
UNIT 1 PHILOSOPHY OF ART

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Formalism
- 1.3 Suchness
- 1.4 A Unified Experience
- 1.5 Feelings
- 1.6 Existential Possibilities
- 1.7 Relation Between Art and Epistemology
- 1.8 Enjoyment of Beauty in Art
- 1.9 Beauty as Meant by Different Thinkers
- 1.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.11 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

‘Philosophy of art’ is studied and discussed under the branch of philosophy known as ‘aesthetics,’ one among the normative subjects besides logic and ethics. Under philosophy of values there are a few distinct subjects as axiology, aesthetics, ethics, and religious philosophy. These subjects come under applied philosophy. The unit introduces to the students the subject matter of philosophy of art.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is applied to the systematic study in a philosophical way of understanding beauty and its manifestation in art and nature. ‘A thing of beauty is joy for ever; its loveliness increases and perishes into nothingness’ (Keats). A beautiful object or event brings forth immense joy. Philosophy is interested in analyzing the true characteristics of beauty in identification with several theories of art. For this analysis is seriously concerned with the value dimension of human experience. The person who becomes wonder-struck and develops the sense of ‘awe’ on perceiving the work of art and the events of nature, his attention is arrested and promotes a kind of self-forgettable joy and gets absorbed in them. In this context what takes place is ‘appreciation’ or ‘worth-assigning awareness.’ Hence aesthetic experience is a distinct type of human experience when compared to other experiences.

In the opinion of C.J. Ducasse, “Art is the language of feeling. So its essence as an activity is expression, not the creation of beauty. What the artist really aims at is objective self-expression. Transmission of feeling is neither the essential intention nor the necessary effect of a work of art. Finally art is expression in the special sense that it is both free or spontaneous and yet not quite undetermined.” This citation implies that an object of aesthetic experience is concerned with two important human potentialities viz., cognitive and practical. The former deals with the

knowing aspects, while the latter with the pragmatic aspect. Again the term 'aesthetics' has a two-fold perspective. First art criticism and secondly art experience. The former is concerned with the merits or demerits of particular works of art, i.e., a kind of intensive investigation into a chosen area of beauty. In this process, aesthetics becomes a science than a philosophy. Beauty emerges from nature and art. In nature, beauty is 'given' and in art it is made. The ideal of beauty pertains to its nature or character. The constitution of ideal beauty forms the subject matter of aesthetics, which comes under the realm of philosophy. The relation of beauty to the meaning of life, its relation to other human values, the evaluation of aesthetic ideal in the context of other values etc., constitute the study of beauty through meta-aesthetics, really an extensive study of aesthetics. Aesthetics is to be understood in terms of 'what beauty is;' meta-aesthetics is to be known through the ideal of 'why we pursue it?' The characteristic features of beauty arising out of art and nature are studied in aesthetics while the significant features of beauty arising out of nature and art are studied in meta-aesthetics.

As beauty in nature is obtained from particular parts of nature and not universal, changeable, alterable, impermanent, non-constant the enjoyment or delight arising out of natural beauty is non-stable, man has resorted to enjoy beauty in art. It is clear that men are dissatisfied with beauty found in nature, but they cannot ignore the ideal of perfect beauty, which is immanent in their consciousness, which is also not associated with ugliness. Since philosophy of art is directly connected with the joyous, delightful enjoyment of beauty it is quite obvious that treat aesthetics as a 'process' and not an end product, an inquiry, an kind of conversation among earnest minds. Any theory of art or art-history for that matter is not keen on the practice of an art such as giving training in the craft of painting, of sculpture, of architecture. However, the above components of artistic creations may stimulate and inspire the artist. From the historical perspective the goal of art is concerned with enjoyment and appreciation, waxed and waned through intervening ages. But from the philosophical point of view the work of art depends on the objects available in nature and events created by the imagination of the artist.

Scholars on aesthetics are of the view that aesthetic attitude is characterized by detachment, psychic distance or disinterestedness. These terms imply that in the process of appreciation of art should not be intruded by the practical as well as personal concerns. This does not mean that the appreciator of art should forego intimate rapport, emotional participation and identification with the artistic object leading to aesthetic enjoyment. The major function of the objects of fine art is to embody an aesthetic vision and elicit an aesthetic response especially in the spheres of dramas, paintings, sculptures, symphonies, poems, dances etc.

There are five alternative views concerning the themes and meanings expressed in aesthetic objects: eternal forms (formalism), suchness, a unified experience, feelings and existential possibilities.

1.2 FORMALISM

Form is generally interpreted to mean unit in variety. Art object is expressed through and embodied in concrete form. Again, the term 'form' indicates the internal relations of the aesthetic object, which has a complex of different but interrelated parts. "The theory of formalism maintains that the art object is 'pure form' and that its formal excellence alone determines its

aesthetic quality. This interpretation is particularly congenial to the proponents of abstractionism in art. The claim that formal excellence is a sufficient condition of aesthetic quality is open to question, that it is a necessary condition is not debated.” Further from the point of view of the ingredients of ‘formal excellence,’ aesthetic evaluations are objective rather than subjective.

As far as the nature and meaning of aesthetic objects are concerned, they express eternal forms, which are also known through imitation or representation as held by Plato and Aristotle. “They were not advocating the naïve idea that artists strive to mirror natural objects as exactly as possible. Rather, the artist seeks to represent the essential nature (essence) of objects, the rational forms on which they are patterned (Plato) or which are inherent in them (Aristotle). For Plato, objects of art are twice removed from the eternal forms, since they are only images of copies of the forms; that is natural objects are imperfect copies of eternal forms and works of art are only ‘imitations’ of natural objects.” It is also believed that aesthetic objects represent an ultimate reality that is eternal, perfect and complete especially in the forms of truthfulness, goodness and beautiful.

Keats and Hegel consider beauty as truth in sensuous form. Schopenhauer treats music as an intuitive grasp of ultimate reality. Santayana refers to beauty as an eternal divine essence suffusing a material object. Tolstoy conceives beauty as a quality of perfecting a material object. Goethe indicates that an art object is a sensuous embodiment of a spiritual meaning. Hinduism observes that the aesthetic objects give intuitions of the ultimate as pure being. Intuition and perfection indicate the epistemological and moral implications in the expression of aesthetic objects. This leads the process of knowing and judging goodness.

1.3 SUCHNESS

This view is held by the Eastern philosophies and religions since the Western thought has predominance of science (cognitive and theoretical aspect of reality) and technology (a highly practical activity). The Eastern religions characteristically accept, appreciate and celebrate aesthetic experience, which is complete in itself. According to Suzuki, “Zen naturally finds its readiest expression in poetry rather than philosophy because it has more affinity with feeling than with intellect; its poetic predilection is inevitable.” This view envisages an Eastern perspective to a Western audience. Aesthetic objects are to be understood in terms of the expression of suchness. Artistic expressions do not represent nature, but are natural in themselves in their spontaneity. Suchness is an awakening to the present instant as the only reality. This approach has been critically evaluated as that suchness cannot be applied to future events especially cruelty, war, disease etc.

1.4 A UNIFIED EXPERIENCE

This view refers to the expression of aesthetic objects. The theory of art as promulgated by John Dewey pertains to the development of common experience, which involves a constant interaction between the living beings and their involvement in the environmental conditions pertaining to actions as well as inactions. In the words of Dewey, “Art is... prefigured in the very process of

living... It is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. Form, as present in the fine arts, is the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience” The above view remarks that our experience becomes aesthetic when we resort to the pervasive, integrated quality of an experience. It becomes an experience, which is complete and unified in itself, indicating its quality of wholeness.

Again to quote Dewey, “The task [of the philosopher of art] is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported they do not even just rest upon the earth. They are the earth in one of its manifest operations... [so] in order to understand the aesthetic in its... approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man; arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens; the sights that hold the crowd – the fire-engine rushing by;... the tense grace of the ball player (as it) infests the on looking crowd...(one has also to consider those) who are happily absorbed in their activities of mind and body... the intelligence mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged.”

