thou, still unravished bride of quietness' and ends up by frowning upon it as 'cold pastoral' which 'teases us out of thought as doth eternity' covering on the way a wide range of emotions between the beginning and the end of the scale. It is to him 'sylvan historian who canst thus express a flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.' But we all know that it had not until Keats said so in 'rhyme.' Not until he revealed its beauty and gave us insights into its truthfulness were we prepared to look upon it as 'friend to man' nor give credence to the memorable formulation: 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.' That is not all: we even began to convince ourselves, working through contraries, that 'that's all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Which painter including Blake himself had realized on canvas the 'fearful symmetry' of the tiger till Blake visualised it as 'burning bright in the forests of the night' (even as D. H. Lawrence invested a common snake with the noble image of the 'uncrowned king of the underworld' and redeemed himself and us of 'a pettiness'). The poet's marvel still remains a perpetual challenge to artists, now and in time to be:

What art could twist the sinews of thy heart

.....  
 What the hammer? What the chain?

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil?

But it is the glory of poetry that it could transmit a great truth through 'a lie' and a lie it remains to the other arts of painting or sculpture or golden handiwork until the artist has a vision of the reality which can only have been the gift of God to Blake the poet. It is Picasso who said that 'art is a lie that makes us see truth, at least the truth that is given to us, to understand.' To go back to literature, as someone who was in a privileged position to talk about art and literature with no preference or prejudice in respect of one or the other wrote some twenty-five years ago at Princeton:

'The referential meanings of words refer us to 'objects' of one type or another which, in aggregate, constitute the potential subject-matter or secondary medium of literature. This medium is much more extensive and varied than that of any of the other arts. Music and the dance are, for the most part, restricted to the interpretation of man's emotive and

conative states. The chief subject-matter of architecture is man's social activities which require to be housed. Sculpture lends itself best to the representation of the human body, and even painting can directly represent only the visible world of nature. Literature, in contrast, can treat of every type of object and every kind of human experience. It cannot, it is true, make its physical subject-matter visible to the eye, as can sculpture and painting, nor can it express man's emotive and conative states in the way in which music expresses them. It too has its expressive limitations. But what it cannot 'represent' to sense, it can conjure up for the imagination, and what it cannot directly evoke by sound alone it can evoke by its own methods of indirection. Because of its complex primary medium, literature has a far richer secondary medium than any of the other arts.'

I am anxious that I should not be understood as holding a brief for literature as against the art of painting or sculpture. Far from it, for I am actually trying to explore the possibilities of using a training in literature, because it is so pervasive certainly in relation to the other arts, as both nature and art. Students of French literature would know how Victor Hugo's preface to his historical drama in verse, *Cromwell*, could be looked upon as the 'prime manifesto of the romantic movement', in art no less than in literature. It seems that 'even literary figures were being discussed by Hugo, the studio-reader, without altering the sense. could quite easily substitute his own choice of equivalents in the field of painting, sculpture, and graphic design. Raphael would take the place of Racine (damned with faint praise by Hugo), Michel Angelo or Rembrandt that of Shakespeare, Callot that of Moliere.

In his *Les Orientales* Hugo seemed to reverse his approach and 'translate the painter's passion for the East into poetic terms to attempt in novelties of metre and rhythm a close equivalent of bravura on canvas.' And Hugo is not alone in advancing the arts of writing and painting by letting them interact on each other. There have always been in Paris and the other metropolitan cities of the world 'poets who dabbled with the brush and painters who dreamed of becoming poets.' The names of Blake, Dante, Gabriel Rossetti, and D. H. Lawrence in England, of W. B. Yeats in Ireland, and of Rabindranath Tagore in our own country come easily to mind, and I submit that the popularity these writers enjoy with our college and university students, should not be thrown away by the teacher in the classroom or for that matter by our critics of art and literature without winning the attention of students to the arts and thus enriching their enjoyment of literature by adding a new dimension to it. It will be an invaluable experience to the students and they cannot be too grateful for helping them see the relatedness of things which do not seem to have any relation. Indeed, it is the mark of a truly educated man to see

the connections of things and place men and events in a proper perspective. In the *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* there is an interesting anecdote. A young novice vajra went to Mārkaṇḍeya with a request to teach him *Pratimālakṣhaṇa*. He had to know the laws of painting, he was told. He was then asked if he knew the laws of dancing. No, but he would learn them. He was told that he could not learn the laws of painting without dancing, nor of dancing without mastering the laws of instrumental music. Yes, he would, but he couldn't learn the laws of music without learning to sing himself!

It is an interesting story meant to inculcate in students of art the dependence of the arts on one another, the unity underlying all knowledge, and the integrated view of life our people have always taken.

I submit too, that the teacher of literature, both English and Sanskrit together with others written in our regional languages, can by means of close reading of the text, and by an informed as well as mature discussion of literature can, to use a phrase of T. S. Eliot in a different connection in his essay on the Frontiers of Criticism, 'lead one to the door' and then he will 'find the way in', 'find the way in' to the shrine of art. Let us examine how this can be done with the help of the best recent practices of literary critics, Anglo-American and Indian, covering between them the present and the past, experiment and tradition, Europe and Asia. I have no particular fascination for them but the tragedy is we have lost touch with our own critical practices for about a thousand years now and so there is something to profit by the practices of the Western critics. For the sake of brevity let me mention some of the highlights of their achievements: the importance of tradition while stressing the need to be original but an originality which puts the artist in the position of a catalytic agent; 'close reading' of the work so as to secure full enjoyment by means of 'total' response' to it, based on objective criteria and by calling attention to discussible particularities, which are there in the work itself, and finally, the social and spiritual roles of art by making value judgments.

It will be of inestimable value to examine the soundness and adequacy of those working hypotheses of art appreciation in the midst of the chaos of critical theories, that is, their soundness and adequacy in the Indian cultural context, because it is good to remember we belong here and not somewhere else on the globe.

Take first of all the much discussed tradition in art and literature. To Western man tradition has invariably meant the centrality of Europe, the mind of Europe, entailing a historical sense which is an awareness of the literature of the whole of Europe from Homer down to the present day, in the attempt to transmit the vitality of the past to the present so as to enrich it. It will be seen that this is different from the 'historical' approach in criticism, for the historical sense becomes a vital part of the aesthetic as

seen in T. S. Eliot's classic formulation that the past is conditioned by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. That is how when a new work of art, a really new work, arises, it changes the existing order, and presents a new pattern, a new hierarchy of masterpieces. It is important to note that a poet and critic who expounded tradition mainly in terms of Hellenism and Christianity should be so strikingly exposed to Indian thought and literature not to speak of his studied attempts to inherit the 'collective unconscious' of the race, thus working towards the concept of universal man.

Let us now see what tradition has come to mean to Indian writers and artists. The late Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy and Professor M. Hiriyanna have done invaluable service in formulating it in more or less precise terms. It is their view that Indian religious and philosophical thinking has moulded the theory and practice of Indian art and literature. But Indian aesthetics has not subordinated itself to philosophy, it has worked independently. The aims of both are the same: to attain detachment from the things of the world, to rise above joy and suffering. While their aims are the same their approaches are different because art works by indirection, by way of *dhvani*, *alankāra*, *vakrokti*, etc., and attaches greater importance to experience, to *rasānubhāva*, not to secure didactic ends so much as a serene and disinterested contemplation of the facts of life. It recognises that life 'is characterised by *avidyā*, by *kāma-karma* and man must constantly endeavour to transcend this 'egocentric predicament.' (The American poet Frost came close to it when he said poetry is 'momentary stay against confusion,' thus stressing the need for constant renewal of sensibility by means of art activity.) Art is thus a *sādhanā*, a means to realise that *paramapurushārtha* which is *moksha*. Such a view of art is the very antitheses of art as self-expression, or art for art's sake espoused by the ivory tower artist.

Eliot alone of all modern Western critics articulated in unequivocal terms the view that art is not expression of emotion, but escape from it, not expression of personality (so much of art-criticism in European museums and art galleries of the previous century centred round identifying the artist; there was money in it!) but the extinction of personality and he was quick to add, of course, only those who have personality know what it is to escape from it. He was soon joined by others who said: 'Don't trust the artist, trust his art;' or, 'separate the man who suffers from the mind that creates.' A far cry from the romantic agony and the ecstasy (examples of which abound in Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth, in that order), while according to the earlier view of art, especially Indian, 'it is sorrow without tears, it is joy without exultation, it is passionate without any loss of serenity.' Such of course was the Christian view of art in the Middle Ages and of Sumerian and Egyptian art earlier which the Renaissance and the Reformation systematically destroyed in Europe. The



Cathedrals of medieval Europe are in this respect like the temples of India, the work of unknown architects. The emotion they expressed was not their own but that of the multitude and of the super-natural whose primacy was an article of faith commonly shared by all. According to such a view art is *dhyāna mantra* and the artist has to do hard work, being apprenticed to a *guru*, his art, not a personal ambition, but as Dr Coomaraswamy has said, 'hereditary vocation,' 'a function of the social order,' 'the themes being provided by general necessities inherent in racial mentality, and method being learnt in a living workshop tradition.' Any notion of perfection of his art in the artist was tantamount to an arrogant assertion of himself as against God, the supreme artist, *Viśvakarmā* or *Devaśilpī*. Isn't that the tragedy of Ibsen's master-builder in the play of that name? Isn't that the reason why when a work approached anything like perfection our sculptors deliberately left a blemish uncorrected? Didn't the perfect dragon as painted on the wall, fly away?

Perfection dwells in heaven, perhaps as an idea in the Platonic language and there is no question of imitation or representation of the supreme idea. As our art-critics have repeatedly remarked, the entire view of Western Art as representation or imitation has maimed art-activity. For in India the emphasis is not on *rūpa* but *svarūpa*. The master-painter is said to be one who can depict 'the dead without life (*chetanā*), the sleeping possessed of it.' The artist had to apprehend its *svabhāva* or what Gerard Manley Hopkins called 'in-scape,' its true nature, what makes a thing that and nothing else. As in India, so in China, all art was the manifestation of an informing energy, the irradiating spirit. Those who sing here said Śankara, sing God. And if we worshipped the images of heroes after the gods, it is because we looked upon them as *avatārapuru-shas*, that is, as symbols, but before long the symbolic significance came to be forgotten and the actual, shall we say the factual, overshadowed the ideal. Carried away by his enthusiasm Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy permits himself to remark: 'Compared with the significance of this religious art, all other schools, Persian, Mughal, and Central Asian must be treated as an episode.' And yet it was he, I think, who advocated a study of one's own tradition and others as 'humanity's heirloom.' But to lose links with one's past is to perish by the root. It does not mean that there should be blind revival of the past. Better novelty than perpetuate deadwood, for that is some sign of life. That is what makes all talk of reviving the Ajanta School or the Rajput or the Mughal school of painting sound so puerile. For that obviously is not the meaning of 'going forward to the past.' It is not a question of revival, it is just an awareness that the artist today is heir to all that man has thought and felt, said and done, that the gentlemen and the ladies present here practising art today stand on the shoulders of their predecessors in art.

The question arises as to how an artist can present his unique apprehension of life in terms of the existing conventions of society, especially when so much knowledge, or as R. P. Blackmur would say, "Knowledges," have today become part of the artist's mental baggage, where once, mere faith sufficed. But that is the challenge to reconcile tradition and originality, great artists are great precisely because of their triumph in achieving the blend and furthering art activity.

The artist has to be equipped to deal with all levels of people—of *paṇḍita* (the scholar), *bhakta* (the devotee), *rasika* (the critic), *āchārya* (the teacher), and *alpabuddhijana* (the common man). And so the critic must bring to it the same wide equipment if he has to give any guidance to the reader or beholder. It is important to remember that in the truly great Indian works of art there are no private symbols, personal idiosyncrasies and personal value patterns which the reader or beholder is called upon to decipher and since there are shared assumptions enjoyment of the work that is, to those who share the tradition, should be easier than in much Western art and literature. The sculptor or the painter created more a type or an archetype than an individual, for the individual's ego was not to be pampered (the bane of the art of portraiture). As Dr Coomaraswamy says, it is not a man called Siddhārtha that need concern us today but Siddhārtha who became Buddha, the Enlightened. And him the painter and the sculptor have portrayed convincingly.

But I humbly ask, between two portraits of the Buddha if one is called upon to judge and evaluate, what is one to do? Similarly we haven't received much help from the art-critic who says, the Dance of Śiva is not a historical event but a symbolic act; it is continuous and not something that happened once and seen no more. Then too, it is not in Chidambaram but in the heart of every worshipper. Again, one is helpless in the presence of two paintings or sculptures of the Dance of Śiva when confronted with the question: 'which one is the better of the two?' What is the *pramāṇa* or the criterion? Is it in the object or in the beholder? If not in the object, for it is not an imitation or representation of Śiva's *rūpa* but his *svarūpa*, it must then be in the beholder. But how is one to trust him? What is one to do if two beholders give two diametrically opposite views about the goodness of the painting? Do we have any discussible particularities by which to evaluate a work of art? It is here that we stuck in judging Indian works of art, and it is here that we feel helpless in answering ignorant and hostile European critics. It is not enough to refer them to our view of life but we must refer them to the works of art themselves.

Even so intelligent a critic as Dr Coomaraswamy goes to the extent of saying that the priest in a Buddhist temple is likely to know more about the image inside than a museum visitor. Necessarily? What are Dr

Coomaraswamy's criteria for saying so? He doesn't elucidate his statement. Indian literature has shared the same fate. The *Vedas* are the revealed word of God, the Epics are about gods and heroes, and the *Gītā* is not so much a poem as prescription of a code of conduct, and so judgment in each case has been suspended by and large. There is hardly any close and sustained full-length criticism of any of our great works of literature. The same is true of our architecture, sculpture and painting; their greatness has to be realized in terms of art, not as something else. It is not being fair or responsible to seek protection under a divine cover as Wordsworth sought to do describing the King's Chapel at Cambridge:

Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely calculated less or more

How wonderful would it be if someone could attempt a close analysis of each of our great temples of Trimūrti in Elephanta, of Śiva as Tripurāntaka ready to walk out of stone, and of the coy bride Pārvatī looking proudly and admiringly at Śiva on winning the hand of this supreme lord of the Universe, in *Pārvatī paṇigrahaṇam* in one of the caves at Ellora; of Buddha preaching his First Sermon at Sarnath, or of Naṭarāja in Chidambaram poised in the storm-centre of his own creation. If only our admiration were grounded in proper understanding of these art-pieces from every point of view how much more would we be proud of our culture! Even a casual historian like Nehru seems in some respects to have done more to art, literature and history than many of us who called ourselves critics but who are simply content to be on the periphery talking learnedly no doubt but without simply touching the life of art. Consider for example, the profound realization of the true nature of Buddha's greatness in *The Discovery of India*, his unearthly power, his detachment, his compassion, his enlightenment:

'Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable.....His eyes are closed but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame.' We not merely feel the impact of his greatness, we see him too, for Nehru succeeds in portraying in so few words what others have done with stone and clay and paint. But even here the analysis while penetrating and profound is of the type and not of any particular image or painting which he distinguishes from others. But that we shall see in something different.

Nehru can make a significant comparison between the characters of two rivals to the throne, by means of the texture of the stone and the architecture of the tombs, a perceptive observation not unworthy of an acute critic of art and yet done by one who has hardly had much time for leisurely reflection about Sher Shah and Humayun. 'The Afghan's tomb, says Nehru, is a stern, strong, imperious-looking building like the

man. Humayun's tomb is a polished and elegant building and from these structures of stone one can form a good idea of these two rivals for empire in the 16th century. Although the one is in Bihar and the other in Delhi. Nehru's discerning eye can collect and compare experiences and draw valid inferences. That is not all. There is a trenchant generalization too about the role of art and literature. He thinks they often give a greater insight into a nation's soul than the superficial activities of the multitude. And then his regret that artists are 'seldom looked upon as the prophets of tomorrow and they meet with little honour.' A soothing balm to our injured pride! I am not, however, holding this up as an example of art criticism but that a non-professional historian like him should have bestowed such intelligent attention on our scattered treasures of art in a letter written to a girl of 13, is praiseworthy. Besides, it is on these lines though at a more advanced level that we can profitably attempt art criticism today, and hence my reference to Nehru and no one, whatever his age and equipment, could hardly come out of a reading of Nehru's *Glimpses of World History* or *The Discovery* without being pleased and instructed by his penetrating remarks on art and literature, thanks to his method of analysis and comparison, the two acknowledged tools of criticism in our time.

There is of course no *one* approach to art criticism. There is room and even justification for plurality of approach as is evidenced by the library full of books of criticism on Shakespeare each throwing light on some aspect of his greatness. No school of criticism has diminished the prestige of Shakespeare or Keats while the reputations, say, of Milton and Shelley have suffered considerably but even there criticism has helped to focus attention on their work as never before.

Consider, just for curiosity because at first sight it sounds like a jugglery of words though it is not, the master metaphors which the New Critics of England and America have used to unlock the doors of art. I. A. Richards's referential and emotive use of words, Empson's 'Ambiguity', Ransom's 'Structure' and 'Texture,' Allen Tate's 'Denotative and Connotative Meanings,' Cleanth Brooks 'Paradox,' and R. P. Blackmur's 'Gesture.' Let me say a word or two about the two because of their immediate relevance to art criticism. Brooks for instance tells us virtually: 'Purge poetry of its paradox. What is left? Only the language of science is left behind.' He studies the twin poems of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* by John Milton and thinks his decisive figure of light versus shadow holds everything. The paradox is that the shadow which pervades *Il Penseroso* is brighter than the light of *L'Allegro*. Perhaps it is. In any case the two poems together form an interesting academic exercise in verse on light and shade by a gifted undergraduate at an ancient university and Mr. Brooks need not have wasted his analytical acumen on these poems. But my object is to

show the use of a method. To me Mr. Blackmur's metaphor 'Gesture' in his justly celebrated essay 'Language as Gesture' is a more purposeful and a more brilliant master-key to the understanding of all the arts. I shall simply quote one or two sentences of his own on each of the arts to call your attention to the amazing grasp of the critic on the various arts.

*Gesture in Poetry*: 'When the language of words fails we resort to the language of gesture' and Blackmur illustrates it by means of a line from Othello: 'I understand a fury in your words! But not the words.' *Gesture in Architecture*: To him the spire on a Church is 'the clearest example of gesture in architecture.' A good spire is 'an arrow aimed at the Almighty, carrying in gesture the whole church with it. 'The sense of movement in inert mass and empty space is gesture in architecture.' *Gesture in Sculpture*: 'It is gesture that makes a stone figure a sphinx and it is gesture that makes the great Sphinx a smile.' *Gesture in Painting*: Gesture may be a single focal moment that 'startles the features into a maximum life.' *Gesture in Dancing*: It is gesture that transforms mere movements into a ritual. *Gesture in Acting*: 'Control' is the keyword with regard to gesture in acting; the actor must feel all the controlling force in acting and Blackmur sounds as though he is speaking from the bower of his bones when he explains the meaning of gesture which is the controlling force in acting: "How can a man understand the play of light who has not felt the sun aching in his bones?" 'Great acting bodies forth the gesture of great words; no more.' *Gesture in music*: It is 'not the theme' of the musician but 'what happens to his theme' that counts and that is gesture.

It is obvious the critic is not talking dogmatically but deliberately, with the help of concrete particulars as though he is seeking corroboration from his readers by asking: this is so, isn't it? And our reply if we have no axe to grind would fall into 'Yes, but' or 'not exactly?' For one might substitute some other term for gesture and pack it with meaning. But isn't this an exemplification of the time-honoured Indian concept of the *sahṛīdaya*? It simply means we have to go back to the dialectical method of the *Upanishads*, the *Purānas* and the *Gītā* to draw sustenance for our critical activity in the present. Unfortunately in our texts there is abundant discussion of principles on incredibly sophisticated plane but hardly any discussion at length, of given works of art or literature. Possibly in a society where culture nourished a tiny minority there was no need to put down things on paper. There were many assumptions which the elite shared and when they percolated downwards from the heights of the social hierarchy they became common currency and there was no questioning; all the thinking had been done by the Brahmin for the others! Not so now. We can't assume anything in a democracy. This is precisely the critic's opportunity; a time of crisis is a time of opportunity.

My point is that it is the business of criticism to win intelligent attention to the work of art from all-round and increase our awareness of the possibilities of life and to enrich the art of living, the greatest of all art. Not for nothing did Tolstoy say that art is not a matter of amusement : art is a serious matter. Indian art certainly is a serious matter. I confess I make my living by teaching literature but I am more proud of those magnificent temples in the heart of our impenetrable jungles, on the precipitous edge of mountains, on the weather-worn islands in stormy seas, and on the serene banks of rivers and of all the treasures of sculpture which practically lie unnoticed by us for they are a tribute to the astonishing spirit of adventure of our ancestors. How to make these flow in our blood-stream, felt in the mind and felt along the heart and thus foster what is called the artistic consciousness of our people, is a task not for ignoramuses like me but for you artists and art critics. When that is done we will generate more art activity in this country and possibly help re-enact in a measure the splendour that was Ind.

# NATURE OF AESTHETIC ENJOYMENT IN GREEK AND INDIAN ANALYSES

R. K. Sen

## Part I

AESTHETICIANS writing after 1920, particularly after Freud (1856-1939), Jung (1875-1961), and I. A. Richards (1893) prefer to look at art experience as a kind of physical sensation. This attitude to art contradicts the earlier view, which looks at mind and matter as each supreme in its own sphere. Descartes was a dualist, who believed that mind and matter both exist, and are entirely different entities, therefore, he had to ask himself how, for example, the desire to walk leads to the physical motion of walking. His unsatisfactory answer was that, although animals are pure automatons, man is different in that he has a soul, which resides in the pineal gland. In this gland, the mind comes in contact with the vital spirits of the body and thus there is interaction between the two. This theory is known as interactionism, and since we do not accept its basis in the function of the pineal gland, we have simply interaction, but without any rational explanation.

Arnold Guelinex, one of Descartes's followers, produced the even more improbable theory of psycho-physical parallelism, sometimes known as the 'theory of the two clock.' Imagine you have two clocks, each keeping perfect time, then supposing you saw one and heard the other, every time one points to the hour the other will strike, giving the impression that the first event causes the second, although in fact they are quite unrelated. So it is with the body and mind in Guelinex's view, each is wound up by God in the beginning in such a way as to keep time with the other. The trouble about all these theories is (a) that they really explain nothing and (b) that they give us a very peculiar view of God as a celestial showman treating us as puppets, when it would surely have been easier to create a world in which mind and matter simply interacted by their very nature.

Modern aestheticians, no less than modern philosophers, are faced with the dualism of mind and matter. The solutions offered are diverse. One of the many solutions is offered by the existentialists. Existentialism

is a term for several philosophic arguments, all centred on the individual and his relationship to the Universe or to God. In his concern with the problem of the individual's relationship to God, Kierkegaard bitterly attacked the abstract metaphysics of the Hegelians and the worldly complacency of the Danish Church. Kierkegaard's fundamental insight was the recognition of the concrete ethical and religious demands confronting the individual. He saw that these demands could not be met by a merely intellectual decision, but required the subjective commitment of the individual. The necessity and seriousness of these ethical decisions facing men was for Kierkegaard the source of his dread and despair. Kierkegaard's analysis of the human situation provides the central theme of contemporary existentialism. For Sartre, as for the other existentialists, existence precedes essence. Princeton theologian Paul Ramsey observes that "ours is the first attempt in recorded history to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead." In the traditional citadels of Christendom, grey Gothic cathedrals stand empty, mute witness to a rejected faith. The anti-heroes of modern art endlessly suggest that waiting for God is futile, since life is without meaning.

Soren, Kierkegaard and other existentialists in reacting against the theory that our existence can be grasped by thought alone, stand for a point of view, sometimes described as 'open commitment.' It follows that the existentialist cannot be rationalist in his outlook for this is merely an escape into thought from the serious problems of existence; none of the important aspects of life—failure, evil, sin, folly nor even the existence of God or the truth of Christianity—can be proved by reason. This means complete commitment, not a dependence on argument as to what exists or not.

The 'open commitment' of the existentialists has been paralleled in post-war America by artists and writers who are better known as 'beat generation.' Essentially anarchic, members of the beat generation reject traditional, social and artistic forms. They seek immediate expression in multiple, intense expressions and beatific illumination like that of some eastern religions, like Yoganaddha, Projñopāya and Zen Buddhism.

(a)

We discover a kind of 'open commitment,' an anticipation of the doctrinal attitude of the beat generation, a frank acknowledgement of the world of senses in the aesthetic speculation of the Hindus and the Buddhists. The Indian attitude is distinguished from the attitude of the beat generation and the existentialist not by a different emphasis on the importance of the world of sense; it is as much openly committed to sense world as any other. The Indian attitude is distinguished by its greater



speculativeness, even when it frankly acknowledges the world of sense. Speculation—as the etymology of the word shows—is an intuitive—an almost visionary mode of apprehension. This does not mean, of course, that it is mere irresponsible meandering of the mind, which ignores reality or seeks to escape from its problems. Speculative thought transcends experience, but only because it attempts to explain, to unify, to order experience. If we use the word in its original sense, then we may say that speculative thought attempts to underpin the chaos of experience, so that it may reveal the features of a structure order, coherence and meaning. Speculative thought is therefore distinct from mere idle speculation in that it never breaks entirely from experience. It may be once removed from the problems of experience, but it is connected with them in that it tries to explain them.

Aesthetic analyses in Hindu and Buddhist India and Hellenic Greece are speculative in the above sense of the term. We feel that it would be wrong to look at experience as an end in itself (as with the existentialists, or beat generation), or simply as a peg of rarefied speculative thought. The ancient world of the Hindus and the Greeks in their attempt to rationalise experience, would seek a direct correlation between facts of experience and their speculative interpretation. This attitude of the Hindus is certainly more inclusive than the attitude of the existentialists, or of the beat generation. This is because this attitude avidly accepts the world of sense; and is not afraid of correctly interpreting the world of sense by speculative methods. This inclusiveness of the Hindu and the Buddhist standpoint forms the subject-matter of this dissertation.

The comprehensiveness of the Indian mind is illustrated by the Indian emphasis on the direct correlation of *karmendriya* (agents of action) and *jñānendriya* (agents of knowledge). A careful analysis of this standpoint will go far to explain the origin of both Indian and Greek dramatic literature in popular rituals. What is even more significant is that relics of such popular rituals have survived in the fully developed aesthetic analysis of later times. The correlation of *karmendriya* and *jñānendriya* is thus an early attempt at comprehensiveness.

<i>Karmendriya</i>	<i>vāk</i>	<i>tvak</i>	<i>pāda</i>	<i>upastha</i>	<i>vāyu</i>
Element	<i>śabda</i>	<i>sparsā</i>	<i>rūpa</i>	<i>rasa</i>	<i>gandha</i>
<i>Jñānendriya</i>	<i>karma</i>	<i>pāṇi</i>	<i>cakṣhu</i>	<i>jihvā</i>	<i>nāsā</i>

It is not easy to find correlative evidence in support of this standpoint. There is at least enough evidence to show how the *jñānendriya*, *jihvā* which lies at the root of bodily *rasas* in the Ayurveda is intimately associated with the *Karmendriya*, *Upastha*. It is freely acknowledged, even in conservative circles how the *upastha* (sexual organs) is associated with the essence of aesthetic enjoyment. This standpoint anticipates by more than two thousand years the recent findings of Sigmund Freud, Adler and

Jung, that all mental emotions and complexes are of a sexual nature. Anyone even superficially acquainted with the Ayurveda, should know that *Vājī-karaṇa* is one of eight parts of the Ayurveda. In *Chikitsā-sthānam* ch. 2, Charaka speaks of the different kinds of food and drink, taken in by the mouth, which improve virility of the male. In the same chapter, Charaka discusses the necessity of taking in rich meals, if a man is to enjoy prolonged sexual intercourse with his wife.

The intimate relationship between the *jñānendriya rasanā* and the *karmendriya upastha*, has been referred to again and again in the *Srimad Bhāgavat*. There is much reason to believe that Bharata was fully aware of this position, when he compared *rasa*-realisation in *kāvya* and *nāṭaka* as being of the same nature as food and drink, tasted by the tongue (*Nāṭya śāstra* ch. VI. It should be remembered that the two *ślokas* in *Nāṭya, śāstra* (G.O.S.) vol. I, ch. vi 32-3 describing the process of *rasa*-realisation, are according to Bharata's own admission, *anuvaiṃsaya ślokas*, Bharata writes,

*Yathā bahudravayaiyutair vyañjanairbahubhir yutam  
Āsvādayanti bhūñjānā bhaktam bhaktavido janāḥ  
Bhāvābhinaya sambandhā sthāyībhāvānstathā budhaḥ  
Āsvādayanti manasā tasmān nāṭyarasaḥ smṛtaḥ*

Abhinavagupta in vol. I p. 290 (G.O.S.) commenting on these verses, writes, *Atretibhāshye anuvaiṃśebhavau śishyā chāryaparamparāsu vartamānau ślokākhyau vṛttaviśeshau sūtrārtha*

*saṅkshepa prakatīkaraṇenakārikā śabdā vāchyaḥ bhavataḥ*

G.O.S. writes that the analogy of cooking used by Bharata in describing *rasa*, was borrowed by him from *Bharata vṛiddha*. It should not be forgotten that the food and drink, particularly butter and condiments, are prescribed by Bharata as a good stimulant to sexual urge.

If we are to proceed with the materials available in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, it seems that the origin of drama should better be associated with the fertility rites of the ancient world. It seems to us that the *jarjara pūjā* and the invocation of Indra are the surviving fragments of an ancient form of fertility cult. Bharata in the first chapter of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* discusses the cult of Indra *Pūjā*. In *Nāṭya Śāstra* ch. I. p. 46, Bharata writes, *aśakyā puruṣai sādīn prayōktum strījanādṛte*, and in the following *ślokas*, (47, 48, 49) Bharata discusses in detail how the Lord created lovely ladies to play the female roles. Bharata writes —

*Mañju keśīm sukeśīm ca miśrakeśīm sulōcanām*

*Saudaminīm devadatlām devasenām manōrmam*

*Sudatīm sundarīm caiva vidagdham vipulām tathā*

*Sumālām santatīm caiva sunandam sumukhīm tathā*

*Magadhīm arjunīm caiva saralām keralām dhṛtīm*

This is a distinct echo of Charaka's analysis of *Vāji karaṇa* in *Chikitsāsthānam* II 2-5. Charaka speaks of the great importance of the wife in restoring the vitality of the male. This is not the end of the story. It must have been noticed how the fertility rites perhaps stimulated the growth of ancient Indian drama. Similar forces were also at work in other countries of the world. Dr. Thorkild Jacobson writing on the fertility cult of ancient Mesopotamia, says, 'Around the end of the third millennium, the city of Isia, which was the ruling city in Southern Mesopotamia, celebrated yearly the marriage of the goddess Inanna to the god Dummuja or Jammuz... since the goddess is an incarnation of the fertility of nature, and her husband, the shepherd-god Dummuja, incarnates the creative powers of spring, it is understandable that this annual union of god and goddess signifies and is the reawakening of nature in spring. In the marriage of these deities, the fertility and the creative powers of nature themselves became manifest. The Babylonians, says Frankfurt of the University of Chicago, "worshipped the generative force in nature in several forms; its manifestation in the beneficial rains and thunderstorms was visualised as a lion-headed bird. Seen in the fertility of the earth, it became a snake." It may be noted that the serpent cult, symbolising the generative power in nature, was also present in ancient Greek thought. Dr. Garrison in his *History of Medicine*, p. 80 fig. C. shows votive tablet to Zeus Meilichios (fourth century B.C.) in Berlin Museum. Ovid in *Metamorphosis* xv. 626-744, and Pliny in xxix. 22, describe how the cult of Aesculapius was transplanted from Epidaurius to Rome in the form of a huge serpent. The serpent, as all anthropologists would agree, usually symbolises the healing power of nature, and earth's fertility.

It should be remembered that Abhinavagupta in defending *śanta* as a *rasa* relies on *Bhujāṅga-vibhu* or *Vāsuki* or *ahipati Patanjali*. Abhinavagupta in G.O.S. vol. I p. 335, quotes from the *Yōga Sūtra*, 1.16, "*tatparam puruṣ khyāte guṇavaitṛsnyam.*" Again, Abhinavagupta quotes from Patanjali; "*tādṛśam tu variāgyam jñānsyaiva parākāṣṭhā.*" Saradatanaya, who knew Abhinavabharati must have known Abhinava's views on *śanta*, and that Abhinava had affiliated *śanta* to Patanjali. Abhinavagupta had perhaps been promoted to do so, because Bharata speaks of *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna dhāraṇa* and *sarva-bhūdayā*, all typically Patanjali concepts as the *anubhāvas* of *śanta*. Saradatanaya also defends *śanta* on the authority of Vasuki. He goes a step further and says that the origin of *rasas* is to be traced to this Vasuki. Yadugiri Yatiraj Swami of Malkote in his introduction to *Bhāva Prakāśa* (G.O.S.) writes on page 36. "In connection with his quotation from Vasuki and the passage on p. 47 quoted below, it may be noted that the *rasa* theory stated in the 6th chapter of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* and quoted by Saradatanaya, may be the same as that held by Vasuki." Saradatanaya writes in unequivocal language (*Bhāva-Prakāśa*, p. 47).

*Utpattisu rasanām ya pura vāsukinodita  
navadasyochyate saiṣa prakārāntara kalpita*

It is to be remembered that both P. V. Kane and Yatiraj Swami of Malkote are agreed that the *rasa* theory of Bharata is indebted to earlier sources, and that the *amuvanīsyā ślokaś* (G.O.S. v. 38-41) must have been taken over from earlier writers.

Who is this Vasuki, the acknowledged master of Bharata? It need not be discussed in detail how Patanjali Charaka had always been looked upon as the lord of serpents. Only a few instances might be recorded here, where tributes are paid to the lord of serpents, who cured the diseases of body by medicine, the diseases of mind by yoga, and remedied the defects of language by writing out a grammar.

Cakrapanidatta in his introduction to the *Commentary on Charaka* refers to Patanjali as *ahi-pati*. *Bhoja-rajā* in Patanjali—*sūtra—vṛitti*, referred to Patanjali as the lord of serpents. In *Sabdānuśasana Rāja Mṛigāṅka*, Bhoja once again refers to Patanjali as the hooded lord of serpents. This association of Patanjali with the lord of serpents throws into prominence a forgotten chapter in the history of Indian *rasa* speculations. It must have been noticed how fertility cults had played an important part in the evolution of aesthetic enjoyment.

Every student of Indian drama knows that the dramatist was expected to worship Indra before the beginning of the play. This took the form of *jarjara-pūjā*. The historical origin of this *jarjara pūjā* has been discussed by Bharata in ch. I. There have been attempts from time to time to associate the origin of Sanskrit drama with primitive religious rites. The older theory traces the origin definitely to the vedic religious performances. "The lack of accurate data precludes our knowing much about the origin of the drama in India, but it is probable that it had its beginning in a combination of these hymns in dramatics and in the religious dances (*Bibliography of Sanskrit Drama*: Columbia University, Indo-Iranian studies III. Intro. p. 1). Prof. Keith suggests a modified version of the above theory.

When we leave out of account the enigmatic dialogues of the *R̥g Veda*, we can see that the Vedic ritual contained within itself the germs of drama, as is the case with practically every form of primitive worship. The ritual did not consist merely in the singing of songs or recitations in honour to the gods: it involved a complex of dramatic representation (*Sanskrit Drama* p. 23). "On the contrary, there is very reason to believe that it was through the use of epic recitations that the latent possibilities of drama were evolved and literary form created" (*Ibid.*, p. 27). But it appears to us that the use of *Indra dhvaja* is a variant form of the fertility cult, which has deeply coloured Indian aesthetic speculations. This is

particularly significant, for it invites comparison with the phallic rituals of the cult of Osiris, Dionysus and Cybele—worship of the Greek world.

(b)

The cult of Osiris, which Herodotus found to be essentially similar to the Dionysiac festival, is essentially a fertility rite. As a god of vegetation, Osiris was naturally conceived as a god of creative energy in general. A striking feature in his worship was the coarse but expressive symbolism by which this aspect of his nature was represented. At this festival women used to go about the village, singing songs in his praise, and carrying obscene images of him, which they set in motion by means of strings. (Herodotus, ii, 48; Plutarch *Isis et Osiris*, 12, 13, 36, 51). The custom was perhaps a charm to ensure the growth of crops. A similar image of him, decked with all the fruits of the earth, is said to have stood in a temple before a figure of Isis, and in the chambers dedicated to him at Philae, the dead god is portrayed lying on his pier, indicating in the plainest way that even in death, his generative virtue was not extinct, but only suspended. Osiris was supposed, like other gods of fertility, to bless men and women with offspring, and the processions at this festival were intended to promote the object as well as to quicken the seed in the ground.

The orgies of the cult of Cybele, or of Dionysus are a means of establishing communion with deity through ecstasy. In the worship of Cybele not only was there ecstasy through the orgiastic dance, and regeneration through food and the blood of taurobolion, but as Farnell points out (*Cults of the Greek States*, vol. iii, p. 300) "the process of regeneration might be affected by a different kind of corporeal union with the divinity, the semblance of a mystic marriage." Even self-mutilation implied an ecstatic craving for assimilation in the goddess, so that in the Cybele service, Farnell finds "a ritual of communion that used a sexual symbol." The primitive tradition of Bacchic enthusiasm was nowhere maintained with such fidelity as in Crete. There, at an early date—probably before Homer, in Farnell's opinion, the Thraco—Phrygian Dionysus cult was engrafted on the pre-hellenic orgies, which celebrated a mother goddess.

In the Cult of Dionysus, sexual emblems were common, and dance of a more or less licentious character are mentioned, while in the Thesmophoria and other services of Demeter, what was called *aischrologia* (obscenity), indecent and scurrilous badinage was indulged in by the women among themselves or more rarely with the men also. The Phallic emblem and the procession called *phallogogia*, or *phallophoria* were especially associated with Dionysus and Hermes; and Plutarch, a man of more than average culture and refinement, describes it as an adjunct of the ancestral and cheerful Dionysiac ritual. Lempriere discusses the peculiar nature of

Dionysus festivals in honour of Bacchus among the Greeks. It was then usual to bring a vessel of wine, adorned with a vine branch, after which followed a goat, a basket of figs and the phalli. . . . After these came a select number of noble virgins carrying poles at the end of which were fastened phalli. Serpents have always been looked upon as symbols of fertility of the earth; and these were commonly used in the baskets carried by the revellers or were put in the hair of the priests, conducting the sacred services. Among the Romans, both sexes promiscuously joined in the celebration during the darkness of night. The drunkenness, the debauchery, and impure actions and indulgences, soon called aloud for the interference of the Senate.

At Argos, the chief festival of Aphrodite was called Hysteria (Usteria) because swine were sacrificed to her. Connected with the same form of the cults was the strange hermaphrodite festival of the goddess at Argos, which bore the special name of the Feast of Wantonness at which women were dressed as men, and the men as women, even wearing veils (*Plutarch De Vert. Mul.* 245e). One of the elements of the Aphrodite cult was the practice of religious prostitution (Strato) alluded to by Pindar, where he celebrates the "hospitable young women, the ministrants of persuasion in rich cerinth whose thoughts often flit towards Ourania Aphrodite (Pindar, Frag. 87). At Corinth, apparently alone in Greece, Hetaerai took part in the state ritual; Plato himself seems to be aware of this background of katharsis, as is clear from his references to it in the *Symposium*.

Gilbert Murray discusses how "sexual union with or under the sanction of the divine power, is the highest experience of religion." He notes the connection which admittedly exists in human nature between ecstatic emotion and sexual excitement. A careful analysis of the pagan cults existing at the beginning of the Christian era, should provide us with a clearer understanding of the neo-platonic doctrine of enthusiasm or ecstasy. This is important, for it forms the basis of the psycho-therapeutic interpretation of katharsis, as attempted by Zeller and Bywater. It is unfortunate that they did not make any serious study of Gnosticism, or Valentinianism of the Manichaean discipline, to all of which the neo-platonists like Iamblichus, Plotinus and Proclus are variously indebted. But while in the ancient cults of Dionysus, Aphrodite, Cybele and Demeter, the fertility rites were crudely observed and represented, these were observed in a subtler form in the religious practices of the neo-platonists. If this be true of the Greek world, this is no less true of the aesthetic speculations of the Indians. These speculations most certainly started with crude fertility rites, but were refined and became extremely subtle with the Mahayanists, the Vajrayanists and the Pratybhijna analysis of Kallata, Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.

## Part II(a)

The philosophical and aesthetic speculations of the Hindus and the Buddhists are marked by a terrible sincerity of purpose, an open avowal of motives only matched by the sincerity of the beat generation and the existentialists. We discover some such sincerity of purpose in the rarefied world of the neo-platonists. However subtle and refined may be the world of the Śaktas, the Śaivas, the Tantrās, and the Mahayanists and the Vajrayanists, the primitive sex symbol is not far away. It is the same with the philosophical speculations of the neo-platonists.

Coming to Śakta analysis, it is well known that the bliss visualised lies in awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* and leading her to the *sahasrasāra*. The Hatha yogi who rouses *kuṇḍalinī*, gains occult powers (*siddhi*) and enjoyment thereby. At every centre to which he leads *kuṇḍalinī*, he experiences a special form of bliss (*ānanda*) and gains special powers (*siddhi*). If he has *vairāgya* for these, he carries Her to the Śiva of his cerebral centre, and enjoys the supreme bliss, which in its nature is that of liberation. She "who shines like a chain of lights—a lighting flash—in the centre of his body is the 'inner woman.' What need have I of any other woman? I have an inner woman, within myself." The Vira (heroine) Sadhaka, knowing himself as the embodiment of Śiva (Śiva'ham) unites with woman as the embodiment of Śakti on the physical plane; The Divya Sadhaka or yogi unites within himself his own principles, female and male, which are the 'Heart of the Lord.' It is their union which is mystic coition (*maithuna*) of the tantrās. There are two forms of union (*sāmarasya*), namely, the first, which is the gross (*sthūla*) or the union of the physical embodiments of the supreme consciousness; and the second which is the subtle (*sūkṣma*) or the union of the quiescent and active principles in consciousness itself. It is the latter which is liberation. The hatha-yogi who gains these various occult powers by the arousal of *kuṇḍalinī* experiences a form of bliss, which is also granted to the *rasa*-enjoyer. Both kinds of pleasure arise out of a sense of perfect balance and harmony.

In the yogic practice, the bliss is said to be enjoyed at the *sahasrasāra*, "well-concealed and attainable only by great effort, is that subtle void (*śūnya*) which is the chief root of liberation (*saṭcakra nirūpaṇam*)." In Parama-siva are united two forms of bliss (*ibid.*, verse 42)—namely *rasa* or Paramananda *rasa* (i.e., the bliss of *mokṣa*) and *virasa* (or the bliss which is the product of the union of Śiva and Śakti). It is from the latter that there arise the universe and the nectar, which floods the lesser world (*kṣudrabramhāṇḍa*) or the body. The ascetic or *yati* of pure mind is instructed in the knowledge by which he realises the unity of the *jīvātman* and the *paramātman* (*Ibid.*, verse 43). It is "that most excellent of man,

who has controlled his mind" (*niyata-nija-citta*)—that is, concentrated the inner faculties (*antahkaraṇa*) on the *sahasrasāra* and has known, it, or who is freed from rebirth, and thus attains *mokṣa* (ibid., verse 16). He becomes *jīvan-mukta*, remaining only so long in the body as is necessary to work out the *karma*—just as a revolving wheel will yet run a little time after the cause of its revoking has ceased. It is the *Bhagavati Nīrvāna Kalā*, which grants divine liberating knowledge—that is *tattva-jñāna* or the knowledge of the Brahman (Ibid., verse 47).

The *kuṇḍalinī* represents the dormant *śakti* of an individual through the exercise of which man enjoys the highest bliss. The *kuṇḍalinī* in her progress upwards absorbs in herself the twenty-four *tattvas*, commencing with the gross elements, and then writhes herself, and becomes one with Parama Śiva. This is the *maithuna* (coition) of the *sāttvika-panca-tattva*. The nectar which flows from such union floods the *kṣudra brahmāṇḍa* or the human body. It is then that the *sādhaka*, forgetful of all in the world, is immersed in ineffable bliss. In the *Cintāmaṇi Stava*, attributed to Sri Sankaracharya, it is said, "This family woman (*kuṇḍalinī*) entering the royal road (*suśumnā*), taking rest at intervals in the secret places (*cakras*) embraces the supreme spouse, and makes the nectar to flow in the *sahasrasāra*."

The Natha-siddhas, like the śaktas looked at ultimate bliss as a sublimation of sexual pleasure. The final goal of the Buddhist—*sahajīyās*, is the attainment of *mahāsukha*. The Natha-siddhas believed in the reality of birth and death, and tried to escape from the whirl of coming and going by transubstantiation of the material body of change to subtle ethereal body, and that again, finally to a perfectly divine body; but the Buddhist *sahajīyās* inherited from the earlier schools of Buddhism the spirit of extreme idealism, and tried to avoid the whirl of birth and death by realising the void nature of the self and of all the *dharmas*, and they further contended that the void nature of the self and the not-self can be realised through the realisation of the *mahāsukha*. The emphasis of the Natha-siddhas is on the yogic practice of transubstantiating the corporal body of death and decay, but the emphasis of the Buddhist *sahajīyās* is on the sexo-yogic pleasure, which transforms the ordinary sex-pleasure to a higher and deeper emotion of bliss.

It should be noted that the *mahāsukha* of the Buddhist *sahajīyās* was not a purely physiological sensation; there was also a psychological element involved in it. This psychological aspect in the *sādhanā* (associated with the sex-emotion and sex-pleasure) is prominent in *mahāsukha vāda*. The Vaishnava *sahajīyā* cult, as pointed by the late Dr. S. B. Das Gupta was based primarily on the divinisation of the sex-emotion by both physiological and psychological discipline. The *mahāsukha* as the *sahaja* nature of the self and the not-self, was transformed into the emotion of supreme love in



the Vaishnava school. Neither *mahāsukha* nor supreme love of the present and the most intense nature is attainable without the help of chosen women, and it is for this reason, that the Buddhists spoke of her as the incarnation of Pranjna, and the Vaishnavas of Mahabhāva (the supreme emotion of love as personified by Radha).

The Buddhist *tantrās* discover in the realm of the sex drive and in the fever of desire the most intimate and intense relation of man and woman. It is the lowest stage; there is as yet hardly any mental relation. This biological relationship of man and woman has been described most clearly by Naropa, who calls it the *karmamudrā*. *Karmamudrā* means a woman with exuberant breasts and a rich display of hair. She is the impetus to and sustaining power of (*hetu*) pleasure on the biological level (*kāmadhātu*). *Karman* (the activity involved in this relation between a man and a woman) means kissing, embracing, touching the genitals, erection of the penis and so on and so forth. A *mudrā* which is characterised by instigating these items (in love life) is said to set up (a certain kind of) relationship (*pratyaya kīni*). This relationship yields only transient pleasure (*ṣarasukha*). The term is used because (such a woman) gives special pleasure (*mudam*) and sexual satisfaction (*ratim*).

By having intercourse with the woman and by becoming absorbed in the spell of the sex drive, man may have the feeling that his insularity has been abolished and that he has become re-united with what was wanting in him and caused his disequilibrium. However, this re-equilibration is only temporary. He is still far from having realised Great Bliss (*mahā-sukha*). In this stage of male-female relationship, to the emotional tyrannies and contagions of society are added the residua of individual experience. And more than this, man possesses more appetite than his sexual organs can satisfy. But unaware of the disproportion between drive and spirit and of the actual reason of his disequilibrium, he is tempted into the vicious circle of seeking all the more in the objective world around him, in order to quench the burning thirst and hunger for completeness and total satisfaction. This, as a matter of fact is the reason that in most cases the relationship between man and woman is confined in the realm of the biological drive. This is what Advāyaraḥja says in his *caturmudrā* (p. 32-33).

“*Evam*” (comprises everything and he who has understood the meaning of this word has understood all and everything).

Since men here do not understand the sequence of the *mudrās*, they work under delusion and suffer erring about in the ocean of existence. In order that they may grasp the meaning of the four *mudrās*, the means of realisation of Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*) is discussed here. There are four *mudrās* :—

- (1) *The karmamudrā*
- (2) *The dharmamudrā*

(3) *The mahāmudrā*, and

(4) *The samayamudrā*.

*Karma* comprises everything that expresses itself in deeds, words and thoughts. A *mudrā* which is characterised in this way is (bound up with and by nature) imagination (*kalpanā-svarūpa*). He who has intercourse with a *karmamudrā* experiences (various stages of) pleasure and bliss (*anandā*) and all of which belong to certain moments (as has been said).

There are four levels of pleasure and bliss:

(1) (ordinary) pleasure (*anandā*)

(2) Transport (*paramānandā*)

(3) Society (*virmānandā*)

(4) Bliss (*sahajānanda*)

There are four moments:

(1) Stimulus (*vicitra*)

(2) Elaborated reflex (*vipāka*)

(3) Final response (*vimarda*)

(4) The moment after consumption with its incredible awareness of all potentialities (*vilakṣaṇa*)

From the Śeka (section of the *Kālacakra-tantrū*) we gather that the moment after consumption (*vilakṣaṇa*) is the central experience.

He who busies himself with the *karmamudrā* experiences a moment which in itself is unmoved (*niṣpaṇḍaphala*). That which in itself is unmoved, appears (in our phenomenal world) as movement (and this movement is) similar (to the unmoved), clinging to enter knowledge, men feel delighted because they believe to have experienced the true nature of all things. In the illusory happiness, they do not know the ways of the *dharmamudrā*, they are ignorant of the *dharmamudrā*, because they busy themselves with the *karmamudrā* exclusively.

How then comes the realisation of the uncreated which is called the very nature of all things? From like causes spring like effects, in the same way as rice grows from paddy. Thus from the uncreated *dharmamudrā* springs the uncreated nature of all things. For this reason, the *dharmamudrā* is said to be the cause of the *mahāmudrā*, as well as of the very nature of all things. Although there is no difference between the *dharmamudrā* and *mahāmudrā* in our everyday language, we speak of a difference. The exalted one has said that the divine form of the E, adorned in the middle with the *vam*, is the birth place of all pleasures and bliss, the treasure house of all Buddhas.

The term treasure house is to be understood in a figurative sense; it is a place, a substratum (to our modes of thinking), because it is reflection of Buddhahood (which is the very nature of bliss). In this figurative sense, the lotus flower (*sarōruha*, the vulva as the birth place of the living and itself very much alive) of a *karmamudrā* is an ocean of fulness and bliss.

This lotus flower or vulva is a transparent place (*svacchandāsthānam*); when in the *avadhuti*, it is united with the permeated by the *bōdhicitta* (the unmoved, symbolised by the sperma or the male organ) which seems to expand and to get lost (*samvṛti-svatasspaṇḍa-rūpa*, i.e., what to the ignorant appears as the beginning of orgasm). This union being comparable to the mixture of the essences of *myrrh nutmeg* (*bōlakakhōla*, also symbol for sexual union) (a kind of), knowledge arises, which is momentary and a lower form of the very nature of all things.

When the individual realises that it will not do to busy oneself with the *karmamudrā*, delegating to some undefined eternal feminine, probably to a goddess somewhere, the function of values, and that it is equally unsatisfactory to hunt after a valuable phantom at the expense of the objective woman, because both the *karmamudrā* and the *jñānamudrā* are creations of his mind, he will transcend these imageries and find wholeness, the initial step to and realisation of the wholeness is the *mahāmudrā*, which has been described by Naropa as follows: The greatness of *mahāmudrā* consists in the fact that she is endowed with the glories of all qualities and values; and that she is not restricted to one particular quality or value. She is called *mudrā*, because she is marked or sealed by the adamant nature of the enlightened mind (*Sekodesstika*, p. 56). Similarly Advayavajra states: "The words "great" and "mudrā" together form the term *mahāmudrā*. She is not a something (*niṣvabhāva*); she is free from the veils which cover the cognizable object and so on; she shines forth like the supreme sky at noon during autumn; she is the support of all success, she is the identity of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*; her body is compassion (*karma*), which is not restricted to a (single) object; she is the uniqueness of great bliss (*Caturmudrā* p. 34).

The apparent dual aspect of man as well as of the whole universe of which man is but a certain manifestation has been symbolised by the *Prajñōpāya*. *Prajñā* is the female aspect and *upāya* is the male aspect: when they are represented or pictured in anthropomorphic shape they embrace each other, touching at all points of contact. This is to show that the one cannot be without the other and that they are basically one. Now this symbol is of special significance. It comprises the physical symbol by means of which man's spiritual journey is pictured and the cosmic symbol by means of which spiritual things and relations are suggested. Interpreted, this symbol means that the *dhātus* or elementary phenomena must continue with the *skandhas* or forces, which together produce what is called man or universe. The *dhātus* are female and comprise five items, which are arranged according to density; density of matter (including elasticity of form and volume) (*pṛithvī*), cohesion (*āp*), heat (*tejas*), expansion (*vāyu*), and space (*ākāśa*). To these five female items correspond five male items, also arranged according to decreasing density:

materiality (muscles, sinews, etc: *rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), sensation (*samjñā*), motivity (*samskārah*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). This polarity may be spoken of as potential and kinetic energy, the *prajñā* or the *dhātus* being the potential energy, the *upāya* and the *skandhās* being the kinetic energy. The Buddhist analysis of the divine aspect as the *dhyāni-buddhās* and the *śaktis* is certainly revelatory. That which has been revealed to us as giving and furthering insight into the true nature of man is described in the following verses, accounting for the names of the *dhyāni-buddhās*, and their *śaktis* :—

“The pure Buddha-knowledge is called *vairōcana* (the resplendent one). “Because this knowledge can never be shaken by uneducated people and also not by disputants, it is called *akṣōbhya* (the one who cannot be shaken).

“Because there is no doubt about the fact that the jewels like the Buddha soon rise (out of this knowledge) and because this knowledge is concerned with the needs of the beings, it is called *ratna-sambhava* (origin of jewels).

“(This knowledge) is truly liberation, because it is not contaminated by (such concepts as) being and not being, and because it is linked up with infinite merits, it is called *amitābha* (infinite splendour).

“Because this Great Knowledge is most effective in accomplishing all that has to be done by the beings, because its accomplishments are never frustrated, it is called *amōghasiddhi* (whose accomplishments are not frustrated).

“Because matter, fine and gross, spreading through the three aspects of time, is seen whenever it is located, this knowledge is called *locana* (she who sees).

“Because the all-Buddha knowledge is the same to itself as well as to me and because (these two aspects) are mutually penetrating, it is called *māmakī* (mineness).

“Because the sublime all-Buddha knowledge wipes out all blemishes and because it is ever ready to purify all and everything, it is called *pandara vāsini* (she who abides in witness).

“Because this knowledge is ever intent upon saving the world by means of Great Compassion and because it is so much suited to carry the beings to the other bank (of the river of existence), it is called *tārā* (she who redeems) *jñāna-siddhi*, v. 12-20.”

The five Dhani-buddhas represent the male, quiescent principles; and the five *śaktis* represent the female active energy.

We feel that it is not incorrect to suggest that the Śaktas, the Śaivas and the Vajrayanists have read in their daring speculations primitive fertility motive. What had originally been confined to the plane of purely experiential world has been used in later speculations for the most subtle and delicate shades of human emotions,

## (b)

Coming to the later European development of the fertility rites of the primitive world, certain striking differences from the Indian analysis will at once become evident. The most significant difference for the modern reader is that while in Hindu and Buddhist analysis, the attitude became more and more psychological, in Christian analysis it became more often theological and mystical. The Indian analysis of mental moods and complexes is more rational and scientific.

According to Plotinus, the one which transcends existence is not directly cognizable by reason; and the coveted identification with transcendent deity comes not so much through knowledge as through ecstasy, coalescence, contact. It was lineally from Plato that Plotinus developed the doctrine of that ecstasy which supervenes upon the contemplation of intellectual beauty, and through which a supreme union with the Divine and Absolute may be achieved. The two points emphasized by Plotinus in this ecstatic contemplation of the Divine, are that the soul, after a long process of internal quietude, of abstraction from sense, and of absorption in reason, thus worthily prepared by active contemplation, must then passively wait, in a kind of hypnotic trance. This passivity of the soul, and the craving for contact and coalescence in Plotinus, require careful examination.

In *Enneads* vi. 9, Plotinus describes soul in communion with God. "The Soul, having now arrived at the desired end and participating of deity, will know that the supplier of true life is then present. She will likewise then require nothing farther; for, on the contrary, it will be requisite to lay aside other things, to step in this alone, amputating everything else with which she is surrounded." Plotinus describes the nature of this ecstasy. "We are like a choir, who stand around the conductor, but do not always sing in tune because their attention is diverted by looking at external things. So we always move round the One—if we did not, we should dissolve and cease to be—but we do not always look towards the One." Our minds being distracted from the Corypheus in the midst, the "energetic word" who sets the rhythm, we do not behold him. We are absorbed in the illusions of sense; the "eye which looks on Eternity," is idle. "But when we do behold Him," says Plotinus again, "we attain the end of our existence and our rest. Then we no longer sing out of tune, but form a truly divine chorus about Him; in which chorus, dance and soul behold the fountain of life, the fountain of intellect, the principle of being, the cause of good, the root of soul".

Plotinus describes his love in a language which at first sight, seems aridly metaphysical. The few passages in which it is mentioned, tell us what his mystical genius drove him to do, and not what his philosophical mind encouraged him to think or say. At once when we come to

these passages, we notice a rise of temperature, an alteration of values. Plotinus, the ecstatic is sure, whatever Plotinus, the metaphysician may think, that the union with God is a union of hearts: That "by love He may be gotten and holden but by thought never." He is convinced, to quote his own words, that the vision is only for the desirous, for him who has that "loving passion" which "causes the lover to rest in the object of his love." The simile of marriage, of the soul as the bride, of conjunction as the soul's highest bliss, which we are sometimes told that we owe in part to the popularity of the song of songs, in part to the sexual aberrations of celibate saints, are also found in the work of this hard-headed pagan philosopher. Plotinus's use of conjunction is full of Aristotelian reminiscences. In *De Generatione*, 720b31, Aristotle uses conjunction to mean sexual copulation. In 717b14, 728a34, 739b1, the term has been used to mean pleasure in sexual intercourse.

The extreme form of this kind of mystical apprehension finds expression in the well-known symbolism of the spiritual marriage between God and the soul; a symbolism which goes back to the Orphic Mysteries, and thence descended via the Neo-Platonists into the stream of Christian tradition. The Church is represented in Catholic Christianity as the bride of Christ. The Apostle says that the union between Christ and his Church is arche-type of which human marriage is an earthly representation. St. Paul bids husbands love their wives, as "Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it" (*Ephesians*, vi. 22-27). This physical union is but the arche-type of that mysterious bond in virtue of which the Church is truly one with Christ, that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh" (*Ephesians*, v. 31; *Genesis*, ii. 24). In these words, the Apostle indicates the mysterious parallelism between the union of the first Adam with the spouse, formed from his body, and the union of the second Adam with the Church (vide *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3. p. 752). Just as earthly marriage is understood by the moral sense less as a satisfaction of personal desire than as a part of the great process of life—the fusion of two selves for new purposes—such spiritual marriage brings with it a new infusion of vitality, a new responsibility. It is not an act, but a state. Fresh life is imparted by which our lives are made complete; new creative powers are conferred. As a result of this spiritual marriage, there is, above all else, a sudden excess of creative vitality. It means man's small derivative life is invaded and enhanced by the Absolute life.

In Plotinus, spirits pass their existence in "living contemplation" (*Enneads*, III. viii. 8). In this state, "soul" becomes the matter of "spirit" (*Enneads*, III. ix. 3) which means that the self-transcendence of the soul is achieved by making itself the passive instrument of spirit.

Plotinus echoes the Aristotelian differentiation of active reason and passive reason. His position is again not very different from Philo's. Philo held that deliverance can be accomplished only when the soul has sunk into passivity, and yielded itself to the rapture of the beatific vision. At this moment there is spiritual intercourse, much like sexual intercourse on the physical plane. This idea of a spiritual intercourse between the human and the divine runs through European mysticism and symbolism. Thus for St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), throughout his deeply mystical sermons on the song of songs, the Divine Word is the bridegroom, the human soul is the bride. The great Richard of St. Victor (c. 1173) has given a detailed application of the symbolism of marriage to the adventures of the spirit of man. He divides the "steep stairway of love" by which the contemplative ascends to union with the Absolute, in four stages. These he calls the betrothal, the marriage, the wedlock and the fruitfulness of the soul.

It must have been noticed that aesthetic speculations in India and the West had their first beginnings in fertility orgies and rituals. In both cases, there is a frank acknowledgement of the demands of the world of senses, paralleled only recently by existentialists and beat generation. But there is one important difference. In Hindu and Buddhist analyses, the problem became eminently psychological; in Europe it tended to become more theological and mystical, and in modern times, unabashedly sensuous. It is only in Freud and Jung that European speculations have become purely psychological, anticipated centuries ago by the Hindus and the Buddhists.

**Modern Movements in World Art and their  
Implications for Aesthetic Theory or Theories**





# MODERN MOVEMENTS IN WORLD ART AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR AN AESTHETIC THEORY OR THEORIES

Fatima Ahmed

TALKING about the relationship between art and aesthetics, it is very important to understand what the term aesthetics conveys. Broadly speaking, aesthetic perception is actually the name given to the sense of beauty which is inherent in all human beings. The plastic arts, with music and poetry, are the most conspicuous movements of this human interest. Apart from the fine arts, people show their susceptibility to beauty in almost every sphere of life.

In spite of this aesthetic theory has received very little attention from the world mostly due to lack of an adequate motive for speculating upon it. Absolute curiosity and love of comprehension for its own sake are not passions we have much leisure to indulge. They require not only freedom from affairs, but what is more rare, a thinking free from all prejudices.

All that has been written about beauty can be divided into two groups. Firstly, that group of writings in which philosophers have interpreted aesthetic facts in the light of their metaphysical principles. Secondly, that group in which artists and critics have ventured into philosophic grounds by generalising somewhat the rules of the craft or the comments of the sensitive observer.

Another circumstance which has also contributed to the absence or failure of the aesthetic speculation is the subjectivity of the phenomenon with which it deals. It deals with the exclusively subjective and human department of imagination and emotion. Things are interesting because we care about them and important because we need them. Yet the popular sense of the unworthiness and insignificance of things purely emotional is very strong. Most philosophers especially those who subscribe to the thought of Descartes hold that unless moral and aesthetic judgements are expressions of objective truth and not merely expressions of human nature, they stand condemned of hopeless triviality. Thus aesthetics has suffered much from the prejudice against the subjective.

The sense of beauty has consequently been given many titles over the centuries. But the most prevalent classifications are: 1. criticism or the objective approach; and 2. aesthetic or the subjective approach. Till recently,

many writers called philosophy of beauty criticism, in other words the reasoned and analytical appreciation of the work of art. This term hardly includes delight in nature and the role of emotions. A beautiful morning is not criticised, it is felt and enjoyed. Criticism in such a case would emphasize deliberate judgement and comparison with standards. Beauty even so described is seldom so perceived.

The inadequacy of this method has led to the adoption of the word aesthetics, that is, the theory of perception or of susceptibility. Compared to criticism aesthetics is a broader word. Kant used it as we know, for his theory of time and space as forms of all perception. By combining criticism with aesthetics we can get two essential qualities of the theory of beauty. Criticism implies judgement and aesthetics perception. What we need is a synthesis of the two, that of perceptions which are critical and judgments which are perceptions. We thus come to the field of critical or appreciative perceptions which have a value in their objects. This leads us to say that aesthetics is concerned with the perception of values.

Values are an indispensable part of aesthetic theory. Values again fall into two categories: permanent and transitional. There are certain values which are transcendental and others which are not so permanent. These latter values are subject to change on account of several objective conditions like socio-economic status of a nation, its educational standard, international and inter-racial communication, presence of a lively link with its cultural heritage, etc. This dynamic quality of values has proved true in the field of art, specially in the art of painting. A portrait by Rembrandt kept beside a portrait by Picasso will illustrate this theory fully.

Painting like any other branch of fine art has undergone tremendous and vital changes, especially from the mid-nineteenth century with the advent of Impressionism. Aesthetic values accordingly have changed. What was once considered the last word in aesthetic and artistic achievement in the quiet browns and austere compositions of the Classicists and Romanticists was set aside by the Impressionists as too premeditated and planned confirming to our theory of criticism which I have mentioned earlier. The Impressionists were nearer to the theory of aesthetics. Theirs was a theory of perception, a direct contact with nature deriving sensuous pleasure and participating in its beauty. They seemed to agree with George Santayana's opinion that "to feel beauty is a better thing than to understand how we come to feel it." Thus the whole standard, out-look and set criteria on art have changed. The change did not stop here but went on and produced movements like Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism and so forth.

The Cubists and Futurists seem to have gone back to the theory of criticism to a considerable extent. The idea of sensations and modulations as conceived by Cezanne is not very far, at least in its execution from the Cartesian theory of viewing and analysing nature as mere object of beauty. This had

led to the formation of the school of Cubism and further to what may be called Abstract Cubism which reached its perfection in the art of Piet Mondrian whose multi-coloured squares are just an intellectual critical commentary on nature.

Aesthetic theory in its application to painting has two major components to be taken into consideration. One is colour, the other form. Form is often considered the synonym of beauty. But prior to the effect of form comes the effect of colour, because a form arises in the constructive imagination whereas colour is purely sensuous, not different in effect from any other sense. Being the primary and essential element in the perception of objects, it is closer to the element of beauty than all other senses. The value of colours differ and change like the value of other sensations. The vibration of a high note of music is equivalent to the vibration of a shrieking red or a violent mauve. There is a nervous process for each colour and consequently a specific value. This theory is very close to the idea of Fauvism which believes that colour is to painting what music is to sound. One of the most remarkable examples of this school are the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky of his early fauve period.

Let the votaries of colour sing their eulogies in praise of colour for colour's sake divorced from form. But I, as a painter, refuse to believe that colour without form has the same intensity and power to move our imagination as colour in its natural habitat, i.e., form. Those who have freed colour from form have only freed it from a tangible and familiar form, and in doing so they have given unfamiliar and perhaps unconventional forms to colour. Every blotch, splash and dab of colour has a form. In fact, one reacts more spontaneously to form. Here the importance of space cannot be denied. In the words of George Santayana "the definition of space is the possibility of motion," and I add, "the inter-relationship of forms." Colour to be expressive and eloquent is always dependent on space and consequently form, since space itself has form. For instance, a rich ultramarine of the moon-lit sky will have less effect when seen framed in the narrow rectangle of a window than when seen in the vast expanse of the sky. The glowing red of a huge bonfire will have more disturbing and violent effect on the eye than a small blob of red in the form of a flower in a bunch of several multi-coloured flowers. Thus space and form often determine the intensity or otherwise of colour.

The effect of art movements as mentioned above has a definite role to play in the shaping of aesthetic values in a given society. The perceptive appreciation of a piece of art, a cognisable object of form and colour, forms the basis of the aesthetic standard of a society. This effect, in turn, is not unilateral. It is correspondingly intense or otherwise in proportion to the dynamism of the society. History plays a significant role in shaping and changing the existing values and consequently the aesthetic theory or theories.

The industrial revolution in Europe had given rise to art movements like Abstract Expressionism etc. Due to the destruction and havoc caused by the world wars, painters lost faith in the existing values and even familiar forms. In that period we see a general tendency towards the arbitrary and brutal distortion of familiar forms. This reveals a hatred and repulsion towards existing values and a desperate desire to create a new and imaginary world, a world where beauty and peace reign supreme. Abstract Art in general and Abstract Expressionism in particular are products of this urge in painters. From this we can deduct that it is not critical analysis of beauty alone that can bring about a change in the aesthetic thinking of a people. But that human emotions and perceptions also play a very significant role.

Lastly, I would like to point out that for a movement of art to be successful and for the resulting aesthetic theory to be more perceptible, it is imperative to have a co-ordination between artists of different fields. Much of the understanding and appreciation of Cubism in France is due to the close interest that Guillaime Appollinair took in it and the creative poetry he wrote in conformity with it. In other countries like America and England this co-ordination is much less. In India it is totally lacking. Whatever novelty and changes we see to-day in Indian painting have come from the West. We realize that a cut and dried movement of art is not necessary to provoke an artist to creative activity. Being sensitive and intellectually and emotionally alive, they are born with experience and deep insight. Still, an organised effort would have helped them enhance and develop their art on better lines. This, and much of the misunderstanding of modern art in India today can be attributed to a want of co-ordination between writers and painters. Painting is comparatively a new medium of expression for India. We are used to painting as illustration or as a pictorial counterpart of literature but not as an art in itself and an end in itself. Words being a more familiar medium can play a significant role in popularizing modern painting and making it more comprehensible to the masses.

I close with an appeal to writers and art critics to take more interest in this subject and write and translate more books on art.

# ROLE OF ABSTRACTION IN MODERN ART

Prodosh Das Gupta

THE egocentric man throughout the ages has projected himself into nature or in other words interpreted nature in terms of himself and his sensibilities. Man has been deified into God in superlative proportions whether in terms of athletic figures as in Greece or Rome, or multi-faced and multi-limbed super-structures of human form as in India and the East.

This idea of deviating from the reality in order to create something unreal or super-real is quite instinctive and natural to all human beings of all ages. Actually, the beginning of abstraction in creative art started from this basic principle or urge of human nature. On the one hand, therefore, we find human figures or forms either being elongated, flattened, dwarfed or formalised according to the aesthetic, religious or some other purposeful needs; and on the other imitative nature of man wanted to be as close to nature as possible trying all the time to represent it in its varied manifestations in all details with an aim to reach perfection.

## PREHISTORIC AND PRIMITIVE ART

Thus, even in the primitive ages when the disorganised life did not show any progress of civilization, artists shaped and gave form to wonderful figures of human and animal kingdom spontaneously, instinctively and unconsciously. These figures often tended to become abstract in nature both in content and in form. This almost geometric abstraction or symbolic representation was never a conscious effort, nor was it responsible for any intellectual dialectics. As Herbert Read would put it—"Perhaps the very fact that he (the primitive man) was not conscious of his gift; that he only exercised it sporadically and then generally in the service of his ritual, is the clue to its unfailing vitality. For though, as we have seen, neither magic nor mysticism are effective causes of art, they may be the appropriate occasions, saving the artist from that self-consciousness and introspective analysis which, as we shall see, spell the death of art." This art, as he says, "is the outcome of a compelling aesthetic impulse like the sexual impulse which is essentially constant."

Worringer however goes deeper into the psychological aspect of this urge and distinguishes between the subjective feeling of empathy and the objective realisation of the external world for the urge to abstraction. He says in his pioneer and authoritative book *Abstraction and Empathy*, "Whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world: in a religious respect it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions. We might describe this state as an immense spiritual dread of space."

Many of the authorities on pre-historic and primitive art have used an undesirable term to denote this kind of art—as Savage Art. It is no wonder, we, belonging to a highly sophisticated, scientific and industrial age cannot but think of any work done in a remote age, (often known as dark age) in disorganised condition of society, otherwise.

However, because of the tremendous impact and influence this kind of art had on the modern artists of the impressionist and the subsequent schools of thought and also the contribution it directly made as a source of modern art, this so called savage art cannot be ignored either historically or in respect of the essential abstract quality, elemental vitality and the life force that were evident in such works of art. It will be clear from the following passage how the modern artists reacted to it, particularly to Negro sculpture. While discussing modern French paintings Jan Gordon says, "Cezanne had shown the importance of structural composition and of the design of recession in painting. Renoir had created rhythmical and sweeping linear compositions which enclosed solid forms; Van Gogh had given rein to the mad fury of his imagination; Matisse had freed drawing from all triviality, and had demonstrated how expressive a simple line could become. All these qualities are present in Negro art as powerfully as it is possible to imagine it in any art. . . . The representation of humanity is more and more conventionalised, more and more simplified and withdrawn from realism. We find the images of extraordinary power, full of sub-conscious suggestion amongst these carvings. They solved in the simplest and frankest way many of the problems confronting the artists of today; yet inspite of this simplicity they convey to the fullest extent the effect intended. These masks of War-Gods or of Devil-Dancers convey their meaning in a more powerful and more direct manner than all the tortured humanity of the naturalistic European school."

Professor Wingert writes to say, "What were the aspects of this art that held, for the more creative of the 20th century artists, such deep fascination? The most significant element which appeal to these modern artists was the non-representational quality of African sculpture. They found in these works an interpretative approach or creative attitude to-

ward the rendering of natural forms that was independent of any degree of verisimilitude in the attainment of sculptural integrity and artistic force. In the African forms they saw an art of pure shape that depicted in various ways the functions and inter-relationships of natural form, whether animal or human."

Against these two eminent authorities on primitive art, I quote another eminent authority, Andre Malraux, which will reveal a high-brow and sophisticated attitude—"However, our Renaissance of the art of savages is more than a re-birth of fatalism. If the fetishes were to enter our Museum without walls charged with their full significance, it was necessary that not merely a handful of artists and Connoisseurs but the white races as a whole should abandon that belief in Free Will which since the days of Rome had been the white man's birth right. He had to consent to the supremacy of that part of him which belongs to the dark under-world of being." Andre Malraux proceeds further on to say, "Thus there was no question of deciding what place in the Museum should be assigned to these primitive arts; for once they are allowed fully and freely to voice their message, they do not merely invade the museum; they burn it down. Yet, whether Europe listens to the ancient lamentation of civilization under threat of death, or whether she shuts her, the culture and art of the West are not dependent solely on her faith; a metamorphosis may well be linked up with the birth of an American Culture, the triumph of Russian Communism, or perhaps, a resurrection of Europe."

Frankly, I stumble when I read this pronouncement from an authority like Andre Malraux. A dilettente that he is, his expression is bound to be somewhat sophisticated coupled with a complex of superiority. It is important to note here in this connection that art wherever its locale is, need not suffer from any complexes. The pride of Europe of its culture emanating from the Roman source need not apprehend a setback if a generation of artists of Malraux's land felt inspired, even excited, to see these Negro works of art and thought of utilizing their inspirations towards the fulfilment of their art which definitely suffered from a decadence after the hey-day of the Renaissance. It cannot be denied that European art did not show any glimpse of creativity during this barren period. The culture of Europe, as a matter of fact, was getting more and more sophisticated and somewhat perverted in the artistic sense. The religious fervour and expression of it through art was on the decline. The artists of the day were preoccupied in showing their excellence in craftsmanship with meticulous detail and ornate excesses. The spirit of art therefore was completely lost. The impressionist painters who were aware of the position had no hesitation therefore to fall back upon Negro Art as their source of inspiration. It will be evident from the history of modern art that this new inspiration actually was responsible for creating a new kind of art which we see today in successive periods of research



and inquiry. This resurgence was inevitable as it is inevitable as a renewal principle with the completion of a cycle of civilization and with the setting in of the decadence. Andre Malraux's lamentations are therefore out of place and cannot be justified. The metamorphosis of modern art need not come through the narrow limits of western culture or for that matter with the birth of American Culture or the triumph of Russian Communism. The world is a vast area and the aesthetic inspirations can be had from any region rich enough to inspire. If sophisticated Europe had covered up its instinctive inspiration seven layers deep through its progress in intellectual pursuits, the necessity therefore arose to look back upon the savage art in its elemental form and abstract character to gather strength and vitality for an artistic regeneration. However precise and efficient an engine (intellect) may be, it cannot run without oil (instinct) which is its life force.

#### CHILD ART AND FOLK ART

Since the pre-historic days and the primitive activities in the by gone days we have travelled far into this modern age through the vicissitudes of various creative activities and claimed a civilization which is intellectually developed. But one thing remains the same—the child of the primitive age and the child of this age make no difference in their mental set up. The child may be the father of tomorrow, but paradoxically though when the child develops into a full-fledged man tomorrow the child in the man dies. That is to say the instinctive and intuitive characters of the child cease to be there anymore in the developed man because of his developed knowledge of the phenomena all about him and his scientific and analytical approach to them. The mystery of nature that abounds in a child is already laid bare to the man in all its scientific and analytical components. Nature in its turn, therefore, takes revenge for this betrayal of man and divorces man from her sympathetic understanding both in its biological and primordial meanings. The great sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, the spiritual head of modern sculptors, made a significant remark in this regard—"When we are no longer children we are already dead." Another great painter of the modern era, Paul Gauguin who escaped this modern civilization and fled to the island of Tahiti in search of inner truth and self realisation also wanted to go back to the days of his childhood for an innocent and fresher outlook of nature in life. This found expression in his words — "Sometimes I went back very far, farther than the horses of the parthenon.....to the wooden rocking horse of my childhood." I believe, nobody could have expressed it better—the parthenon horse denoting the civilised age of the Greeks and the wooden rocking horse representing the very emblem of innocent, unsophisticated childhood. The

wooden rocking horse further points towards the abstract formal content of the horse against the naturalistic representation of the parthenon horse.