Science provides us only instrumental meaning by taking the objects out of isolation by informing the causes and effects. But art, since it provides with direct expression of meanings, such meanings cannot be translated into ordinary language. The artist enlarges and unifies the quality of the perceiver's experience by way of his imagination in a wholesome manner. Anyhow, the work of art, according to this theory, cannot be viewed as the intention of the artist, but the unified quality of experience which evokes perception. The art object becomes the vehicle of complete unhindered communication. It enables us to overcome our blindness by vividly sharing the meanings. However the question remains, “Is the net cast by a unified experience’ ambiguously all-inclusive?”

1.5 FEELINGS

The theory, which upholds the view that aesthetic objects express feelings in known as expressionism, which can be understood in three different dimensions:

- a) Since the composer exhibits his personal feelings, he is said to be sad.
- b) The music creates a sad feeling in me
- c) In addition, the music itself is sad.

All the above expressions are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Altogether, the feelings may be aroused by the artist, caused by the object and experienced by the observer. This view is mainly maintained by Croce who had interpreted art as an expression of the artist's state of mind. A movement called romanticism has exemplified the personal emotion of the artist through his artistic creation. First the artist develops a deep-rooted feeling in him and communicate those feelings and emotions so as to stimulate same kind of experience by the spectators which act

mainly is concerned with love of nature which is a manifestation of the spirit. Sublimated sexual impulses, primordial images, the unconscious state etc, are experienced artistically through the feelings of the artist in his work. Susan Langer and Ernst Cassirer hold that art as the creation of forms that articulate the very structure of human feelings. However human feelings cannot be arrested through statements by an art object. It is merely a symbolic representation and in this sense a major role of art is to clarify the subjective side of human life. In the presence of aesthetic objects we are subjected to expressing our emotions in a variety of ways like sadness, joy etc. According to George Santayana beauty is objectified pleasure. This approach poses the following questions; Whether our feelings indicate the intentions of the artist? Whether they indicate the art object itself? Whether they point out our emotional state then? Whether they refer to the meanings and expectations we project on top the aesthetic object?

1.6 EXISTENTIAL POSSIBILITIES

This view maintains that aesthetic objects express the existential possibilities that an art object is a pure possibility. It is not a representation of form or essence; rather it is a presentation of a possibility felt and imagined by the artist. The art object is more than an imagined possibility; it is itself the presence of the possibility. The art object in its finished state is not an expression of fullness, but a thrust of spontaneity from lack of being. The art object refers to the existence of the enactment, utterance or feeling of an individual. It is truthful in its content and essence and not abstract kind of truth and it does not need any kind of empirical test. Art assists human beings to taste the human existence in a manifold way with clear and complete meaning.

1.7 RELATION BETWEEN ART AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Since aesthetic perception involves intuition, the instant awareness enables to grasp the qualities of the art object. According to intuitionism, the observer develops direct awareness of the aesthetic object which results in the intuitive knowledge about the nature of the object presented by the artist. Language and literature are the best sources to depict human nature through aesthetic appeal such as love, pathos, joy, good, evil etc. to know more about human conditions, the novelist, poet and the dramatist are of immense help. Susan Langer maintains, “that the arts express truths about human emotions, but the explicitly states that these truths are not translatable into propositions subject to empirical test. No knowledge claim is put forward in her view that art clarifies human emotions. The latter statement coincides with the view that art provides, not knowledge, but a sense of disclosure, insight, and heightened intelligibility. The above argument of Langer makes a skeptical approach of the intuitionism that the artists furnish a vivid acquaintance with human realities and possibilities, but without any knowledge about them. The view of the existentialists that are presentations are ‘true’ when they emanate perfect and authentic feelings is also refuted here that they do not produce any knowledge. The critics of this knowledge theory in art are of the view that the function of art is to offer new interpretation leading to the expansion of awareness.

1.8 ENJOYMENT OF BEAUTY IN ART

Since the nature cannot provide a permanent and abiding aesthetic experience because of calamities, human aspirations etc., man resort to enjoy beauty in artistic creations, which offer the solace that lacks in nature. Man's imaginative attitude and skilful exercises are reflected in the creation of art, but not in the absence of natural base. Hence, there cannot be extreme idealism nor extreme realism as well as abstractionism and imitationism. As the artist transcends the realm of the actual world and rests in the world of imagination, there is no imitation of the actual world. However, the actual materials of the world serve as the basis for the execution of his work and hence the artist has to work within the ambit of the real world. Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgement* introduces the theme of aesthetics within the mental framework in the form of a judgement. Any judgement to have an aesthetic appeal Kant stipulates two criteria, viz., beauty with a kind of freedom which is unique and disinterestedness. They have certain formal conditions.

According to Clive Bell, aesthetic judgments should have something in common; otherwise we may not call them aesthetics. "Either all works of art have some common quality, or when we speak of works of art we gibber."⁶ This view indicates a narrow theory about the meaning of words. One and the same word may give different kinds of meaning and represent a number of different things, provided the definite characteristics which those things all share. Bell is of the opinion that every work of art has something in common worthy of the name. "Only one answer seems possible, significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combination of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'significant form'" Just opposite to the view of Kant who treated men as ends in themselves, and meant by that men must be treated and respected as autonomous agents with an inalienable right, Bell has developed a different view. If men are seen as end in themselves, they would be known as a combination of colors and lines or patterns. In the same way work of art will also be seen as a pattern and not as a representation or as something with some function or relation to men or other living organisms.

Again, as the work of art is a product of ideal, or mental construction of the artist, the firm belief is that there can be no ugliness in a work of art. The material medium on which the art is created may look beautiful or ugly, but as such art is neither beautiful nor ugly. Also in the long run the physical structure of the art may be eroded or dwindled, but the significant structure of the art remains the same, since it is based on the will as well as the imagination of the artist. Since the artist has the right to select his things and materials according to his skill and fertile imagination, the work of art remains as harmonious whole. For instance, a drama, a painting, a sculpture or music may appear to be organized in parts or patterns; they reveal unitary appeal to the audience when they enjoy the manifestation of artistic taste through them. Thus, the beauty of art is constant, consistent, unchangeable and immortal. The ontological categories of real or unreal cannot be applicable to the works of art, but the works of art are treated as class by themselves since they pave the way for entertainment only rather than intellectual interrogation. As the work of art is pure and devoid of ugliness, it becomes steady for ever and does not produce pain. Hence art produces higher pleasure than the natural beauty.

The pursuit of art is not based on instinct even though it is spontaneous both for creation of art and its appreciation. Neither planned effort nor deliberate choice play a vital role in the process of creation and enjoyment of art. Hence people are prone to declare 'art for art's sake.

According to one view art activity is the manifestation of play of impulse, or the effusion of surplus energy. Another view refutes this theory that it would denounce art from the perspective of human value. As dissatisfaction prevails in the pursuit of art in nature, man naturally gets satisfied in the artistic creation since he longs for the ideal of perfect beauty. For the creation of art the significant factor that is required at the initial level is the inspiration which is based on spontaneous, self-forgetful and detectable experience. In the vicinity of nature, the artist forgets himself and his imagination flows to convert the natural beauty into artistic beauty. In this sense the artist is placed above the common man who lacks the ability of imagination, inspiration artistic skill etc, and place below the enlightened persons who see and enjoy beauty in the flora and fauna of the earth. The creative genius in the artist enables him to convert the nature enjoyable more through his marvellous ideas. The appreciator must stoop to the level of the artist, i.e. he must have a similar heart that of the artist to appreciate his creation.

Regarding the content and method of art presentation, it will be interesting to note that both of them are the two aspects of the same phenomenon. The former refers to the theme or the subject matter of art creation, especially the theme causing emotional appeal in the mind of the appreciator. The latter is the mode of communication or transmitting the content. Only when there is a proper blending of the content and method, there would be the fulfillment of enjoying beauty in art. Between the content and method, the content is the foremost element while the method is secondary and is subservient to the content. If method predominates in any work of art, it will lose its significant aspect. The method is actually a means to serve the purpose of communicating the content. The content of any work of art is predominantly situational as well as emotional since the content cannot go beyond human life. But the emotional and situational themes of art must be not actualized but idealized. Then only the appreciator will develop a kind of detached attitude in appreciating the central theme of art. If it is not idealized, then it becomes personal and will culminate in developing a kind of distaste for art. The main objective of art creation is to evoke a kind of interest, self-forgetful joy and delightful experience in the appreciator. However, the method of appreciation will undergo change corresponding to the change in the content.