Children in their artistic inclinations are visionary and often concerned with fantasies. These fundamental elements of childhood are the strong points of character and the mould of the being of the child. One may ask why is it so. It will be easy to understand these two fundamentals when placed against a mature man endowed with the power of reasoning. The grown up, sophisticated man is always fettered down by conventions, religious, or other wordly considerations which impede the natural and spontaneous flow of his character. He does not believe in fantasies and visions which may have some connections with the unconscious state of his dream-world. He is shy and often defeated by his own reasons to portray any such belief or statements in his practical life. A child has no such inhibitions. He is playful, open minded and sees the world around him with the sensitivity which cannot be interpreted in terms of physical realities.

Many of the modern artists therefore delved into this unconscious religion of the child and tried to express themselves with an abandon of the child's freedom. The leader of this group was Paul Klee. The result of his experiments in this regard had contributed immensely towards modern art. He had brought a freshness, unpolluted with conventions and mature reasonings mainly depending on the symbols a child would always use for his expression. This abstraction both in the mental region as well as in the symbols themselves opened up a new possibility of artistic expression. No doubt in the hands of Paul Klee, a giant thinker and a finished draftsman—the paintings all through became child like, were never childish; as if, the sublimation of child-art (not in the spiritual sense but in the technical sense) was awaiting Paul Klee's intervention.

In human society folk art has always played a very important and continuous role throughout the ages. It has no historical basis nor has it developed historically. It looks as if the same archetype model has been handed down from father to son from time immemorial. There is no change in its formal concept but surprisingly enough it has been accepted by the societies of all generations of all times. The elemental, simplified qualities of its formal character have an appeal both to the sophisticated ones as well as unsophisticated village dwellers. The only variation folk art has is in terms of subject matter which at times may be connected with a story or a legend known to all. This has a singular appeal to the masses who are mainly concerned with such works of art. One of the very eminent French painters, Henry Rousseau painted with such a verve. His paintings of flora and fauna have an unsophisticated character with all the sensitivity of a naive and supernatural feeling; although it cannot be said that Rousseau in any way took inspiration from folk art or that he tried any kind of

abstraction in his work consciously. But as it is, his work being very much akin to folk art is already somewhat abstracted in its formal aspect.

### MODERN PHASE

In the changed perspective of today it is very interesting to find Ruskin defending Turner's paintings against the so called ancients in his book *Modern Painters*, Vol. I of *General Principles and of Truth*. This book was written in the year 1843, that is to say, more than 120 years ago. Within this long gap, complete changes have occurred again in the values and in the guiding principles and truth of art which perhaps were regarded by Ruskin as permanent and inflexible. The then modern painters and particularly Turner, who was Ruskin's ideal has become out-dated and out-moded today. They are no more modern. With the revolutionary changes in the forms of art in the context of the modern era of supersonic planes and atom bombs, the values of art have also changed. The principles and truth of art as envisaged by Ruskin and so vigorously advocated by him have become irrelevant today. The gap between Ruskin on the one hand and Picasso, Pollock and Kline on the other is a vast and formidable one. With this constant change in art-concept, with the changing phases in time, it is indeed impossible to define and hold modern art in a water-tight compartment.

Any discussion however in any of the aspects of modern art is invariably based on the art of the West created during the last one century through a systematic process of research, experiment and innovation. Unfortunately, the Eastern countries lay dormant during this century and practically no significant work worth the name has been produced either as a matter of innovation or inventive process or as a natural flow or extension of the traditions. The history of art having such great traditions as in Egypt, India, China and Japan is pathetically silent during this century. The attempt of the revival movement in India in the beginning of this century was but a reactionary, nationalistic outburst to go back to the glorious past. It was therefore inopportune, inappropriate and a futile attempt destined to lose the battle against the force of time which rushes in an incalculable speed in modern times. The state of affairs in Egypt, China and Japan was no better. The modern movement in art that we find making some progress in Japan and India today did not grow out of any sound principle of faith or tradition.

It is indeed no gain saying the fact that with the introduction of technology and science into the modern civilization of today a new technique based more or less on the scientific and analytical process in the development of art has emerged since the days of post-renaissance baroque period. Art since then has become an expression of an individual, irres-

pective of the social demand. Today, society as such has no collective demand on the artists nor do the artists agree to bear the burden of social obligations. The age of religious domination, the dictation of the ruling hierarchy is no more there and the artist today enjoys complete freedom from all such social and political bonds. True, this freedom enjoyed by a modern artist has on the one hand created a kind of self confidence in the artist and given a status and personality of his own and at the same time sufficient scope in expressing himself independent of any external influences, but on the other it has given him scope enough towards indisciplined indulgence to be erratic, uncompromising and at times whimsical. Individual freedom to be creative and productive therefore hangs in the delicate balance between individuality and self discipline.

We are well aware of the tremendous strides that this freedom of expression has contributed towards the world fund of art since the impressionist movement started by a group of individualist intellectuals in France in the middle of the 19th century. The inquisitive and researchive mind of a handful of French artists like Manet, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, Picasso, Gauguin, Degas, Van Gogh and others brought a new light and new perspective in determining painting in terms of light. To this end however the credit of breaking through the hard lines of tradition of the academic art and visualising something in terms of abstract expressionism goes to that English painter, Turner. It is he who had the courage and self-confidence to break away from the diehard tradition of British painting and create something new abstracting the subject matter, which invariably would either be a landscape or a seascape, in a profound, vast and limitless manner. The range of space between the earth and the sky and the sea would give a feeling of limitless space beyond the frames. This new approach to painting gave a definite and significant turn towards an intellectual interpretation and development of art. It may be argued however that Turner never was himself conscious of such a possibility nor did he intend to develop something intellectually in the paintings in question, being a painter of nature he had the opportunity of having a new vista of expression. But then the fact remains that it was Turner and nobody else prior to him who could so courageously break away from the clutches of tradition and breathe a free air.

The main characteristics of Turner's final development in his landscapes and seascapes is the simplification of the visible objects in nature and merging them all into one unified atmospheric entity through a purely subjective and lyrical approach. In his landscapes and seascapes colour dominates and envelopes form in a mystic way which may be better expressed as 'impressionistic dissolution of form.'

This dissolution of form helps to create a sense of space which is more akin to the Chinese sense of space—the basic difference being that

in a Chinese landscape the matter or objects in nature are arranged in space in such a manner that the vacant space becomes predominant in relation to the concomitant objects which play the role of counter points. The space or the colours used do not interfere with the objects nor envelop them with the idea of creating a vague, mystic feeling. Hence the space and objects co-exist.

I have particularly mentioned the role of space in Turner's landscape as well as Chinese with a view to emphasize on this particular aspect of painting as I feel that this has a tremendous impact on the human mind which ultimately is responsible to create a feeling of impersonal abstraction in him. Unfortunately, artists in the West seldom utilised this aspect in their painting. They are invariably busy in twisting, juxtaposing, dividing and splitting forms and experimenting with colour in all its possible manifestations, either in its juxtaposed and harmonic relationship or its basic values. The constructivists and supermatists however tried to emphasize on space values in a different way, in non-objective terms. It is really unfortunate that no painter after Turner took any inspiration from his landscapes or seascapes which offered a tremendous possibility of showing a new approach to painting both in its technical and intellectual dimensions. The impressionist group of painters in France that succeeded him did not care very much for his paintings. Their paintings were inspired by a new technique evolved out of an intellectual process of seeing nature in a split second with the changing light. Such a split-second impression of an atmosphere in nature where light is the predominant factor, again is the result of an 'impressionistic dissolution of form.' And this dissolution is a kind of abstraction. As a matter of fact any distraction from the usual reality is a kind of an abstraction. To say it in terms of photography—anything which is out of focus in the mental process of filtration and ultimately arrives at a definite concentrated statement may be termed as abstraction.

Modern art today is actually and essentially in the reverse gear. By the term 'reverse gear' I do not however mean a going back. It is in the sense that modern artists have sought to open up new vistas of enquiries into the past, particularly with reference to the uninhibited works of art of the so called primitives. If the impressionist school made the beginning of it, the enquiry culminated with the cubists under the leadership of Paul Cezanne. In this enquiry the African sculpture played a significant role no doubt with their formalistic, simplified and non-representational character. Cezanne's quest was purely objective, scientific and analytical, much beyond the thesis and scope of the impressionist school. Cezanne sought to penetrate into the formal content of the objects in nature and rearrange them in terms of geometric abstractions with the help of light and shade. Cezanne himself said: "See nature as cylinder, sphere, and cone, the whole

plays in perspective so that each side of an object or plane is directed towards a central point.....Nature is for us more a matter of depth than of surface—whence the necessity of introducing into the vibrations of light, represented by reds and yellows, a sufficient number of bluish tones to give a feeling of air.”

In his experiment with cubism Cezanne introduced a new vocabulary of artistic expression, not actually disregarding nature but interpreting it in terms of certain aesthetic principles which he borrowed from the primitives. It is however no denying the fact that Cezanne's interpretation of nature was only a transformation of nature into art devoid of any naturalistic considerations. It is nature interpreted intellectually in terms of geometric forms.

Later on between 1908-1914 cubism became progressively non-representational and two dimensional in the hands of his successors, Picasso and Braque. Nature was completely disintegrated in their hands and forms were broken up in order to build up a new synthesis, superimposing forms on forms and thus creating a sense of dynamism. The true and pure abstraction started crystallising from this point. The other important movements of futurism, supermatism, constructivism and surrealism followed closely as its novel extensions having their own bias and logic, but often overlapping each other.

Futurism developed in Italy and its first manifesto appeared in 1909. The futurists were mainly interested in expressing dynamism in terms of time and space suggesting the continuum in movement. Their energy was however inspired by a sense of inverted passivism and anarchism. The most important and known members of this group are Umberto Boccioni and Gino Severint.

The first phase of abstraction in impressionism however culminated in the movements of supermatism, constructivism and de-Stijl. The cubists although disintegrated nature and abstracted forms of natural objects, retained some sort of resemblance to natural forms in their works. In supermatism, constructivism and de-Stijlism such resemblance to any object in nature was missing. They were all interpreting a new kind of pictorial meaning through forms which were non-objective and geometric in shapes complemented by flat colour. The formal content often looked rigid and architectonic in character. In other words, the set-square of geometry ruled the scene. What with Cezanne was only an embryonic form bore fruit in the hands of Malevitch, Tatlin, Pevsner, Gabo, Mondrian and Kandinsky, to mention only a few, who were directly responsible for ushering in a new era of painting and sculpture conforming to the shapes of geometry, purely from the point of view of autonomy of art. The basis of this geometrisation of art is nothing modern. It is as old as Plato, who first applied the principle of geometry in defining beauty in the

following way—"I do not now intend by beauty of shapes what most people would expect, such as that of living creatures or pictures, but, for the purpose of my argument, I mean straight lines and curves and the surfaces of solid forms produced out of these by lathes and rulers and squares, if you understand me. For I mean that these things are not beautiful relatively, like other things, but always and naturally and absolutely; and they have their proper pleasures, in no way depending on the itch of desire. And I mean colours of the same kind, with the same kind of beauty and pleasure."

The logical development of Euclidain intervention in art has brought in its trail two very disquieting features— 1. de-humanisation of art 2. detachment of art from society and therefore its non-functional character.

Just after the first world war in 1919 a very significant movement was initiated by Walter Gropius in war-torn Germany under the banner of the Bauhaus school, the main inspiration of which was architecture. It was actually the confluence of three modern groups of artists from Russia, Holland and Germany who all agreed in the principle of purism in art which was responsible for the final transformation of 'near-abstraction' in art evinced throughout the ages to 'mere-abstraction.' No doubt, these groups of artists took their sustenance from pure and functional architecture as well as from the aesthetics of precise and pure machine-forms, they completely ignored the functional aspect of form which is inherently associated with them. It is most pertinent to note in this connection that this basic urge of abstraction from the primitive days has been always functional whether in the mask-form or in the form of implements and utensils. In the history of mankind, art always has been linked up with some social function either with religion or with court to have its sustenance from and relationship with society. Walter Gropius's direction therefore to link up today's art with machine and industry, the religion of the day, was appropriate and meaningful. Herbert Read's analysis of this is: "Essentially it is a policy based on rational conception of aesthetic values. Our need is the wider recognition of art as a biological function, and a constructive planning of our modes of living which takes full cognizance of this function.....an artist must plan the houses, the halls and factories and all that makes up the city; an artist must plan the interiors of such buildings—the shapes of the rooms and their lighting and colour, an artist must plan the furniture of these rooms down to the smallest detail, the knives and forks, the cups and saucers and the door-handles."

One may however persist in arguing whether art should be for art's sake or for cups and saucers' sake!

# MODERN SCIENCES (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MODERN MATHEMATICS) AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NEW AESTHETICS

Bhupendra Karia

SINCE the subject involves a comparative study of the developments in modern sciences and aesthetics, we shall limit our discussion to only those problems which have come to be considered in the last 15 years.

With the publication of *Autre* (Michel Tapié, 1957) the whole area of abstract expressionism as we know it became, so to say, a closed problem. In retrospect it is easy to realize that the abstract expressionist school was dated because it chose to negate more than to accept or evolve. Modern mathematics on the other hand has taught us two important things:

1. that reduction, deduction or abstraction should be used merely as a tool through which general principles are evolved; and
2. that while it is possible, necessary and essential to think in the abstract, such abstractions should be able to produce tangible proofs when required.

In other words abstraction is valid if and only if it evolves an acceptance principle. Destructivity is a tool which should be used to achieve clearly defined constructive goals. Hence Swedish film maker Ingmar Bergman's significant statement: "I will even murder if it furthers my art."

The post-*Autre* period produced a new group of artists who combined the imagination, perception and the know-how of logicians, engineers, psychologists, cyberneticians, philosophers, physicists and mathematicians. These totally aware men, although few in number and widely scattered in all and the oddest corners of the world, demanded that the accepted principles in art be re-evaluated in order to keep the developments in art and aesthetics abreast with those in modern sciences. Being inspired by the methods used in modern mathematics, the modern artists sought to make their statements precise and meaningful. Thus the known terminology was given a well defined field of operation and a whole new terminology was devised to make the various movements in art easier to determine and check. *Autre* had already defined the end of an era in very accurate terms: "We have now come to an end of the experimental stage and are



ready to exact complete works." and "in former times it was form with which we conditioned space but now it is space through which we engender form—as if space were a womb which brings forth form." The consciousness of and the ability to make such statements about the changing and shifting emphasis clearly indicates its inspirational roots in the soil of modern scientific discoveries.

This new trend of thought also brought about a shift in the medium of expression. It is significant to note that the most important developments have occurred in the field of graphic arts. Most recent developments include two new subjects:

1. graphic thought, and
2. print aesthetics

This development runs parallel with the fact that in the last 41 years modern mathematics has severed all ties with philosophy, physics and engineering as an independent, speculative science. This fact has been clearly established by modern mathematicians' two main contributions:

The intuitionist school, and

Linguistic algebra and automata theory

Similarly, graphic arts (or print-making) has developed quite independently of painting, design or industrial graphics and printing technology. It is true that the scientific thinking of the modern graphic artists is attributable to the fact that they essentially deal with technology. But this scientific thinking and technological advantages are geared to that the modern artists have a more powerful and effective weapon to explore the herebefore unknown aesthetic experiences: that a machine can be beautiful; that a function well fulfilled is an aesthetic achievement; that eating a good sandwich is a spiritual experience. The graphic artists' contribution to new abstraction is an approach that makes abstraction a kind of symbolism and a shorthand. It is important to understand that these symbols do not stand for objects, ideas, emotions and moods but for the very elements of art. They are devised and used so that the art thoughts are quicker to write and easier to decipher. A classic example is the logicians' symbols:

let P denote that it is raining

let q denote that the ground is wet

With these symbols and their value-meanings established, we can make very clear and economical statements like

if P then q

or

if not P then q is false etc.

This new attitude enables us to consider the problem of abstraction in art as an open question. (P. W. Bridgman: *The Open and the Closed Ques-*

tions in *The Nature of Modern Physical Theory*, Harvard University lectures)

Bridgman also points out that there is a whole range of meaningful and meaningless questions in science as well as in everyday life. Example: in 1882 it was proved that the number Pi is transcendental. Would it have been meaningful to ask in 1881 whether the number Pi is transcendental or not? or, is it possible that there are missing integers in the series of natural numbers as we know them, etc., establishing a conclusion that those questions which cannot be answered in yes or no and those for which no operational techniques for the verification of the answer exist are meaningless questions? Along these methods we have now been able to establish a criteria to judge original contributions in art and aesthetics. Thus the question of meaningfulness and operatives is now translated in art by a simple but stern statement that anything that does not contribute something intrinsically new to the idea, understanding or appreciation of art and aesthetics cannot be rated significant. Henry Moore's discovery of the principle of 3rd dimension in sculpture is and can be significant only in this light.

It is not possible to deny that the methods used in and the results obtained from the experiments in gestalt psychology and visual perception (Drs. E. Mach and W. Kohler: *Dynamics of Psychology*) opened up unexplored avenues of visual communications. Nor is it possible to deny that modern technological advances brought home the realization that for a modern mind the conventional painting is too limited a medium of expression.

The first effect of such realization of limitedness was the introduction of foreign elements in painting. Louise Nevelson (USA), Enrico Baj and Fontana (Italy), Antoni Tapies (Spain) and other innovators introduced what we now know as the sculptured paintings. But this was only the first step in a new revolution that was to come in art of the 1960s. With the amazing, chaotic and consternating developments in the mass communication media, reproductive techniques, the computer directed technology of space explorations etc., came also the big break-through in art and expression. The modern artists who were fast becoming aware of the limitation of possibilities found yet another medium in search of possibilities.

### PROGRAMMING AND KINETICS

Most notable contribution came from Switzerland with the self destroying mechanized sculptures of Yves Tinguely (Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan, 1960). Significant work has also been done by Iceland's talented graphic designer Deiter Rot in his magnificent book called *AC*.

As recently as 1960, people talked about computerized or programmed

art only in jest. The most recent work and publication of the work of some of our designers, artists and musicians show the clarity and perception with which it has now been turned into an impressively real achievement. Jhon Cage's computerized music is now a well known phenomena and wonder. Noteworthy work has been done by Karl Gerstner (*Designing Programmes*, 1964, Switzerland) from which I shall quote here at length and explain the process and theory of his work:

PROGRAMME FOR BERIO	A TRUTH	
---------------------	------------	--

ETC., ETC.

# MODERN MOVEMENTS IN WORLD ART AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON AESTHETIC THEORIES

Krishen Khanna

I think it is important at the very outset to make clear what I mean by the term "Modern" and what are the particular attributes of those artists whom I choose to call 'Modern.'

I can find no better treatment of Modern Man than Jung's which appears in his essay entitled "The spiritual problem of Modern Man." He states:

"The Man we call Modern, the man who is aware of the immediate present, is by no means the average man. He is rather the man who stands upon a peak, or at the very edge of the world, the abyss of the future before him, above him the heavens, and below him the whole of mankind with a history that disappears in primeval mists. The modern man—or the man of the immediate present—is rarely met with. Since to be wholly of the present means to be fully conscious of one's existence as a man, it requires the most intensive and extensive consciousness, with a minimum of unconsciousness. It must be clearly understood that the mere fact of living in the present does not make a man modern, for if that were the case everyone at present alive would be so. He alone is modern who is fully conscious of the present. . . . and he alone finds that the ways of life which correspond to earlier levels fall upon him. The values and strivings of those past worlds no longer interest him save from the historical standpoint. Thus he has become "unhistorical" in the deepest sense and has estranged himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of traditions."

The same is true of the artists I shall speak of. Each one of them stood on the threshold of future and concerned himself with immediate problems. A really modern artist is not concerned with rehashing history and giving the appearance of modernity. He grows out of history and when the moment is ripe, he discards it like a snake discards its skin and creates a new vision, a new reality. He is, therefore, forever on the frontier and is engaged in enlarging consciousness and awareness.

The art historian is but a recording instrument of what happened. He

is dealing with facts. Like all historians, he would like to deduce laws and make predictions. Unfortunately for him art does not evidence a logical progression. Unlike science and philosophy, art does not present any advance. As Sir Herbert Read says somewhere that if a law is observed in the history of art, it is the law of reaction. Once a movement is established its decline sets in with melancholic certainty. It achieves perfection in its kind with a startling burst of energy, a gesture which is too quick for the historian to follow, but once grasped, the incipient seeds of decay set in. The equilibrium of the aesthetic life is permanently unstable and the great artists of the past, as of our own time have fought the decay which their own achievements have fostered.

The aesthetic philosopher, has been and to my limited knowledge, still is, interested in philosophical questions. What is Beauty? Is the aesthetic experience contingent on an object or is it a state of mind? What is the definition of an art object and what if any are its attributes? What is the relation between Nature and Art? He is concerned, like all disciplines in the humanities with understanding and formulation of norms and standards of judgement, with consolidating knowledge and creating categories for clear thinking. The recent discoveries of psychology have greatly aided the understanding of the creative processes.

The question which the artist can legitimately ask is, does all this knowledge and all this thinking enable the aesthetic philosopher to discover a new work of art? My own experience tells me that aesthetic philosophers are so preoccupied with the realm of ideas, with thinking and reading, that they are quite helpless when confronted by such a work. I can readily think of innumerable friends who are intellectuals with handsome libraries, who can argue with eloquence and logic, but who do not have a work of art in their homes, who visit no studios nor any exhibitions.

I do not wish to sound critical of them for I recognise that adventures in ideas are a meaningful enough activity. But let not such activity be substituted for art. Art is an activity which conceives the world visually. Again as Herbert Read points out, there are alternative methods of conceiving the world. We can measure it in an agreed system of signs, numerals or letters. We can make statements about the world based on experiments. We can construct systems that explain the world imaginatively and these form our myths—Art is none of these. "It is" as Conard Fiedler puts it "an ever living question asked of the visible world by the visual sense" and the artist is simply a man who has the desire and the necessary ability to transport his visual perception into a material form. The first part is perceptive, the second expressive. This division is created only for purposes of clear thinking and does not exist as two separate processes. In actual practice the artist expresses what he perceives and perceives what he expresses.

It is commonly believed that there is only one way to see the world. The way it is presented to our immediate vision. This is of course not true. We see what we learn or want to see and vision becomes a habit, a kind of convention, an edited summary of facts. We see not according to the inevitable laws of optics, but by a desire to construct a credible world. What we see must be made real and art in this sense becomes the construction of reality.

I would like to mention the art critic and the connoisseur whose function is to be distinguished from that of the art historian or the aesthetic philosopher. The art critic at his best is someone who has an intimate knowledge of the craft on the one hand and an ability to formulate value judgements on the other. Very often, he is closely associated with artists and has an intimate knowledge of what is going on in the artist's mind and in his studio. He is, if I may use the word, a suppressed artist himself endowed with perception but lacking the expressive power to formulate matter. He has the power which the artist does not usually have, the power to express in words and give an account of the plastic circumstances of a work of art.

He stands therefore midway between the artist and the uninitiated but willing viewer and he can point to the fruitful directions. He will not, and cannot expect to be a substitute for the experience of art but he can indicate how to get there. This position is ideally stated for what we see is not the humble but necessary function of pointing and directing, but of sitting in judgement and pontificating. A value judgement instead of arriving from the centre of artistic activity is inflicted like a section from the penal code. Who does this help? I hazard a guess that were our art critics to be in lively touch with our artists, were there a lively exchange all the time, instead of going through the medium of newspapers, there would result a healthier climate of art.

## OBSERVATIONS OF AN ARTIST FACE A FACE WITH ALL THE AESTHETIC THEORIES

Ram Kumar

THIS is not a paper but mere observations of a painter in the course of this seminar. These observations are not based on research work of Indian aesthetics but are intuitive reactions of an artist. It is possible that you may discover contradictions, illogical ideas etc., but I am not very much worried about these so called short comings as I know that they are based on Truth—truth of a living artist, however small he may be.

I have listened to the learned papers and discussions in the seminar very carefully and have learnt many new things regarding aesthetics, art history, new interpretations of problems concerning art etc. They have definitely added to my knowledge. But there I am face a face to all the big words as an artist. Many learned friends here have not posed the problem as an artist would do. And with regrets I must say that most of the creative artists who have read their papers in the seminar have spoken in the borrowed language of an art critic or an art historian instead of speaking in their own language, I mean that they too have posed the problem not as an artist but as an art historian.

Art history has its own validity and if a painter knows about it, well and good. But here is the main question : Is it necessary for him in his development as a creative artist? I do not think so and many of my artist friends would agree with me here. A creative artist makes history, he does not go in its details, its chronological order, its interpretations, its intricacies.

I feel that there is a wide gulf between artists on one hand and art critics (if we have any) and art historians on the other. As Krishen (Khanna) pointed out that they would fumble in confrontation with a work of art; their valuation, their judgement in most cases will be a wrong one because they try to avoid this confrontation. So I feel, what is the use of such high sounding words like *bhāva*, *rasa*, biological problems, semantics etc. which I have been hearing every day, when they fail to help a man in real understanding of a work of art. We fight with words about theories of aesthetics but it is not my problem. It does not help me when I face an empty canvas in my studio. My tools are different when I tackle my problems, not with words but with brushes and colours.

Learned Friends, please do not misunderstand me. I have great esteem for all the knowledge and ideas which you expressed in your papers. But do try to understand me when I say that my day-to-day problems as a creative artist living in 1966 are different and you will not be able to understand them till you come down from your high pedestal of knowledge and learning and visualise them with the simple eye of an uneducated illiterate ignorant man, who is called an artist. Why do I have a feeling of being an 'outsider' in your company? Because I am not interested in the intricacies of your art history: we do not have the same platforms while discussing art.

Another point which struck me during discussions was that we attached a lot of importance and discussed at length our traditional values, ancient works of art, theories of aesthetics propounded hundreds of years ago. How many times we have referred to the names of Ajanta, Pahari and Rajput miniatures, Giotto and Leonardo de Vinci, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Picasso etc. to prove a certain point of view. Slides of the well known European Masters were shown repeatedly. In my opinion if a contemporary artist from Europe had attended this Seminar, he would have thought that we were trying to live once again in our past, in glory which belonged to us ages ago.

But why to feel shy looking at ourselves today. I feel that we completely forgot to assess in the present situation in our country with all its implications. It is shocking to realise that we thought it important to collect material on Pop Art and Op Art and show the slides of contemporary American and British and French artists and ignored the works of our own contemporary artists. I know that discussions on Picasso, Matisse, Pop and Op Art without seeing a single original work of theirs in fashionable drawing rooms over a glass of whisky is regarded an intellectual activity. And these very intellectuals have hardly any knowledge of our artistic problems, our achievements and failures, our peculiar situation.

Let us face the facts as they are today. Did we ever question why our talented artists like Raza, Souza, Akbar Padamsee, Samant, Krishna Reddy have left India and settled down abroad? When we tempt our scientists and engineers with good jobs and bright prospects in this country and beg them to come back and work anew, why we could not do the same with our artists? What happens to a talented artist like Tyeb Mehta who after five years stay in London when he had bright prospects comes to India and have a first class exhibition in Delhi and Bombay and is able to sell only 2 or 3 paintings?

Words, words, words.....I am sorry but I must confess that I am sick of them. They seem to me hollow, devoid of any meaning. Let us use them to express our emotions so that they would enclose a meaningful space not a void.

Poetic images, musical rhythms, architectural beauty, philosophical interpretations etc., are these the unconscious emotions aroused by a work of



art? While looking at a painting the painter does not think of poetry or music. I expect others also to feel in terms of colours and forms. If he cannot do so then the painting has failed in its purpose.

Where is my audience? Who looks at my paintings? Where are the people who sympathetically and sincerely try to understand my creations? I find none except a handful of my artist brothers. Where are the critics who meet me for 10 minutes in my exhibition to pass judgement over my works done in one year? Will I have faith in their judgement, in their assessment and analysis? They are not acquainted with our language. How can they understand us? The silent walls of my studio is my audience.

To me life at present is much more important than things which are dead. When in other fields of life we are trying to tackle problems of today—food, five year plans, industrialisation, population, illiteracy etc., then why in field of art we go on lamenting about our past. When are you going to discuss us? Five hundred years after we are dead? In my opinion an artist like Hussain is much more important than Ajanta and Ellora. He lives with us, he shares his artistic creations with us, he communicates to us the living experience as of today. He and his contemporaries living in India today will be responsible for the coming generation of Indian painters. To us here a living artist in our midst is more important than Picasso, Pop and Op Arts because we see him every day, we feel his presence, he participates (mark the word participate) in our life.

Knowledge, awareness of our traditions, getting acquainted with our past, I have nothing against all this. But I think this can be collected from books, in libraries, in archives. But we are not to be found in books and archives. We are here, why to feel shy in talking to us. Will you like to talk to us when we are dead?

Some one said here the other day that a period of 15 or 20 years is too small to be assessed. We have to wait and see whether the creations of this period can stand the test of time, whether they enter the doors of our museums and become a part of history. Is this not a sign of our own weakness, a proof of our not being able to judge whether it is good or bad. We have to wait and see. Sorry friends! I do not agree. History will not pardon us for an attitude like this. We want to be judged, evaluated, here and now!

# THE AESTHETICS OF 'ANTI-ART'

Jag Mohan

THE Aesthetics of Anti-Art is the theme of my paper, in which I propose to provide a comprehensive report on the *avant garde* art movements of the last decade and a half, and attempt to extract the aesthetics of Pop Art, Op Art, Kinetic Art, *l'art brut* and such other art movements, which have succeeded Abstract Expressionism.

In the context of the epochs and centuries of world art under review at this Seminar, it may look that I have taken up a very minute segment of time for detailed discussion. But if you will bear with me till the end, you will agree that during this short period more sensational and novel concepts and ideas of art and aesthetics have been brought into the world than at any time before. In tune with the *zeitgeist* of the times, accepted notions, cherished ideas, established values and confirmed opinions have been thrown overboard in the world of art as in other fields. Like in the political world, in the art world too, there has been much too much of revolutions and counter-revolutions, coups and assassinations—metaphorically speaking. How serious the situation has been in the world of art can be gathered from the few indications, which I shall list presently.

## DEFINITIONS

The very word Aesthetics which according to the Oxford English Dictionary, used to mean as “belonging to the appreciation of the beautiful” has undergone a radical transformation. According to the Penguin English Dictionary, compiled by G. N. Garmonsway, “Aesthetics means the study of beauty and ugliness.” This is a sensational definition, but it is there in the dictionary. And an ideal one too to suit the age in which beauty is found in banality.

Now to the word Anti-Art, which is used as a blanket word to cover many ideas and art movements, it has come into vogue along with “Anti-Novel,” “A-literature” and “Anti-Matter.” To understand its full implications, I shall cite some examples.

Some time ago, Ad Reinhardt, an American Professor of Oriental Art History at the Hunter College, who is said to be well-versed in Oriental

Philosophies and Zen Buddhism, had a most interesting and successful exhibition of large canvases all painted just black. His view was that his black paintings were "pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless and disinterested paintings." He further added that they were "non-emotive, non-anecdotal, purely aesthetic, non-objective paintings, which are ideal transcendent, aware of nothing but art." With his Black Art. Ad Reinhardt had wiped out colours, form, content, composition, space and every thing connected with painting. By reaching the *cul de sac* in painting, he seemed to have attained his *nirvana*! It is the end of painting too.

Probably inspired by Ad Reinhardt, a German named Carl Frederick Reuterschwaerd, residing in Stockholm, did a most extraordinary thing to qualify himself for the Nobel Prize for Literature. He published a book entitled "Nobel Prize" under his name, with the cover and the title page having the name of the book, the author and the printer, followed by a hundred blank pages. Priced at 24.5 crowns, equivalent to 5 dollars, this book of blank pages became the favourite of collectors. The author of the blank book explained that with this book there would be no controversies, nor problems of translation, nor printer's devils; nor any need for banning. And that is the last word in books.

Artists in every field are vying with one another in reaching the ultimate point of absurdity. John Cage, the most *avant garde* composer in the U.S.A. created a sensation with his composition, "4 Minutes and 33 Second." When it was rendered on the stage, a pianist sat before a closed piano for exactly four minutes and thirty-three second before a puzzled audience and then left. And, the only sounds that could be heard were those that floated randomly from the hall and outside—sounds of shoes, programme books, doors, buses and birds.

The Rage for Chaos, The Black Painting, the Blank Book and the Silent Symphony may strike some as hoaxes. But they have been accepted as peak points in creative activity, since they fall into pattern with other incredible works of art like paintings, which rest on the floor, sculptures which move under hydraulic pressure and neon painting-cum-sculptures. After all this is the age of Beat Poetry, which is declaimed after the poet has had his marijuana; it is the age of films like "*L'Annie derniere a Marienbad*, which have no continuity; it is the age of absurd drama and Theatre of Cruelty; it is the age of electronic music and computer poetry; it is the age of ballet like that of Merce Cunningham in which music has been separated from dance and of ballroom dancing in which the partners stretch themselves on the floor separately and wriggle and writhe; and it is the age of William Burroughs, who cuts his manuscripts and jumbles up the passages to destroy continuity.

The art world of the fifties and the sixties is far different from the art

world of the period after the first world war. The problems, theories and manifestos formulated by the Dadaist, Tristan, Tzara, the Surrealists, the Cubists, the painters of the *college*, the sculptors of the readymade and others have been magnified manifold and squarely met by the Pop artists, the Op specialists, the Kinetic Art manufacturers, the Neon Light Sculptors-cum-Painters and others. Though they have all come into existence during the last decade and a half, their art movements have found votaries all over the world—even in India. Thanks to the mass media and communications, publicity gimmicks, high pressure salesmanship and the world considerably shrunk in size due to jet air transport, these Anti-Art movements have come to stay. Born out of the modern man's rage for chaos, they have debunked order, harmony, formal arrangement, accepted ideas and long cherished ideals. These art movements have philosophies and philosophers and interpreters, whose strident voices can be heard through a dozen languages. They have established the traditions of Anti-Formalism, Anti-Traditionalism and Neo-Modernism, which incidentally is a successor to the Palaeo-Modernism of Picasso, Braque, Tzara and others. How far they have gone can be judged from the new concept of art that has been formulated. Frank Kermode, who has succeeded Stephen Spender as the co-editor of the *Encounter*, has said that according to them "art is whatever you provide, when the place in which you provide it is associated with the ideas, and contains people, who are prepared to accept this and other assumptions."

#### POP ART

Now that I have provided the context and a rough idea of the Anti-Art movements of today, let me go into a detailed analysis of these movements, one by one.

Let me take up Pop Art first. Shortened form of Popular Art, it has now become U.S.A.'s greatest contribution to the world of art. Christened so by Lawrence Alloway, the British-born Curator of the Guggenheim Museum, New York, it has now become a worldwide movement. The seal of recognition was set on it when its greatest exponent, Robert Rauschenberg, was awarded the first prize at the Venice Biennale. It may be recalled that the two other Americans, who have been honoured there, were James McNeill Whistler and Mark Tobey. Pop art has been described as the Art of the Icons of the Machine Age, the Computer Age and the Space Travel Age. It is the art of the Supermarket. It is Junk Art. It is the Scrap Art. Its images are derived from newspapers, tabloids, comic strips, movies, highways and byways, the assembly line and the drug store. The Pop Artists have been using the symbols and images popularised by the mass communication media like the American flag, Life magazine covers, photographs of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, Cambell's soup cans,

cartons of Brillo, letters, road signs, stuffed birds, hamburgers and such other banal things of day-to-day life.

Roy Lichtenstein, a stalwart champion of Pop Art has described it in a very picturesque way. "Pop Art is anti-experimental, anti-contemplative, anti-nuance, anti-getting-away-from-the-rectangle, anti-movement-and-light, anti-paint-quality, anti-zen and anti all those brilliant ideas of the preceding movements." Lil Picard, his European counterpart has rhapsodised in Pop Art style thus; "It is vital, witty, ugly, shocking supermarket woolworth new york, exciting, banal, newspaperish, young, surprising." In short, as another Pop Artist further clarified, "Pop is everything Art hasn't been for the last two decades." It could as well be two centuries!

Dr. Alan R. Solomon, Director of the Jewish Museum in New York, in his defence of Pop Art, has said : "The new figurative art, or, as it is called New Realism, Pop Art or Neo-Dada has provoked a response of extraordinary intensity, stimulating extremes of unabashed delight or renewed anguish. Like all vital new movements in the modern period (Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism) it has quickly been assigned a pejorative title or a string of titles.....These new artists speak to our feelings rather than to our minds and they have no programmatic philosophical intent. Still they speak so clearly from the contemporary spirit that their art, as much as it varies from individual to individual, shows a remarkable degree of philosophical consistency."

#### POP ARTISTS

Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns are said to be the founders of the movement. Rauschenberg specialises in what is known as combines. He uses newspaper cuttings, rags, ropes, flattened cans, stuffed birds and attach them to his canvases in a casual manner, allowing accident to play a vital part. Silk screen images of photographs in different colours also play their part. A critic has pointed out that in his work, "the understatement and the attention to ordinary attitudes and objects are important." Jasper Johns became famous with his sculpture of a broken torchlight without batteries or bulb, mounted on two nails. Since then he has been using beer cans cast together and painted back into beer cans. Discarded day-to-day objects are given a new lease of life in his work and presented in the art context.

James Rosenquist believes in using fragmented images of various objects in a jumbled up manner. His paintings have a billboard flavour about them. Robert Indiana uses letters, road signs, stars and stripes in several dynamic combinations and permutations. Roy Lichtenstein's forte is in blowing up the image of comic strips and in presenting them with new colour schemes and framework. Claes Oldenburgt is a sculptor who pre-

sents super-real symbols of hamburgers, pies and cakes in plastic or glass cases. They are painted objects very much like the painted mud fruits found in our village markets. Andy Warhol, another big name in Pop Art, specialises in six-foot high cans of Campbell's soup, over sized Coca-Cola bottles, silk-screen images, photo copies arranged in groups and such other things. He explains: "Why I am painting this way is that I want to be a machine and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do."

As it is not my intention to compile a dictionary of Pop Artists, I shall not dwell more on the other artists like Tom Wesselman, Marisol, Peter Blake and others. But I want to emphasise that the Pop Art movement has spread far and wide. In Britain, West Germany and Japan there are quite a few Pop Artists. In India, Bhupen Khakkar, Mansram and Vivan Sundaram are trying to create Indian Pop Art by using symbols of the *paan* shop, pictures of Durga, photographs of the Khajuraho *mithuna* couples, crude folk art toys, plastic scorpions and other things.

While its protagonists hail Pop Art as a return to humanist art and a healthy reaction to the arid drip-and-dry abstract expressionist art, its critics dub it as a vulgar capitalist realist art, which only the U.S.A. could create. However, its future seems to be bright since a whole pop culture has begun to evolve. In America, Pop Art has had its impact in every field. Pop Art has demolished the barriers between non-communicative art and the public. And, through Pop Art, homage has been paid to Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Braque, Juan Gris and others, for their pioneering experiments have been carried forward to the logical extremes.

#### OP ART

Now let me take up Op Art. It is not by merely dropping 'P' from Pop Art that Op Art came into existence. It came as a reaction to Pop Art and as the European reply to it. Known in certain circles as Retinal Art, it depends on visual impact. Op Art is the shortened form of Optical Art—an art that depends on lines, stripes, dots, circles, triangles, squares and other geometrical forms. It also depends very much on colours, their juxtaposition and interaction. Op Art's eye-tickling, eye-smarting and eye-wrenching masterpieces are based fundamentally on distortion of perspective, the moire effect, by which non-existent shadows and ripples materialise when parallel or periodic lines are superimposed, or colour interaction in which side-by-side colours alter each other and on the flicker effect. Op Art believes in creating the illusion of motion in a medium that is basically static. Non-existent ripples and waves can be noticed if one stared at the static optical paintings. Scientifically determined and most often made on mass production basis, Op Art has been acclaimed to be as important as

the discovery of perspective in the 15th century and as the biggest thing since Cubism. It is an art of precision. It is a mechanical muse, which is created with ruler and compass and mechanical gadgets. It scorns the emotionalism and whimsicality of the abstract expressionists. It derides the preponderance of chance in their paintings. Op Art scoffs at the naivette and the vulgarity of the Pop Artists.

### OP ARTISTS

Op Artists insist that they are the descendants of Cezanne, Seurat and Mondrian. They say they have derived their art from Cezanne's ideas of colour, from Seurat's Pointillism, from Mondrian's geometrical compositions and so on. They claim that their immediate forbears are Joseph Albers of the original Bauhaus group, who is a pioneer in the study of perception of colours, and Victor Vasarely, another researcher in colour perception. Op Artists are even modest to call themselves as experimenters with visual impact. But their creations are powerful enough to create vertigo, giddiness and nausea in the onlookers.

A remarkable aspect of the Op Artists is that they like to form groups and work collectively. Calling themselves as the New Idealists and Neo-Gildsman, they have formed groups in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the U.S.A. The Persian group headed by Vasarely's son is called *Groupe de Recherche d' Art Visuel*. In Germany there is a Zero group, Italy boasts of Groupe N and Groupe T. The American group is called Anonimo. And, Spain has Equipo 57. The members of these groups work collectively and execute the projects. Some times, like the master-craftsmen of the past, they do the preliminary designs and ask the commercial artists and photographers to do the rest.

Yet another interesting aspect of the Op Artists is that some of them change their names because they do not want to reveal their nationality and parentage. Thus, Vasarely's son goes under the name of yclept Yvaral, with a small "y" in the first name. Tadasuke Kuwayama, the Japanese artist working in Paris has renamed himself as Tadasky. Then there is a Latin American painter with the name of Jesus Raphael Sato. Here certainly they have a point in their favour. Incidentally, half a century ago, Ezra Pound named his son as Homer Shakespeare Pound!

The slogan of the Op Artist is : "From Impersonality to Universality." Their art has such visual appeal that a Swahili and a Greenlander, an Oraon and a New Zealander will react to it spontaneously without any effort or background knowledge. Their art has nothing to do with the world of objects, emotions and experiences of the artist, and time and place of the artist. There is undoubtedly a timeless element about Op Art. And its appeal is universal.

In the U.S.A., Richard Anuskiewicz and Julian Stanczak, who both studied under Joseph Albers, have become the leading Op Artists. In Britain, Bridget Piley and Francis Herwitt are doing remarkable experiments with their Op Art. And, in other countries Op Groups are functioning quite well, though not in India.

One great disadvantage in Op Art is that the personality of the creator will be missing in his work, though lately the Op Artists try to reveal their individualities through their work. Since they believe in collective work, they are not concerned with individual personality.

Then there is a major point of criticism against Op Art, which has been succinctly said by John Canaday, the art critic of The New York Times : "The weakness in the argument that art is a purely visual experience, is, simply, that art is not a purely visual experience. It is an intellectual, emotional and philosophical experience—or at least it always has been. The eye, until Optical Art said no, has been only the intermediate receptor of the colours, lines and forms that describe or express the various thoughts, beliefs, sensations or moods that artists have thought worth interpreting or crystallising. Art has never stopped at the retina, but has gone right on through to the brain, and via that route to the heart."

The Op Artists dismiss all this valid criticism and hug to their concept that their work should "assault the retina, belabour it, fool it, exercise it, confuse it, tease it, stimulate it by every popular visual device possible."

#### KINETIC ART

Let me leave them aside and pass on to the Kinetic Artists. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Kinetic means "of, due to, motion." The sum and substance of Kinetic Art is motion. The Kinetic Artists subscribe to the views that if the art of today must reflect the spirit of the times, then motion must be introduced into static art. For today, motion is the most vital, dynamic aspect of modern life. We not only believe in faster and faster means of transport, but also in space travel. In the age of cosmonauts, static paintings and sculptures must go! So the Kinetic Artists say. And they were not the first to say. Thirty to forty years ago, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Francis Picabia, Naum Gabo, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray and Alexander Calder pondered over this problem and experimented with readymades, irrational machine rotary hemispheres and other gadgets. The most famous and the most successful among them all, was of course Alexander Calder, who with his Mobiles revolutionised sculpture. His suspended metal sculptures moved and rotated. Their work has been taken up and considerably expanded by the kinetic artists of today. Frank Malina has made electro-paintings, which are adjudged to be best kinetic paintings. The basic composition in Malina's paintings is painted in the usual manner



on a transparent stator, fixed on a frame and hung on a wall. Behind the stator are several painted rotors, moved by electricity. Coloured shapes are thus thrown on the stator to be seen by the onlookers. Nicholas Schoffer, a French Artist, has made kinetic sculptures, in which curved and angular metal pieces are arranged vertically and horizontally along with a coloured mobile disc and an electric light. Interesting images are thrown on a large opaque screen by the Kinetic Sculpture. Pol Bury, a Belgian artist, uses wood, metal and plastic along with a concealed motor. G. Kosice, an Argentinian, has invented Hydraulic Sculpture, in which water pressure moves the mobile elements in the sculpture. And one V. Tarkis, a Greek artist has merely used a magnet and iron particles to demonstrate the principles of Kinetic Sculpture. Some of the kinetic artists used electronic or tape-recorded music to add a further dimension to their works.

#### MUSICAL PAINTINGS

That reminds me of 'paintings that can be seen and heard', of Gunter Mass, a German, who after his travels in Europe, Egypt and India, invented the audio-visual paintings. In his work, music does not merely accompany the painting. Forms and colours are converted into sounds. The elemental geometrical forms in his paintings are converted into sounds through diapositives. Thus a circle has one sound, a triangle another and a rectangle a still different sound. With the help of photo tubes and an electronic scanning device the forms are converted into sounds. Colours too have sound values. Blue sounds remote and cool; green is soothing and restful; and red is turbulent. With the flick of the switch, the paintings can be seen and heard!

#### NEON ART

Neon sculpture-cum-paintings too come within the purview of this survey. Two European artists, who were spellbound by the neon-light advertisements of the Times Square in New York, have launched these garishly bright, animated sculpture-cum-paintings. Martial Raysse, a French sculptor, who used to make his sculptures out of radio parts and tooth brushes, took to neonlight images because light and colour can be seen in a novel and intense form. His neon icons are done imaginatively. They are not any street signs, but art objects, he insists. For instance his Flower Pot neon sculpture-cum-painting lights up slowly—first the pot, then the stem and then the flowers. His Telephone flashes off and suggest incessant ringing. The other artist in this field is Greek-born Chryssa, who says that she is using contemporary techniques just as Byzantine used the processes familiar in his day to capture the shift and shimmer of light. She creates forms out of letters of the alphabet and keeps them in glass cases. Both

of them do the preliminary designs and get their works done by the neon-light manufacturers. These two and eight other neon artists from five countries were recently honoured at a group show sponsored by the Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art. With the never-ending material available from the art journals of the world, with the never-ceasing experiment being done by the artists the world over, a fabulous catalogue can be compiled. That is not my intention here. I want to spotlight only those that help to throw-light on the anti-art movement. With three more instances, I shall finish this section and proceed to an analysis of what exactly is the Anti-Art Movement.

How far the craze for novelty and multi-dimensional art has gone can be judged from the following two instances. One is about the Vienna-born Maria Stern's painting which can be called as *Variation on Goya's Naked Maja*. It is a large canvas with a bright Mediterranean blue with a narrow upper band of black. On the line dividing the two colours reclined a paper cut-out from a large print of Goya's Naked Maja. From the Nude's hand, through a hole in the canvas dangled a string. And, every time the string was pulled by a visitor, a voice-box behind the canvas was set in motion and such naughty expressions as "Please change my dress," "I am sleepy" and "will you play with me?" were heard. This is the absurd limit to which audio-visual paintings have been taken.

#### HAPPENINGS

The other instance I wish to cite is perhaps the ultimate in what is known as Happenings. Happenings are specially contrived events that occur at art exhibitions. Their origin is attributed to Allen Kaprow, Associate Professor of Fine Arts, State University of New York. At his Orange Happening, a semi-nude girl was kept in a bath-tub full of orange juice. Lot of Florida oranges were also kept. Those who came squeezed the oranges or drank the juice in the tub. This was supposed to be an experiment in audience participation. Even in this the ultimate was reached when the Institute Di Tella Visual Arts Centre of Buenos Aires, a hot-bed of *avant garde* art movements, organised the "La Menesunda." Menesunda means confusion, mess, tangle etc. And, it is in this type of dazed confusion that the visitors landed after they passed through a series of rooms with corridors connecting them. When groups of visitors went through the rooms, they had to participate in essential situations. In one room there were bright neon lights. In another, a bed with a flesh-and-blood couple. In the third, the temperature was several degrees below zero. The fourth was a glass capsule in which the visitors were covered with confetti. And the fifth was an enormous hallow head inside which was a beauty parlour. The sponsors described this as something more than cinema, spectacle and happening.

La Menesunda was certainly an experiment in the Huxleyean "Feelies." This too in the name of Art.

#### DEBUFFET

Finally, before passing on to the last section of this paper, I would like to dwell briefly on *l'art brut* of Jean Debuffet. It is a one-man movement and has some validity. By using all sorts of materials in his painting and by attuning himself to sub-conscious and even pre-conscious urges, Debuffet has been creating a world of primeval splendour. In his paintings, brutalized Paul Klee figures and totemic images are disintegrated with violence into simple, inarticulate and sombre forms, which somehow retain all the memory of their humanity, according to Norman Schlenhoff. Debuffet's stand is that all canons of art represent humbug. And through his art, he has set up an Anti-Art movement of his own. His theories and replies to them would take up a separate paper.

#### FEATURES OF ANTI-ART

Now that I have provided a survey of the most *avant garde* art movements and pointed out the "Anti-Art" elements in them, let me now proceed with the "Aesthetics of Anti-Art."

Frank Kermode of the *Encounter* in a recent article has given a part description of Anti-Art. He said: "For instance, all of them say that art is much less interesting than life and not generically different from it. All seek impersonality (though strong personalities are vividly present in their work) and therefore experiment with chance. All accept that art is characteristically impermanent being made up of things without transcendence. And all rejoice to work on the borders of farce. They made random and unpredictable things in a world consisting of random and unpredictable things, an activity that is always absurd; the purposeless is pursued with fanatic purpose, farcical in itself. Using Kermode's statement as a starting-point, let me try to list the characteristic features of these *avant garde* art movements and show why they are Anti-Art.

1. *Emphasis on the accidental element*: In Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and other types of Art like Junk Art, there is a great emphasis on the accidental element in the process of creation. There is a theory built around, called the "Aleation" Theory, according to which chance or grace plays a role in the composition of any work of art and that whatever may be the accidental form involved in the process, the work of art will fall into an order though not in order. I wish to cite the case of Niki de Saint-Phalle, who ties up plastic bags of paint over the canvas and then shoots those bags with her rifle. The patterns formed by the dripping paint formed the

painting. This is an extreme case. Several of the Pop Artists create their colleges depending mostly on the accidental element, which has been anathema to the artists of East and West in the past.

2. *The use of new, impermanent, non-artistic materials*: Painters and sculptors are using plastic sheets, plexiglas, nails, sand, bee wax, scrap iron, upholstery materials, neon tubes, P.V.C. paints, fabric dyes, etc. These materials may suit the age, but it cannot be gainsaid that they are non-artistic and impermanent materials. Wind, weather, termites, jolts in transport and such other factors will destroy these works of art.

3. *The preoccupation with experimentation*: The artists of today are preoccupied with experimentation to such an extent that they will not stop anywhere. Even though experimentation by itself is very necessary for progress in the arts, the present tempo of experimentation is alarming. Besides, there is more of experimentation with materials and techniques than of experimentation with ideas and concepts, with the result that more of craft has entered the field and less of art.

4. *The increasing use of gimmicks*: Consequent to experimentation in all sorts of crazy ways, there has been an increasing use of gimmicks in the process of creation, in the art works and in the display. The obsession with novelty has led many artists to resort to gimmicks, with the result that the art works look dubious. Why, some of them turn out to be hoaxes.

5. *Mechanization*: Kinetic sculpture, welded sculpture, neon sculpture-cum-painting and such other things require a knowledge of engineering and technology. Mechanics gadgetry has made such serious inroads that one begins to wonder whether a simple course in science and engineering will have to be included in the art schools of tomorrow!

6. *The changing concepts of media*: Gone are the days of two-dimensional paintings and three-dimensional sculptures. Today painters sculpt and sculptors paint. Paintings project three feet from the wall or rest on the floor. And sculptures have acquired garish colours on them. Bronze and marble have been replaced by iron, plastics and glass. The very word sculpting is a bit devalued since welded sculptures came into existence. Besides, paintings and sculptures have acquired a new dimension since sound has been added to them.

7. *Mass production methods and industrialization of art*: In the U.S.A., Britain and Germany, art has lately come to be classified as Art Consumer Industry. Alvin Toffler has written a whole book called "*The Culture Consumers*" in which he has revealed art in a new light—in terms of producers and consumers, laws of supply and demand, profit sector and non-profit sectors of consumers and such other industrial concepts. One will have to reconcile oneself with the idea of art being an industry today because of various factors. Artists themselves are going in for mass production methods. Pop Artists use photo copies and silk screen prints, One

Pop Artist has made coloured squares in aluminium, which can be arranged in any pattern that one likes.

Recently, two artists, Gerald Laing and Peter Phillips created a sculpture called "Hybrid" according to the desires of art consumers after a thorough market-research. They sent a questionnaire to 137 collectors, museum directors and critics to find out which was the ideal height, the ideal material and so on. When the replies came in, they were fed into the computer to analyse the results. Then it was found that 52.2 inches would be the ideal height for the sculpture. The ideal colours were red, white and blue. The ideal materials were aluminium (28.6%), plexiglas (23.6%), brass (23.6%) and plastic (17%). Accordingly, "Hybrid" was made, one in standard size and one in desk size. And when the products were presented on a turn-table to the consumers, an announcement was made that next year's model would be different in order to accommodate changing tastes. Sculptures and car models are no different now.

8. *De-personalization*: As pointed out earlier, in Op Art, Kinetic Art, Neon Art and other forms of modern art, the artist has to depend on others for the finishing of the works of his imagination. This had led to de-personalization. No longer can we find the personality of the painter or a sculptor in his works.

9. *Communication and non-communication*: The works of art today are as Newsweek put it, "mindlessly blank." They look forward to a robotized future. There is no need for content, meaning and message. Nor for feelings. Since the present day icons can be made out of anything and everything and beauty can be found in banality, there is apparently no need for communication between the artist and the art-lover. De-humanization having reached the apex, there is very precious left to communicate. Hence the black painting, the blank book and the silent symphony.

10. *The scrapping of all accepted ideas of art*: All the totems and taboos of art in East and West have to be relegated to the scrapheap since novel and revolutionary ideas have come into existence, demanding from us adjustment. We may or we may not. But the voices of the Anti-Art leaders are insistent and strident. But for them, this paper would not have been written.

## CONCLUSION

It is strange that in the world of art all this should have happened when in the world of science, man is looking forward to reaching the moon and to creating life in the test-tube. But it is in the very nature of Art that it "is not a certain sum of knowledge, technical or otherwise, but a reality in process of becoming, which reveals itself to us and eludes us at every step," to quote the words of Michel Seuphor. And let us comfort our-

selves with the words of Ernst Fischer: "Man, who became man through work, who stepped out of the animal kingdom as transformer of the natural into the artificial, who became therefore the magician, Man the creator of social reality, will always stay the great magician, will always be Prometheus bringing fire from heaven to earth, will always be Orpheus entralling nature with his music. Not until humanity itself dies will art die."

Though apparently it looks as if the arts have come to a dead-end, actually it is not so. We, in the year 1966, are facing a situation in the arts very much similar to that fifty years ago, when Tzara, Mondrian, Duchamp, Leger and others launched the ideas which have found full expression now. Soon artists are bound to turn their eyes in other directions or inwards. For it is not in the nature of things for a revolution to be on forever. And, as Seuphor put it, "Revolutions renew the air; they do not change the substance of things. What is permanent adapts itself to the new climate." Art has created its anti-thesis in Anti-Art. But there is bound to be a synthesis of both, for that is the inexorable law of life. Let us not merely hope for it. Let us look forward to it. Let us not become panicky and despondent. Let us still hope for the best. Even if Pop Art gathers the momentum of the snowball, it will become so popular that everyone of us can become a Pop Artist. If Op Art becomes a world wide movement, then we will be reviving the medieval guilds. If Kinetic Art and Happenings become very popular, then all our senses will get satisfaction simultaneously. And, why not? After some time, why should there not be a possibility of artists getting tired by formal experiments and craving for content in works of art. Why cannot the old themes be presented in new styles? Why cannot the social realists of U.S.S.R., China and other countries adopt the basic principles of Pop Art and Op Art? There are tremendous possibilities before us. Let us anticipate them with wonder and with faith that not until humanity itself dies will art die.

# THE IMPACT OF MODERN MOVEMENTS ON THE AESTHETIC THEORY OR THEORIES

Laxman Pai

*(The paper was prepared by the author in a question form with the intention of expanding the ideas in a common question-answer discussion atmosphere)*

PERSONALLY I would like to deal with this subject right from the beginning, tracing its development to the present, that is, from the aesthetic theory to the modern movements and their impact.

Here are some important questions which I am noting alongwith my own brief observations on them.

- (1) *Has the aesthetic theory changed? Can there be a change in the basic aesthetic theory? Or is the change only in respect of the outward structure of aesthetics?*

There cannot be a change in the fundamental structure of the aesthetic theory. In any form of art whether in music, literature, dance, painting or sculpture, it is always the perfect proportion and the resultant harmony in formal conceptions that create on an individual the vital aesthetic response.

And this response is applicable to all works of art at any period.

On this principle, there cannot be a change in the basic aesthetic theory.

If we say that the aesthetic outlook changes according to the different ages, we will have to accept that our conception of aesthetics is only applied to the outward structure of the creative work, that is the formal conception of the work of art.

- (2) *Is there a change in the aesthetic approach of the artist towards his creation?*

If we consider the outward structural elements as the basis of aesthetics, we will have to agree to the change.

(3) *What is the real specific change in outlook, which the artist had in mind during the modern movement?*

The modern movement in painting was the product of the West's direct revolution against the Greek classical conception. The artists were more preoccupied in changing the formal concept of painting in its entire process of execution, Middle Eastern and Eastern concepts of painting were the basic inspirations.

During my first sojourn in Paris in 1951 I was asked the question: In what way has modern movements influenced me? My answer was frank and simple. The modern European Artists were trying to approach the Eastern concepts, that means they were approaching my own or the Eastern concepts.

The second point the Modern Artist had in mind was to change the very process of viewing a work of art.

Here we come to the very significant factors of objective and subjective approaches in art.

Paintings were executed in distinctly objective manner, but in the process the artist preferred his own freedom, to discard his other responsibilities in order to adhere to the objective beginning.

He preferred the on-looker to look at the painting just without any objective value.

(4) *Is there a change in the aesthetic approach of the on-looker towards painting or any other creative expression?*

Generally speaking, there is no great change in the spectator's approach to a painting. A painting is generally appreciated in three (or perhaps more) ways.

a) Sentimental.

b) As an illustration of one's own personal experiences.

c) As a pure aesthetic response with a clear, unclouded mind.

a) Sentimental approach: For example, a painting entitled 'Christ' or 'Lord Krishna' is appreciated by a devotee-spectator for the sake of the subject value only.

b) The illustrative approach is always a complicated one. If we analyse, we shall realise that the individual first recalls his own personal experience and creates an image suggested by the title of the painting and contrasts it with the painter's work before him. His reaction to the work of art depends on how much his own vision or experience corresponds to the painter's.

c) The ideal aesthetic response is the purest and the most direct. This is only found in a few who are gifted with a sensitive and clear, open mind.



In this case there is not the preconceived vision of the spectator, no conflict between the picture and his own conception and that of the artist. This response is direct and is caused by the harmonies created by means of form, colour, line and texture.

(5) *Has the artist succeeded in changing the spectator's approach?*

To some extent I think he has. But on the whole any man would always want to hold the limited experience of his own vision as a criterion to appreciate a painting.

(6) *Music, for example, which is transmitted to the same brain screen, through the audio organ, reacts easily on individuals. But the same is not the case with the painting, which makes demands on the visual organs. Where is the clash?*

An individual reacts to the musical harmony directly without referring to his own preconceived vision. But he comes to clash with painting, because of his own preconceived visual images.

(7) *Can the creative painting be fully subjective?*

In painting, the perfect harmony in form, colour, line and texture is the main element for consideration. But that element cannot be an end in itself.

This element is only the binding medium—the start is always objective. In the case of Indian miniatures or religious paintings of the Christian era, the artist had dual jobs to play: To keep the objective feeling throughout, at the same time considering the aesthetic aspects of the painting.

In the development of the modern movements we find only the objective start as a spark, to keep the freedom of harmony in painting which moves in a direction without considering the starting objective form.

(8) *If we still appreciate ancient illustrative paintings, it is because of their aesthetics or formal conceptual value, we can also at the same time be at ease with modern movement of paintings, our aesthetic theory has changed only in as much as there is a change in our present day approach to the work of art itself.*

# AN INQUIRY INTO THE MOTIVE BEHIND NEGATION OF APPEARANCE IN MODERN ART

Pranabranjan Ray

BETWEEN 1843 and 1860 John Ruskin published his *magnum opus* *Modern Painters*. Pinpointing the elements on which greatness of style depend, Ruskin laid down the choice of noble subject as the primary pre-condition when he wrote: "The style is greater or less in exact proportion to the nobleness of the interests and passions involved in the subject. The habitual choice of sacred subjects, such as the Nativity, Transfiguration, Crusifixion (if the choice be sincere), implies that the painter has a natural disposition to dwell on highest thoughts. . . ." The second element of greatness of style in Ruskin's words: "(the) characteristic of the great school of art is that it introduces in the conception of its subject as much beauty as possible, consistently with truth." Truth and beauty of Ruskin's conception are, however, "entirely distinct though often related things. One is a property of statements, the other of objects. . . . For although truth and beauty are independent of each other, it does not follow that we are at liberty to pursue whichever we please. They are indeed separable, but it is wrong to separate them; they are to be sought together in order of their worthiness; that is to say, truth first and beauty afterwards. High art differs from low art in possessing an excess of beauty in addition to its truth, not in possession of excess of beauty inconsistent with truth".<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to see Aristotelean<sup>2</sup> inspiration behind Ruskin's ideas. In fact Ruskin did not only lay down these criteria for the modern art of his conception or of his time, but for art—irrespective of spatio-temporal considerations. In order to be a valid theory and system of aesthetics should necessarily be applicable to all categories and variations of art. A theory that fails to supply explanation for any variety of art is not a valid theory.

I have chosen Ruskin's premises simply for the fact that most general and common characteristic features of the 20th century visual arts can be pinpointed in direct contradistinction to Ruskin's theory. The use of the word general

- 
1. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (Selections), Everymans, London, undated. pp. 147-50.
  2. "The poet, being an imitator, like the painter or any other artist of that kind, must necessarily, when he imitates, have in view one of these three objects : he must represent things as they were or are; or such as they are said to be and believed to be; or such as they should be." *Aristotle's Poetics*, Tr. by Thomas Twining. Everyman's Edition, edited by G. A. Moxon, London, 1949. p. 51.

characteristics can be objected to by many a connoisseur. But to many laymen, who are not that unlettered in visual language, differences between a Cubist Picasso, a Fauvist Matisse, a geometrical plasticist Mondrian and an abstract expressionist Kandinsky are just minor differences about choice of observational forms and do not signify any real difference in attitudes and philosophy. They are all more or less deviationists of nature. If this way of looking at the 20th century art cannot be accepted, yet it must be admitted that there is a large amount of reasonability in the approach.

To go back to Ruskin's hypothesis: from the example of subjects Ruskin had given, it seems that, he was referring to subjects as embodied in objects, which have had assumed nobility due to certain extra-visual values and associations imposed on them. Even assuming that all art before the birth of Romanticism—which upheld the commonplace in glory—had shown a preference for grand subjects, it is doubtful whether nobility of subject was at all responsible for greatness of style at any time. On the other hand, it is perhaps not difficult to show that nobility of subject in art actually depends on the greatness of style. In true naturalistic fashion of the times the Impressionists “discarded most of what the academics held dear, ‘heroic’ subject matter. . . . Their art was largely observational and cared more for temporary appearance of things in a particular light and movement than for emotive possibilities of their subject”.<sup>3</sup> But appearance of objects were still subjects for the Impressionists, although their concern centred round movement of and effect of light and atmosphere on natural objects as visualised in terms of colour. Concern for subject as embodied in objective forms further diminished with the post-impressionist like Paul Cezanne, Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. In a letter written by the poet-critic Gillaume Appolinaire to the art-dealer Ambroise Vollard, the former asked: “When Cezanne paints a still life with apples, plates and knives, does he try to describe their likeness to real objects in all their normal associations?” By way of reply to his own query elsewhere in the same letter, he writes “nothing could be more unedible than Cezanne’s apples more unusable than Cezanne’s knives and plates”.<sup>4</sup> Etymologically the term subject in this context means either topic or a matter of discourse or study or that which it is the object of the artist to express. But with Cezanne that element of representational object that is there, as is plain from the assessment of Appolinaire, becomes incidental and subservient to pictorial considerations. Locus of subject shifts from the representational object recorded in the painting. And Paul Cezanne was the painter with whom all considerations of modern, that is to say 20th century art, must begin.

“The diminished concern with subject led to a diminished interest in the actual appearance of the visible world and an increased interest in what it represented to the artist’s temperament. From this emerged a concern with the

3. Trewin Copplestone, *Modern Art Movements*, London, 1962. p. 15.

4. Ambroise Vollard, *Paul Cezanne*, Paris, 1915.

picture that was being painted rather than the subject it might be depicting; subject became subordinated to painting itself." Objective-subject, in subordinate status, incidental to art—has remained more or less present in the works of the Fauvists, Expressionists of different variety and perhaps in the paintings of the Surrealists. In quest for plasticity and purely autonomous pictorial values Cubism first completely dislodged subjects from visible world from already insecure seat in art. Pure abstractionists, of the variety of neo-plasticism and constructivism, coming later showed no concern at all for subject. Abstract expressionists, working from different end, found in subjects of visible world obstacles to free and unbridled expression of individual experience of subjective nature.

But two exceptions must be made to this general tendency in modern art away from objective subject. As Michel Seuphor says, "the anecdote (literature, in short) was nevertheless to take possession of painting again, to dominate it as it has rarely done, when Surrealism swept over Paris. For a few years nothing else was to remain".<sup>5</sup> Subject in the sense of anecdotal subject has very much remained a concern with the Mexican modern painters like Rivera, Orzco, Siqueiros and Tamayo.

I will endeavour to show that though it is largely true that the general tendency of 20th century art is away from subject as embodied in the visible-world object or visible-world sequence of objects, but subject as theme or content of creative intention does, as Georg Lukacs says, determine the form of work of art.<sup>6</sup> This always did and is still doing. The change in the formalistic attitudes in 20th century arts are ascribable to changes in *weltanschauung*. I will also endeavour to show that relegation of objective-subject to secondary position in modern art is only a symptom and not a characteristic feature.

To go back to establish the general character of modern art and once again to Ruskin's hypothesis: his second pre-condition for greatness of style can be taken up for polemics to lay bare the general characteristics of the 20th century art. In this criterion of his, Ruskin discusses about truth and beauty and their mutual relation in art. Truth, Ruskin says, is a quality of objects. Without going into the debates of epistemology, I would like to point to two examples, one given by Heinrich Wölfflin and other by Jose Ortega Y Gasset, about difference in individual response to the same phenomenal stimuli. Once Ludwig Richter and three friends set out to paint a landscape and all four firmly resolved not to deviate from nature by hair's breadth; and although the subject was the same, the result was four totally different pictures, as different from each other as the personalities of the four painters.<sup>7</sup> In the second example, a great man was dying, his wife was at his bedside and doctor was holding his pulse; a reporter was

5. Michel Seuphor, *Abstract Painting*, New York, 1964. p. 94.

6. Georg Lukacs, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, London, 1962. p. 19.

7. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, Dover Edition, New York, p. 1.

present for professional reasons and a painter was there by chance. They were all witnessing the identical event of a man's death but were reacting in totally different manner.<sup>8</sup> Without resorting to unqualified relativistic position of uniqueness of individual reaction, it might be said in sociological jargon that difference in culture-strata-time-personality continuum do produce differing responses to identical phenomenon. It is very difficult to say in such cases whose response is most objective, hence truthful. Everyone's response is as truthful and as objective as the others'.

20th century artists irrespective of their many, even contradictory isms and beliefs are united in the belief that truth is not a quality of objects of visible world. Or even if it be a quality of objects of visible world, art at least has no use for such transient, impersonal and unself-conscious truth. Hence objective appearance has lost its value in art of this century. Truth, whether subjective or objective is to be sought beyond appearance. Rejection of validity of phenomenal image or at least relegation of it to secondary importance and accepting objective appearance only as incidental to subjectively conceived truth are the most important general characteristics of the art of the 20th century. Varieties of stylistic trends, distortions (an unfortunate word) and abstractions (another misconceived word) are unified in this rejection of the world of appearances.

Fauvism led by Matisse was the first of the great 20th century art movements to arrive around 1905-06. The most noticeable pictorial characteristic of Fauvism was an exaggerated use of colour, use of verbose colour schema etc. Colour in Fauvist canvases spilled over the bounds of form with practically nothing to do with chiaroscuro. Autonomous, violent and intense use of colours by Fauvists stemmed from the belief that colour can evoke atmosphere and emotional response independently of the form of the subject. Objective-subject is redundant, truth is concerned with subjective emotion which can be expressed in terms of colour values only. And since emotion is resultant effect of sense-perception and sensuous participation or what the empiricist philosophers call the result of experience through senses; visual sense is best roused to emotion when it gets involved in perception of colour values.

Sergi Eisenstein, the great Soviet film theoritian, did a bit of research in relation between colour and emotion. He observed that only the primary colours are capable of rousing emotions. But their potentialities are limited. These are capable of rousing such broad and generalised emotions as are associated with sensations of warmth, coolness, brightness and darkness. But a same warm or a cool or a bright colour can play up completely different emotions in combination with different other colours. Only in careful combination with certain other colours does a colour become capable of evoking meaningful suggestions.

Unlike Fauvism, which sought to drape the world of visible forms with colours that it lacks, to establish with it a communion with emotional life of man—

---

8. Jose Ortega Y Gasset, *The Dehumanisation of Art*, Doubleday-Anchor, New York, p. 13.

Cubism the next great germinal movement in the 20th century art, was in its initial stages, an offspring of realism. It represented an attempt to reduce the images given in visual perception to a schematic or structural order.<sup>9</sup> What was the schema? So long the art of painting, which depended on the image of external world to a great extent—sought to realise it in art through the employment of multitudes of techniques to create illusions of external world, such as the three-dimensional perspective, the point of vanishing parallel lines and the chiaroscuro etc. Cubism in the first place sought to reconstruct the three dimensional external world in terms of two dimensional picture-space and without resorting to the techniques of creating illusions. Creation of a parallel reality in terms of visual perception and picture-surface was implied in the endeavour. In its subsequent phase, the cubists sought to find out the underlying structural principles of the objects of visible world, those are most general constant qualities of objects despite multiplicity and transitoriness of worldly appearances.

Closely connected with and springing directly from the later-day Cubist experiments are various pure abstract art styles, which includes works of neo-Plasticists like Piet Mondrian, constructivists like Naum Gabo and Anotoine Pevsener, Super-matists like Casimir Malevitch and Tatlin and unattached pure abstractionists like Ben Nicholson and Victor Pasmore. The pure abstract art, according to its exponents, is a purely perceptual art. Mondrian had written, "Man is enabled by abstract aesthetic contemplation to achieve conscious unity with the universal. The deepest purpose in painting has always been to give concrete existence, through lines and colours, to the universal which appears in contemplation,"<sup>10</sup> and again, "Unconsciously every true artist has always been moved by beauty of lines, colours and relationship for their own sake and not by what they represent".<sup>11</sup> Hence abstract art; for "Abstract real-painting is capable of mathematically aesthetic expression, because it possesses an exact, mathematical means of expression".<sup>12</sup> Compare this statement with, "man as an element of nature is subject to that universal law of nature to which all other phenomenon of nature is subject. This universal law is operative in every phenomenon, yet it is prior to all phenomenon. Pythagorous thought, it can only be conceived through numbers,"<sup>13</sup> and Mondrian thought, as his basic data were visual, natural principle could be conceived through basic visual elements like horizontal and verticle lines and primary colours. As these basic visual elements are roots of all beauty and orderliness or ugliness and chaos, these would be basic elements to create works of beauty. The pure abstractionists like all ture naturalist-idealists, think that the basic principles of colour sensation, form-sensation etc. are derived from arrangement of basic geometrical forms, presented in primary

- 
9. Herbert Read, *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, Meridian, New York, 1955. p. 95.
  10. R. Goldwater and M. Treves, *Artists on Art*, Pantheon, New York, 1945.
  11. *ibid.*
  12. *ibid.*
  13. J. P. Mayer, *Political Thought : The European Tradition*, New York, 1939. p. 57.

colours. These are more universalistic in appeal, having their base in physiology and psychology of sensation. In words of Cesar Domela, an exponent of pure abstract painting, "the mathematical art that attempts at exclusion of individuality, personality and temperament would be grasped as readily in Stockholm as in Athens—that is with no local limitations, no temperamental exclusions". So 'truth', the pure abstractionists sought not in appearance of objects, but in an abstract universalistic principle in the fashion of all objective-idealists.

Nikhilesh, a motive character in Tagore's novel *Ghare Bairey*, somewhere says, "the image of Sandip that is taking form in my mind has perhaps got deformed by the heat of my anguish".<sup>14</sup> The statement here is an expressionistic expression. Neither the appearance nor the conceptual structure of form of Sandip nor even the problem of giving plastic equivalent of external form of Sandip is primary. To Expressionist painters like Edvard Munch, Emile Nolde, Franz Marc and Paul Klee, that tension, that individually experienced anguish is the primary truth; visible form is only incidental to that subjective truth.

Expressionism, as against Cubism, pure abstract art and even Fauvism did not develop any rigid pictorial convention. Expressionist painters would use the representational and the figurative or non-representational according to individual temperaments. But even when an expressionist painter clings to representational form of object in his painting, the appearance of the objects undergo vast transformation, and forms in their juxtaposition to each other in a composition do not stand for any narration of worldly phenomenon but function as ideographs.

Whether people realise or not, abstraction is a method and not an inspiration and there are kinds of abstraction. Wassily Kandinsky believed that personal subjective experience of spiritual kind can never be expressed in terms of known forms of the observable world. Worldly appearances are obstacles to expression of ideas having no visual equivalents. In visual terms these subjective and individual experiences can be evoked through abstract shapes and colours arranged in suggestive compositions. "Kandinsky, was not so pure an abstract artist as Piet Mondrian: he used his abstract forms to illustrate subjective themes. Behind his compositions there was always an 'idea'—perhaps a philosophical idea or a musical idea—for which he tried to find the plastic equivalent: With Piet Mondrian, there is no precedent idea. The composition is conceived, *ab initio*, in plastic terms".<sup>15</sup> Expressionism, therefore, sought truth in subjective experience of the individual that lie beyond the realm of the visible appearances.

Surrealism is a very adaptable name and is used to describe a great variety of work, from pure fantasy to the involved allegory or dream image. In dealing with the fantastic Surrealists painting may take a number of distinct forms, each of which, however, is recognisable through irrational approach and construc-

14. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gharey Bairey* (in Home and in the Universe).

15. Herbert Read—op. cit., p. 45.

tionally unreal, unworldly, mysterious figures, either painted extremely meticulously with naturalistic details or constructed in near or wholly abstract shapes. Surrealism was defined by Andre Breton, as he said, 'once for all time' as "pure psychic automation, by which it is intended to express the real process of thought. Thought's dictation free from any control by the reason, independent of any aesthetic or moral preoccupation". And again, "Surrealism rests on the belief in superior reality of certain forms of associations hitherto neglected, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought".<sup>16</sup> When the Surrealist painters like Dali, Chirico and Dix meticulously painted appearance of objective reality or parts thereof with meticulous care like the naturalists, they did not go whole hog for naturalistic treatment of everything. They sought to go beyond the appearance of things by irrational and mysterious juxtaposition of known and unknown forms of visible world. Surrealists sought to put art to the service of a pseudo-Freudian theory about thought process. Truth according to them resided beyond realistic appearance of things, sub-conscious and unconscious mind of men is the locus of that superior reality. These sub-conscious and unconscious motivations of mind transform the visible reality with desire, apprehension etc.

This short survey of the more important of the 20th century movements had to be undertaken for laying bare the main characteristics of the 20th century art. These early 20th century movements till now have remained germinal movements. Appearance of action painting, Pop and Op art has not altered the situation in any substantial way.

It is probably clear from the foregoing survey that commonly thought of chief characteristic of the 20th century art—'abstraction' is only a quantitatively major symptom. It is neither exclusive nor fundamental to 20th century art. It is only that the 20th century visual artists have made a more thorough and variegated use of the method of abstraction than had hitherto been done.