According to Croce any aesthetic work especially the work of art must be internal or intuitive; non-internal or external type of art is no longer a work of art. However the insists on the inseparable nature of intuition and expression. To put I precisely, art is intuition-expression. He has frankly identified intuitive or expressive knowledge with the aesthetic or artistic fact, taking works of art as examples of intuitive knowledge and attributing to them the characteristics of intuition and vice-versa. He also wants those who contemplate on artistic creations to set aside theory and abstraction, but to estimate their attractive native through direct intuition. There are a few implication from this hypothesis of Croce:

- A) Knowing a thing implies the expression to oneself which is a necessary togetherness of intuition and expression. Any aesthetic expression is essentially is nothing but an inner clarity or shaping which is involved in intuition itself. All works of art such as painting, drawing, singing etc., are cases of merely practical or willed activity. The physical work of art which is outer like literature, music etc., evoke a kind of external stimulus in the minds of the audience or readers, enables the artist to resort to outer expression since it causes kind of aesthetic experience in the form of intuition expression.

- B) None can consider any work of art as representing a symbol of some meaning since it is an inseparable unity of intuition and expression. Actually a symbol is different from its meaning in everyday language.
- C) In the opinion of Croce, if any work of art is an instant result of intuition-expression, it would be wrong to evaluate its merit on the basis of general laws or genres of art, rather one must straightaway proceed to study the art's finished work itself. The several kinds of work of art are not true species, with genera and sub-species. But it resembles a kind of family likeness.
- D) Artistic expression has a secondary value, as it is the outcome of outer activity, however having its root in the spiritual or inner activity called intuition. In his own words, "The aesthetic fact is altogether completed in the expressive elaboration of impressions. When we have achieved the word within us, conceived definitely and vividly a figure or a stature, or found a musical motive, expression is born and complete: there is no need for anything else. Croce here emphasizes that we should not confuse true aesthetic expression with a practical activity. For the genuine work of art arises and completes in the mind itself. The aesthetics are expected to share or recall the real work and hence there is only pragmatic value rather than aesthetic appeal for the observers of the work of art.
- E) Croce propounded a new theory of beauty which is a 'successful expression, or rather, as expression and nothing more, because expression when it is not successful is not expression.

In spite of Croce's profound views about aesthetic work as having intuition expression formula, there arise certain difficulties in making his ideas to have universal command or general acceptance. There is also a problem in 'forming' and 'making' if we rely upon intuition as having formed expression. Where exactly do we find that intuition? We also cannot totally ignore the symbolic representation as well as meaning attributed to work of art like music.

1.9 BEAUTY AS MEANT BY DIFFERENT THINKERS

R.G. Collingwood

Collingwood considers art as imagination and expression instead of intuition and expression. His views on art may be summarized as follows; "the essential function of art is to express emotions, not to arouse or describe them. The artistic expression of emotions is also to be distinguished from merely giving vent to them. Positively, it is clear and highly individualized projection of emotions. It is also creation. But creation is not to be taken as the manipulation of some external material in accordance with a set of method or technique. Art is not the same kind of making as craft. This difference may be clearly seen (partly) by reflecting that the true locus of artistic creation is imagination, not the outer world of performance and artifacts." The central problem for Collingwood regarding aesthetics is whether art is an expression of emotions. This is not a philosophical theory or definition of art, but familiar to every artist and to those who have some acquaintance with the arts. In aesthetics, one has to carefully think what kind of expression of emotion has been really depicted.

According to Collingwood, there is a difference between what makes the expression of emotion and the actual arousal of it as in the case of a father angrily scolding his mischievous child. This will not arouse the same emotion in the child, but the child will understand the kind of emotion that is being expressed, anger. Similarly when a person arousing emotion on others may not have the same experience in himself, like a salesperson who tries to attract the buyers of his products. However, the man who seeks to arouse a kind of emotion in the audience knows well in advance, what this emotion is. This Collingwood regards an expression as an activity of which there can be no technique.

He also insists to distinguish between expression of emotions and their mere description, since description involves generalization. Also emotions vary from individual to individual depending upon its precise nature pertaining to a particular situation. Hence the aim of art is different from craft according to him, for craft is conceived in general terms. To quote him, “the artist proper is a person who grappling with the problem of expressing a certain emotion, says, ‘I want to get this clear’ He does not want a thing of a certain kind, he wants a certain thing. This is why the kind of a person who takes his literature as psychology, saying, ‘how admirably this writer depicts the feelings of women, or bus drivers...’ necessarily misunderstands every real work of art with which he comes into contact and takes for good art... what is not art at all.”

In the opinion of Collingwood, art is not only an expression but a kind of creative, imaginary making, also not the making of an artifact nor a craft. Art cannot be construed as a mere transformation of the raw material from one thing to some thing based on a fixed plan with a plan with a preconceived end. It is a voluntary act of procreation. It is spontaneous achievement with creative genius, deliberation and responsibility in his mind. He also distinguishes imagination from make-believe in explaining a work of art. For ‘make-believe’ is always opposed to reality and vice-versa. Imagination is not necessarily tied down to the unreal like the make-believe system. Again make-believe is determined by aversion and desire, while imagination is indifferent to them. Collingwood’s contention is the art-work is based on an imaginary object internally. Art is totally a imaginary work which is total or comprehensive.

The critics of Collingwood question the nature of emotion and the purpose of creating art by every artist. For in the case of instrumental music, art is nothing to do with emotion. Regarding the expression of emotions, the critics point out that an emotional experience is a wholly indeterminate one, which is purely psychological without having any awareness of the objective situation. It would be a cumbersome task to express our emotions in perfect language, even though we may have an awareness of the same. Collingwood speaks of generic features of emotion rather than its specific significance. The critics also point out his biased tendency against the perceptual elements in arts; for he firmly underestimates them. They also disagree with the distinction of artist from a craftsman.

C.J. Ducasse

Ducasse in his famous work, *The Philosophy of Art* refers a vigorous and analytical style of argument. The significant element of his notion of ‘aesthetic art’ may be summarized as follows: “Art is the language of feeling. So its essence as an activity is expression, not the creation of beauty. What the artist really aims at is objective self expression. Transmission of feeling is neither the essential intention nor the necessary effect of a work of art. Finally, art is expression

in the special sense that it is both free or spontaneous and yet not quite undetermined. Before, however, we set out to explain the various ideas implicit in this summary of Ducasse, we would do well to bring out what he means by aesthetic art. The term, aesthetic, he rightly points out, has been used in quite a few different sense; loosely as synonymous with 'beautiful' in the etymological sense, to mean the generally perceptible as when Kant titles the first part of his *critique of pure reason* as 'transcendental aesthetic.' and again, 'as an adjective intended to differentiate feelings obtained in the contemplation of things which are meant to be mere designs, from feelings obtained in the contemplation of other things, such as dramatic entities...' Therefore, in so far as there is no one firmly establishes sense; in which the word aesthetic is used in the language of the plain man. Ducasse feels justified, in putting his own meaning on the word, and decides to use it to signify; 'having to do with feelings obtained through contemplation.'

According to Ducasse, aesthetic art has been characterized as the 'conscious objectification of one's feeling.' He distinguishes it from fine art, which produces something beautiful. But art is merely conscious objective, self-expression i.e. critically controlled objectification of self. In his own view, "strictly speaking, pictures, statues, and the like are not art at all but works of art; and art is not a quality discernible in them but an activity of man, - the activity namely, of which such things are the products." It also involves the language or expression of feeling. Like the art of putting our meaning into words, art is putting of a feeling into an object created ad hoc, i.e. giving a concrete shape to the feeling leading to contemplation. Through this type of explanation, Ducasse avoids the excesses of Croce and holds that his theory of art has a value of expression in terms of an external, observable object. However, his association of art with language seems to be misleading. Language, properly used can offer meaningful statements, but not to good works of art. His idea of feeling is also does not suit to the idea of emotion since both are psychologically at variance. Emotion is nothing but the strengthened or vibrant feeling.