But then there have been as many kinds of abstraction and abstract art in this century as there had been in the art of all past ages taken together. It is simply because abstraction in art is a method, a functional resultant of some attitude and neither an end in itself nor an inspiration. There is little correspondance in resultant effect between Kandinsky's kind of 'abstraction' and Mondrian's kind of abstraction. On the other hand, in resultant effects, Oscar Kokoscha's not so abstract paintings have affinities with Kandinsky's paintings. Piet Mondrian's architectonic abstraction has affinities with Constantin Branchusi's simplifactory and reductionist abstraction.

It is perhaps evident from the preceding analyses of major trends of modern art that the prime characteristic of modern art is rejection of the validity of appearances of objective form and all institutional forms. This negation is common feature of all the major art movements of this century. Abstraction

---

16. Andre Breton, *First Surrealist Manifesto*, Paris, 1924.



is nothing but a logical culmination of this negation of validity of phenomenal image.

On the positive side, in varying degrees all the art movements of this century have tended towards greater reliance on plasticity of expression, that is to say, on qualities those are specifically related to visual sense perception, rather than on literary, narrative, objective and other associations.

20th century artists are apt to publicise the second or the positive aspect of their art out of proportions. In fact Giotto once echoed the findings of a modern Gestalt psychologist, who said : "perception tends towards balance and symmetry; or differently expressed : balance and symmetry are perceptual characteristics of the visual world which will be realised whenever the external conditions allow it; when they do not unbalance, and lack of symmetry will be experienced as a characteristic of objects or the whole field, together with a felt urge towards better balance".<sup>17</sup> Pure formal aspect of composition also attracted the attention of Leonardo da Vinci. And yet despite geometrical precision and plasticity of their composition, their art had other values besides the perceptual.

Then again, when the pre-twentieth century artists took into account the appearance of things of the visible world, it would be wrong to presume, as Ortega Y Gasset did, that their sole concern had been recapturing of the appearance only. It will be worth while to remember what Heinrich Wofflin remarked on this point : "it is a mistake for art history to work with the clumsy notion of the imitation of nature, as though it were merely a homogeneous process of increasing perfection".<sup>18</sup> Yet never did a pre-twentieth century painter or a sculptor as whole negate the objective appearance.

But if observation data from the world of art is to be believed and when these must be believed so far as visual arts are concerned, twentieth century art represents a total departure from art of the past.

"By attributing everything to expression alone, we make the false assumption that for every state of mind the same expressional methods were always available" or even affective. "Every artist finds certain visual possibilities before him, to which he is bound. Not everything is possible at all times, vision itself has a history".<sup>19</sup>

General assumption about art and its function in the 20th century is conditioned by the visual possibilities and the *zeitgeist* of this century. Therefore, 20th century expressionist like August Macke has more affinities despite defference with a 20th century purist like Ben Nicholson than with an old painter with expressionist tendencies like Grunewald, and Mondrian has more affinities with expressionist Franz Marc than with Giotto.

Never before in the history of art, artists have shown so much exclusive perusal of selective subjective ideal in art. Ortega Y Gasset is perhaps right when

17. Karl Kofka, *Problems in the Psychology of Art* ; a Bryan Mawrr Symposium, 1940.

18. Heinrich Wofflin—op. cit., p. 13.

19. *ibid.*, p. 11-12.

he says that the new art is basically subjective in character. While Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism and to some extent Fauvism would readily accept that, Cubists, Constructivists, Neo-plasticists would not agree to that description. They would say that their art is universalistic and rational in aiming at only perceptual sensation. Yet the art of the latter are as subjective, simply for the reason that their concepts are not empirically verifiable.

To return to our argument of attention of modern art to exclusive elements. Giotto, despite his pre-occupation with problems of balance and harmony was never oblivious of narrative potential of his subjects, and Grunewald despite his pre-occupation with ideas of fear and tension did not at all relegate institutional forms of visible world to oblivion. But why of all centuries the twentieth century art is exhibiting this tendency to negate the phenomenal image and pursuing exclusive truths beyond the reality of appearances, the major symptom of which is visual abstraction.

Taking his cue from Hegel and Feurbach, Karl Marx developed the theory of alienation. To say it in Erich Fromm's words : "Alienation as we find it in modern society is almost total, it pervades the relationship of man to his work, to his creations, to what he consumes, to the state, to his fellow men and to himself".<sup>20</sup> "The idea of alienation as derived from Marx... has a double meaning which can best be distinguished as estrangement and reification. The first is essentially a socio-psychological condition in which the individual experiences a sense of distance, or a divorce from his society or his community; he can not belong, he is deracinated. The second, a philosophical category with psychological overtones, implies that an individual is treated as an object and turned into a thing and loses his identity in the process; in contemporary parlance he is depersonalised".<sup>21</sup> Alienation, according to Marx, was rooted in work under capitalism, but had become an all pervading phenomenon. The sociologist Georg Simmel, writing about the anonymity of modern man, first located the source of alienation in industrial society, which destroyed man's self-identity by dispersing him into cluster of separate roles.

But in which way does alienation act in visual arts? Georg Lukacs, the brilliant Hungarian Marxist, wrote somewhere—"under capitalist social relations all social processes take on an illusory or reified appearance in the sense that they come to be regarded as having an 'objective' external reality of their own, as though they were other than those participated in or resulted from human action".<sup>22</sup> Erich Fromm has termed this process of 'objectification' away from subject as 'abstractification'. This meaning is distinguished from the process of abstraction which involves generalisations. Abstractification on the other hand

20. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, Premier Book, Greenwich, Conn. 1965. p. 114-15.

21. Daniel Bell, *The Debate on Alienation; Revisionism*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1962. p. 195.

22. Georg Lukacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, Leipzig, 1923. p. 198.

tries to project certain of the qualities over and above the phenomenon that exhibit the qualities. In accentuating certain qualities abstractification neglect other qualities of the objective phenomenon. Thus a conceptual quality is subjectively objectified away from the phenomenon. To quote Fromm again, "in contemporary Western culture this polarity has given way to an almost exclusive reference to the abstract qualities of things and people".<sup>23</sup>

Real source of the general tendency of visual art in 20th century towards declaration of autonomy of the world of art, which Ortega Y Gasset terms as de-humanisation of art, lies in this total tendency towards objectification. Sense perceptoriness is being sought to be given a separate life. That this is *zeitgeist* is proved by the fact that this tendency is discernable in the musical experiments of Schonberg, Alban Berg and Stravinsky. This tendency becomes discernable when Mallarme says that poetry should not be vehicle of emotion, it should not mean, it might at best evoke suggestion through arrangement of sensitive sounds. But behind this modernist endeavours to create in art a distinct world which is parallel to social world, there is a distinct attitude of distrust of the world of ephemeral and unwanted social relations crowded with institutional forms, those are unsuited to man's free flow of creative energy and hypocritical social behaviours. Even not so much a purist painter as Kandinsky in a letter written to his friend said, "I knew with certainty that the object harms my paintings. Ends (and hence also means) of nature and art differ essentially and organically". When man made beliefs, faiths, myths, and institutions are failing to deliver to man his happiness, his solace, his mental sustenance, what else but the potentiality to perceive through senses remains with him. Hence this glorification of plasticity.

And again, 'abstractification' tendency is *a priori* to all distortions of visible world and all abstraction in 20th century art. In search of truth behind phenomenal image, modern artists have sought to find answer in either this or that aspect of the experience of subject, i.e., man in relation to his visual perception. All the modernist movements in art have more or less done certain abstractification, thereby alienating art from wholeness of human experience. By isolating elements of life and visual experience for specialized emphasis, the 20th century art have largely disregarded the organic unity of life which alone gives any expression of it a meaning.

This specialization and perusal of exclusive aspects have enriched the language of visual perception enormously on the positive side. But it has taken away from art more than what it has given. Art like technology is perfecting its tools, implements and techniques for their own sake and deriving motive force from the observational data provided by the world of art, without any reference whatsoever to human experience and want. While technology is tolerated by people in general for its usefulness, when art which has no similar usefulness becomes

---

23. Erich Fromm—op. cit., p. 106.

exclusive like technology, becomes at the same time more alienated. The paradox of the situation is that certain modern artists and movements are in fact technology-oriented in less deeper sense than the former. Observational data in their works strongly recall their associations with machineries etc. I have a lurking suspicion that the artists, in search of ways to overcome alienation and find identification, found in technology the panacea, because it commands the greatest social power in modern society and hence represents the image of a vocation in identity with the purpose of the society in a technology-oriented situation. What Ortega Y Gasset called the dehumanisation of art is a resultant effect of that specialization and technocratization of art.

Roger Fry demanded that in order to be aesthetically satisfying any work of art "must in the first place be adapted to that disinterested intensity of contemplation, which we have found to be the effect of cutting off of responsive action. It must be suited to that heightened power of perception which we found to result therefrom. And the first quality that we demand in our sensations will be order, without which our sensations will be troubled and perplexed and the other quality will be variety, without which they will not be fully stimulated. It may be objected that many things in nature, such as flowers, possess these qualities of order and variety in high degree and these objects do undoubtedly stimulate and satisfy that clear disinterested contemplation which is characteristic of the aesthetic attitude. But in our reaction to a work of art there is something more—there is a consciousness of purpose, the consciousness of a peculiar relation of sympathy with the man who made this thing in order to arouse precisely the sensations we experience".<sup>24</sup> Plasticity, therefore, can not be last word in art, although it might be the primary requirement. Purposiveness gives art a superior dimension and with it comes the question of content. Content does not necessarily refer to images of the phenomenal world, it might be and is generally the *weltanschauung* of the artist concerned, his consciousness in composition of which the phenomenal world enters as an important factor.

It can be easily shown that path-breakers and *avant-garde* artists of each of the great modern movements, if not consciously, then at least unconsciously have given expression to certain attitudinal content. Mondrian's art can again be taken up as an example. "In spite of its emphasis on plasticity and purity of visual appeal his art was as much a function of time and society as art any time was."<sup>25</sup> Mondrian, as had been pointed out by Earnst Fischer, went all out to establish peace and harmony amidst conflicting tendencies in a world within his reach, as the ordering of phenomenal world of chaotic existence was beyond his reach. In visual terms he sought to achieve mathematical balance between contradictory horizontal and vertical principles, without taking recourse to mechanical sym-

24. Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1957. p. 29-30.

25. Pranabranjan Ray, *Crisis of Choice*, *Now*, April 29, 1966.

metry. But greatest of all examples is perhaps Picasso<sup>26</sup> himself. "This humanist artist has time and again returned to indivisibility of human experience from one sort of artistic exclusiveness and another".<sup>27</sup> But there are other examples too, exclusiveness of movements, their dogmatic emphasis on selective aspects of experience to total exclusion of other aspects of human experience in art, have not been able to contain the other-embracing sensibilities of artists like Matisse, Chagall and Paul Klee. Interestingly enough different organised movements lay claim on their art at the same time.

---

26. John Berger, *Successes and Failures of Picasso*, Pelican, London, 1965.

27. Earnst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art*, Pelican, London, 1963.

## MODERN MOVEMENTS IN WORLD ART AND THEIR IMPLICATION FOR AESTHETIC THEORIES

B. C. Sanyal

LET us try and be clear in our mind on the shades of meaning the word *modern* conveys in relation to art. Primarily, we shall confine our research and observations to world art of present or recent times and more particularly the phenomenal art development in India in the last decade or so. But irrespective of date, the appreciation of Modern Art instantly brings into mind an appreciation of qualities near to us in feeling temperament and mood. This feeling can be derived from works of art even if produced in time far removed from our era. Some months ago I visited the rock-shelter paintings near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. The immediate reaction was "How modern are these pre-historic drawings!" In a broad manner of speaking it can be said that the modernness of Modern Art as far as it relates to qualities of form and colour is independent of time. Yet it will not be wholly true, as Modern Art of our time is a question of values limited to a more up-to-date sense. The values represent a special development in the mode of visual perception which has its source perhaps in the social and industrial revolutions of the recent centuries as well as in the spiritual and mental ills of this age. Plastic Art, which once represented harmony and order, now seems to have abdicated in favour of chaos and tension. No wonder, the bewildered public believes that Modern Art is a joke at their cost, sustained only by clever publicists and hired agents. Does it indicate a crisis in Art of our time, or Art has only made plain the truth of the malady of contemporary civilisation? The consequences of the two World Wars and the obsession with extinction of the human race in nuclear warfare may well have given reason for a kind of cynicism, which is reflected in the visual distortion in Art. It is remarkable how the human figure began to appear distorted in the Art of the Western World and progressively more violent in distortion till we find the image of man is totally abandoned in the pictorial vision of the modern artist. Abstract Art of today is a negation of man as an element in the pictorial space. This I believe is a commentary on the state of mind we are in. Art of today does not record events and anecdotes, but it does record all the same the contemporary state of mind and attitude,

Scribbled in the note book of Leonardo da Vinci, we find "A good painter is to paint two main things, namely man and the working of man's mind." How outdated it sounds in respect of the first in the present context, yet has not Leonardo's work stood the test of time and remained aesthetically valid, independent of time? Ultra modern art is devoid of content and stands on the foundation of form alone. It demands, therefore, an exactitude of visual refinement. The subject matter of a painting now is *painting* itself. In other words it means : the painterly experience derived through the knowledge and command over technique plus the intellectual potential of the painter. The most damaging thing that can be said about a painting today is to refer to it as an illustration, or to say it has a subject matter, or that it has a literary content. Undoubtedly, with the expansion of science in the nineteenth century, the visible world was viewed by the painter in a new light, in term of light and colour revealed by the laws of science. Now, with the further development of science, painters have dealt with the invisible world, giving full reign to their imagination and fantasy, stimulated by the idea of outer space and soft landing on the moon. The subject matter of the twentieth century abstract art is free from social or literary content. In fact, this is the most significant departure in modern movement in World Art. Art has now divorced itself from the affairs of man and turned to visual commentaries for its own sake. Original art interprets the present and ceases to imitate what preceded before, but this is not for the sake of novelty and newness. Another important attribute to the development of Modern Art is the revolution in technique. The first revolution can be traced in the discovery of a practical method of painting in oil. It released the artist from the severity of planning a picture with rigid outline and gave him ease and speed in painting. Further more, the painter was able to paint on canvas as a substitute for wall surface. It also enabled the painter to be free with his brush and the pigment providing enough scope for improvisation. Gradually thus, chiaroscuro in painting was almost totally left behind. In recent times, with the advance of science and technology, the discovery of new material in the shape of plastics, moulded glass, glazed tiles, synthetic rubber, processed leather, oxidised metal, etc. further revolutionised technique to the extent that the life cycle of traditional painting and sculpture seems to be coming to an end. Brush painter has already become a term of derision in the West. Functions of painters, sculptors and graphicists are encroaching one another and the result is already in evidence, a fusion of media. This indeed is a singular event in the world of plastic and visual art in modern times. Art forms are largely determined by the media and the technique employed. The day is not far when artists will use computers to design the visual image.

Let us now examine the contemporary Indian scene vis-a-vis the modern

movement in World Art. A brief look into the process of evolution in Indian Art in the preceding period will be useful. Practice of the arts from the ancient time built up a unity of Indian tradition, which at the turn of the century came to near disintegration, having completed its cycle of life. The vacuum thus created in the cultural confrontation between the East and the West made room for the ingress of European Colonial Art. The British, during their rule, promoted styles of painting belonging to the Victorian era. Mention should be made, however, that a small group of enlightened Englishmen, who came to learn and appreciate the aesthetic value of Indian Art, did make commendable effort to save it from decay and oblivion. A positive reaction set in, however, against the current staleness of the degenerate school of painting, leading to the pioneering effort of Abanindranath and his associates to re-create a national art style in painting and sculpture. But no sooner the romantic renaissance zeal came to an end, the movement readily yielded to stronger modern inspirations that floated in from beyond. We were ready for more critical approach to painting as a craft and painting as an art. We were actually on the threshold of the modern phase of Indian painting.

Modern Art has made a strong impact in the post-independence period, because of the altered socio-political conditions. The newly awakened Indian mind was not content with narrow nationalism. The temperament of the national was attuned to internationalism, perhaps with the zeal of the new convert. Indian artists travelled abroad more widely. Cultural exchange programmes opened the gate for free traffic in meeting of minds and brought our artists, painters, sculptors face to face with modern international trends in art. Isolation and insularity of the past was shaken off and Indian talent readily responded to the climate of the jet age. International idiom of the visual and plastic arts was found agreeable enough for adoption. Indian artists felt free to choose and experiment. They no longer felt obliged to be tied down to sentimental traditionalism. But it is the idiom and not the vision which seems to prevail, barring a few exceptions. Facile sophistry substituted for searching inventiveness. The inspiration and experience is second hand but significantly indicative of the shape of things to come in Modern Indian Art. The effects of industrialisation and technological development will raise the country from the state of medievalism and modern India will then accept the genuinely modern Indian Art moulded in native sensibility.

I have confined my observations largely to painting, but I believe the modern movement pertaining to painting runs parallel also to sculpture, the difference being the difference of media and dimensions.

Aesthetic theories applicable for the appraisal of art must first trace the organic development of the visual experience and show how this is related to the prevalent movement of thought and sensibility of the period.



Theories do not precede the creative impulses of a given time. The art style of the period expertly analysed formulates the aesthetic theories. The facts contributing to the modern movement of painting and sculpture in the World Art constitute the history. Coherence is established by a philosophy giving the art movement a meaning and reason to be.

The style of painting or sculpture that is singularly modern needs a fresh outlook for just and honest assessment, free from propagandist element. Much in the art of the twentieth century has an element of pretence and calculated snobbery. A critical method, therefore, is necessary that can distinguish between the genuine and the spurious, between the relevant and the insincere, between the true and the false—a sound aesthetic theory that is capable of penetrating the disguises.

I do not claim to know the Western system and thought of aesthetic theories, nor the *śilpa-śāstras* of India. But an individual develops a sense of aesthetics from perception and direct experience. The rituals of worship, the festivals of the seasons, images of idols, ritualistic designs and decorations, forms in nature, environments, architectural monuments, folk art, dress, food, smell—experience of all these go to build one's aesthetic sensibility. This sensibility makes one see beauty or ugliness in things. Truly speaking, sense of beauty and ugliness is only in one's mind. But aesthetic theories known to us are not adequate to measure Modern World Art. Modern Art is not merely the question of sensation of beauty and ugliness, sentiment and emotion, *bhāva*, *bhāngi* or *bhāngā*. It is necessary to formulate new canons based on the understanding of new method and material as well as the chemistry of the new thought process, to be able to set up new norms and standards of judgment of Modern Art. I do not know if the traditional theories of Indian Aesthetics can totally meet this new demand-theories evolved to assess and guide a highly developed humanistic Indian Art.

**PART THREE**  
**Report of Discussions**

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND, DIRECTOR OF THE SEMINAR

FIRST, SECOND & THIRD BUSINESS SESSIONS

16, 17 & 18 May 1966

*Chairman:* PROF. C. D. NARASIMHAIAH

*Rapporteur:* DR. S. K. NANDI

FOURTH & FIFTH BUSINESS SESSIONS

19 & 20 May 1966

*Chairman:* MR. B. C. SANYAL

*Rapporteur:* MISS JAYA APPASAMY

SIXTH & SEVENTH BUSINESS SESSIONS

21 & 23 May 1966

*Chairman:* DR. MULK RAJ ANAND

*Rapporteur:* MR. JAG MOHAN

EIGHTH, NINTH & TENTH BUSINESS SESSIONS

24, 25 & 26 May 1966

*Chairman:* DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY

*Rapporteur:* MISS GEETA KAPUR

CONCLUDING SESSION

28 May 1966

*Inaugural Remarks  
of Dr. Mulk Raj Anand,  
Director of the Seminar*

If one looks at the contemporary situation in the silent areas of pictorial and plastic experience, the conviction is forced on one, more and more, that words cannot explain the meaning of colour and organized form.

The difference between prose writing, poetry and painted or carved images is very wide: The prose sentence is generally based on the logic of a major premiss, a minor premiss and a conclusion. The metaphors of poetry certainly suggest experiences on various planes, and are nearer the suggestions of the plastic arts; but they are seldom equivalent to the idiom of the quite different materials, techniques and expressions employed in the silent areas. Even in the many traditions of art as illustration, in the different parts of the world, when political titles were given, or verses sought to be represented, the medium of words did not have much relationship with the medium of colours or lines.

The autonomy of painting and sculpture in our own times has, increasingly, made for a situation where a work of art need not have a title in words in order to be communicable.

And, apart from the historical, metaphysical and social, surveys of the background of creative works, as well as personal analysis of the artist's life, appreciation of art can only be attempted in a way which may suggest or invoke what we call in Sanskrit, the *vāsanās*, or energies, implicit in form.

I will not refer to newspaper criticism, which is often a shorthand reportage on the works of art, astringent or sympathetic according to the state of the stomach of the commentator.

What, then, is the role of art criticism in relation to the silent areas?

There have been many systems of aesthetic theory built up in the world by various philosophers.

This approach would seem to imply that the philosopher wishes to put forward, beyond his occasional inspired criticism of art works, a coherent aesthetic theory different from other people's systems. We know the systems of Plato, Pānini, Bhatta Nayaka, Ananda Vardhana, Abhinavagupta, Kant, Croce, Santayana, Dewey, Tagore, the Social Realists and many others.

Nów, our own attitude, in an emergent country like India (and I think this may apply to quite a few countries of Asia and Africa), is much more tentative.

In recent years we have subjected our systems of aesthetics from the earliest times till today, to a searching enquiry, particularly from the point of view

of any relevance they might have had for the art activity of the time when these systems were elaborated and after. In spite of some enlightenment about the sources of creativeness and some hunches about the aspirations of exalted mystics for the realisation of God, we have failed to find much relevance of the various concepts to art activity which was for a long time in the service of making images for temples.

Actually, in the first few centuries of the conscious experience of creative works in our country (roughly from the 6th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.), the arts of painting and sculpture were considered incidental to architecture and were not given an autonomous status. And, even during the classical renaissance (which lasted from about the 3rd century A.D. to the 6th century A.D.), when painting and sculpture were practised as *Lalita Kalā* (fine arts), poetry, drama and music seem to have been honoured as higher manifestations of culture than the pictorial and plastic arts.

The theoreticians of the early pre-Christian centuries, like the grammarian Pānini, wrote their aphorisms about aesthetics in terms of poetry. And almost all the others who followed, like Bhatta Nayaka, Ananda Vardhana and Abhinavagupta, developed the theories of *rasa* (flavour), *dhavni* (resonance) and *bhāva* (emotion) with special reference to the aesthetic of poetry and drama. The kings, Sarangapani and Bhoj of Dhar, in the early medieval period, devoted themselves to the aesthetic of music.

The result of this emphasis was that *rasa* (flavour) can be tasted in poetry, dance or music, *dhavni* or resonance can be heard in these creative arts, and *bhāva* can be measured in these disciplines, but there is not even a rough and ready manner in which we can apply these concepts to forms in painting and sculpture.

In fact, apart from the emphasis on individual expression, even in the classical renaissance of the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. the visuals were mostly hieratic objects, symbols of the moods of the gods of Hindu mythology or Buddhist iconography, and though painted or carved with the highest potential skill, so that some of them are formally important single works of world art, they remain symbols which express an idea or a situation. For instance, the images of the Buddha with the eyes directed towards the tip of the nose are supposed to express concentration; the dancing Shiva is intended to interpret the rhythm of the world; the elephant-headed god, Ganesha, with his big paunch, stands for the blessing of worldly wealth. It is merely incidental from the point of view of the priests that the carvers made the radial zigzag lines suggest energy, the rich curvatures suggest harmony, the conical or double lines suggest fire, the wavering horizontal lines suggest waves in the sea, even as every basic colour was supposed to have an emotional significance associated with it because it was supposed to arouse a mood.

The important aesthetic concepts like *rasa* (flavour), *dhavni* (resonance) and *bhāva* (emotion) are thus transcendental experiences, and quite explicitly

equated to the realisation of *ānanda* (bliss) or the realisation of the Supreme God.

The systems built upon mystical theories of union with the deity served a real function in temple art, though I fancy that the craftsmen were far more mundane than the priests who dictated that 'even the mishapen image of a god is to be preferred to a secular image'.

Similarly, I believe that however coherent may be the aesthetic theories of Plato, Kant, Croce, Tagore and other conceptualists, the transcendental bias of these thinkers, as well as the attempt at system-making, separates their main superstructures from art activity, and compels us to analyse the sources of creative art in man afresh. In the absence of comprehensive knowledge of these sources, we may accept only certain hypotheses for appreciation of individual works of art, on the empirical basis of analysis of each work of an artist or of the whole of the opus, as it may seem in integral development, but it would seem too invidious to force systems of aesthetic theory on to works of art.

If this tentative view of art criticism has any validity, then we can discover certain basic principles about the organisation of images, forms or inspirations, which have been implicit in a work of art and which can be redefined in view of the most recent additions to knowledge through science, as well as the insights of the complex structure produced by our own 20th century civilisation. I believe that in the heart and mind of the unitary man of our time, in so far as he has absorbed the insights, experiences and enlarged knowledge of the universe of the last five hundred years, lie the sanctions for a humanist aesthetics. The principles of this view have not yet been worked out to any large extent, except in the incidental writings of some of our contemporaries like Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Herbert Read, Charles Mauron, Benoy Kumar Sarkar and the later, Rabindranath Tagore. These principles, however, offer some guidelines for a flexible, open-minded and deeper approach towards a work of art, or the creative process which goes into its making, even if criticism remains thus a miscellany of notes and does not add up to a system.

Let us, first of all, try and trace some aspects of the creative process in the pictorial and plastic arts.

There is an aphorism of the *sāṃkhya* philosophy of ancient India that as long as the heart beats, the body-soul is ever seeking rhythmic balance in the process of renewal, and there is a constant ebb and flow. And, in this ebb and flow, our highly evolved hunches, intuitions and apperceptions compel us to release all our *vāsanās* or energies through the play of the sensibility. One image, ideogram or idea-image may start off a whole process in the moment of the impact of an aspect of the outside object on the inner life. Then this image gathers force from the rhythmic flow in the complex of the stirrings, memories and dormant energies. The kinetic flow, the poetry of the unconscious, thus initiates the struggle against the barriers to demonstration.

And, with some help from the logical brain, the intuitional-instinctive logic of illogic projects itself in the organisation of forms in a silent area, with those suggestions, echoes and diathrymbs which are possible symbols for communication of the artist's compulsive drive to express himself or his racial experience. The sources of art, therefore, lie in the urges and aspirations of the body-soul, which form the inner process of an obsessive expressionism, the search, quest or struggle of life against all forms of death.

One would have to go much deeper into the various manifestations of art works to explain the creative process more comprehensively. It would have to be shown, for instance, how a myth, or an image, is subjected by the artist to conscious visual analysis as in a bronze of the dancing Shiva, in *Mont St. Victoire* of Cezanne or in Picasso's *Guernica*. The pilot station of the brain has something to do with the organisation of the constructed object, which becomes the autonomous work of art, a thing by itself. But the pulls and tensions of the sensibility, the ebb and the flow of the underworld, as well as the individual genius and skill of the artist in the demonstration or expression of urges of the total personality, remain of the utmost importance. And in this, intuition supplies a kind of 'quick' from the metabolism as D. H. Lawrence defined it.

And this, I feel, the recognition of all the in-between processes, the alliance with the *vāsanās* or energies, and the indication of those intangibles, like how much expressionism, how much body-soul urging, and how much rationality, what 'twists and turns' in the realised image, the nature of the possible search-drive of the artist, and how he puts the colours, often in impossible fusions, still achieving our alliance with the fire or quick of the fundamental flow—all this criss-cross of the intensely complex creative vision is the business of the art critic to explain, in order to help both the artist and the onlooker.

The art critic, when he is not merely a newspaper hack, is, therefore, likely to be in more or less complete *misalliance* with the artist. And he can anticipate the dormant state of the naive, half-dead or routine commonsense man to whom the work of art is rather the inexplicable miracle of Gogia Pasha, the magician. Perhaps the critic is a more complete artist than the artist himself (though he may not know how to draw); certainly he is more sensitive than many spectators, and possibly a more human being than a philosopher. He has to achieve a certain detachment even in his attachment. He has to be dynamic yet patient. He has to remain relatively unbiased and try to be comprehensive, possessed of a more total awareness of the processes of life, of the variety of ways of communication, and of deep insights. He can't simply say, 'I don't like abstract art', or 'I like abstract art'. He has to keep a flexible mind, to open all the doors and windows of his soul, to receive all the breezes, so long as he is not swept off his feet by the winds that blow.

This may seem a tall order.

But I believe that the advance of quantitative knowledge and the misuse of

science by the power potentates in our own tragic age, the confusions created by the cash-nexus, and the instinctive ejaculations of despair, escape, evasion and hopeless hope, are forcing the artist to live in full confrontation of himself and of the problems of human destiny. The artist, 'being a special kind of man', cannot often be in full view of himself or his situation in the world. Only a critic may be able to help him by suggesting the departure points.

There are other, incidental, problems of art before the critic, specially in the developing societies. The orthodox traditions tend to inhibit experiment. The new materials are not available and the influence in the making of new works of art has not yet been estimated. And much of the repetitive, or borrowed, unthought-out, content of art persists in meretricious forms. Also, beyond the natural youthful ambition to be creative, there is no life concept which may make the artist's individual expression more than a suburban effort. It is difficult for man to be part of the complex of a one world culture which may release the individual, beyond national frontiers, first to himself and then to solidarity or harmony with other artists, because the human situation today, though actually similar everywhere, still carries the hangover of national, racial and feudal hangovers.

The advance in demonstration, presentation and expression, the differentiation in construction at other levels than mere story telling, which has become possible today in the most intense and *avant-garde* centres of art, demands from the critics of the emergent societies decisive intervention to indicate departure points. Rejection is often worse than acceptance of everything new. The task is more subtle. The differences and inhibitions between art works imaginatively ahead of the audience and the orthodox audience itself have to be abolished. And the propaganda, publicity and commercialism of much western art have to be guarded against.

This means that the critic must open up the new space-time continuum of our age, put the artist in focus, define his confrontation and seek to relate him and the spectator with all the new possibilities. For the essence of creation in every age is that, in the confrontation of man himself by man, the myths and methods of the past do not help him to live and create in a changed environment. The true artist cannot go on repeating the old myths and methods, but has to create his own answers and his own contemporary myths and methods. He must search, find and initiate fresh approaches, thus extending the range of the imagination to absorb the hitherto unexplored silent areas.

Of course, in order to enable the artist to do this, the critic must help the artist, for the critic knows, through his overall knowledge of the situation, the nature of the moment of historical change or revolution.

For instance, those who were aware of the implication of Cezanne's intellectual analysis of structure beyond the Impressionists' dominant concern with feeling for light, did not accuse him of not eating carrots for his eyesight.

Again when Picasso and Braque deliberately put their cubes in various layers,



and the former gave multiple profiles to his characters on the two-dimensional plane, the departure from 19th century academism was ultimately accepted and no one painting a figure can go back on him.

Similarly, the advance made by the Surrealists, the German Expressionists and, later, the American Abstractionists, has been recognised everywhere.

And I feel that the situation has now been reached when it is precisely the critic who might find a solution to the problem of where do we go from here—from the dissolving of paint into the most sensitive vague and amorphous patterns (often very useful for the All-India Handloom Board for adaptation to the Indian woman's *sāri*) and from the remoteness achieved in much experimental art form the human centre.

I am not anti-abstractionist. I believe the gains of the most important experiments, like those of Mondrian, are permanent part of our world heritage. But when this pioneer wrote to James Johnson Sweeney that he had just abolished line and wished to do away with colour to achieve purity of expression, he made a confession of the utmost importance. Mr. Sweeney might have answered that the place for Mondrian was probably in the *āśrama* of Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. For, as long as the materials of art are used to communicate, at however sensitive a level, there is no escape from the necessity of reaching the human spirit through the senses, the nerves, the tendons and the muscles as well as the rhythms latent in the lumbar ganglion, but if the implements of communication cannot be used, or are found unnecessary, then the search of the artist may be for a mystic end and not for exchange with other human beings.

I suspect that the reason why Picasso did not take his deliberate distortion to ultimate abstraction was that in spite of his adventures into the logical conclusions of his various techniques, he wished to remain allied to the total human centre than go into by lanes with dead ends.

Our own actual art tradition has, at its best, been in the interests of a body-soul search. Always, the important works of Indian art, even of the present day experimentalists, reveal a bias for belonging to oneself in order to belong to others, who may see confirmation for their unfamiliar feelings in the new expression areas. I would like to define this tradition as one of the most persistently expressionist traditions of the world.

If this is not too large a generalisation, and has some relevance to the present situation, I would like to urge that in this fundamental body-soul search there is a possible answer to the problem of modern man facing his destiny on the many planes of confrontation.

I think the dramatisation of human experience will not mean the return of 19th century academic realism. But it may mean distortions beyond Picasso, explorations of colour combinations, or confusions beyond Andre, Mason or Jackson Pollock, extensions into the many universes discovered by science beyond the daring innovations of Naum Gabo, Nicholas Schoeffler and Victor

Vassarely. The human being in his total potential may come back, through the experimentalism of our age, into focus.

I believe that the last-ditch traditionalist stand against the inventiveness of our new agro-industrial civilisation has to be given up, and experimentation accepted with an open mind, so long as the works before us do not seem to pass off clever tricks of Pop art or Op art for creativeness. I am for a new series of hypotheses in art appreciation commensurate with our new age.

## SECTION A

*The fundamental postulates of traditional Indian aesthetics  
and*

*their relevance to art activity in India through the ages*

S. S. BARLINGAY, Some concepts in Bharata's theory of Drama

### *Discussion*

MR. B. P. MATHUR asked how architecture could be considered to revolve around *nritya*, and how it was influenced by dancing. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND, answering him, said that a sense of the rhythm in dancing would certainly help the architect.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA referred to the progress we have made in music. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY said, in the same context, that mechanical devices did not effect qualitative changes in music. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA, however, felt concern over, the effect of mechanical devices on music, and said that the compression of music detracted from its artistic excellence. Concurring with this opinion, MR. B. C. SANYAL cited film music as an example; he doubted its being significant in any sense of the term.

MR. JAG MOHAN thought that improvisation gave Indian art its freshness, but MR. KRISHEN KHANNA, in this connection pointed to the influence of British band music on some of the *rāgas*.

DR. MAQBUL AHMAD said that Indian classical music had certain set *rāgas*, and the *rāgas* in *Rabindra-Sangīt* were also traditional. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY said that the basic *rāgas* were not fixed; the number of *rāgas* varied from three to seven during different periods in Indian history, and they were quite different from the number that we find in Chinese and Indonesian music.

KALYAN KUMAR GANGULI, Animals in early Indian art: A case study in the evolution of form and human sensitivity

### *Presented in absentia*

ANAND KRISHNA, Indian aesthetics as revealed in Sanskrit literature:  
A retrospect

and

K. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Traditional Indian aesthetics in theory and

Practice: A restatement with special reference to *Nāṭya Śāstra* and the graphic arts.

### Discussion

Opening the discussion on the two papers together, DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY spoke of the nature of *bhāva* and *rasa*. He said that *bhāva* had possibly a Greek parallel. The process of imagination and the cultivation of sensitivity are called *bhāvanā*. Imagination perceives nature. On the basis of its values, it then transforms nature by ordering and selecting from it into a re-creation. These values are not only aesthetic, but also religious, social, etc., and for this reason India has never produced 'art for art's sake'. It has always produced an expressionistic rather than an impressionistic art.

But the process of imagination (*bhāva*) makes the creative interaction and the rendering of nature more and more complex. If the critic appreciates and grasps this rendering, then what happens in him is *rasa*, delight. *Bhāva* is thus the interaction of imagination with the objective world; it is the process of creativity. If the product of this interaction achieves success, it stimulates *rasa* or aesthetic delight. These two words belong to different realms: *rasa* to aesthetics, as reaction to art, and *bhāva* to art activity in the creative process. In actual art experience, *rasa* and *bhāva* are so interwoven that no abrupt distinction can be made between the two.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY then referred to the introductory remarks of Dr. Mulk Raj Anand and his plea for an objective historical view. He asked whether it is possible to see the past objectively, in its own terms, without evaluating tradition and inheritance, i.e., without selecting those seeds from the past which are still potent from the contemporary point of view. The present needs and wants more than a mere description of the past; looking back from the present does entail value and selectivity. With regard to this basic assumption about the relation of present to past DR. RAY went on to ask: (1) does the meaning of *bhāva* in the 5th century agree with that in the 15th century; and (2) do Bharata and Abhinavagupta mean the same thing by *rasa*? Can we absolutely and finally define the vocabulary of aesthetics? These words, *bhāva* and *rasa*, have been in active use for a span of more than 1500 years. Words have a life of their own, and would not their definitions necessarily change in the context of different times? Unless one applies these terms to the objects of their various times, the connotations of the concepts would be destroyed and the words would be arbitrarily robbed of their potency.

If one did not interpret the texts literally but attempted to understand them in terms of the arts themselves, then a basic principle of interrelationships among the arts would emerge. The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* may be taken as an example: the prescription that plasticity in dancing (balance, proportion, harmony of movement and form) would have to be transliterated into painting

or sculpture. This is not a matter of one art referring to another so much as of the basic reference back to the original plasticity of form, the vital process of life itself. It is just this that is apparent on the walls of Ajanta.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA also pointed out that creation is an integral process. The creator is the subject relating to the object (canvas, stone, etc.) He has an aesthetic experience which he then manifests in form through a dialectic between the subjectivity of the initial *rasa* and the objective medium. The result is art. But until an artist has had an aesthetic experience, he cannot create. *Rasa* is thus also a precondition of creation. He asked whether these two apparently distinct definitions of *rasa*, as the precondition and as the result of art, were dichotomous.

PROF. N. V. BANERJEE commented that if the aesthetic experience of the artist did not manifest itself as art, then *rasa* was a misnomer. The initial subjective experience of *rasa* must be objectified in art. DR. S. K. NANDI explained that 'objective' meant here independent and outside. Creation is the process of de-subjectifying subjective feelings of putting them 'outside'; when that process is complete, the work of art is finished.

MR. K. S. KULKARNI questioned this, however, wanting to know whether the transformation of subjectivity would mean that an art work is necessarily an objective thing. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY also commented that speaking in terms of subjective versus objective was simply creating unnecessary polarities. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA agreed with this and said that creation is not the objectification of subjectivity but rather the marriage of spirit and matter. Further, the artist had a dual role, that of spectator as well as creator, both of which function within the process of creation. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY called art the externalization of an aesthetic experience. Once the initial experience had been externalized into art, the resulting *rasa* was not in the beholder alone, nor in the object, but in the interaction of the two.

MR. JAG MOHAN said that he objected to the entire discussion of these concepts. He asked that initial reference be made to the artists and aestheticians of the Gupta and pre-Gupta periods. If that were done, he said, it would be seen that the artisans were of society's non-elite, while the aestheticians were elite Brahmans removed from the artists' situation. For this reason, the terracottas had an uninhibited creative dynamism, but in the 'high art' of the time the elite aestheticians dictated how art had to be done, and imposed the *Śāstras* on the creative process. He commented that this had never happened in the West, where aestheticians followed creation. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY wanted to know if there was sufficient data to prove this dictation by the Brahmans, and PROF. KRISHNAMOORTHY also joined issue and said that sometimes the theoreticians were non-Brahmans and this whole issue could not be seen simply in terms of *śudras* versus the elite.

Finally, DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY commented on the definition of the term *sādṛśya*. He said that Coomaraswamy had defined it as verisimilitude. But

this is not an appropriate definition for there is no 'realistic' Indian art. Verisimilitude connotes imitation, but logically it is impossible to imitate exactly, unless it be through a mechanical process. Art is not 'imitation' but rather 'representation' (i.e. re-presentation). In representing, the subjective element enters the process and makes pure imitation impossible. Art does not imitate nature but constantly refers to nature and follows its laws of balance, proportion, rhythm, harmony. Thus the definition of *sādṛiṣya* is not 'verisimilitude', or even 'likeness,' but 'reference.'

## AJIT MOOKERJEE. Tantra Art in search of Life Divine

### *Discussion*

The discussion centred around the question of whether or not Tantric painting was art. The Tantric *yantras* were entirely metaphysical in intention, and not deliberately aesthetic. It was art for the sake of an idea, a means to the embodiment of esoteric *mantras*.

PROF. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY wanted to know if Tantric writers ever stated that the system had any reference to artistic activity. Could Tantric experiences be translated into aesthetic language?

The author said that for the initiated it was easy to express their experiences in aesthetic language. But DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY pointed out that the Tantra paintings were done by Tantrics only as starting points for the *sādhakas*. The aesthetic appeal might be there but it was not intended by the Tantrics themselves; they presupposed no aesthetic experience. In response to Prof. Krishnamoorthy's question of the relationship between art and Tantric ritual, DR. RAY said that the various Tantric gods and goddesses, their different colours, have specific meanings which were discussed in the relevant *śāstric* texts.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA refused to accept Tantric art as aesthetic activity, as it was not the product of any conscious aesthetic intention. He said it was more an art 'found', than an art 'form'. MR. JAG MOHAN, however, felt that it was a valid art in that it used pictorial means and the basic elements of painting. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that these paintings must be approached on an aesthetic basis rather than through any metaphysical understanding of their symbolism.

With a different problem in mind, MRS. KAPILA VATSYAYAN asked how Tantric art could be related to the Indian aesthetic tradition, and how the very technical nature of its vocabulary could be related to the traditional aesthetic language. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that this art was not Brahmanical, it was not shaped in that tradition, and could not be put in the conventional categories.

No final agreement was reached on the question of whether these paintings were to be considered works of art or considered merely as means to the esoteric ends of magic and power. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND summed up the content

of discussion in his final remark that no matter what the intention (aesthetic or metaphysical) of the *yantra* maker, if his painting evokes an aesthetic experience in us, it deserves to be approached with respect.

## PROFESSOR NAGENDRA, The nature of aesthetic experience

### - Discussion

A clarification was sought by DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY regarding the author's statement that, in the creative process, the artist ultimately succeeds in effecting a harmonious fusion of all his pleasant and unpleasant experiences, and this is called art. DR. RAY asked if the experience of the artist in the process of creation can itself be called art? He also suggested that 'human sensibility' might be a more suitable term than 'human mind'.

PROF. NAGENDRA explained the difficulties in the use of Sanskrit terms translated into English. He stated, in clarification, that he had used the terms *chitta* and *mana* as synonyms.

PROF. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY and DR. MULK RAJ ANAND felt that the three broad categories of experience distinguished in the paper, sensual, mental and intellectual, were disputable.

PROF. C. D. NARASIMHAIAH felt that terms like 'pleasure', 'imagination' and 'mind' have been employed loosely and indiscriminately. He averred that *ānanda* is above all pain and pleasure. Regarding the reference to the mystics, he pointed out that they did not 'crave' for pain in any masochistic manner. For mystics, pain may be a starting point, but they do not crave for pain as such. He agreed with Dr. Niharranjan Ray that the mere fusion of pleasant and unpleasant aesthetic experience in the mind of the artist does not create art, for there must always be concretisation and externalisation in the creation of art. The term used by I.A. Richards was 'organisation' and not 'systematisation' of impulses. In any case, I.A. Richards need not be considered to have said the last word on aesthetics. He also found the use of expressions like 'material pleasure' and 'gratification' unfortunate. In the particular poem of Bhava Bhuti quoted in the paper, the quoted words had been used referentially and not emotively. PROF. NARASIMHAIAH wished for clarification and not confusion in expression and ideas.

PROF. KRISHNAMOORTHY explained that according to Indian tradition there are three planes of dramatic art: first, naturalistic; second, with less naturalism and more idealism; and, third, when only the characters speak. He described the poem of Abhinavagupta as purely *vastu varṇana*. He said further that

*rasa* should be in *naṭa* and not only in the artist's or spectator's experience. DR. S. S. BARLINGAY warned that since Ramakrishna Kavi had made many interpolations in Abhinavagupta's texts, one should be very careful in using them.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that the poem quoted in the paper was a bad example of poetry, which jeopardised value judgment. He said that every person is capable of aesthetic experience but not every person can transmute that experience into art. In his view there is no difference between the experience of a scientist in intellectual discovery and the aesthetic experience of a 'going-to-be-an-artist'. The scientist, Jagdish Chandra Bose, had an aesthetic experience when he saw the feelings of a plant under the microscope. When Rabindranath Tagore met Einstein, the latter is reported to have said, 'I am more spiritual than you are'. The only difference is that the scientist has an ulterior aim and this is not so with the artist. With regard to the words empathy and sympathy, DR. RAY pointed out that the root 'pathy' meant 'drawn from medicinal plants' in Greek.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND did not like the references to Marx and Freud in the paper. Marx had nothing much to do with art in all his writings; and Freud too did not have much light to shed on art. DR. ANAND did not want any laboratory examination of terms from texts, or casual journalistic explanations. He pleaded for an examination of the problem from a human level. He felt also that it would be better if twenty paintings were analysed by one hundred different people, instead of going into theories.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA said that after hearing PROF. NAGENDRA's paper, and reading that of DR. R. K. SEN, he had created the following formula: PRIMITIVE/MODERN=FERTILITY CULT/EXISTENTIALISM=MALE AND FEMALE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP=CATHARSIS. In his view the biological aspect is the moot point of creative activity. As an artist he felt that in every creation the emotional and biological factors come in first, and the intellectual factor comes much later.

In his reply, PROF. NAGENDRA explained that the aim of his paper was a re-orientation of Indian theories of aesthetics. In doing this, he had had to contend with the difficulty of finding exact synonyms for Sanskrit words in English. Similarly, for Greek terms too, he had to depend on English translations by experts. He still felt that 'pleasure' is a better term than 'delectation', which was suggested in discussion. He was fully aware of the concepts and ideas of *laukika* and *alaukika*; he had used 'material' in the context of normal human experience. In his opinion, PROF. NAGENDRA said, it is quite possible and feasible to differentiate between mental and intellectual experience. Regarding the poem he had quoted, he said that it is naturally impossible to convince anyone who had a subjective opinion contrary to his own. Finally, Marx and Freud had, according to his reading, made references to aesthetics in their writings.



NIHARRANJAN RAY, Testimony of a student of  
history of Indian art, life and thought

*Discussion*

PROF. N. A. NIKAM asked, in the context of the author's theory that art activity had its genesis in biological urges, whether the biological urges are conscious or not. Is this urge transcendental, i.e. prior to all activity? DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY replied that he felt the conventional English words did not sufficiently convey the meaning he intended. Hence his preference for the word *kāma* as the basic spring of action. He referred to *kāmayati* and *kāmachhanda* in the Buddhist texts, and the idea of *vāsanā* in the Jain scriptures, all of which anticipated Vatsyana's *Kāmasūtra*. Art is born of desire or *kāma*. Creation means this desire to communicate.

Referring to the author's statement that intrinsic perception is active in science as well as art, MR. LAXMAN PAI observed that aesthetic experience is creative experience, whereas scientific experience is more mathematical in nature. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that Aesthetics, the original Greek word, meant 'perception'. Intrinsic perception is the entire fullness of vision. When perceiving a field object, one sees *only* that object. This is a highly conscious state. The response, the total alertness of intrinsic perception implies not only consciousness, but also value selection. Intrinsic perception is an end in itself for the aesthetic experience, whereas such perception, its consciousness and selectivity, is a means to further knowledge for the scientist, but as facts of experience these acts of perception do not differ and form a common meeting point.

MRS. VATSYAYAN made a plea for a session on the *rasika* aspect of the created art. This was within the Indian tradition of the cultivation of perception; it used to be part of the social fabric. At what point was the Indian ethos of cultivation of feeling abandoned, and why? DR. RAY replied with reference to *budh*, to know. The three sources of knowledge were *bodha*, *buddhi* and *bodhi*. Aesthetic responses depended upon training in *bodha*, the training of feeling phenomena and developing perception with the totality of one's being. But the enervated sensibilities of India are due to the fact that since the days of Sankaracharya this *bodha* has been completely neglected. Vedanta killed it with its emphasis on *buddhi*, which is just intellect, cerebration.

Referring to the part of the paper on 'Does Art Imitate Nature?', DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE asked whether nature and art could be found together in music. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that art need not portray nature in order to follow its laws of balance, proportion, rhythm and harmony. In this definition, it is impossible to say that 'nature' is excluded from any art. Music is most abstract in its reference to nature, but it is still an organization and a disciplining of sound (all forms of which are audible in nature) according to natural laws.

DR. CHATTERJEE also asked how industrialization effected the 'dehumanization of art'. DR. RAY explained that rapidly increasing mechanization was one of the casual factors in a widespread alienation which art must somehow overcome.

In response to a question from PROF. N. A. NIKAM regarding the meaning of 'natural purpose', DR. RAY said that this natural purpose of art is the improvement of the human personality, though this was not to be held in any superficially didactic sense. Improvement is always a conscious intention in the creative process.

A number of participants asked questions concerning the statement that 'art is a human activity with an aim and purpose—the improvement of the human species... Basically art is a moral activity of the social man.' They asked to know what is meant by the 'social responsibility' of the artist; in what way is art a 'moral activity', and how does art effect social improvement?

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY replied that artistic creation is a human activity and, therefore, a social activity. Conception (the initial aesthetic experience) is not creation, but only the outset of it. Creation happens when the initial experience is communicated. Any man may have an aesthetic experience, but its communication requires material and technical skill, and the artist's knowledge of his relationship to the 'other' (other men or society). The whole of a creation's meaning is dependent on this awareness. Thus 'social responsibility' is largely speaking the artist's responsibility for being as fully aware, alert, and embracing of the universe—the cosmos of his being—as possible. Seen in this manner, art's purpose of improvement of society does not differ from its moral purpose of improvement of the human personality—initially the artist's own, in developing this awareness in himself. 'Moral' must be understood here not in its conventional ethical connotations, but in the sense of *being*.

Responsibility to these purposes does not bind the artist to a static social situation. Instead, art must be dynamic in the social order. For example, if the *avant-garde* artist feels society is wrong, then it is his responsibility to destroy, change, re-create values with his art. But it must be emphasized that the artist's responsibility does not dictate the nature of his creation. An artist must have a world view of art and life, and he must find himself in relation to the cosmos (man, the social order, the physical universe). Having these, an artist fulfills his 'social responsibility' in *creating a work of art* in the most qualitative sense.

DR. B. N. GOSWAMY agreed generally but pointed out that artists did not have to consciously effect 'social improvement' as the only intended end of their art.

DR. S. C. MALIK asked whether this matter of 'world view' and 'social responsibility' could hold true for primitive and folk art. Were these artists, while creating, aware of any social order? DR. RAY pointed out that these artists bodied forth in their art the myths and beliefs of their own cosmologies. There are primitive and folk universes too, out of which artists act and speak and create.

DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE asked how one could draw a distinction between didactic literature and literature which was fulfilling its social responsibility as art. DR. RAY said that didactic literature consists in information and presentation of fact rather than in any artistic merit. Didactic statements fail to communicate in terms of states of being and becoming (*bhāva*). 'Didactic art' is a misnomer, for any intentionally didactic work suffers artistically.

DR. MAQBUL AHMAD, referring to Arabic texts which stated that God was the greater artist, said that Indian music's devotional character was due to its being directed toward this Artist. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that art activity is not itself religious. All art activity takes place in a social situation. Until recently, the social motivation of art in India was religious. But Ajanta, strictly speaking was not religious, and the acts of artistic creation embodied there were not religious. Buddhism was only the peg on which to hang art activity.

DR. RAY went on to say that one major realization that had never come about in Indian art history was that *very little of it was art* in the qualitative, aesthetic, *rasa*—invoking sense. In each period of Indian art history, there are only a few good pieces. The 'craft' of these ages, the total produce of artistic craftsmanship, is not justified as 'art' simply on the basis of being religiously significant or old. We need to clarify our vision and distinguish good art from bad on the basis of *aesthetic* criteria.

S. K. SARASWATI, Indian art : the artist's point of view

### *Discussion*

PROF. N. A. NIKAM, referring to the author's thesis that the artist, and not the metaphysician or the philosopher, was responsible for determining the form and character of Indian art, asked whether art was *parā vidyā* or *aparā vidyā*, and whether art *qua* art could be independent of religion. PROF. SARASWATI replied that he did not accept the hypothesis of complete autonomy for art and religion, but he felt that too much metaphysical bias was present in past aesthetic thinking, and it was for this reason that the emphasis in his paper was on the artist's role in the art activity of India.

PROF. N. V. BANERJEE objected to the idea of metaphysics being excluded from art activity. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND explained that the paper was a corrective, not forbidding metaphysics so much as it was attempting to dissociate art from the dominance of religious connotations. The artist, dealing with his material and compositions, certainly had tasks other than the religions. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY added that *yoga* was not invariably and necessarily a religious term. *Yoga* in art could mean the dialectic of skill with material and idea, or efficiency

in the creative process. *Dhyāna*, that is, concentration of the entire consciousness on a single point, also has a different meaning for art; for both art and religion it, too, is not necessarily a metaphysical concept.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY also commented on the question of form and formlessness. Through the process of art the formless achieves new form; in this respect, religion and art are fraternal expressions of a common consciousness. For instance, is entering a temple a religious experience or an aesthetic one? The progression of entry through a wide door into a painted *maṇḍapam*, into an inner area, and then through a low door into the small dark *garbha-griha*, the movement, the inward-directedness of the architecture, creates an aesthetic evocation rather than a religious one. One kneels in a cathedral, a mosque or a temple, from this aesthetic evocation, though one may not be of these faiths, just as a Hindu looking at a Russian icon does not have to know the icon's metaphysical background in order to appreciate it as a work of art.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA pointed out that a single metaphysical concept can lead to creation of two different bronzes. Are we then able to say that they are of equal aesthetic merit? A Buddha image, even a grotesque one, can be a vehicle of metaphysical attainment, whereas an artistically achieved bronze need never even be worshipped. It achieves its own end in simply being an aesthetically good image.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND reiterated his plea that we should deal with the *fact* of the work of art rather than with its metaphysical content. MR. P. DAS GUPTA illustrated this distinction, saying that he had once found a dozen or so villagers lying prostrate before his sculpture. They were worshipping it because they thought that any statue represented some deity. But they acted out of a habitual response to statues rather than any aesthetic appreciation of sculpture. DR. ANAND said that it is not only villagers, but the majority of art historians who respond to art in this way. Coomaraswamy, for example, said that any image leads to God; and he had focussed his vision on the metaphysical content of images rather than on the images themselves. PROF. S. K. SARASWATI cited the lines from the *śāstras* which had been responsible for so much of this sort of vision: 'The image, even though ugly, can lead the receiver closer to God, if made according to the *śāstras*'.

DR. ANAND affirmed that the artists' point of view needs to be brought more into the consideration of art objects, but would simply shifting the focus from metaphysical to technical terms present an adequate picture? MR. JAG MOHAN said that it is necessary to turn to the social and economic conditions from which the art arose, to have as sources the time and society, as well as the *śāstras*, if we are to understand the artist's point of view. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY said that it is not necessary to compartmentalise sensibility into 'artistic' or 'philosophic', because art does belong exclusively to any single vision; it is a whole, the total human point of view.

## SHYAMALA SHARMA, The aesthetics of Indian music and dance

*Discussion*

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND, opening the discussion, again referred to the idea of 'basic' and 'dependent' arts, and wanted to know the significance of the ancient *rasa* theory in the context of diversified art-forms.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that the ancient art classifications had changed again and again, and all these classifications were prompted by some philosophical ideas. He felt that the *rasa* theory could not be applied to architecture. Referring to the author's statement that 'art and beauty' were never discussed as philosophical problems in the texts, DR. RAY pointed out that 'beauty' was not found as a concept in aesthetics before the 18th century, and this concept was not discussed in India before the 19th century. Rather than 'beauty' consideration should deal with 'form'.

When asked about her premise of religious spirituality as the basis of Indian art, DR. SHYAMALA SHARMA replied that God was value-form, a logical concept. Art was a value concept trying to get a habitat. Several participants questioned this premise, and DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY asked specifically whether spiritual experience was prior to the dance and music. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY pointed out that the Kathak dance, for example, had nothing to do with Hindu religious sentiments, as it had its origin among Central Asian nomadic communities. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND suggested that there were many influences other than the spiritual one working on Indian art.

## KAPILA VATSYAYAN, Indian aesthetics and art activity

*Discussion*

Opening the discussion PROF. C. D. NARASIMHAIAH said that to him it appeared wrong to separate the world of feeling from that of intellect. It was like separating the dancer from dance. In recent times we seem to have taken to a romantic conception of the arts. According to tradition, our ancients put all kinds of experiences together into the crucible to formulate a new art. The divorce of intellect and emotion has given rise to sentimentalism and a race between escapists and romanticists. 'When I have intellect I have feeling also.' T. S. Eliot has also referred to the modern dissociation of sensibility.

PROF. NAGENDRA said that the intellect created concepts, but feeling is the result of intuitive and imaginative action. To him the intellect was not the basis of creative activity.

MR. LAXMAN PAI distinguished between knowledge and feeling. He said that weighing a stone in a balance gives one knowledge of its weight, while feeling

the weight of a stone in the hand gives one the experience of feeling. He referred to the symbolism of colour and the *rāgas* and added that memory has a part to play in their creative associations.

DR. KAPILA VATSYAYAN commented that there is a great need of psychological studies regarding what exactly happens to one when one hears a *rāga*, firstly, on a person who is familiar with the tradition, and, secondly, on one who is not. In our texts it had been clearly stated that art was for the initiated or the connoisseur. Association played a very important part, and the audience was expected to know the forms of the art.

DR. ANAND KRISHNA then referred to the paper's mention of the understanding of pain in ancient literature. He corroborated the author's statement by citing the example of Shakuntala and also the theory of *karuṇā* in Bhavabhuti. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that according to traditional Indian thought death was only a passing phase, a change of form. He asked if we today had any other idea of death. PROF. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY cited as an example from Vamana that the problem was how to balance opposites. Both pain and joy were within everyone's experience, and both were mixed.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that though he could intellectually accept the concept that death was only a transference of matter from one form to another, he was deeply aware that he in his present form had a limited time span and that this awareness created within him a sense of compression, a feeling that *time* was running out and what has to be achieved should be done before *temporal time* came to a stop for him.

MR. K. S. KULKARNI said that traditional ideas of life and death are still widely held in our belief. The artist's outlook on life or death, pleasure and pain has a bearing on the artist's work. He thought a knowledge of the Indian tradition essential.

According to MR. RATAN PARIMOO the topic of death was a theme, though it may become part of a medium as in poetry. Because of the special nature of painting, what could the painter do with regard to death in his art? DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that our realisation of death is not theoretic. It is a question of attitude on the part of the artist, a question of consciousness. His ideas inform his whole personality and therefore also his work.

## SECTION B

### *Contemporary aesthetic thinking in India and its relevance to the contemporary art situation in the country*

JAYA APPASAMY, The folk inspiration in modern Indian painting

#### *Discussion*

MR. JAG MOHAN pointed out, at the outset, that there are a number of artists who had been influenced by folk art but who were not mentioned in the paper. He cited Rathin Maitra, Gaitonde, Samant and others. DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY added that modern jazz music is an example of an art that had originated as folk art but became a full-fledged art in its own right.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that folk art is not an isolated event. The study of folk art is linked with the study of man. When there is a lack of genuineness of motivation and inspiration, new sources of art are sought.

MR. B. C. SANYAL said that the search for inspiration is a common phenomenon, but the artist need not totally succumb to his inspiration since the creative process in action may disregard the starting point of inspiration.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that the earlier work of M. F. Husain also showed reliance on and assimilation from folk sources. He suggested that in order to show more clearly the origins of inspiration, the folk examples which had influenced the artist, and the modern artists' work of the same kind, should be shown together.

MISS GEETA KAPUR said that the artists who abandoned folk art often continued the decorative attitude in another form.

MR. AJIT MOOKERJEE pointed out that collecting folk art is a passion with some modern western artists also. He cited from personal knowledge the examples of Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore as well as Picasso. Archer had compared Leger and Kalighat painting, while it was known that Rodin had some wood carvings from South India. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that the fact that Picasso, Barbara Hepworth and Rodin had collected pieces of Indian sculpture and folk art did not necessarily mean that they had directly derived inspiration from such objects.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA, returning to Dr. Niharranjan Ray's point, said it is necessary not merely to study folk art superficially, as some artists apparently did, but also to study it closely in connection with anthropological factors and

environment. The artist, however, had the freedom to choose his inspiration. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY added that a historical factor must also be borne in mind. Words and language and symbols lose their sharpness by constant use in a civilisation. When civilisations become sophisticated, they become careless and lose the sharp definition of meaning. The artist therefore finds it necessary to dive deep into the biological reservoirs of life itself; he searches for primitive sources to enrich his art. In the India of 1920s artists went to these sources, i.e. the people of the soil, to revitalise themselves.

S. K. NANDI, Aesthetics of Abanindranath Tagore: his paintings

### *Discussion*

According to DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY, who began the discussion, Abanindranath's *Bāgésvarī Lectures* did not amount to an aesthetic theory. His images and analogies were not systematic. Abanindranath was also a literary artist; his manner and mode of work were more important than the building of a system that could be logically sustained. Other artists have also left records which make us realise the imaginative world they lived in. We should not take Abanindranath's ideas or musings on art as systematic aesthetics. DR. RAY's second point was that it would be preferable to use the term rationalism rather than realism with regard to Abanindranath's art. This term should be thought of in the Eastern sense, as *chhandas*, the principle of the constitutive order of things. The artist always is concerned with reality, as it is the artist's material. Thirdly, DR. RAY said, revivalism and eclecticism were not mutually exclusive or contradictory.

He also explained the point regarding art as the transformation of nature, pointing out that in Indian art technique there was no study of nature in the Western sense. The object was not sketched by superficial observation. The method was one of study and contemplation of the object in all moods. The artist projected himself into the object and tried to understand its objectness. Art was thus nature transformed.

DR. S. K. NANDI said that he did not agree with the opinion that natural *chhandas* are transformed in art. He minimised the importance of technique and cited Abanindranath's view that technique has to be transcended.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that that is only one aspect of the problem. Another aspect is rather more important. The finished product even by a spontaneous writer is a technical feat. For instance, Abanindranath's 'Last Journey of Rabindranath Tagore' was painted in so less than five versions. His technique was not equal to his vision in every stage. Again, in Rabindranath's manuscripts there was great variation, and this is why in modern times greater attention is being paid by scholars to the textural criticism of manuscripts.



DR. RAY further said that the problem of equating Art, Beauty and Truth did not exercise the Indian mind before the 19th century, nor the European mind before the 18th century. *Sundara* meant that which was well done, and did not concern art specifically. Realism and naturalism were thus not pitted against each other.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA expressed the view that the theoretical exposition of ideas and analyses does not explain art. He thought that the author of the paper was confusing the two systems: the philosophic system and the sense verifiability of actual works of art. His thesis was based on Abanindranath's confusion. The paper had stressed the eclecticism of Abanindranath's art, but Abanindranath had never developed a style; his eclecticism was simply a collection of influences from different sources, such as Mughal, Japanese and European art. Every painter is no doubt subject to influences, but these have to be put into a crucible and fused into a single style. Abanindranath showed lack of understanding of each individual style which he had borrowed, and had made no contribution to the visual pictorial language of art. He was an illustrator.

MR. RATAN PARIMOO sought to point out a difference between realism and naturalism. He said that Aristotle's theory of art was written with reference to drama and so it was not correct to cite it; Abanindranath's theory referred to painting. He added that naturalism in the Western sense is a handy term to distinguish naturalistic paintings from those paintings which are manifestly non-naturalistic. Therefore, it would create difficulties if Dr. Ray's interpretation of the term naturalism is accepted.

Technique is not to be considered, MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said, as a mechanical acquisition of skill but as a way, a means of realising an inner compulsion. It is the inner necessity of a new vision that creates or searches for new means, a new technique. A truly original creator would create his own instruments and his own techniques. The tragedy of Abanindranath lay in his misconceived notions of technique and style. In his eagerness to create an authentic Indian style, he forgot that style was not a conscious acquisition but a *resultant* in the pursuit of a vision. To be Indian was not a vision but a self-conscious desire for creating a national identity.

MR. AJIT MOOKERJEE wanted to know the extent to which the Chinese style and Kalighat style had influenced Abanindranath. It is known that Chinese hand-made paper was available in Calcutta. This paper was supplied to Kalighat artists. Chinese colours and paper were also supplied to Jorashanko. He also wanted to know to what extent were the artists of the period encouraged by support received from the 'red light' districts.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA was of the view that Abanindranath did not draw inspiration from Ravi Varma as stated in the paper. MR. DAS GUTPA did not acknowledge Ravi Varma as an artist. He thought Abanindranath did arrive at his own style even if he had borrowed from other sources. He said that even

classical music incorporated in itself different styles, nuances and improvisations.

DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY took objection to Abanindranath's being dubbed an illustrator in a derogatory sense. Joshua Reynolds thought that art was illustration. Illustration could be the starting point of art. Secondly, with regard to Abanindranath's eclecticism, every artist in his life time faces the challenges of his society. He takes from the idioms of his period those which are of interest to him; to this extent every artist is eclectic. As to the remark that Abanindranath had no style, DR. P. S. RAY said that a painting by Abanindranath is immediately recognisable as *his* when seen; this itself is the proof of his style.

DR. ANAND KRISHNA said that reference had been made to Abanindranath's painting, 'Passing of Shahjahan', as work of Mughal art. His style was not in the least related to Mughal painting. Abanindranath's attitude to art could be contrasted and compared usefully with that of Gogonendranath.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND felt that Dr. Nandi's point of view did not put the artist in his legitimate place. For instance, Rabindranath evolved a theory of aesthetics, of harmony, but he contradicted it by his art. It is difficult to reconcile the theoretician and the artist. The most valid part of their work is their creations, in case of artists their pictorial works. The real point is whether they furthered the progress of art. Coming to Abanindranath's paintings, when one considers his total vision one has to consider him a failure.

MISS JAYA APPASAMY pointed out that there is a very large body of the artist's work, as he was active from 1895 to 1951. An artist who was so prolific must have had many periods and changes. Too much emphasis had been given to the influences on Abanindranath: the most important factor in this artist's work was his own temperament and personality which was highly imaginative. Secondly, we have to think of the period with its combination of *fin de siècle* and romantic tendencies. When one considers Indian painting of the period, the lifeless work of the art schools, one is struck by its complete aesthetic barrenness. When one considers Abanindranath's work against this barrenness, one can realise what he had achieved. In 1900, Abanindranath was a modern man.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that the seminar should discuss pictures rather than theories of art. MR. B. C. SANYAL also felt that the discussion had deviated from trying to understand the significance of Abanindranath. The Bengal School did not wish to establish a system of aesthetics but a new national art. What they had tried to give us was the aesthetic experience that pervaded the day-to-day life of the people with a new sense of awareness and sensibility. Art to them was a way of life and related to life. Everything they did or organised—plays, performances, festivals—was endowed with a highly developed aesthetic sense.

DR. S. K. NANDI, making his reply, said that sense verifiability is not the only source to make the arts valid; other ideas too have to be considered. He said

that he had used the term realism in the sense of 'nature improved upon or idealised'. In his view, Abanindranath's work was essentially eclectic and revivalistic. With regard to the view of art as form moving towards the formless or the formless moving towards form, he asked whether, in that case, one should accept the babblings of a child as art? Art is *māya* and art content is neither *sat* or *asat*. As regards the importance of technique he agreed to differ, as in his opinion technique is not a part of art activity, and it does not determine the character of art.

DR. NANDI concluded that he was not aware that the word eclectic had any derogatory connotations. So he would now add the term synthesis to eclecticism. He had made a comparison between Aristotle's and Abanindranath's views on the universality of art objects. Art is desubjectified and claims universality. He also thought that to appeal to the pictorial situation only is emotional and therefore a lower form of appreciation.

#### RATAN PARIMOO, Revivalism and after: an aesthetic controversy

##### *Discussion*

MR. B. C. SANYAL commented that there is a great need of education in art history as neither the artist nor the public are sufficiently aware of all the facts and factors influencing the current position in the field of art. There should be cross currents of a certain idealism as well as a scientific approach, resulting in analysis and enquiry.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that while studying art the history of the period as a whole has to be kept in mind. In 1912 *Gitanjali* was published, which represented the traditional vision of the poet; whereas in 1917 *Balaka* was published, which began a new era. By the 1920s Rabindranath had already visited Europe three times and had come in touch with the German Expressionists and Emile Nolde. In the 1920s India also saw the birth of other movements such as the Socialist and Communist movements. Art moves with history. In 1929 the Independence Resolution was passed and India began to affiliate herself with world movements. From 1890 to 1910 there was a self-conscious revivalism, criticism was built up only in the succeeding period. Havell was the first person to build up a collection of Indian art. He also studied Indian religions and subscribed to the then current idea that religion was the basis of aesthetic thought.

## SECTION C

### *Comparative aesthetics of traditional India, China and the West and its relevance to the art works of the respective areas*

N. V. BANERJEE, Art as the will to create

#### *Discussion*

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND disagreed with the thesis that art is a means of adjusting to a life of bondage. He reiterated his view that art is the product of the biological urge to create. PROF. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY felt that the 'otherness' of Prof. Banerjee's paper could not be sustained from the Indian point of view.

MR. RATAN PARIMOO supported the author's point of view, saying that the will to create means in fact that the artist is creating under the guidance of his whole being. There is a demand for this creation from his whole being. DR. ANAND KRISHNA objected to this formulation, saying that it did not explain the thesis of the paper, according to which all artifacts are artistic.

PROF. BANERJEE replied that art is an escape from, rather than a confrontation of the problem of 'otherness' that is inevitable in human existence. MR. P. DAS GUPTA felt that this definition of art could not cover the example of craft-work, which is often artistic, though created for different ends entirely. He also wondered if architecture could be considered a form of art according to Prof. Banerjee's view.

MARGARET CHATTERJEE, Some philosophical problems arising in the arts

#### *Discussion*

The first question was put by MR. LAXMAN PAI, who asked if an interpreter of music can adjust himself to interpreting Beethoven and Bach equally well. DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE said, that there are some specialists and there are others who can interpret all composers.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND felt that taste is inborn, but it gets blunted by all sorts of influences and habits of mind. He wanted the system of education in schools and colleges to be planned so that inhibitions can be removed and tastes revived; good taste for actual works of art should be inculcated in the younger generation and not so much a taste for metaphysical theories. PROF. C. D. NARASIMHAIAH added that the revival of taste is needed not only in painting but in poetry and other arts. DR. S. S. BARLINGAY felt that re-cultivation could be done on an experimental basis. DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE said that in Britain after the War there was a sort of renaissance in the arts, and people were more conscious of art than before. She thought that this might have been influenced by the immigration of foreigners and by the foreign travels of those who had gone to war.

On the subject of Child Art, MR. PRANAB RANJAN RAY said that as an art critic he had seen several exhibitions of children's art, but had sadly enough found them disheartening. Most of the work consisted of consciously done copies or 'goaded copies' or corrected copies. There was very little spontaneity in them. It was only in exhibitions of the work of mentally retarded children that he had found better quality. His second point concerned the 'original' in the performing arts, e.g. in Western music. He wondered whether the original of Bach or Beethoven is reproduced when, for instance, Toscanini interprets it; or is it the conductor giving his particular version?

MR. P. DAS GUPTA also described his experiences as a judge of child art. He had found that only a bare one-fifth of the entries were of any merit; the rest were either purely imitative or downright bad. He did not want anything to be imposed on the children. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND felt that it is wrong to regard a child's product as a work of art; it is rather an expression of the child's developing sensibility. Children between the ages of three and nine should be encouraged to express themselves through art activities; this should be made a part of the educational set-up. Then their tastes could be developed; otherwise they would become inhibited, perverted or ossified.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA, pointing to the difference between memory images of paintings and an actual fresh look at the paintings, asked if similar memory images of music can be developed. DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE felt that this is possible. She also said that when people say that a painting has come off in spite of faulty and shoddy technique, it is actually just the technique that has made it possible for the painting to come off.

MISS APPASAMY pointed out that originals came into existence comparatively late in the development of European art. After the Renaissance, when the genius of individual artists came to be recognised, copies by others of inferior

merit began to appear. The cult of the individual led to ever increasing emphasis on the originality of work; artists began to invent their own forms and media even. This was invariably followed by bad work by others.

MR. K. S. KULKARNI said that, unless they are reproduced by mechanical means, copies can only be approximations. Secondly, originality flourished in ancient days also; artists of long ago were more original than the artists of today. Thirdly, given freedom and a creative attitude children in any part of the world can develop beautifully.

MR. PRANABRANJAN RAY pointed out that all the bother about copies arose because there was a lot of money in the making and selling of copies. As regards originality, he said that the concept of originality that we have today did not exist in the past.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that there was indeed a lot of difference between Giotto and the School of Giotto. In earlier days, however, e.g. in the Byzantine period, there was not much difference between one artist and another. There was a given idiom, which bound the artists together, and within that idiom one artist differed from another very little.

Disagreeing, DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that in Khajuraho only a few sculptures were good, but the rest was junk. He stated that he was against the erratic element in present-day ideas of originality, and deprecated the fads and cults of originality.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that whenever there is an original painter with original ideas, there will always be others who will copy his work or derive their inspiration from it. These copyists need not be deprecated or derided.

DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE explained that an original in painting has a definite meaning and value. In the performing arts, no doubt the score of the composer was original, but every time it is performed in an original manner, that performance is original too.

MR. LAXMAN PAI referred to the *mudras* of Indian dance which were conceived a long time ago. He wondered whether, in these changed times, it would be congenial to change and adapt them to present day needs. DR. KAPILA VATSYAYAN pointed out that the very word *mudra* was not used in the past in the way we use it now. In the past, it was known as *hasta abhinaya*. The hands and fingers were employed in different combinations and permutations, along with facial expressions and gestures, to convey meaning. The hand movements formed a sort of grammar of symbols that could be used to convey whole sentences.

She explained that modern experiments have been made in this respect, and demonstrated how a railway engine can be depicted by *hasta abhinaya*.

MR. RATAN PARIMOO referred to two different interpretations of Shakespeare, in 16th century costume and in modern costume, and to interpretations of music with today's instruments and the original instruments. Which is to be deemed to be original. DR. CHATTERJEE said that since both interpretations flourish, both should be accepted.

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH, Indian aesthetics and art activity: a literary critic's view

*Discussion*

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY jokingly remarked, opening the discussion, that though he was in cent per cent agreement with the paper, he must resort to the expressions used by the author, like 'Yes, but' and 'Not exactly, because'. Being himself a literary and art critic, DR. RAY felt that a specialist in one field or even a creative artist in one field can throw light on another field. Literature and the visual arts can help one another. But when we take up the Urn about which Keats had written a poem, mentioned at length in the paper, two distinctive factors have to be taken into consideration. The Grecian Urn, the object, was one. And Keats, whose responses to the Urn were concretised in the poem, was another. To the creator of the Urn in Greece, it may not have been an Urn at all. It was a concretization of his aesthetic experience. And Keats created his Ode out of his aesthetic responses on coming into contact with the Urn. Of course, an art critic's response to the Urn would further differ from Keat's responses.

In India too there are archaeologists and art historians who have used literary references to understand and interpret works of art. For instance, Kalidasa's poems had been used to throw light on Ajanta paintings, since Kalidasa and the painters of Ajanta were of the same period. Dr. Sivaramamurthi did a considerable amount of work in this respect. Although such literary parallels to art may help in one way, they cannot help us to understand the process of artistic creation. Some inferences can be drawn from literature regarding art, but explanations cannot be extracted.

PROF. NARASIMHAIAH agreed that no art criticism can be based solely on a literary critic's view. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND commented that the literary parallels between Kalidasa and Indian paintings found by Dr. Sivaramamurthi were too much in favour of literature.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA took up the reference to Coomaraswamy in the paper, according to which he had said that a Buddhist priest would know more about the Buddhist image than a museum visitor. MR. DAS GUPTA related an instance about the late Maharajah of Indore, which threw light on this matter. The Maharajah had wanted to build a temple in which to instal not a religious image but Brancusi's 'Bird in Flight', as the Maharajah found that aesthetically and spiritually satisfying.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA agreed with Dr. Niharranjan Ray that the awareness brought about by a piece of literature concerning an art object would be entirely different from the awareness brought about by the art object itself.