John Dewey

John Dewey considers art neither as luxury nor as an intrusion into life, but simply experience. To quote Dewey, "This task (of the philosopher of art) is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They are the earth in one of its manifest operations... [so,] in order to understand the aesthetic in its... approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and sense that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens; the sights that hold the crowd – the fire-engine resting by;... the tense grace of the ball-player (as it) infests the on looking crowd... (one has also to consider those) who are happily absorbed in their activities of mind and body... The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his material and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged." To put it more precisely, the task of the philosopher of art, according to Dewey, is to restore the link between art and everyday experience. 'Experience' for Dewey is not merely a subjective pole, but refers to the whole transaction of explicit manifestation, contrary to the views explained by Croce and Collingwood.

An art product or a work of art, according to Dewey is a fusion of sense and meaning since the artist has engaged artistically in the product of art. Aesthetic experience is no more private and psychical exclusively than any other kind of experience. Several aesthetic predicates like beautiful, poignant, tragic, etc., express the original character of the things themselves and not mere projections of subjective states. Experience is not individualized, but occurs continuously since it is unconsummated and divided. Aesthetically an experience consists of an inner unit and order, moves towards fulfilment, agreeable and satisfying on the whole, which is basically emotional. For the emotional states are conditioned by parts of an inclusive and enduring situation that involves concern for objects and their issues. To quote Dewey, “A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live... Somehow, (it) operates to deepen and to rise to great clarify that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience... This fact... is the explanation of the feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with aesthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense aesthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world, which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves.... (the) enveloping undefined whole is felt as an expansion of ourselves.”

The above citation will give the entire gamut of the outlook of aesthetic experience developed by Dewey. An art product is a work of art only potentially so long as it does not so quicken others' experience, which as a formed substance leading to the work of art in actuality and is perceived as formed in terms of an experience.

George Santayana

He names his work on aesthetics as *The sense of beauty*, since it plays a vital role in life than the aesthetic theory in philosophy. “We must learn from our study why, when and how beauty appears, what conditions an object must fulfil to be beautiful, what elements of our nature make us sensible of beauty, and what the relation is between the constitution of the object and the excitement of our susceptibility.” In his view the sense of beauty is to complete in the living context of our experience of beauty and artistic expressiveness rather than reflecting upon in the abstract. In his another work *The Realm of Essence*, Santayana explicitly states that beauty is indefinable. ‘The beautiful is itself an essence, an indefinable quality felt in many things which, however disparate they may be otherwise, receive this name by virtue of a special emotion, half wonder, half love, which is felt in their presence.’

Santayana maintains that judgement of beauty is immediate, unmediated and non-relational. Art is different from science, since the latter is related to truth, a fidelity to fact, while art is for entertainment, stimulation of our senses and imagination. Reasoning really sub serves the aesthetic by way of satisfying our understanding. Again Santayana distinguishes aesthetic values with other kinds of value like moral, social, economic etc. beauty may be good, it cannot lead to moral obligation. He insists that our practical reason compares, combines and harmonizes all our interests but each value coming under its domain is unique and distinct. Aesthetic pleasure, in his opinion is objectification, a pleasure of ours, though regarded as a quality of things. However, it is an agreeable state of experience since there is the assigning a locus in the object. As elements of beauty, the materials of beauty are sensations of bodily welfare and surplus

energy caused by instincts etc., another element is form which is agreeable in several respects which temper the unpleasantness and commotional power of adversity and unrighteousness since forms are the types which we come to form as a residuum of everyday experience. He describes music, sculpture, literature, poetry, as the individual arts.

Susanne K. Langer

Langer treats art as an expressive form. The ability to express or articulate or project the subjective factor of our experience distinguishes art from other things. "The essential function of art is not to give vent to the artist's own feeling, nor even to evoke any emotion in the contemplator, but to so 'express' the life of feeling that art lovers in general, nay, even artists themselves, may come to know a little more about 'vitality in all its manifestations from sheer sensibility to the most elaborate phases of awareness and emotion.'" In other words, the essential value of art is not affective or predominantly subjective but cognitive. Art is a vehicle of knowledge of the life of feeling." Like other philosophers of art, Langer considers 'expression' as the central concept of his aesthetical theory. 'A work of art is an expressive form created for our perception through sense or imagination, and what it expresses is human feeling.' The major concepts in his theory are 'form' 'expression, 'feeling,' 'creation' and 'perception.'

The form of an work of art is the moral effect of it and it also represents the whole work of art as a form itself, which requires in art making and art contemplation. But form need not be an essential factor in literary art. Art is expressed in a certain form according to Langer. They are expressed in the forms of symbol, sign and signal, image, experience etc. Art Symbol is presentational or non-discursive based on the principle of construction. Feeling in art is concerned with the subjectively felt realities, i.e., everything that can be felt especially from sensation, pain, comfort, excitement and repose including complex emotions and intellectual tensions. However, non-verbal or non-representational work of art may not evoke any kind of feeling. Regarding creation Langer is of the opinion that art-work is the expressive forms created for our perception. Finally, artistic import and intuition constitute the contemplation of the created art in a form with expressiveness with several meanings each one is unique and distinct. According to Langer, poetry contains the discourse, which creates and projects an illusion besides image, semblance of virtual life or personal and immediate experience as well as forms of feeling.

L.A. Reid

Reid treats art as an embodiment of creative aesthetics from the perspective of constructive and critical. By the word 'creation' Reid means that which was earlier unknown to the artist, but gradually manifests through his creation. He prefers to use the word embodiment instead of expression, as the key concept of aesthetics, since the works of art give definite, or more or less material, shape to the artist's idea or vision. Art is the creative aesthetic embodiment which has an individual form. Language in art, according to Reid, is the excitement in ideas of the artist which moves him to proceed further. "A poet has a freedom in the selection and manipulation of his subject-matter (in exactly the same way as a painter freely selects from the features of a landscape) to which the philosopher or the scientist has no right. It is ideas-as-he-feels-than (ideas as values) that 'get into' the poem. As with the painter, his emphasis, his style, is affected by the rhythms and pulsing of his feeling. In the writing of philosophy and science (on the other hand) the quality of style is primarily subordinate to the clarity of ideas." However, critics state

that that art cannot be regarded as a kind of expression but better may be called embodied meaning.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How do you understand Beauty?

2) What are the views of different philosophers on 'rasa'?

1.10 LET US SUM UP

Besides the above philosophers of art we come across Aristotle, Leo Tolstoy, John Hoppers, Clive Bell, E.H. Gomrich, T.M. Grane, David Hume and Magaret Macdonald discussing about poetics, art, the language of emotion, art and emotion, artistic representation and form, artistic representation, artistic greatness, of the standard of taste and some distinctive features of arguments used in criticism of the art respectively.

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UNIT 2**RASA - DEFINITION, NATURE AND SCOPE**

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
 - 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Definition
 - 2.3 Nature
 - 2.4 Scope
 - 2.5 Poetry as Emotive Meaning
 - 2.6 The Validity of *Rasa* as a Theoretical Concept
 - 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
 - 2.8 Key Words
 - 2.9 Further Readings and References
-

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to learn the literary theory from the concept of '*Rasa*.' It would therefore be appropriate to explain the meaning and scope of the term. It is also very important to know that in the Indian context, the concept of *rasa* is central to all discourse about literature. It can also be seen as a pervasive influence in the theories of painting, sculpture, drama and dance in addition to poetry. Hence, it is necessary to understand how and why the concept of *rasa* dominated the critical scene in India.

Thus by the end of this unit, you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of the concept
 - understand it as a general theory of literature
 - it's study in relation to other theories
 - it's emergence as the major literary concept
 - it's pervasive influence in arts
-

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As a general theory of literature, the *Rasa* doctrine (*rasa-vada*) is based on the premises that literary works (as verbal compositions) express emotive meanings and that all literature is typically emotive discourse or discourse that has to do with the portrayal of feelings and attitudes rather than with ideas, concepts, statements of universal truths, and so forth. It also raises a host of philosophical questions. What kind of entities are the emotions, what is their objective or ontological status. How are they recognized? How do they get expressed in words? These and other related questions will have to be considered seriously.

In the history of Sanskrit literature the concept of *rasa* has been developed in detail and in a multifaceted way. It has remained central to all literary discourses. The term '*rasa*' may not find a good equivalent in English, but in its basic sense means 'aesthetic relish'. Though a specific attitude is required to appreciate *rasa* yet it is not a conditioning by experience that the Behaviorists forge. Experience of *rasa* is also in terms of an inner process that occur in the individual while going through a literary piece or performance. Hence, this aesthetic relish is not concerned with mere linguistic behavior in an empty way but communicating a distinct eternal

flavor or mood such as tragic, comic, erotic and so forth. A distinct role is given to what can be referred to simply as the common human emotions treated in the poem termed as *Bhavas* and the art of emotion or *rasa* that emerges from such treatment. While it is believed that in the history of Sanskrit poetics, perhaps no other concept has given rise to so much controversy. It appears to be a truth to an extent since the author of *Rasagangadhara* who tries to review in detail the diverse shades of expert opinion centering round *rasa*, is driven to confess at the end that the only common point that *emergesis* : ‘*rasa* is felt’ , as that which is invariably connected with the highest joy and partaking of beauty in the world.

2.2 DEFINITION

The term *rasa* in the Vedic literature derives from the root ‘*ras*’ which means to taste, sweet juice, sap or essence for instance , ‘*raso vai madhu*’ (*Shatapatha Brahmana* vi.iv. 3-27) ; ‘*raso vai sah*’ (*Taittiriya Upanishad*. 2.7.2.) etc. The classical interpretations of Bharata’s famous ‘*Rasa-Sutra*’ explains it as : “ Emotions in poetry came to be expressed through the conjunction of their causes and symptoms and other ancillary feelings that accompany the emotions” (*Natyashastra*. 6.31). Bharata here stipulates four necessary conditions that must be present for an emotion to become manifested: (i) causes (*vibhavas*, (ii) symptoms (*anubhavas* , (iii) feelings (*vyabhicharin*), and (iv) their conjunction (*samyoga*) (*vibhava anubhava vyabhicharisamyogat rasanishpattih*. NS 6.32.). A reading of *Natyashastra* (NS) will show that Bharata never indulges in the metaphysical discussion about the aesthetic response of the man/woman of taste. He recognizes how it varies from individual to individual. It is not justified to estimate *rasa* with a set of general arguments by citing experimental results and not by revealing the basic ideas in the foundations of emotional sensitivity.

Causes (*vibhavas*): The causes of an emotion are those that generate or excite the emotion or are the occasion of that emotion. In Sanskrit , the cause is designated by the term *vibhava*, a word synonymous with *karana*, *hetu*, *nimitta*, all of them meaning ‘cause.’ It is also called a *vibhava* because knowledge of an emotion through words, physical gestures , and involuntary psychic symptoms (sweating, trembling and so forth) expressive of that emotion.

This is again of two kinds, the first is the primary cause or the object of emotion (internal object in modern terminology), which is defined as “that, resting on which, as its object , emotions like love are born’. The Sanskrit term for this is *alambana-vibhava*. This may be a person, scene, object or thought that excite a person’s emotion and appears to him in a certain light or under a certain description. It is not however, the case that the mere presence of the object will necessarily excite an emotion in a person. It will not, unless the object is ‘intended’ by that person as an object of his feeling and he is moved to think of it under a certain description.

Second is the exciting cause (*uddipana-vibhava*). The object of an emotion is the generative cause of that emotion because, although it is the object to which the emotion is directed, it is also the reason for that emotion. That is to say that the emotion will not possibly arise in a person without the actual presence or thought of that object. But the object in itself is not sufficient for the emotion to develop unless the circumstances are also appropriate. For example, love between two young people grows into a full-blown passion when conditions, such as privacy, moonlight, a pleasant climate and so forth are present. So, under the exciting causes are included all the attended circumstances that enhance the feeling. Familiar examples of these would be the

‘atmospheric’ setting in Edgar Allen Poes’ ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’, and the images of sterility, dryness, agony and death in Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’. The objects simply help the emotion to exhibit itself and therefore, are called ‘causes’ in a secondary sense.

Expressions and Symptoms

Emotional states will become objects of discourse only when they are expressed in an overt or visible way, in speech, action or gesture. In the works of Charlton, “The idea of any emotion is...in general bound up with the idea of how it is manifested...” Hence, the conjunction of the symptoms with the causes is of utmost importance in any discourse about the emotions. The Sanskrit word for the behavioral expression is ‘*anubhava*’ which means etymologically, ‘that which follows or ensues from the feeling (as its effect)’. *Anubhava* is that which ‘makes the feeling apprehensible’. The expressions, the words, actions or gestures are in one sense the effects of their emotions and appear after emotions. But from the point of view of the observer, they are the indicative signs of the emotions, motions, changes in appearance, and actions that point to the emotions. Through them, the emotions which being internal conditions, must otherwise remain unknown, are made known or objectified.

Ancillary Feelings

When a feeling is being expressed in a poem as a primary mood, other feelings that normally accompany it are called its ancillaries. No feeling, however basic, appears in its severest purity of form but attracts other emotions as well. Thus, if love-in-union is the emotion being treated, it will attract a host of other feelings, bashfulness, infatuation, agitation eagerness, pride, vacillation and others. These ancillary feelings are called *vyabhichari* or *sanchari-bhavas* (transient or fleeting emotions) because they come and go at will in association with the principal emotions and help stabilize them. Without the reinforcement of the fleeting emotions, no emotion can be developed into an enduring mood. Poetic organization consists, not only in developing an emotion into a sustained mood, but also in developing an emotion into a sustained mood by exhibiting an entire emotional sequence of alternating stands.

Their Conjunction

As Abhinavagupta points out, it is only when the full paraphernalia of objects, expressions and accessory feelings is present that the composition will be most effective. For this reason, the dramatic presentation has been regarded as the best form of entertainment. Therefore, in it, a whole situation is elaborated with a picture- like vividness. In a written composition, however, this picturesqueness results from the verbal descriptions, and the appropriate actions have to be realized.

2.3 NATURE

Although, *rasa*, as originally propounded by Bharata was purely an aesthetic concept, it has through the centuries, been absorbed into theological discussions and consequently become strongly tinged with one or the other metaphysical trend. Bharata’s commentators themselves sought, from time to time, to give a metaphysical twist to the *rasa* theory. *Rasa*, according to Bharata is the first known formulator of the relishable quality inherent in an artistic work which according to him, is its emotive content. Every work, poem or play is supposed to treat an emotive theme and communicate a distinct emotional flavor or mood, such as tragic, comic and so forth. In this sense, one can speak of the *rasa* of a work and also, since there are many such

moods of poetic or dramatic ‘moods’ or ‘emotions’, of *rasas* in the plural. A distinction is also made between the common human emotions, treated in the poem which are termed ‘*bhavas*’ and the art of emotion or ‘*rasa*’ that emerges from such a treatment, the assumption being that the raw stuff of the emotions presented as undergone by characters in a play or by the speaker of a lyric poem is transformed in the process into a universalized emotion and rendered fit for a contemplative enjoyment. In the second sense in which the term is understood, *rasa* is relishable experience occasioned by the work in the reader or spectator which may be referred to as the ‘*rasa* experience’.

The *rasa* theory states that the aim of poetry is the expression and evocation of emotions and that a poem exists for no other purpose than that it should be relished by the reader. Aesthetic experience is this act of relishing or gestation (*rasana*). The idea that poetry expresses emotions and moves us is not of course new to Western criticism. It is implicit in Aristotle’s ‘Poetics’, in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition generally, in Longinus particularly, in Romantic expressionistic aestheticians down to Croce, and in such modern critics as Richards and Eliot. But the Western prejudice against emotions in poetry, too, is as old as Plato and the Puritans. Traditionally, Western criticism has reflected a division of loyalties between the opposite principles of ‘*dulce*’ and ‘*utile*’, so much so that a complete aesthetics of the emotions was not possible unless it was also justified by moral, cognitive or philosophical values. This is true even of Aristotle. In the Indian tradition, on the other hand, one finds a more consistent and systematic theorizing about poetry in terms of the emotions and an attempt to explain the whole area of poetic semantics as well as aesthetic psychology centrally from the standpoint of emotions.