DR. S.K.NANDI said that the paper was full of prescriptive statements, and 19th century poetic diction. He also felt that the references to names were not to the point. For instance, a blind boy could be named *Padmalochana* (lotus-eyed) and that made no sense. He also mentioned the case of Jamini Roy, who was his neighbour and to whom he had gone for explanations about his art. Even though Jamini Roy was an extremely creative and perceptive person, he failed in intellectual discourse and in explaining his own art. Creation is one thing and talking about creation is an entirely different thing, the two operate at different levels.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND agreed that it is difficult to explain one art by another, but said this could be a helpful attitude: 'Painting is Poetry by analogy'.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that although Shakespeare may have said, 'What's in a name?', according to Indian tradition the world depended on *nāma*, *rūpa* and *svarūpa*. Names belong to a whole world, as they are made of sound and image. Concerning the present sad state of art education in the country, and the loss of sensitivity among the younger generation, he recounted how during his time as Professor of Fine Arts at Calcutta University, he used to organise educational tours of Konarak. As Konarak is a non-consecrated temple it has no sanctity for the Hindus, but large groups of villagers, including their mothers and daughters, would come and see the 'erotic' sculptures unabashedly. The city-bred college students would only view the sculptures out of the corners of their eyes. And the sculptures had to be explained to the students. With the villagers it was a different matter. One day when he asked them why they came, one of them replied, 'We like them. These temples tell the stories of our lives.' From this we can see how the Indian sculptural tradition had percolated down to the lowest level.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND, however, contended that the masses do not understand art easily. He was more worried about the intelligentsia of the country for there



seemed to be a complete breakdown in their sensibility and sensitivity. His plea was for more scholars to address themselves to the task of educating the intelligentsia by whatever means possible, even if it be from parallels in music. He remarked that Aurobindo, a great philosopher and aesthete, had a bad bronze in his room, which was inexplicable. PROF. NARASIMHAIAH also advocated a multiplicity of approaches to the arts.

DR. R.K.SEN disputed a statement in the paper that poetry and painting belong to two different categories and that 'one stills the emotions and teaches restrained delight, while the other moves the emotions and sends one to raptures'. He said that both poetry and painting can send us into raptures. If any art is successful, whether it is poetry or painting, it can have this effect. With Lessing and others the idea had developed that what Homer could do a sculptor could never do, but this is a wrong idea.

MR. LAXMAN PAI pointed out that whenever intellectuals and philosophers visit the studios of artists, they are not interested in seeing and appreciating the paintings but are more worried about the intellectual processes behind creation and appreciation. He also wondered whether there is any validity in the concept of the ivory tower artist.

PROF. NARASIMHAIAH replied that, historically speaking, there had been a school of ivory tower artists; T.S.Eliot, F.R.Leavis and others had helped artists to get out of the ivory tower attitude. He concluded the discussion by saying that he was overwhelmed by the learning of the participants. He would return home to teach poetry and literature with added new dimensions.

R.K. SEN, Nature of aesthetic enjoyment in Greek and Indian analysis

#### *Discussion*

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that it has been historically established that speculations about aesthetics had their origins in primitive fertility rites. This has been confirmed by archaeological finds and historical references. Parallelism can be found not only between India and the Mediterranean world in this respect, but also with China, and in Arabic and Persian, especially, Sufi literature. The main thesis of the paper, therefore, did not need further discussion.

A major question, however, remained to be answered. If the origins and development of aesthetic speculation in India and the Hellenistic world were the same, then how are we to account for the fundamental difference in the end

products of the art of India and of Europe? Why was there this difference between the sensibilities and sensitivities of the two areas which resulted in European art's not being predominantly conditioned by theological and mystical thought? According to the assumptions formulated in the paper, our art should have been theirs, and their art ours. This is a major problem to be solved.

MR. PRANABRANJAN RAY pointed out that the sex drive is only one among many biological urges, and these are culturally conditioned. He referred to the experience of Thor Nielsen of the Kon Tiki expedition, who had married a South Sea Islander and whose physiological drive, conditioned by Scandinavian culture, was not acceptable to his wife. He said that, in different societies, there are different categories of experience and of drives.

PROF. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY raised doubts about the *Nāṭya Śāstra* having been derived from the Ayurvedic texts. Apart from uncertainty about the relative dates of these works, he stated that there is no textual evidence that *sthāyībhāvas* were taken over from Ayurvedic concepts. He felt that, in the context of 20th century knowledge and experience, we may believe all that has been said about the sublimation of the sex drive, but actually there is no evidence in the Alankāra texts.

MR. LAXMAN PAI was sceptical about whether there is any similarity between aesthetic enjoyment and sexual enjoyment. Sexual activity is more of a practical activity. He said that sexual enjoyment and aesthetic enjoyment are two different processes entirely. PROF. N.A. NIKAM was of the opinion that the paper committed the 'naturalistic fallacy' (G.Moore). The whole process of aesthetic activity cannot be explained away by taking sex as one of its components.

MR. PRANABRANJAN RAY observed that in ancient India, as in other early societies, the use of analogies was prevalent and we should not be carried away by them. According to MR. AJIT MOOKERJEE, the paper has ignored an important point which was one of the basic tenets of Tantric philosophy, the belief that all human beings are females and that there is no male in the world. According to PROF. NAGENDRA, the *Nāṭya Śāstra* did not contain references to all the points raised by the paper. He said that *sāttvika rasa* and *bhoja rasa* were entirely opposed to one another.

DR. S.K. NANDI, while accepting that the paper was a unique one, felt that the texts were not correctly quoted and interpreted. He said that Plato was only against Amusement Poetry. According to the *Sāṃkhya* system, there is no union of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti* (the Male and the Female). The apotheosis to the Mother Cult theory can be found in the story of Brahma's birth, according to which Brahma came out of the navel of Lord Vishnu and not out of the womb

of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. It is, finally, a misinterpretation of Freud and Adler to take libido to mean the sexual urge only, as the paper did.

DR. MARGARET CHATTERJEE said that, in her view, the paper did not commit any 'naturalistic fallacy'. She went on to say that the Christian concept cannot be understood only in terms of Eros for there is also the agape to be taken into consideration. In Christian and Jewish traditions, there are other conceptual relationships, like those of Father and Son, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and even that of Friend and Friend.

In the view of DR. KAPILA VATSYAYAN what the author had argued is true at one level only. In India several things had happened giving scope for development in different directions. There is also the question of several layers of meanings. Even though Ayurveda may have contributed much one has to look at the problem not from a restricted viewpoint, but from a totality of knowledge and experience.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND, on the other hand, gave lavish praise to the paper. He found support in Dr. Sen's thesis for his own hunch that Indian art and literature depended very much on the culture of Vatsayana. He fully endorsed the view that the basic trend of Indian aesthetics depended on biological and sexual urges. He pleaded for an unprejudiced view of this whole matter.

DR. R.K.SEN then replied to the various points of criticism. In regard to Prof. Krishnamoorthy's observations, the author said that he had proved in the course of his article on 'Charkra, Susruta and Bharata' (*The Indian Historical Quarterly*, no. 1, 1953) that Bharata derived his ideas of *vyābhichārībhāvas* from the Ayurvedic texts. Referring to *sthāyībhāvas*, he pointed out that the Male and Female principle was operative behind *hāsya* (Male) and *rati* (Female), as well as *vīra* (Male) and *bhayānaka* (Female). The Alankāra texts agreed that *śringāra* and *hāsya* go together, just as the Aristotelean pity (*karuṇā*) and fear (*rudra*), with pity as the female principle and fear as the active principle. Confirmation of this can be found in the Vajrayāna texts of the seventh century.

With regard to Prof. Nagendra's query, DR. SEN said that if Chapter VI of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* is read along with Chapter I, ample confirmation can be found for fertility rites being the background of *Nāṭya Śāstra*. Bharata's analogy of food and drink in explaining *rasa* evolution (Chapter VI) can be traced back to Charaka.

PROF. KRISHNAMOORTHY intervened to say that though *sattvikabhāva* may be proven to have been derived from Charaka, the same cannot be said of *sthāyībhāvas*. DR. SEN said that he had been misunderstood. He had only contended

that *sattvikabhāvas* and *vyābhichārībhāvas* had been taken over from Ayurvedic texts. In answer to Prof. Nikam's point that aesthetic experience is all-pervasive, and that the biological emphasis is misleading, DR. SEN said that his stand was that aesthetic experience started from the biological plane and proceeded to more subtle and refined levels. He affirmed that *rasa* has to be taken from the totality of experience.

MR. P. DAS GUPTA then quoted a Tantric text which he felt bore on the discussion, 'The night time of the Body is the day time of the Soul.' MR. AJIT MOOKERJEE said that in tantra, as in christian theology, all souls were considered females in the search of God. DR. SEN commented that in Greek thought the formative principle was reckoned as male and the constituent principle as female

In answer to Dr. Nandi's point, DR. SEN said that in Plato's Symposium, he had condemned all the arts. Plato's attitude towards love was revealed in his reference to the Sphere split up by the other for union.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY, concluding the discussion, said that while most of the aesthetic and philosophical speculations posed in the paper are tenable, they have to be interpreted in terms of the visual arts. DR. SEN commented that he was only a student of aesthetics and literature and not a student of art.

## SECTION D

### *Modern movements in world art and their implications for aesthetic theory*

FATIMA AHMED, Modern movements in world art and their implications for aesthetic theory or theories

*Presented in absentia*

PRODOSH DAS GUPTA, Role of abstraction in modern art

#### *Discussion*

A statement by Andre Malraux about the position of primitive art in European museums, quoted in the paper, was taken up by DR. MULK RAJ ANAND. He deplored the derisive attitude that some European and American critics take towards Asian art, when their own art is often despairing and escapist. He quoted T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound to indicate the nature of this despair. He urged that we must shake off the patronage that is extended to us, and take up our own position in world art.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA also deprecated the attitude of superiority that some Westerners assume towards Asian art. E.g., at the Seattle World Fair, under the title of World Art only Western art was displayed. He wished to make a distinction, however, between individual artists and the political-cultural organisations in operation. The best artists in the West are not parochial. They are cognizant of, and interested in, the work of artists in other parts of the world.

With reference to the section on folk art, PROF. S.K.SARASWATI wanted to know the meaning of the paper's statement, 'Folk art has no historical basis'. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY referred to the distinction made by Stella Kramrisch between folk art which is historically dated and conditioned by time, and that which is time-less. Folk toys, etc. have a historical lineage, while ritual objects are almost timeless.

In regard to the basic issue of defining the term 'abstract', PROF. K.KRISHNA-

MOORTHY sought for a clearer definition of it, and MISS GEETA KAPUR suggested that a distinction should be made between 'near-abstract' and abstract art, because they implied very different attitudes. This was the line of distinction between analytical and synthetic cubism.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that in developing a relation between primitive art and modern abstract art there had been an over-simplification of the problem; the polarity of their intentions should be further clarified. Abstraction in primitive art is in the nature of extractions that give rise to essentialised symbols. In modern art, abstraction is an intellectual process to make the picture plane an autonomous reality and, therefore, it could be better called non-objective art. MR. K.S.KULKARNI also distinguished between the qualities of primitive abstraction and modern abstraction. The former was born of conceptual formulas after a close observation of nature; the latter is the result of an individual's subjective interpretation of known forms. MISS JAYA APPASAMY characterised the primitive abstraction of folk art as cumulative, organised, ritualistic, impersonal, Symbolic and very meaningful. Modern abstraction she characterised as individual, idiosyncratic, intellectual, non-symbolic, aesthetic and often devoid of meaning.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY, concluding the discussion, said that the important line of demarcation between traditional and modern art lies at the point where the concept of the referential is given up and art becomes non-referential. This raises the questions of communication and of dehumanization discussed further in the subsequent papers.

BHUPENDRA KARIA, Modern sciences (with special reference to modern mathematics) and its influence on new aesthetics

#### *Discussion*

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that today nothing is wholly outside of anything. We have now a theory in mathematics, called the Game Theory, which is being used in the study of politics and military strategy. Mathematics can be brought into art also. Further, according to traditional Indian conceptions of Time, nothing was 'static' or 'kinetic'. Time was Flux. The metal images of *Mahishamardini Durgā* and *Naṭarāja* blended perfectly the kinetic and the static. Even while *Durgā* is killing the demon, there is no tension or twitch in the muscles; it is a smiling face, as if she were in a sort of *līlā*. In the *Naṭarāja* ceaseless movement is depicted, but there is no tension in this either. In *Laokoon*, movement stays for a moment in the outstretched hand. There is nothing new in modern kinetic art; the ancient Indians tackled the problem. As

a matter of fact, modern Abstract Art has come back to the traditional Indian concept of Time.

MR. BHUPENDRA KARIA referred to the frog, which we now know, can only see things in motion. He was happy to note that our ancients had been aware of all these things. He mentioned the case of Frank Lloyd Wright, who once solved a problem of architecture, only to find later that Confucius had also worked on it. However, Wright had tackled the problem in his own right.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that the important thing is that art makes its own media. The media are in search of possibilities. It is an internal necessity of the artist that makes him select the medium and use it. Once the medium is chosen, it has its own repercussions.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND pointed out that good artists are concerned with all aspects of life and, therefore, with new space relations. Science can be absorbed by art advantageously, but clever tricks will not do. He did not want an art of conundrums and puzzles.

MR. LAXMAN PAI asked whether a work of art should be judged on the basis of its newness or on its intrinsic qualities.

In his concluding remarks DR. MULK RAJ ANAND protested against the statement of Ingmar Bergman, quoted in the paper, 'I will even murder if it furthers my art'. He said that it reminded him of Goering's remark that he always reached for his gun when he heard the word 'culture'. He did not want to have anything to do with such art; he wanted Art which had as its destination, Man.

KRISHEN KHANNA, Modern movements in world art and their implications on aesthetic theories

#### *Discussion*

The discussion centred around the slides shown by the author of modern American, European and Indian paintings. Participants commented on the motivation and invention of the artist as realised within the picture space; on the pictorial elements of the painting; and on the visual response which a painting should and does evoke from the receptive onlooker.

MR. KHANNA emphasised the need to look at a painting with intensity and concentration, to look at it in a way which would sympathise with, and approximate toward, the creative experience of the artist.

RAM KUMAR. Observations of an artist face a face with all aesthetic theories

*Discussion*

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY asked why, if the statements made in the paper concerning the unimportance of art history and aesthetics were true, should an artist like Mr. Ram Kumar want his work to be judged and evaluated at all? MISS JAYA APPASAMY said that the artist wants his work to be judged because he paints not for history but for us, and wants participation and involvement.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that the artist's isolation as an outsider is a predicament of all egocentric artists. DR. S. K. NANDI concurred with this, saying that the paper epitomised the egocentric position.

DR. IRVING KRIESBERG made a plea that the artist's attitude be heard rather than be immediately put into a philosophical system. He said that the philosophical and historical aspects of art are a separate item of discussion from art activity—as the title of the seminar indicated.

MR. PRANABRANJAN RAY said that the paper should be taken as a testament of faith. In view of the Philistine attitudes that exist in our society, not only among laymen but also art critics, the observations made in the paper are pertinent.

MR. RATAN PARIMOO felt that the artist was being put in the dock. The discussion had failed to take up the questions raised in the paper, and thus proven their authenticity. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that the paper's observations well emphasised the immediate problem of contemporary Indian art.

MR. MADANJEET SINGH said that the paper's attitude is representative of many artists but not of all. The particular social and economic context of an artist is an important factor. The paper had done well in focussing on the failure of art criticism in confronting contemporary art activity.

MR. B.C. SANYAL said that the paper is an indication of the alienation we have all been speaking of, and a testament of cynicism of which serious note should be taken.

JAG MOHAN, The aesthetics of anti-art

*Discussion*

MISS JAYA APPASAMY felt that the paper presented too broad a survey,



and that much disparity had been lumped together. Within the art movements here termed Anti-Art, a distinction ought to be made between the lesser and the more significant aspects, for that would elucidate the main direction in which art is moving. Within any movement itself a qualitative evaluation of particular works must also be made to gain insight into the essence of contemporary creative activity.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that the gimmicks must be separated from genuine expression and, above all, the destination of art, man, must be kept in mind. DR. IRVING KRIESBERG said that rather than dismissing or immediately judging the avant-garde, we should try to understand it in its own context, and try to discover the possibilities that lie therein.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that in viewing avant-garde work there is no need for a total suspension of judgement, since even when the mind is kept open, positions have to be taken, as they are vis-a-vis every aspect of life.

### LAXMAN PAI, The impact of modern movements on aesthetic theory or theories

#### *Discussion*

After reading his paper, MR. LAXMAN PAI went on to enlarge certain points visually, by sketching on the blackboard. Starting by drawing a woman's face, he proceeded to transform it from obvious representation to an abstraction no longer recognisable. He raised two issues: the definition of 'reference' in art, and the nature of the visual response to an art work.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY responded that 'reference' is not similarity or verisimilitude, and asked whether there can be anything in art which has no reference to nature in its widest sense. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA explained that 'non-reference' in a visual language distinguishes between what is pictorially related to known objects and what is not.

DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY, saying that 'reference' is used in two senses, distinguished between (1) the referring of one visual object to another, and (2) the referring of a process or an idea. The latter cannot be a reference in visual language.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that in art the process of concretisation is, after all, 'derived'. To that extent there is always a reference, if not to visual manifestations, then to the principles of nature. He illustrated his point from architec-

ture, which he called the most abstract of the arts. It consist of lines, volume, space, which are all derived from nature. It is out of such derivations that most abstract arts can be explained, for here reference is not just to the visible world of nature but to its essential facts and principles.

MR. LAXMAN PAI called on two participants to articulate their responses to some prints he had shown. One participant had little visual response. MR. MULK RAJ ANAND, taking this as a case in point, said that unless one is a trained *rasika* there can be no direct, immediate aesthetic response to painting: one must assimilate and diffuse the initial response in order to approximate to the artist's creative process and intention. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY agreed that, in any art, the key to developing an aesthetic response lies in an organised and disciplined exposure.

PRANABRANJAN RAY, An inquiry into the motive behind the negation of appearance in modern art

#### Discussion

PROF. N.A.NIKAM, lauding the paper, said that it might be titled, 'The Epistemology of Aesthetic Experience'. He was very interested, as a philosopher, in the dialectic of aesthetic experience presented in the paper that subjective experiences cannot be embodied in known visual forms, and yet art purports to do just that, to make the subjective visible. The paper also suggested to him the possibility that the Jain theory of *anekantvadan* is derived more from the nature of aesthetic experience than from logic, though the logician who formulated it may not have been conscious of this.

The discussion then turned to the question of alienation in society and in art. MR. KRISHEN KHANNA said that the paper had passed a value judgement on Modern art, as being alienated from life. It was said that modern art is restricted, not only in its relationship to human experience, but also in terms of visual experience. In MR. KHANNA'S view, the important thing to consider in art is its potential to expand our visual awareness, however small or large that extension may be. In any case, no one artist can express the total human condition in all its directions and dimensions. It is in the totality of art in any age that the totality of human experience is expressed.

MR. PRANABRANJAN RAY did not agree; he said that the sum total of experience does not involve arithmetical addition in art, as in technology. It is true that any one artist cannot contain and express the whole of human experience.

What is important is that the artist relate himself to, and express, human experience within his own dimension and capacity.

DR. MULK RAJ ANAND felt that the paper argued very subtly, and he wanted it to be responded to in the same manner. The paper explained the predicament of modern art in the context of alienation in society, and this alienation cannot be denied.

MR. MADANJEET SINGH said that the development of science and technology has isolated artists into a specialised cult, but if the communication which is absent today between the artist and the masses could be restored, then there would be a two-way enrichment of life and art. MR. B. C. SANYAL also said that alienation is a fact today and it inevitably works its way into the attitudes of artists. The means of communication being blocked by over-sophistication, artists have developed what may be called a *visual technology*. MR. K. S. KULKARNI agreed that an alienated society must yield an alienated art; he wanted the artists to find their own solution for the situation.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY concluded that alienation is a fact and we need not gloss over it. Alienation is the unbalance of man in relation to society; it is not in the hands of sociologists, etc. to restore the balance but rather for the artists and poets to do so. The obligation lies with them because they have the deepest perception and sensibilities, but at all stages it must be understood that life is greater than art and art activity must feed into life by confronting larger human issues.

B. C. SANYAL, Modern movements in world art and their implications for aesthetic theories

### *Discussion*

At the outset, PROF. N. A. NIKAM wished to determine the meaning of the term modernism. He understood it as an abstract term related to and deriving from a prevailing philosophy. He questioned whether, for example, the Soviet philosophy would necessarily yield its own aesthetics, and whether that would then be called modernism. DR. MULK RAJ ANAND said that a philosophical system does not necessarily yield an aesthetic theory, and the contemporary Soviet system has not yielded such a theory. Modernism is to be understood in a larger context. He said that the essence of modernity lay in the qualitative response of an age to quantitative changes. Modernism is the distilled essence of all the changes that have taken place through science, technology, war, etc.

Modernism is to be understood as born out of the crises of our time and the challenge contained therein.

MR. KRISHEN KHANNA quoted a passage from Carl Jung's *Spiritual Problems of Modern Man*, in which the meaning of modernity was explained. The passage emphasised the importance of total responsiveness on the part of modern man to his immediate present and all that it contains. To be modern requires 'the most intensive and extensive consciousness with a minimum of unconsciousness'. DR. B.N.GOSWAMY explained that the concept of modernity has to be understood in differing human contexts, modernism arrives in different countries at different dates. Even in art modernism was not a unified development in all cultures. In all cases, however, modernism is essentially the opposition of man to traditional structures.

Seeking to explain the term modernism as employed in relation to art, DR. PUNYA SLOKA RAY said that when historical premises did not hold, modern man and the artists had to create parallel worlds, ones that moved away from history and created alternatives. He referred to Mallarme who said that the quintessence of modern art lay in its involvement in building parallels. The artist has lost faith in the phenomenal world and is reverting to himself.

PROF. N.V.BANERJEE pointed out that the term 'modern' is used in two different senses: (1) in a chronological sense; and (2) in the sense of that which addresses the contemporaneity of man. DR. S.S. BARNINGAY defined three ways in which he saw 'modernism' being used in the paper: (1) a descriptive term; (2) an evaluative term; and (3) a term denoting chronology. DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that modernity is not simply contemporaneousness; it has to do with an attitude, the total response of an age to challenges being thrown at the existing order. The necessity of a deep and intensive response had occurred at various crucial points in the history of India and of the World. This is what constitutes modernity in our context too.

In response to a question, MR. B. C. SANYAL said that he used the words chaos and tension to refer to the endless alternatives and open possibilities that are now before the artist. Chaos may exist in art for the onlooker also, if he is not familiar with the particular manner of expression. But the chaos would disappear once familiarity is established.

Several participants commented that the chaos lies not in art but in the entire social context in which art is created and from which it necessarily derives its life force. MR. RATAN PARIMOO said that the artist is concerned with resolving chaos and establishing order through the use of pictorial means. Other participants

also said that the most significant artists, though a part of this chaos, yet transcended it in and through their art, thereby creating new order and new harmonies. Mondrian was given as an example.

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY said that in nature itself there is chaos. In the history of man, chaotic situations are thrown up, but man responded to them by creating new orders; any society which did not respond in this way, degenerated. In today's world crucial ideas and events are cutting across one another, creating crises. The human endeavour is to bring about order, and the artist's function is to constantly make, organize, discipline and create order. The artist has broken through the old values of proportion, balance, harmony, etc., but only to discover new ones. As for tension, DR. RAY commented that there can be no creation without tension and tension is released only when the work of art is complete.

## CONCLUDING SESSION

### *Thanksgiving*

DR. NIHARRANJAN RAY

Dr. Niharranjan Ray said that although organising the Seminar was a strenuous task, but at the present moment he felt elated in spirit by his success in bringing together artists, philosophers, historians and art critics. This was perhaps the first such occasion. And it was a great experience. The experience had enriched him and given him confidence.

He thanked Dr. Mulk Raj Anand for his encouragement and co-operation in this venture. The Seminar had been able to establish an intangible relation between the participants. Such a relationship tends to deepen and sharpen perception. He complimented participants on the attitude with which they had discussed the Indian tradition. He was happy to note that traditions in Indian aesthetics and art were not discussed only as items of scholarship but as something living which belonged to Indians; and yet the speakers raised themselves above traditionalism. Traditions were looked up to with respect, yet there was no lack of a critical attitude in dealing with them.

He regretted that there was no Sinological scholar in the Seminar. He said that the Chinese, with their own vision and thinking, are making an important contribution in the field, but unfortunately very little is known about it. Referring to the latest trends in Western art, he said that there is a consciousness of tomorrow's art in the West, along with a kind of feverish activity.

He was sorry, reviewing the Seminar, that it had not discussed drama and the stage, because very significant developments are taking place there. Man, he said, fears frustrations, depression and stresses in political and economic life. The Seminar had analysed these conditions and happenings in the cultural world of India. The question of the role of the artist is very pertinent at this moment, and it is necessary to do something in this matter. After the battle of Plassey in 1758, during the period of subjection when the entire society decomposed and disintegrated, the poet Kaviranjan Ramprasad had kept the flame of hope alive through his poems and songs.

The purpose of the present Seminar was to see how this kind of awareness can be created and maintained. If it succeeded in making people aware of the vital importance of the social context, the Seminar would have achieved its purpose.

## DR. MULK RAJ ANAND

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand said that he would give artists Gandhiji's advice: 'Open all the doors and windows but do not be blown off by the breeze.' Dr. Anand said that, whatever we are in our roots, we should be sensitive to external conditions and to the forces of change. Success lies in appreciating the total point of view. As to the conclusions of the Seminar, he said that to reach conclusions many aspects need to be absorbed and this always takes time.

Dr. Anand said that in other parts of the world intellectuals do not hate one another, but in India they seem to peck at one another. This is a sorry state of affairs. This country does not lack talent in the field. The example of Coomaraswamy shows this. But we need many more free minds to examine ideas and appreciate them.

Reviewing the contemporary situation, Dr. Anand referred to the Bengali poets as an example of steadfastness and eventual victory. Their poetry was not very popular in the beginning and the poets had to assemble on the pavement to recite their work. That was their way to win the battle. He asked how many artists today are prepared to do battle in this way?

## PROFESSOR N. V. BANERJEE

Prof. Banerjee said that from the humanistic point of view, *jiva* is very important. All human beings have an inherent tendency to seek integration within ourselves and with others. Alienation is indeed a universal phenomenon. Survival is the goal for which everyone has to struggle. This universal struggle for survival puts us in bondage. Art, religion and morals are the ways of adaptation to a life of bondage. The adaptation is sought through art by creating something which can communicate to others, but it is something which can never achieve communion with others.

## MR. KRISHEN KHANNA

To him, Mr. Khanna said, art is a way of life. As a man, the artist has a responsibility to his family, and also obligations to the society in which he lives. As an artist, he also feels an overriding sense of responsibility to his work and vocation. Art is not a trade, it is a vocation of complete dedication, commitment and of many sacrifices. Art does not happen. A painting is not a picture to look at, it is a chunk of the artist's life. If the painter could communicate this fact to the art historian, the critic and the philosopher, his purpose was served.

Artists never flatter one another; rather, they throw acid on one another's

work. Yet the artist wants to know where he stands with others, because he is a modern man and lives today, not in the past.

MR. B. C. SANYAL

Mr. B. C. Sanyal expressed pleasure at being among philosophers, although he was usually awed by them. Aesthetics does say many important things which have a bearing on the artist's experience. No artist, whatever his field of activity, can or should ignore his social responsibility; he is a product of his society. By the very fact of being what he is, the artist is, however, deeply preoccupied with his work. He is often misunderstood for this. The role of the artist in society is a question which can be put the other way round also, as the role of society in relation to the creative artist.

The observations of Mr. Ram Kumar had struck a discordant note, disturbing to all, but they had served a purpose. He had reflected an opinion which arises from the gap existing between the artist and the understanding of art. The question of alienation should not arise, but it does exist in fact. No artist asks for privileges, but the wall between his work and the understanding of his work must be broken through from both sides. A seminar like this one could achieve it.

PROFESSOR K. KRISHNAMOORTHY

Prof. Krishnamoorthy said that he had come to the Seminar in great trepidation. As a Sanskrit scholar, he was happy at the response to his paper. The Seminar broke the closed atmosphere in which the study of Sanskrit literature and poetics is carried on. He was grateful for it.

PROFESSOR N. A. NIKAM

Prof. Nikam observed that nowhere had he come across such a diversity of viewpoints as were expressed at this Seminar. He regretted, from his experience at other conferences and seminars, the fallacious way of thinking current about Indian philosophy in relation to aesthetics. The Vedantic philosophy, identified with the illusion theory, is thought to deny any concern with art and aesthetics. People should also take account of the other side of the Indian tradition, which taught people to find God in the world and destroy illusion. This is a practical task; 'finding' is an activity; and how else can one obtain the delight of existence, *ānanda*? This delight is not limited to intellect and emotion; it extends to the artist's creation also.





## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Anand, Dr. Mulk Raj  
Chairman  
Lalit Kala Akademi  
Rabindra Bhavan  
Feroz Shah Road  
New Delhi-1
2. Ahmed, Kumari Fatima  
C/o Srimati Najmunisa Begum  
Dharmvanth High School  
Yakutpura  
Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)
3. Appasamy, Srimati Jaya  
Editor, Lalit Kala Akademi  
Rabindra Bhavan  
Feroz Shah Road  
New Delhi-1
4. Barlingay, Dr. S. S.  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Delhi  
Delhi-7
5. Banerjee, Dr. N. V.  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas  
Simla-5
6. Bhatnagar, Kumari Santosh  
Lecturer in Drawing and Painting  
Vanasthali Vidyapith  
Vanasthali (Rajasthan)
7. Chaudhuri, Professor Sankho  
Department of Fine Arts  
M. S. University of Baroda  
Baroda (Gujrat)
8. Chaitanya, Mr. Krishna  
All India Arts and Crafts Society  
Rafi Marg  
New Delhi-1
9. Chatterjee, Dr. (Srimati) Margaret  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Delhi  
Delhi-7
10. Dasgupta, Mr. Pradosh  
Director  
National Gallery of Modern Art  
Jaipur House  
New Delhi-11
11. Ganguli, Dr. Kalyan Kumar  
Department of Ancient Indian  
History and Culture  
University of Calcutta  
Asutosh Building  
Calcutta-12
12. Gairola, Dr. C. K.  
C/o Kumar Gallery  
Sundar Nagar  
New Delhi
13. Goswamy, Dr. B. N.  
Department of Fine Arts  
Panjab University  
Chandigarh-3 (Punjab)
14. Kapoor, Miss Geeta  
C/o Principal, Modern School  
New Delhi
15. Khanna, Mr. Krishen  
3-B, Mathura Road  
Jungpura Extension  
New Delhi-14
16. Krishna, Dr. Anand  
Deputy Director  
Bharat Kala Bhavan  
Banaras Hindu University  
Varanasi-5

17. Kumar, Mr. Ram  
14A/20, Western Extn. Area  
Karolbagh  
New Delhi
18. Karia, Mr. Bhupendra  
Department of Fine Arts  
M. S. University of Baroda  
Baroda (Gujrat)
19. Kulkarni, Mr. K. S.  
Director  
Triveni Kala Sangam  
205, Tansen Marg  
Dharwar-3 (Mysore)
20. Kriesberg, Dr. Irving  
Fulbright Research Professor  
Udaipur University  
Udaipur (Rajasthan)
21. Krishnamoorthy, Dr. K.  
Head of the Department of  
Sanskrit  
Karnatak University  
Dharwar-3 (Mysore)
22. Mohan, Mr. Jag  
Sreenath, Prabhat Colony  
Santa Cruz East  
Bombay-55
23. Mathur, Mr. B. P.  
Senior Architect  
Panjab University  
Chandigarh-3 (Punjab)
24. Mookherjee, Mr. Ajit  
Director  
Crafts Museum (AIHB)  
Thapar House  
Janpath  
New Delhi-1
25. Mehta, Mr. Tayeb  
C/o Mr. Krishen Khanna  
3-B, Mathura Road  
Jangpura Extension  
New Delhi-14
26. Nagendra, Dr.  
Professor and Head  
Department of Hindi  
University of Delhi  
Delhi-7
27. Nandi, Dr. Sudhir Kumar  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas  
Simla-5
28. Narasimhaiah, Dr. C. D.  
Professor and Head  
Department of English  
University of Mysore  
Mysore-5 (Mysore)
29. Nikam, Professor N. A.  
28, 3rd Cross Road,  
Basavangudi  
Bangalore-4
30. Parimoo, Mr. Ratan  
Department of History of Art  
M.S. University of Baroda  
Baroda (Gujrat)
31. Pandey, Dr. K. C.  
U.G.C. Professor of Sanskrit  
(Lucknow University)  
Fyzabad Road : Babujanj  
Crossing, Lucknow (U.P.)
32. Pai, Mr. Laxman  
A-102, Defence Colony  
New Delhi-3
33. Ray, Dr. Niharranjan  
Director, I.I.A.S.  
Rashtrapati Nivas  
Simla - 5
34. Ray, Mr. Pranabranjan  
Art Critic, Ananda Bazar Journals,  
1, Sooterkin Street  
Calcutta-1
35. Raghavan, Professor V.  
Head of the Department of  
Sanskrit, University of Madras  
Madras

36. Sanyal, Mr. B. C.  
Secretary  
Lalit Kala Akademi  
Rabindra Bhavan  
Feroz Shah Road  
New Delhi-1
37. Saraswati, Professor S. K.  
Head of the Department of  
Archaeology  
University of Calcutta  
Asutosh Building  
Calcutta-12
38. Sharma, Dr. (Kumari) Shyamla  
Indian Institute of Advanced  
Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas  
Simla-5
39. Sen, Dr. Ramendra Kumar  
Department of English  
University of Calcutta  
Asutosh Building  
Calcutta-12
40. Singh, Mr. Sangram  
Director, Maharaja's Museum  
City Palace  
Jaipur (Rajasthan)
41. Singh, Mr. Madanjeet  
270, D. II Vinay Marg  
Diplomatic Enclave  
New Delhi
42. Vatsyayan, Dr. Srimati Kapila  
Deputy Education Adviser  
Ministry of Education  
Government of India  
New Delhi

# INDEX

- A-literature 249
- Abanindranath Tagore 120f; his aesthetic ideas 120, 122ff; father of modern Indian art 120; influence on him 120; influence of Mavell on 120; influence of Okakura on 120; influence of Gilherdi on 120; influence of Palmer on 120; influence of Ravi Verma on 120; influence of Taikwan on 120; influence of Hisida on 120; his art 121; art before 121; R.V. Leyden on 121; technique of 121ff; on Saṅga of painting 37, 120ff
- abhinava* 15, 101, 108
- Abhinava Bhārati* 20
- Abhinavagupta 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 52, 208, 283, 284, 291, 294
- Abstract art, beginning of 229ff; expression of an individual 234f
- Abstract cubism 227; expressionism 228, 239, 270, 271, 273, 274
- abstraction, in child art and folk art 232ff; in modern art, role of 229ff; in modern phase 234ff; in prehistoric and primitive art 229ff; in primitive and modern art 317; urge to 230f
- absurd drama 250
- Āchārya Brojendra Nath Seal 122
- āchāryas 41, 90, 191
- Ad Reinhardt 249f
- ādarśa-pratibimba* 38, 39
- adhikāravāda* 142
- adhishṭhān* 63
- adhyāsa* 20
- Ādipurāna of Pampa* 48
- Adler 314
- Advaita philosophy 20
- ādya śakti* 62
- aesthetic analysis, Indian attitude 205f; speculative character 206; comprehensiveness 206f
- aesthetics: concepts, as the means of realisation of *ānanda* 284f; def. 225f; emotion and sensual passion, distinction 44; experience 84f; experience in West 4; inception of experience 315; Indian philosophy 41ff; speculations of Buddhists 212ff; speculations of Hindus 212ff; theory, different systems 283; theory, Indian 283f; theory, Indian origin 11, 104f, 225f; treatises, paucity in India of 3, 4; as understood by Greeks 3; concepts of Abanindranath Tagore 120f; importance of imagination in 52; in India 3ff; meaning of 249, 296; origins of 313
- agni mantra* 58
- Agust Macke 272
- ahipāti* 208
- Ajanta 48
- Ajas* 31
- Ajit Ghosh 114
- ākāśa* 216
- Akbar Padamsec 247
- akhaṇḍa* 51
- akritivīśeṣa* 37
- akṛṣṭi* 93
- Akśobhya* 217
- alaṅkāra* 36, 51, 53, 93, 197
- alaṅkārarakauśala* 51
- alaṅkāraprayoga* 51
- alaṅkāra śāstra* 36
- Alaṅkāra texts 314
- alaṅkārikas* as source of Indian aesthetics 36, 82, 142
- Alan R. Solomon 252
- alaukika* 295
- Alban Berg 274
- Alexander Calder 255
- alienation theory in art 273
- Almelkar 116
- alpabuddhijana* 199
- Alvin Toffler, *The Culture Consumers* 259
- Amarāvati art 130
- Ambroise Vollard 266
- amitābha* 219
- Amōghasiddhi* 219
- anāhata-dhvani* 55, 56, 57
- ānanda* 20, 65, 124, 125, 164, 212, 215, 285, 294, 326; and *rasa* 20
- ānandam* 154
- Ānandavardhana 54, 283, 284
- ananya paratantra* 141
- Andre 288
- Andre Breton 271
- Andre Malraux 231, 232
- Andy Warhol 253
- anekavadan* 321
- aṅgasauśṭhavaṭīśayya* 37
- animals: as supernatural power 31, 32; domestication of 30; in early Indian art 25ff, 32, 33, 35; in Egyptian art 26f, 30; gods represented by 32, 33; in Greek art 26f; in Harappan art 27ff; in Mediterranean art 29; in post-Mauryan art 34; in Vedic literature 31; sacrifice 32
- Anonimo group 254
- Anotoine Pevsener 269
- anśa* 14
- antahkaraṇa* 213
- anti art movement 249ff
- anti art, features of 258ff