The emotive theory was not by any means the only theory to be advanced by the classical Sanskrit critics. Sanskrit poetics had its school of metaphor (*Alankara*), which thought of figurative or deviant expression as the special characteristic of poetic language and its school of style (*Riti*), which believed that a special arrangement of words, of phonetic and syntactic features, constituted the essence of poetry. Then there was this influential school, that of suggestion (*Dhvani*), led by Anandavardhana, and his commentator Abhinavagupta. This school argued that poetic indirection was a special, supernumerary activity of words, outside both literal and metaphoric functions. However, these two critics were also responsible for developing Bharata’s doctrine of emotions, which Bharata himself applied mainly to dramatic literature, into a unified theory of poetry. At their hands, the concept of *rasa* became the central criterion of poetic semantics, it subsumed even the principle of suggestion.

The *rasa* theory implies that there are a number of specific emotions, each with its distinct tone or flavor, and not an anonymous aesthetic emotion or a host of nameless emotions. As Bharata said, “Drama is the representation of the mental states, actions and conduct of people” (*Natyashastra*. 2.112). Thus, Bharata lists as many as forty nine emotional states (*bhavas*), of which eight are primary or durable states (*sthayin*), with their corresponding *rasas* or aesthetic moods ; thirty-three are transitory states (*vyabhicharin*); and eight are involuntary expressions, like tears, horripilation, trembling, and so on , which are also thought to be mental states even though they appear as physical conditions. The eight basic emotions are erotic love, comic laughter, grief, fury, heroic spirit, fear, wonder, and disgust or revulsion. Only these basic emotions can be developed into distinct aesthetic moods, whereas the other , transient emotions come and go according to their affinity with the durable emotions. Later commentators, however, added a ninth emotion to Bharata’s list of eight basic states, namely subsidence or serenity (*shanta*). The final number of basic emotions in the *rasa* tradition is therefore taken to be nine.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Aesthetic relish?

2) What are the premises of *rasa* doctrine?

2.4 SCOPE

Sanskrit poetics also avoids the pitfalls of the various transcendental revelatory theories associated with Romanticism and traceable largely to neo-Platonic doctrines. Theorists in this tradition believe that the artist has a vision of reality hidden behind the appearance of things and makes the revelation of this vision the object of his art. The trouble with this view is that the critic has no means of knowing this vision of ultimate reality except through the work itself and that when he does come to know about it, he cannot ascertain whether it has been faithfully reproduced or embodied in the work. The Sanskrit critics speak of art as an object of enjoyment rather than as a medium for transmitting inspired versions of ultimate reality. Although for them art occasions a supernal delight, its matrix is common stuff of human emotions. Aesthetic experience is simply the apprehension of the created work as delight, and the pleasure principle cannot be supported from aesthetic contemplation. This delight is regarded as its end and as having no immediate relation to the practical concerns of the world or to the pragmatic aims of moral improvement or spiritual salvation. Sanskrit theory is thus opposed to a didactic, hortative view of literature. Abhinavagupta declares that poetry is fundamentally different from ethics or religion and that the principal element in aesthetic experience is not knowledge but delight, although poetry may also lead to the expression of our being and enrich our power of intuition (NS 2.115).

The whole problem concerning the language of poetic emotions centers on the question, Can emotional qualities be tested as they are normally taken to reside in the subjective experience of the writer or reader? The answer to this question hinges on our being able to describe the connection between the work of art and the feeling in the work of art itself and, in a sense, make it testable. The approach in the light of Wittgenstein's logic seeks to avoid the dangers of both expressionist and affective theories by locating feelings squarely in the work of art itself instead of imputing them to any actual person, artist or observer. It does not evaluate the work either by inquiring whether it has faithfully expressed the author's alleged feelings or by examining its effects on the minds of the audience. The feelings we find in the poem or play are objective qualities present in the work. They are not the feelings of anybody in particular; they are just feelings defined by their objects and situational contexts. The language of feeling is not then a private language; it is more a system of symbols, a language game that is understood by those who have learned its conventions and usages.

This objective emphasis is, in fact, quite congenial to the Indian theorist. The *rasa* theory itself, as formulated by Bharata in his *Natyashastra*, deals with the emotions in an entirely objective

way. In his famous *rasa-sutra* (formula), Bharata explains how emotions are expressed in poetry: “Emotions in poetry come to be expressed through the conjunction of their causes and symptoms, and other ancillary feelings that accompany the emotions”. Here Bharata stipulates three conditions or situational factors that must be present together for an emotion to become manifested : (i) that which generates the emotion, which includes (a) the object to which the emotion is directed (i.e. , the intentional object, *alambanavibhava*), for example, Juliet, and (b) other exciting circumstances (*uddipyanavibhava*), for example, youth, privacy, moonlight etc.: (ii) the overt expressions (actions and gestures) that exhibit the emotion, called *anubhavas*, for example, tears, laughter etc. : and (iii) other ancillary feelings, such as depression, elevation, agitation etc. that normally accompany that emotion. The object, thus set forth by Bharata, of representing the various emotions in terms of their attendant conditions make the poetic situation very much a public situation.

Bharata’s commentators, were careful to point out the emotions treated in poetry are neither the projections of the reader’s own mental states nor the private feelings of the poet: rather, they are the objective situations abiding in the poem (*kavyagata*), as its cognitive content. The sorrow presented in the Ramayana is to be taken not as the personal sorrow of the poet but sorrow itself in its generalized form and identified by its criteria. If it were only a feeling personal to the poet, it would not attain the status of a poem (*shlokatva*) and would not be fit for the reader’s contemplation. It is further stated that the possibility of the poetic emotions being objectified in the work is dependent on their representation in words. *Rasa* is apprehended as residing in the work, in the situational factors presented in an appropriate language.

That poetic emotions have their ‘life in the poem’ and arise only in relation to their formal representation in the poem is also the conclusion of T.S. Eliot. Speaking of Ezra Pound’s poetry, Eliot says that Pound’s verse is always definite and concrete because “he has always a definite emotion it. Feelings and passions, Eliot further argues, are not merely subjective but objective and public. Bharata’s *rasa-sutra* affirms as much. Emotions exist and are manifested in inalienable association with their causes and circumstances. As they are known in life by their objective signs, so also are they apprehended from the language that describes them. It would therefore be wrong to bring the charge of subjectivism or naïve emotionalism against the *rasa* theory.

A critic may pose a problem as follows: Meanings and ideas are of course objectively present in the work; they can, for instance, be adequately and most often unambiguously specified. But since there can be no equally sensitive control of emotional response we are here in the realm of the subjective. This difficulty is fully appreciated by the *rasa* theorist. Hence, Bharata and following him, Anandavardhana set up an elaborate logic of the emotions and a body of criteria for situation appraisal, *rasauchitya* (propriety in the treatment of emotions), based on public norms and standards (*lokadharmi*, *lokapramana*). It must not be forgotten that what the Sanskrit critics are talking about are not the elusive inner happenings of the Cartesian theory but ‘meanings’ of emotive situations and behavior as they enter into human discourse. Emotions in poetry are as objective and public as ‘meanings and ideas’ are and can be specified as adequately as the others can be.

The Sanskrit critics however do not wish to banish the affections from the poetic experience. Nor do they entirely dispense with mental concepts. Bharata whose approach to aesthetics was more practical than philosophical, assumed that the emotions expressed in poetry are the emotions felt by the poet and shared by the audience. But Shankuka, an early commentator on Bharata, saw the difficulty implicit in Bharata’s formula for emotional expression and stated that emotions,

being mental states cannot be directly known or expressed; the knowledge of them is made possible only by their perceptible causes and effects which are their logical signs, not of intrapsychic states themselves.

Abhinavagupta too, recognizes this distinction between inner mental states and their conditions and signs and points out that, while these signs serve to manifest or make known the emotions, they are not identical with emotions themselves. The two belong to two different orders of existence (the one is physical and insentient and the other mental and sentient), and they are apprehended by different organs of perception. Both Shankuka and Abhinavagupta agree that emotions are mental entities that are not identical with their natural expressions or with their verbal representations. Thus, they both assume that they are logically and epistemologically prior to their outward manifestations while at the same time they admit they can become known to others only through their external signs.

In Sanskrit criticism, there is a lively debate on the nature of poetic truth. In his commentary on Bharata, Abhinavagupta sums up many views on the nature of dramatic representation and argues against the prevalent theories of imitation and Illusion. Bharata defined drama by the term '*anukarana*', which may be translated as 'mimetic reproduction': "Drama is a reproduction of the mental states, actions and conduct of people". Abhinavagupta's predecessors, Lollata and Shankuka, who commented on Bharata's work, understood dramatic representation in mimetic terms and held that aesthetic perception is illusory cognition (*mithyajnana*), although it does produce real emotions in the spectator.

The connection between the imitation and illusion theories is obvious. An imitative reproduction of the real, whether in the medium of paint, words, or physical gestures, cannot be the real thing; consequently, the response evoked by it is based on illusion. Abhinavagupta argues that drama, and by extension all poetry (*kavya*), is not an imitation but a depiction or description in words (or enactment in the case of theatrical performance) of the life of the emotions that in turn, arouses the latent emotive dispositions of the actor or spectator and causes him to reflect on the presented situation with a degree of sympathetic identification.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Can emotional qualities be tasted?

2) How will you explain Bharata's *rasa*-sutra?

2.5 POETRY AS EMOTIVE MEANING

The best definition of literature is perhaps contextual and one that takes into account the nature of the literary situation and the purpose and motivation of the sentences employed in it. It is easier to define the nature and type of a discourse by its context than by its linguistic form. It is in these terms that the *rasa* theory conceives of the nature of literature. The purpose of literary discourse is, according to this theory, neither the statement of universal truths nor the prompting of men to action but 'evocation'. Bhattanayaka, a staunch defender of the *rasa* doctrine as well

as a critic of *dhvani* theory, distinguishes the poetic from the other forms of literature, such as the Vedas, scientific, ethical and historical texts, by its evocative aim (*bhavakatva*). In poetry, both words and meanings directly contribute to the aim of *rasa*-evocation and are subordinated to that activity.

Abhinavagupta agrees with Bhattanayaka that the function of poetic language can be said to consist only in evocation. Pleasure alone is the primary end of poetry: the instruction provided by it is but a remote aim. Poetry too, he declares, is in this sense essentially enactment, although language is its sole medium and mode of presentation. Bharata had stated that “no poetic meaning subsists without *rasa*”. According to his etymology, *bhavas* (emotions in poetry) are so called because they bring into being (*bhavayanti*, evoke) corresponding aesthetic moods. They are an ‘instrument of causation’. Therefore, Abhinavagupta concludes that ‘*rasa* is the fundamental aim and purport of poetry.’ Anandavardhana too says ‘Where *rasa*, in its various forms, is not the subject matter of discourse there no manner of poetry is possible.’

There is no poetic theme that is not infused with *rasa*, no object that does not become the cause of an emotion. Even as all themes and ideas become poetic when infused with *rasa*, all elements of language viz. figure, meter, rhyme and all such verbal and phonological devices must also derive their efficacy from a *rasa* context by contributing to the evocative function. They do not rest in themselves since they can be understood only through *rasa*, which is the final resting point of all poetic discourse.

2.6 THE VALIDITY OF RASA AS A THEORETICAL CONCEPT

Bharata’s *rasa* doctrine was commented on in diverse ways both before and after Abhinavagupta, and many reformulations and mutations of it appeared in the course of its history. Valid criteria for evaluative judgments can be formulated only on the basis of permanent or necessary properties, which all literature must possess and not on the basis of non-necessary properties, such as complexity, irony and so on. *Auchitya*, translated as ‘propriety’ is understood by the Sanskrit writers as the harmonious adaptation of the poetic means like the language, figure, image and so on to the poetic end. This end is conceived by the *rasa* theorist as the evocation of *rasa*. While, thus, the final ground of reference in poetic criticism is evocation of aesthetic moods, the only criterion of beauty is appropriateness, the idea that, in poetry good and bad is to be determined on the ground of appropriateness and inappropriateness and that merits and faults do not obtain abstractly but depend on many inter-related factors, such as suitability of language to theme, tone, context and so forth. All writers, from Bharata down, assumed decorum to be a central regulative principle. Bharata treats ‘*auchitya*’ in relation to the problems of drama and stage presentation. Anandavardhana also considers propriety an imperative but he is emphatic in stating that the sole consideration in deciding the propriety of form and matter is the end of delineating the *rasas*, to which all other features must be subordinated.

In modern times L.A. Reid says that what art embodies are emotive values, which can be perceived as objective qualities of the work, ‘not facts or ideas as such’ many Continental theorists down to Croce had a stake in the emotionality of art, including music. But they were for the most part thinking either of the artist’s self-expression or of the reader’s or viewer’s response. For instance, Eugene Vernon focuses on the artist’s character and genius, whereas Tolstoy, with his ‘infection’ theory focuses on the communicative aspect. Kant’s theory of disinterested delight as being characteristic of aesthetic attitude has a parallel in Abhinavagupta’s aesthetics. But his philosophy of taste is response oriented, although judgments of taste are taken

to be valid interpersonally, whereas the emphasis of the *rasa* theory is object centered. Susan Langer is undoubtedly one of the prominent aestheticians who have accorded a central place to 'feeling' in the philosophy of art. Her theory of art and literature should be of great interest to the Indian theorist not only because of certain affinities to the *rasa* concept but because she makes a particular mention of that concept in the context of her discussion of the dramatic form.

Bharata, in his *Natyashastra*, assigned specific emotional or suggestive values to musical note (*svaras*) and melodic patterns or '*jatis*' (later called *ragas*) when they were used in stage presentation for evocative purposes. But there is no suggestion in Bharata that the musical notes by themselves express any particular emotions. A *raga* is so called because, etymologically. It produces a mood, albeit in a vague way, or is colored by it. Any given *raga* may be adapted to a variety of moods. A *raga* can become the vehicle of a mood when it is employed in an expressive context, when, for instance, a lyric is set in a *raga*. Therefore, melody is related to the meanings of the song, not as an expresser (*vachaka*), but as a suggestor (*vyanjaka*). Both Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta recognize that musical sounds too can be suggestive of *rasa* in this way.

The great emphasis placed on *abhinaya* or gestural enactment is a clear indication of the influence of the *rasa* concept on Indian dancing and on play-acting as well. Bharata dealt with both dance and drama, and so both these arts were for him natural adjuncts of the theatre and vehicles of dramatic expression. The relation of *rasa* doctrine to the arts of painting and sculpture is, however, more intimate since these arts are understood by the ancient Indian writers as being essentially representational. According to the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, painting and sculpture, like expressive dance, 'reproduce all that is the object of experience'. They employ the same eye-expressions, hand-gestures and body postures that are found in dance. Even as one speaks of the dramatic emotions (*natya-rasas*), one can also speak of the *rasas* expressed in painting or sculpture (*citra-rasas*). Emotion (*bhava*) is thus accepted as one of the criteria of painting, together with symmetry, similarity, proper disposition of colors, and so on.

Check your progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the Scope of *rasa*?

2) Reflect on the Validity of the concept of *rasa*.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

A brief profile of the major concept of criticism in Sanskrit literature viz. the theory of *rasa* together with a meaningful discourse, wherever possible is given. The Nature, Scope and other related areas have been discussed within the permitted space. Also, an attempt to introduce in a comparative light, the views and critical thinking in the West is made to enable students for their own further studies.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Rasa: Relishing, taste.

Dhvani: Suggestion

Alamkara : Figuration

2.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 AESTHETICS: DEFINITION, NATURE AND SCOPE

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Definition of Aesthetics
 - 3.3 Nature of Aesthetics
 - 3.4 Three Approaches to Aesthetics
 - 3.5 The Aesthetic Recipient
 - 3.6 The Aesthetic Experience
 - 3.7 Scope of Aesthetics
 - 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
 - 3.9 Key Words
 - 3.10 Further Readings and References
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to introduce the concept 'Aesthetics' and explain certain concepts relating to it in terms of its nature. By doing so, we expect to understand the scope of aesthetics. Very basically, aesthetics involves two issues: (1) definitions of art and (2) responses to art. For example, when we consider why a particular painting was created, purchased, displayed, and liked, we are considering a set of aesthetic designations and the nature of aesthetic responses. Further, this chapter proposes to show the general connection between aesthetic recipient and aesthetic experience on the basis of their inseparable bonding, which begins with the very act of approaching art in general.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of the concept called Aesthetics;
 - to comprehend the nature of Aesthetics;
 - to identify the three approaches of Aesthetics;
 - to be able to understand aesthetic recipient and aesthetic experience
 - to understand the scope of Aesthetics
-

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'aesthetics' is essentially derived from the Greek word *aisthetikos*, meaning "esthetic, sensitive, sentient", which in turn was derived from *aisthanomai*, meaning "I perceive, feel, sense". The modern usage of the term "aesthetics" was appropriated and coined with new meaning in the German form *Ästhetik* (modern spelling *Ästhetik*) by a German philosopher called Alexander Baumgarten in 1735.