- Anti-matter 249  
 Anti-Novel 249  
 Antoni Topics 241  
*anubhāva* 24, 51  
*anukaraṇa* 13, 14, 17, 49, 52  
*anukūrtana* 49  
*anukṛiti* 13, 14, 17, 39  
*anuvādin* 98  
*anuvṛttsaya śloka*s 207  
*anyachīttata* 38  
*āp* 216  
*apāna* 58  
*aparā vidyā* 298  
 Aquinas 3  
*Arabhatī* 15  
 architecture influenced by *nyāya* 290  
 Aristotle 3, 44, 136ff  
 Arnold Guélinex on mind and matter 204  
 art : activity 4, 5, 8of ; alienation of society in 321f, 322, 325 ; appreciation 12, 21, 40f ; beauty in 96f ; beauty and nature, relation *inter se* 122f ; Bertrand Russel on 127 ; Bracquemont on 127f ; character of 41, 80, 82f, 86f ; christian view 197 ; classification of 17, 18 ; creation, concept of 12, 21, 51 ; critic, role and problems 286ff ; criticism of Blackmur's 188ff, 202 ; criticism, failure of 318 ; def. by Frank Kermode 251 ; emphasis on labour in 124 ; Ernest Cassirer on 124 ; essentials 275f ; evolution of 25f, 35, 319 ; functions in 20th century 272f ; historian 243f ; imagination in 128ff ; imitation in 13, 14, 83f, 128, 136f See also *anukaraṇa* ; imitations of nature 296 ; in Indian *atānikāvikas* 142 ; Indian 89ff ; Indian traditional 159ff ; inner intuition 124 ; its dependence 195f ; likeness in ancient Indian 38f ; mimetic element in 128 ; Margaret Bulley on 129 ; movements, effect 225ff ; naturalism in 129, 130f ; nobility of subject in 265ff ; on truth and beauty 125ff, 127 ; otherness of 307 ; psychological approach to 38 ; Rabindranath Tagore on 128, 129 ; reality in 135, 142f, 152ff ; situation, Indian 188 ; Southern-Siberian 26 ; Sunga 35 ; technique, Laxman Pai on 124 ; the social activity 297 ; three-centred theory of 11 ; urge to create 81, 307 ; Van Loon on 128 ; visual response to 321ff ; Weirtz on imitation in 128 ; West Asian 30 ; Zimmer on 129  
 art and : concept of mind 124 ; imitation 292f ; literature, Indian tradition 197f ; literature, Western tradition 196f ; nature, relation 128 ; religion 297ff ; science 87 ; social order 87f  
 art, animals : in early Indian 25ff, 32, 33, 35 ; in Egyptian 26f, 30 ; in Greek 26f ; in Harappan 27ff ; in Mediterranean 29 ; in post-Mauryan 34  
 art, as : corrector of nature 140 ; deceptive 145f ; *māya* 306 ; medium of communication 12, 81f ; meeting ground of sublime and particular 95f, 103 ; physical sensation 204 ; play theory 153f ; *sakh* 157 ; static 244  
*artha* 22, 49  
 artist : def. 199 ; depersonalization of 144f ; functions of 323, 325 ; responsibility of 297 ; role of 91 ; his success in changing spectator's approach 264 ; its expression 103 ; chaos in 323f  
*arūpa* 67, 140  
*Arūpa na Rūpa* 144  
*asabda brahma* 62  
*āsana* 30, 65  
*asat* 306  
*asavāda* 19, 51  
*āsvama* 288  
*Atharva Veda* 32  
*ātman* 68, 94  
*atodya* 36  
*Atīhasālīnī* 91, 124  
 audio-visual paintings 256  
 Auguste Rodin 4  
 Aurobindo 312 ; on neglect of art education 190f, 288  
*avachchedaka* 21  
*avadhuti* 216  
 avant-garde : works 320 ; movements 249ff  
*avatāra* 31  
*avatārapurusha* 198  
*avidha* 48  
*avidya* 197  
 Ayodhyā 47  
 Āyurveda 209  
*āyurveda sāstras* 85  
 Āyurvedic texts 313, 314f, 315  
 Bach 307, 308  
 Badri, D. 116  
 Badri Narayan 117  
*Bāgśrī* 99  
*Bāgśrīvarī Silper Pravandhāvalī* 123, 124, 132, 155, 156, 158  
*Balaka* 306  
*Bāna* 37  
 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee 4, 188  
 Barbara Hepworth 302  
 Basavabhūpala 44  
 Battle of Plassey 324  
 beat generation 205  
 Beat Poetry 250  
 beauty : objective approach 225f ; subjective approach 225f  
 Beethoven 307, 308  
 Ben Nicholson 269, 272  
 Bendre, D.R. 48  
 Benedetto Croce 135, 152f  
*Bhagavān* 62  
*Bhagavati Nirvāna Kāla* 213  
 Bhagwan Kapoor 116  
*Bhairavī* 100  
*bhakti* 199  
*Bhaṅga* 51, 279

- bhāngi* 279  
 Bharat Muni 92, 93  
 Bhārat Śilpār Shāḍaṅga 122, 135, 158  
 Bharata: 11ff, 35, 42, 49, 50, 51, 52, 94-291, 314, 315; classical commentaries on 52; classification of behaviour pattern in imitation 15; classification of elements of imitation 14, 15; concept of *rasa* 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; concepts in theory of drama 11; on improving virility 207; on *rasa* realisation 207; on *nāṭya* 37  
 Bharata Nāṭyam 95, 101, 102  
*Bharatavṛiddha* 207  
*Bhāratī* 15  
 Bharat art 130  
 Bhāsa, on qualities of painting 39f  
*Bhaṭṭa-Taṭṭa* 44  
*Bhaṭṭanāyaka* 11, 52, 283, 284  
*bhāva*: 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 82, 85, 88, 146, 246, 279, 284, 291, 297, 298; and *rasa* 20; as the essence of picture 146; in *Nāṭya Śāstra* 21; meaning of 46, 49ff; usages of 21, 22  
*Bhāva Prakāśa* 208  
*bhāvabhāsa* 54  
 Bhavabhūti 40, 41, 294, 301  
*bhāvadārśana* 40  
*bhāvakatva* 51  
*bhāvanā* 50, 291  
*bhāvanāvūpāra* 52  
*Bhavatisayopeta* 19  
*bhāvavan* 45  
*bhāvavat* 45  
*bhāvika* 45  
*bhāvita* 22  
*bhāvopeta* 21  
*bhayana* 314  
*bhoja rasa* 313  
*bhū* 21  
*Bhoja Raja* 209  
*Bhujāṅga-Vibhu* 208  
*Bhupālī* 99  
 Bhupen Khakkar 253  
*bija* 58  
*bija mantra* 58  
*bijākshara* 59  
*bindu* 63, 64  
 Binode Behari Mukherjee 115  
 Black Paintings 250  
 Blake 194, 195  
 blank book 250 (see also Nobel Prize)  
*bodha* 296  
*bodhi* 296  
*bodhi-citta* 216  
*bōlakakhōla* 216  
 Bosanquet 153, 156  
 Bowie 135  
 Brahma, birth of 313f  
 Brahman 11  
*brahmānanda* 52, 106  
*brahmāṇḍa* 55, 63  
*brahmarāndhra* 66  
*brahmayonī* 64  
 Braque 237, 251, 253, 287  
 Bridget Piley 255  
 Bridgman, P.W. 240f  
*Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* 32  
*buddhi* 296  
 Buddhaghosa 124, 125  
 Buddhism as source of artistic activity 95  
 Buddhist Sahajiyas view on ultimate bliss 213ff  
*budh* 296  
 Bywater 211  
 Byzantine 256, 309  
 Caesar 126  
*cakrās* 213  
 Cakrapanidatta 209  
*cakshu* 206  
*caran-citra* 125  
 Carl Frederick Reuterschwaerd 250  
 Casimir Malevitch 269  
*Caturmudrā* 214, 216  
 Cesar Domela 270  
 Cesare Zavattini 135  
 Cezanne: 4, 226, 230, 236, 237, 254, 266, 267, 286, 287; his interpretation of nature 236f  
 Chagall 276  
*chaitanya* 64  
*chakra* 66  
*chakshushā* 37  
*chāmpaka* 131  
*chāpākāra* 38  
 Charaka 207, 315f  
 Charles Mauron 285  
 Chatterji, S.K. 121  
 chāvda 116  
*chetanā* 198  
*chhandas* 83, 131  
*Chhāndogya Upanishad* 32  
*Chikitsā-Sihānam* 207f; on improving virility 207  
 Child Art 308  
 Chinese sense of space 235f  
 Chirico 271  
*chitra* 37  
*Chitrasūtra* 37  
*chitta* 124, 294  
*chitta-Sāññā* 91  
*Chryssa* 256  
*Cintāmani Stava* 213  
 Cīragghaṭṭi 48  
*citra*, constituents of 49 (see also painting)  
*citraturaga* 52  
*cittavṛitti* 46, 50  
 Claes Oldenburt 252  
 Clive Bell 285  
 Cage, John 242, 250  
 Coleridge 4  
 Colingwood 3, 153  
 Colour: and emotion, relation between 268; as the principle factor in art 227  
 Combines 252  
 Computer poetry 250

Computerized art 241f  
Computerized music 242  
Conard Fielder 244  
conceptual relationship 314  
Confucius 318  
Constantin Branchusi 271  
Constructionists 273  
Coomaraswamy 122, 129, 189, 199f, 310  
creative art (*see* abstract art)  
creative painting as fully subjective 264  
creative process 4, 85f  
Cro-magnon hunters 26  
Croce 3, 283, 285  
Cubism 226, 227, 228, 237, 266, 267, 269,  
273; characteristics of 268  
cultures, contrasting 193  
Cunningham, Merce 250

*dādra* 99

*Dadhikya* 32

*daiṅi siddhi* 21, 24

*Daiṅikī* 19

Dali 271

Dammuja 208

Dance : aesthetics of 92ff; elements of 101 :  
Indian, characteristics of 102; poses of  
101; religious nature of 101f; role of  
human body in 101

dancer and painter, comparison 102

Daniel Bell 273

Dante 195

*darbaṇa-pratibimba* 38, 39

*Daśarūpaka* 13

Dasgupta, S.N. 125, 131

Dattila 94

Debuffet 258

Degas 235

dehumanisation of art 273f

Deiter Rot 241

Devyani Krishna 117

*desa* 99

Descartes 225; on mind and matter 204

design value of Indian crafts 160

destination of art, 318, 320

*Devakīpī* 198

*devatā* 59

Dewey 283

*dharmā* 49, 134, 213

*Dharmakīrti* 44

*dharmamudrā* 214f

*dharmī* 11, 14

Dhanapāla 37, 40

*dhātus* 216f

*dhruvad* 98

*dhvāna* 93

*dhvani* 197, 284

*Dhvanyāloka* 12, 53, 54

*dhyanā* 84, 132, 299

*dhyanā mantra* 198

*dhyanā-yoga* 89

*dhyanī-buddhas* 217

*dik* 56, 57

disintegration of nature in art 237

dissolution of form, Turner's technique 235

Dix 271

domestication of animals 30

drama : as form of poetry 12; def. 13 :  
elements of 16, 17, 23; essence of success  
of 13; *pathya* as part of staged 13; the  
best of literary forms 44

dramatic art, three planes of 294

Dushyanta 46

Dūtavākyaṃ 39

Earnest Cassirer 124, 139

ecstatic emotion and sexual excitement 211

electronic music 250

electropainting 255, 256

Eliot, J.S. 4, 197, 312, 316

emotions in poetry and painting 312

enjoyment, sexual aesthetic 313

Enrico Baj 241

Equipo 57 group 254

Erich Fromm 273

Ernst Fischer 261, 275

*esraj* 157

*Etasa* 32

*Evam* 214

Expressionism 226, 266, 267, 268, 269, 272,

274; characteristics of 270f

Ezra Pond 316

Fauvism 266, 267, 268, 273; characteristics  
of 268

Feast of Wantonness 211

fertility cults 208, 210f

fertility rites, attitudes on 218

fertility rites, the stimulators of ancient  
Indian drama 208f

Festival of Hermaphrodite 211

Feurbach 273

folk art : characteristics of 113f, 118; forms  
111f; in Jaina illuminations 116; in  
Rajasthani miniatures 116; Kramrisch on  
113; modern trends in 116ff

folk inspiration in modern Indian painting  
111f

Fontana 241

form as the synonym of beauty 227

Four Minutes and Thirty Three Seconds 250  
(*see* also Silent Symphony)

Francis Picabia 255

Frank Malina 255

Franz Marc 272

Freud 314

Futurism 226, 237

Gabriel Rossetti 195

Gaitonde 302

Gaṇapātha 45

*gandha* 45, 206



Gandhiji's advice 325  
 Gauguin, Paul 4, 111, 115, 232, 235, 266  
 Ganguli, O.C. 122  
*garbha griha* 299  
*garuḍa* 133  
*Gaurī Pāṭṭa* 62  
 Gautam Vaghela 117  
*gāyatrī mantra* 59  
*gazal* 99  
 Geometrisation of art 237f  
 Georg Simmel 273  
 George Birdwood 161, 163  
 George Santayana 120, 139, 155, 226, 227  
 Gerald Laing 260  
*Charoa* 143  
 Gibbon 126  
 Gilbert Murray 211  
 Gilherdi 120  
 Giotto 272, 273, 309  
*Gītā* 36, 50  
*Gītārājali* 97  
*Gītā Govindam* 102  
 Gnosticism 211  
 gods represented by animals 32, 33  
 Goering 318  
 Gogendranath Tagore 170  
 Gogia Pasha 286  
 Goldwater, R. 269  
 Gombrich, E.H. 89  
*Gotamas* 31  
 graphic artists contribution to art 240  
 graphic thought 240; print aesthetics 240  
*grishma ritū*, depiction of 40  
*Groupe de Recherche d' Art Visuel* 254  
 Groupe N 254  
 Groupe T 254  
 Grunewald 272, 273  
 Guillaume Appollinaire 228, 266  
*gūṇas* 45, 53  
 Gunter Mass 256  
 guru 198  
  
 Halder 115  
 Happenings 257  
*Harshacharitam* 37  
*hasta abhinaya* 309f  
*hastas* 44  
*hasya* 314f  
*hava* 21  
 Havell, E.B. 120, 159ff  
 Hebbar 116  
 Heinrich Wölfflin 267, 272  
 Hegel 3, 273  
*hela* 21  
 Henry Moore 241  
 Henry Rousseau 233f  
 Herbert Read 285; on abstract art 229, 244, 269  
*hetu* 214  
 Hisada 120  
 Homer 312  
 Honsman, A.E. 152

*hridaya samvādī* 23  
 human attitude to wild animals 27, 29, 32  
 Husain 117  
 Hussain, M.F. 302  
 Hysteria 211  
  
 Iamblichus 211  
*iccha śakti* 56  
 identity of art and beauty 123  
 imitation, difficulties in 14, 16  
 Impressionism 226, 237  
 Inanna 208  
 inborn taste 307f  
 Indian aesthetics: basic trend of 314;  
   philosophy of 44ff; in Sanskrit literature  
   36ff  
 Indian paintings 121  
 India's vitality and endurance, secret 188  
*Indra dwaja* 209  
 Ingmar Bergman 318  
*Iśvara* 57, 62  
*itiṅṛita* 13  
 ivory tower attitude 312  
  
 Jackson Pollock 288  
*Jada* 64  
 Jainism as source of artistic activity 95  
 James McNeill Whistler 251  
 James Rosenquist 252  
 Jamini Roy 114, 115, 118, 189, 311  
 Jammuz—see Dammuja  
 Jan Gordon 230  
*japa* 57  
*Jarjara pūjā* 207, 209  
 Jasper Johns 252  
 Jayadeva 102  
 Jean Debuffet 258  
 Jeram Patel 116  
 Jesus Raphael Sato 254  
*jihvā* 66, 206, 325  
*jivan mukta* 213  
*jīvātman* 212  
*Jñāna* 56  
*jñānamudrā* 216  
*Jñāna-Siddhi* 217  
*Jñānendriya* 206f  
 John Berger 276  
 John Canaday 255  
 Jose Ortega Y. Casset 267, 272, 274, 275  
 Joseph Albers 254, 255  
 Joshua Reynolds 305  
 Juan Gris 253  
 Julian Stanczak 254  
 Jung, Carl 243, 323  
 Jyoti Bhatt 116  
  
 Kabir 99  
 Kaiśikī 15, 16  
*Kalā* 14, 62, 80  
*Kalā-karma* 80

*Kālacakra-tantra* 251  
*kalāhāya* 80  
*Kālidāsā* 11, 40, 41, 310; on *nāṭya* 37  
*kalpanā-svarūpa* 215  
*kāma* 49, 80, 81, 296  
*kāmachhanda* 296  
*kāmadhatu* 214  
*kāma-karma* 197  
 Kamala Mittal 117  
*Kāmasūtra* 38, 296  
*Kāmayati* 81, 296  
*Kant* 3, 283  
*Kandinsky, Wassily* 227, 237, 266, 270, 271  
 274  
*Kantrivitsamuādī* 38  
*Kaprow, Allen* 257  
*karika* 22  
*Karl Gerstner* 242  
*Karl Koska*, 272  
*Karl Marx* 273f  
*karma* 206, 213, 215f  
*karmamudrā* 214ff  
*harman* 214  
*karmendriya* 61, 206f  
*karuṇa* 307, 314  
*kāśyapa* 31  
*Kāthak* 95, 101, 102  
*Kāthākali* 102  
*Kāthasaritsāgara* 40  
*kauśikas* 31  
*kavi* 42  
*kavi-karma* 80  
*kāvya* 23, 106, 207  
*Kāvya-lāhikārasūtra* 44  
*Kāvya-prakāśa* 44  
*kāvya-rtha* 23, 24; and *sthāyī bhāva* 23, 24  
*Keats* 310  
*Khajuraho* 309  
*Khambhoj* 99  
*Khela*, concept of 152ff  
*Khemraj, P.* 116  
*Khyal* 99  
*Kierkegaard* on mind and matter 205  
*Kinetic art* 255; art manufactures 251  
*Kline* 234  
*Knox, I.* 158  
*Koka śāstra* 65  
*komal risabha* 99  
*Konarak* 311  
*Konrad Lange* 156  
*Kokoscha, Oscar* 271  
*Kosice, G.* 256  
*Kramrisch, S.* 29, 316  
*Krishna Reddy* 247  
*kṛiya* 56  
*kṣudrabramhanda* 212f  
*kṣarasukha* 214  
*Kumārasambhavam* 37  
*kuṇḍalinī* 65, 66, 212f  
*kuṇḍalinī śakti* 66  
*Kurma* 31  
*Kurus* 31  
*Kuttanimatam* 37

*la Menesunda* 257  
*Lakshmi* 314  
*Laihkāvtāra Sūtra* 34, 35  
*Laszlo Moholy Nesy* 255  
*laukika* 295  
*lāvanya* 38, 39, 53  
*Lawrence, D. H.* 194f  
*Laxman Pai* 116  
*laya* 56, 64  
*Leavis, F.R.* on art 193, 312  
*Leger* 261  
*Lempriere* on fertility rites 210f  
*Leonardo da Vinci* 4, 272, 277  
*līlā* 62, 317; concept of 152ff  
*līnga* 62, 63  
*līngam* 63  
*līnga-yoni* 62  
*Lil Picard* 252  
 literary criticism and art 310  
 literature and visual arts, relation 310  
*locana* 12, 217  
*loka* 37  
*lokacharita* 37  
*Lokadharmī* 15  
*Lollaṭa* 52  
*Louise Nevelson* 241  
*Lucas, George* 267, 273  
*Luchino Visconti* 135  
*Ludwig Richter* 267

*Macdonell, A.A.* 31, 32  
*Mackay* 27, 28, 31  
*Madam Chiang Kai Shek's paintings* 135f  
*madhura* 39  
*Madhusudan Dutt* 188  
*madhyama* 56  
*mahamudrā* 215f  
*Mahāmāyā* 62  
*mahāsukha* 213f  
*mahāsukha vāda* 213  
*mahisamardini Durgā* 317  
*Mahler, J.C.* 29  
*maithuna* 212f, 253  
*Mālāvīkāgnimitram* 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 40  
*Malevitch* 237  
*Malkosh* 99  
*Mallarme, Andre* 274, 316, 323  
*Māmaki* 217  
*Man Ray* 255  
*mana* 294  
*mānasa* 21  
*Mānasollāsa* 38, 43  
*maṇḍala* 61  
*maṇḍapam* 299  
*Maṇḍukeyas* 31  
*Manet* 235  
*Manipuri* 95, 101, 102  
*Manish Dey* 115  
*Mansram* 253  
*mantra* 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 65, 293  
*mantra śāstra* 57  
*Mānushi* 19  
*Marcel Duchamp* 253, 255, 261

- Margret Lowenfeld 153  
 Maria Stern 257  
 Marisal 253  
 Mark Tobey 251  
 Mārkaṇḍeya 36, 196  
 Martial Raysse 256  
 Masoji 115  
 Mason 288  
 maṭa 294f  
 Mathematics: in art 317; its influence on  
   new aesthetics 239ff  
 Mathew Arnold 4  
 Mathura Museum 131  
 mātṛās 58  
 maṭṛika 56  
 Matsyas 31  
 matsyodara 38  
 Matisse 111, 118, 230, 247, 266, 268, 276  
 matuṣ 45  
 māyā 62, 126, 146  
 Mayer, J. P. 269  
 Meghadūtam 38, 39  
 Meghadūte 46  
 mental emotions 207  
 Merchant of Venice 46  
 Michael Angelo 4  
 Michel Seuphor 260, 261, 267, 275  
 Michel Topie 239  
 Millet 4  
 Millet 111  
 mind and matter 204  
 Mira 99  
 Mobiles 255  
 modern art 271f; meaning of 276f; a question  
   of values 276  
 modern artist 243  
 modern def. 243  
 modern movement, change in artist's out-  
   look 263  
 Modern Review 148  
 modernism in differing contexts 322ff,  
 moksha 49, 197, 212f  
 Mondrian, Piet 227, 237, 254, 261, 266, 269,  
   270, 271, 272, 275, 288  
 Moreau 118  
 Mrichchhakaṭika 39  
 mṛidangam 100  
 mudam 214  
 mūdḥā 41  
 mudrā 44, 65, 214ff; gestures in dance 309  
 Mukerjee, B. B. 148, 152  
 Mukul 115  
 mūlādhāra chakra 66  
 Mūrti 134; on reality in art 134ff  
 music: and mechanical devices 290; and  
   painting, difference in reaction 264; as  
   science 94; effect of 98ff; Hindustani  
   classical, character 98f; Indian, aesthetics  
   of 92ff; Indian and Western, comparison  
   94; Indian, characteristics 102; Plato on  
   98; to express man's relation to God 98  
 musical painting 256  
 myrrh nutmeg 216  
 nāda 56  
 nādabrahma 100  
 nāgas 34  
 nāma 58, 311  
 Nanda Lal Bose 114, 115, 189  
 Nārada 93, 94  
 Narayan, R. K. 189  
 nāsā 206  
 nātaka 12, 13, 20, 106, 207  
 nātaka and nāṭya, difference between 13  
 Natarāja 93, 317  
 Natha Siddhas' view of ultimate bliss 213  
 Natwara 93  
 nāṭya 12, 13, 14, 92, 93, 101; a kind of  
   creation 13, 36, 37, 49; as imitation 14;  
   and nātaka 13  
 Nāṭyadharmī 15, 16  
 Nāṭya Śāstra 11, 12, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,  
   37, 42, 43, 44, 45, 92, 93, 101, 104, 207f,  
   313; bhāva in 21; concept of 42; rasa  
   in 24  
 Nāṭyaveda 92  
 Naum Gabo 237, 255, 269, 289  
 nayan-madhu 39  
 nayanavishaya 39  
 nāyikā 38  
 negation of appearance in art 272, 273f  
 Negro art 230, 231  
 Nehru on Buddha 200  
 Neo Dada 252 (see New Realism)  
 Neo Guildsman 254  
 Neo Idealists 254  
 neo-plasticists 273  
 Neon art 256  
 Neon light sculptures cum painters 251  
 netra mudras 36  
 New Realism 252  
 Nicholas Schoffer 256, 289  
 Niki de saint-Phalle 258  
 nimantraṇa 140  
 nirṇaya 41  
 Nirode Mazumdar 116  
 nirvāṇa 34, 216, 250  
 nirveda-bhāva 46  
 nishāda 99  
 nispaṇḍaphala 215  
 niśvabhāva 216  
 nitya 62  
 Nivedita, Sister 117ff  
 nṛitta 36, 37, 101, 108  
 nṛitya 101, 290  
 Nobel Prize 250  
 Norman Schlenhoff 258  
 Okakura 120  
 Om 55  
 Op art 247, 248, 253f, 271, 289; criticism 225  
 Op Artists 254f  
 Open commitment 204f  
 Optical Art (see Op art)  
 originals 308, 309ff  
 Orzco 267

- pada* 206  
*Padmalochana* 311  
 Paidi Raju 116  
 painter, def. 47f; job of 46  
 painting 277; dramatic element in 37; importance of total aesthetic effect in 48; quality of 39f; shortcomings of 39f; standard prescription 43  
*pakhvāj* 100  
*pakshapāta* 40  
 Palmer, C. L. 120  
*palvāla* 40  
 Parmanand 117  
*pañchakoṇa* 61  
 Pañchamam Vedam 92  
*Pandara Vasini* 217  
*pañḍita* 199  
*paṇi* 206  
 Pāṇini 45, 283, 284  
*parā* 56  
*Parā aur Aparā Sakti* 57  
*parā vidyā* 298  
 Parallelism of art 313f  
*paramānanda* 215  
*paramapurushārtha* 197  
*Pavanātman* 212  
*parāvuc* 56  
 Paritosh Sen 117  
*paśyanti* 56  
 Patanjali 45, 52  
*pathya* 13  
 Paul Klee 233, 258, 276  
 Paul Ramsay on mind and matter 205  
 Peter Blake 253  
 Peter Phillips 260  
 phallogogia 210  
 phallogophoria (see phallogogia)  
 Picasso 4, 111, 118, 226, 234, 237, 247, 248, 251, 266, 276, 286, 287; on art 194  
*pipal tree* 30  
 Pissaro 235  
 Plato 44, 136f, 283, 285, 315  
 Plotinus 211, 218f; his view on ultimate bliss 218ff  
 Plutarch on fertility rites 210  
*Poetics* 137  
 poetry: as medium of communication 12, 13; as vehicle of emotion 274; contemporary situation 325  
 Pol Bury 256  
 Pop art 247, 248, 251f, 271, 289  
 Pop artists 251ff  
*praharsha* 19  
 prajñā 64, 216f  
 Prajñākaragupta 44  
 prajñopāya 64, 216  
*prakṛiti* 56, 62, 63, 64, 65, 81, 164, 313  
*bramāṇa* 39, 199  
*Pramānavartika* 44  
*prāṇa* 58, 61  
 Pranabranjan Ray 275  
*praṇava* 55  
*pratibimba* 38  
*pratimālakṣhaṇa* 196  
*pratyayakṣini* 214  
*praeṛitti* 11, 14, 15, 16  
*prayoga* 12, 20  
*prekshaka* 19  
 Proclus 211  
 programmed art 241f  
*pṛthvi* 216  
*pulaka* 19  
 Pullock 234  
 Purandardāsa 98  
*Pūriyā* 99  
*purusha* 62, 63, 64, 65, 81, 164, 313  
*Purushasūkti* 32  
*Pūrvi* 99  
 Puvīs de Chavanues 111  
 Rabindranath Tagore 4, 97, 124, 126, 128, 133, 170f, 188, 270, 283, 285; expression in art 171f; individualism in art 170; pictorial means in art 172  
*rāga* 60, 61, 94, 98ff, 107f, 301; and colour 300; influence of British band music on 290  
*Raghuvamśam* 47  
*rāgini* 60  
 Rājjab 116  
*rakta* 62  
 Ramen Chakravarty 115  
*Rangapīṭham* 93  
*rasa* 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 32, 35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 82, 85, 88, 93, 106, 134, 167, 206ff, 246, 284, 291, 292, 293, 298, 299, 300, 315; a precondition of creation 53, 292; and *ānanda* 20; and *bhāva* 20; and *siddhi* 20; and *sthāyī bhāva* 53; as understood by Abhinavagupta 18ff; as understood by Bharata 11, 17ff, 207; concept of 11, 24, 49ff; in *Nāṭya Sāstra* 24; in relation to architecture 300  
*rasabhāsa* 54  
*rasacitra* 48  
*rasa-Jñāna* 169f  
*rasanā* 207  
*rasānubhāva* 197  
*rasapratipādana* 51  
*Rasahjñā* 22  
*rasavāda* 52  
*rasavān* 45  
*rasavat* 45  
*rasa vidyā* 169  
 rasika 199, 296  
*rasiko nāṭah* 45, 52  
 Rathin Maitra 116, 302  
*rati* 51, 314  
*ratim* 214  
*ratna-parikṣhā* 40  
*Ratna-sambhava* 217  
 Ray, N. R. 125  
 Raza 247  
*rekhā* 59  
 religion as the base of every activity 43  
 Rembrandt 226  
 renaissance 308f  
 Rene Grousset 35, 130f

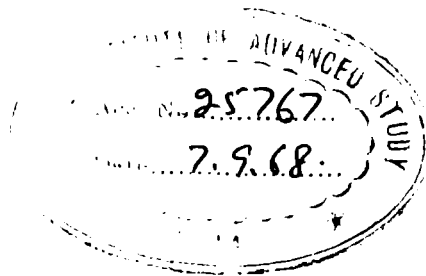
Renoir 230, 235  
 Retinal Art (*see* Op Art)  
*Rg Veda* 31, 32, 35, 209  
 Richard Anuskiewicz 254  
 Richards, I. A. on art 193, 201  
*rishtis* 150  
*rīti* 93  
 Rivera 267  
 Robert Indiana 252  
 Robert Rauschenberg 251f  
 Rodin 302  
 Roger Fry 275, 285  
 Roy Lichtenstein 252  
*rudra* 314  
*rūpa* 45, 57, 91, 126, 198f, 206, 207, 311  
*rūpabheda* 39, 126  
*rūpachchāyā* 38  
*rūpam* 169  
*rūpasūtra* 37  
*rūpatīśayya* 37, 38  
*Rūpatīśyakkṛīṇam* 37  
*rūpavīśeṣha* 37  
 Ruskin, John 160, 234, 265ff

*śabda* 45, 55, 60, 61, 206  
*śabda brahṃa* 56, 57f  
*Sadbānuśāsāna Raja Mṛigāṅka* 209  
*śabda tanmantra* 51  
*Sadaṅga* 37, 38, 40; and imagination 133;  
 on nature and art 128f, 141f; six limbs  
 of painting 127  
*sādha* 66, 213, 293  
*sādhana* 64, 107, 157, 197, 213  
*sādhāraṇī karaṇa* 16, 52  
*sādhu* 38, 41  
*sadriśya* 292f  
*sadriśyam* 38, 39, 84  
*śaḡuna sākār* 94, 95  
*sahaja* 213  
*sahajānand* 215  
*sahajiyās* 213  
*sahasrasara* 212f  
*sāhita* 81  
*sāhitya* 81, 108  
*sahṛidaya* 282  
 sailoz Mookherjea 116  
*śakḡ* 157f  
*śakti* 56, 57, 62, 63, 64, 65f  
*Śakuntalam* 40, 45, 46  
*Śālagrāma* 63  
*sama* 108  
*samādhi* 68  
*samana* 58  
 samant 247, 302  
*samarasya* 212  
*samayamudrā* 215  
*saṅgraha* 23  
*sanmā* 217  
*śāṃkhya* 285f, 313  
*samsāra* 216  
*samskāraḡ* 82, 217  
*samvādin* 98  
*Samvarana* 31

*sañchārī* 22  
*sañchārī bhāva* 107, 108  
 sanchi art 130  
*sandhān* 140  
*sangūti* 108  
*saṅgharsha* 105  
*saṅjñā* 22  
*Sāṅkhya* 62, 64  
 Śāṅkuka 52  
 Sanskrit *Kavyas* 37  
*śānta* 208  
 Santayana 283  
 Sanyal, B. C. 116  
 Śārāṅga deva 94  
 Sarasvatī 93  
 Sarkar, Binoy Kumar 168ff; analysis of  
 Indian painting 170; attack on prevalent  
 views on art 168f; on emancipation  
 of art 167f; on language of the painter  
 170  
*sarōruha* 215  
 Sartre on mind and matter 205  
*sarvam* 67  
*satpātra* 107  
*sat* 306  
 Satish Gujral 117  
*sattvika bhāva* 315f  
*Sattvika—panchalattva* 213  
*sattvika rasa* 313  
*Satvatī* 15  
*satya* 21  
*susumna* 213  
 Schonberg 274  
 Science in art 318  
 sculpture: as memoirs of lives 311;  
 technique, Prodosh Dasgupta on 121;  
 third dimension in 241  
 sculptured paintings 241  
 Seattle World Fair 316  
 Seminar: approach of 5, 6; purpose of 3, 5  
 sensibility of masses 311  
 Sergi Eisenstein 268  
 Seurat 254  
 Sex symbols 212ff  
 Shakespeare 310f  
*shankha* 150  
 Sheila Auden 117  
*siddhi* 11, 18, 19, 20, 24, 212; and *rasa*  
 20; classification of 19; concept of 19  
 Sigmund Freud on mental emotions 207  
 Silent Symphony 250  
*Śilpa* 36, 80, 90, 91  
*śilpa-karma* 80  
*śilpa-kāstra* 82, 90, 134, 279  
*śilpi-yogin* 55, 67, 68  
 Siqueiros 267  
 Sisley 235  
 Sister Nivedita's views on paintings 150f  
*Śithila Samādhi* 38  
*Śiva* 63, 64, 65, 66, 67  
*Śiva-bindu* 63  
*Śiva-līṅga* 62, 63  
 Sivaramamurthi 310

- Śiva-Śakti* 62, 65, 66  
*Śivatattvaratnākara* 44  
 skandhas 216f  
*Skanda Purāṇa* 62  
*ślokas* 207  
 Smith, V. A. 43  
*Smansakshan* 15  
*sucha* 45  
 Somesvara 38  
 Sonza 247  
*sparsā* 45, 206  
 spearing 156  
*sphota* 56  
*sphotavāda* 56  
*Śrīmad Bhāgavat* 207  
*Śrīngāra* 46, 47, 51, 314  
 Sreenivasulu, k. 116  
*śrota-peyam* 39  
*Śrutis* 93, 98, 126  
 Stella Kramrisch 113  
*sthāyī* 11, 22  
*Sthaviravalicharita* 38  
*sthāyī bhāva* 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 51, 53, 106, 107, 313, 314; and *rasa* 53; in drama 22, 23; meaning of 20, 21, 22, 24  
*sthira* 22  
*sthūla* 212  
 Stravinsky 274  
 style, elements of good 265  
 Subhankara 94  
*Sūdraka* 39  
*sūkṣma* 212  
 Sultan Ali 116  
*śunakas* 31  
*sundara* 304  
 Sundaram Vivan 253  
 Suñga art 35  
 Sunil Narayan 117  
*śūnya* 212  
*śūnyahridayatā* 38  
 Surrealism 270f  
*susādrīśya* 39  
*sūtra* 45, 209  
*svabhābukti* 122  
*svabhāva* 198  
*svacchandāsthānam* 216  
*Śvapnavasavadattam* 39  
*svarūpa* 67, 198f, 311  
*svatī* 98  
*svayambhū* 32  
*svayamrūpa* 140  
*śūcta* 62  
 Sweeney, James Johnson 288  
 Sylvain Levi 43  
  
*tabla* 100  
 Tadasuki (see Tadasuke Kuwayama)  
 Tadasuke Kuwayama 254  
*Taittiriya Upaniṣad* 32, 35  
*tala* 108  
 Tamayo 267  
*Tanḍava Nrītya* 101  
*Tānpūrā* 100  
  
 Tantra 58, 63  
 Tantric texts 315  
 tantra theology 315  
*tappa* 99  
*Tāra* 217  
*tarāṅga* 18  
 Tarkis, V. 256  
*Tārkiśhya* 32  
 Toscanini 308  
 Tatlin 237, 269  
*tattvas* 56, 213  
*tattva jñāna* 213  
*tejas* 216  
*thumri* 99, 100  
*Tilakmañjarī* 37, 40  
 Tirumal 98  
*tivra madhyama* 99  
*todi* 99  
 Tolstoy 4  
 Tom Wesselman 253  
 tortoise as cosmogonic power 31, 32  
 totemism in Vedic people 31  
 Trewin 265  
*trikona* 64  
 Tristan Tzara 251, 253, 261  
 truth in art 267f  
 truth and beauty, Romain Rolland on 126  
 Tulsi 99  
 Turner 234, 235, 236  
*tvak* 206  
 Tyagarāja 98  
 Tyebl Mehta 247  
  
*udāna* 58  
 ultimate bliss, view on 213ff  
*Umāsvatī Jaina Sūtra* 64  
*unnadāyitri* 39  
*upastha* 206f  
*upāya* 64, 216f  
 Urn 310  
 Usteria (see Hysteria)  
*utpala-patra* 38  
*utsāha* 51  
*uttarārāmachritam* 40  
  
*vāc-tattva* 57  
*vādin* 98  
*vaiḅhavi* 56  
*vairagya* 212  
*vaiṅcāna* 217  
 Vaisnava Sahajiyas view on ultimate bliss 213  
*Vaiṣṇava Śāstra* 62  
*vāṅi-karaṇa* 207f  
 Vajrayana texts 314  
*vāk* 206  
*vakrokti* 122, 197  
 Valentinianism 211  
*vām* 215  
*Vāmana* 44  
 Van Gogh 230, 235, 266

- Van Loon 128f  
*vaṅpur-viśeṣha* 37  
*varṇa* 45  
*Varṇam* 102  
*vasānās* 283, 285, 286, 296; art appreciation  
     theory of 283  
*vasant rītu*, depiction of 40  
 Vasari 4  
*vāsita* 22  
*vastusvabhāva* 50  
*vastusvabhāva-varṇanā* 51, 291  
*Vāsuki* 208f  
*Vatsas* 31  
 Vatsayana 314  
*vayu* 206, 216  
*vedāna* 217  
 Vedic literature, animals in 31  
 Venkatappa 189  
*vibhāva* 24  
*vicitra* 215  
 Victor Hugo 195  
 Victor Pasmore 269  
 Victor Vasarely 254, 289  
*viddha* 48  
*viddha chitra* 38  
*Vidūshām* 41  
 Vidyāranya 94  
*viññāna* 217  
*Vikramorvaśīyam* 14  
*vilakṣana* 215  
*Vimarda* 215  
*vipaka* 215  
*vīra* 51, 314  
 virility improving 207  
*virasa* 212  
*Virmānand* 215  
 Vishnu 314  
*Vishṇudharmottarapurāna* 43, 47, 196, 291;  
     on eye types 36, 37, 38, 39f  
*vismaya* 19  
*viśranti* 51  
 visual experience and modern art 321  
*Viśvakarmā* 198  
*vivādin* 98  
*vṛita* 22  
*vyāna* 58  
*vṛitti* 11, 14, 15, 16, 209  
*vyabhichārī-bhāva* 22, 24, 51, 107, 108 314-  
     315  
 Walter Gropius 238  
 Wordsworth 200  
 Worringer on abstract art 230  
 William Burroughs 250  
 William Morris 111, 160  
 Wingert 230  
 Wright, Frank Lloyd 318  
 Yadugiri Yatiraj Swami of Melkote 210  
*yajna* 37  
*yakshas* 34, 93  
*yantra* 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 67, 293f  
*yati* 212  
 yclept Yvaral 254  
*yoga* 38, 43, 50, 55, 58, 84, 298  
*yoga āsana* 65  
*yoga Sūtra* 208  
*yogi* 30  
*yogin* 52, 89  
*yoni* 62, 63  
 Yves Tuiguely 241  
*yug* 65  
 Zero Group 254  
 Zimmer 28, 29, 129



1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.