Philosophers did not start to use the word 'aesthetics' until eighteenth century. Later it began to emerge as a term describing the whole area of feeling, as opposed to reason. A disagreement on the relation between emotion and reason is one of the oldest problems in philosophy. Aesthetics arose as an attempt to offer a constructive account of the role played by emotions and feelings in the human life. When the fine arts were advanced to an important place in culture, a particular kind of feeling was especially associated with art, so that gradually we have come to use 'aesthetic' as a generic term not only for certain special feeling but all our relations to art as well. In that sense aesthetics is not restricted to post-eighteenth century philosophy. Philosophers use

the term ‘aesthetics’ to refer to a discipline of reasoned discourse like ethics or epistemology. The subject matter of aesthetics may be an intuition, feeling or emotion, but aesthetics itself is part of philosophy and is open to the same demands for evidence and logically controlled argumentation that characterize all philosophy. In that sense aesthetics should be able to account for all the phenomena of its field, though there may be many different theories that compete with the discipline.

3.2 DEFINITION OF AESTHETICS

Aesthetics (also spelled esthetics) is broadly defined as the philosophical study of the nature of art, beauty and taste. To define its subject matter more precisely is, however, immensely difficult. Indeed, it could be said that self-definition has been the major task of aesthetics over the decades. Here, we are acquainted with an interesting and puzzling realm of experience: the realm of the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, and the elegant; of taste, criticism, and fine art; and of contemplation and sensuous enjoyment. It is our assumption that similar principles are operative and similar interests are engaged in all these phenomena. If we are mistaken in this impression, we will have to dismiss such ideas as beauty and taste as having only peripheral philosophical interest. Alternatively, if our impression is correct and philosophy corroborates it, we will have discovered the foundation for an influential philosophical aesthetics.

When we speak of an aesthetic theory in philosophy, we are trying to give explanatory account of fine arts and beauty. A theory for example, claims that all form of art is an imitation or mimesis. Plato was the first to use the word ‘imitation’ in relation with poetry in his *The Republic*, and considered art as mere imitation of real life and of no serious use or quality. Later Aristotle defended imaginative art as something that helps human beings to get away from unnecessary emotions, offers useful purgation of *Katharsis*. Today, the theory of *Katharsis* is considered as one of the greatest contributions to aesthetics.

3.3 NATURE OF AESTHETICS

It is one of the most difficult tasks answering the question ‘what is aesthetics’? Aesthetics is that philosophical country whose borders of investigation are known as experiences of beauty and appreciation of art. This territory of beauty and art has been visited numerous times by brave explorers, the aestheticians, who have given accounts more or less detailed, but always enthusiastic, of their discoveries. The charges against the aestheticians mainly are twofold: (1) that they attempt the impossible, in that beauty and art are indefinable (2) that they attempt the futile, in that, even were a definition possible, it would be of no aid to the appreciation of an art work. So an examination and reply to these two charges will reveal to us the nature and objectives of aesthetics as a field of study and investigation. Aesthetics must definitely, be based on observations about art, about the ideas and feelings that art produces and about the specific interpretations that art communicates. Thus aesthetics depends on facts from art history, on observations about perception and how we know through our senses, and on reflections on the language that we use to talk about both art and our responses to it. Yet aesthetics is not same thing as art history or criticism. Aesthetics reaches beyond art to nature and perhaps to the nuances a larger picture of sensory awareness.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Define aesthetics?

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2) What problem you encounter while trying to understand the nature aesthetics?

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3.4 THREE APPROCHES TO AESTHETICS

The central theoretical term of the first approach is 'beauty'. Edmund Burke in his famous treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) attempted to draw a distinction between two aesthetic concepts. His distinction between the sublime and the beautiful was extremely influential, reflecting as it did the prevailing style of contemporary criticism. By studying the qualities that these concepts denoted, Burke analyzed the different outlooks that are directed toward them. Burke is important because he explained the opposition of beauty and sublimity by a physiological theory. He made the opposition of pleasure and pain the source of the two aesthetic categories, deriving beauty from pleasure and sublimity from pain. According to Burke, the pleasure of beauty has a relaxing effect on the character of the body, whereas sublimity, in contrast, tightens these characters. Thus, by applying the ability of his imaginative theory, he could distinguish the beautiful and sublime: "The ideas of the sublime and the beautiful stand on foundations so different, that it is hard, I had almost said impossible, to think of reconciling them in the same subject, without considerably lessening the effect of the one or the other upon the passions" [113-114]. Burke's use of this physiological theory of beauty and sublimity makes him the first English writer to offer a purely aesthetic explanation of these effects; that is, Burke was the first to explain beauty and sublimity purely in terms of the process of perception and its effect upon the perceiver.

The second approach is related to a philosophical study of certain states of mind; responses, attitudes, emotions that are held to be involved in aesthetic experience. In the seminal work of modern aesthetics *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) Immanuel Kant located certain salient features of the aesthetic in the faculty of "judgment," whereby we take certain position toward objects, separating them from our scientific interests and our practical concerns. The key to the aesthetic realm according to Kant lies in a certain "disinterested" attitude, which we may presume toward any object and can be articulated in contrasting ways. *The Critique of Judgment* begins with an account of beauty. The initial issue is: what kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, 'That is a beautiful sunset'. Kant argues that such aesthetic judgments or 'judgments of taste' must have four key distinguishing features. First, they are 'disinterested, which means, we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful. Second and third, such judgments are both 'universal' and 'necessary'. This means roughly that it is an intrinsic part of the activity of such a judgment to expect others to agree with us. We debate and argue about our aesthetic judgments – and especially about

works of art -and we tend to believe that such debates and arguments can actually achieve something. Indeed, for many purposes, 'beauty' behaves as if it were a real property of an object, like its weight or chemical composition. But Kant insists that universality and necessity are in fact a product of features of the human mind (Kant calls these features 'common sense'), and that there is no objective property of a thing that makes it beautiful. Fourth, through aesthetic judgments, beautiful objects appear to be 'purposive without purpose' (sometimes translated as 'final without end'). An object's purpose is the concept according to which it was made (the concept of a vegetable soup in the mind of the cook, for example); an object is purposive if it appears to have such a purpose; if, in other words, it appears to have been made or designed. But it is part of the experience of beautiful objects, Kant argues, that they should affect us as if they had a purpose, although no particular purpose can be found.

The third approach is based on the philosophical study of the aesthetic object. An aesthetic object is an object or an event which focuses on the aesthetic interest or an aesthetic experience. We might say further that aesthetic objects are objects like paintings, symphonies, plays, flowers, sunsets and so forth. In principle an aesthetic object can be any sensible object in the world. This is because any sensible object in the world can be approached to or experienced aesthetically. This approach reflects the view that the problems of aesthetics exist primarily because the world contains a special class of objects toward which we react selectively and which we describe in aesthetic terms.

The existence of such objects forms the major phenomenon and our aesthetic experience should thus be described according to such concepts and the meaning of aesthetics should be determined accordingly. The normal group considered as prime aesthetic objects are mainly works of art. All other aesthetic objects (landscapes, faces etc) tend to be included in this class only because, and to the extent that, they can be seen as art. If we adopt such an approach, then there ceases to be a real distinction between aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Much of recent aesthetics has been similarly focused on artistic problems, and it could be said that it is now orthodox to consider aesthetics entirely through the study of art. The third approach to aesthetics does not require this concentration upon art. Even someone who considered art to be no more than one manifestation of aesthetic value - perhaps even a comparatively insignificant manifestation - may believe that the first concern of aesthetics is to study the objects of aesthetic experience and description and to find in them the true distinguishing features of the aesthetic realm.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the three basic approaches to aesthetics

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2) Explain Edmund Burke's distinction between the sublime and the beautiful?

.....

3) Explain the four certain salient features of the aesthetic in the faculty of “judgment,” by Kant?

.....

3.5 THE AESTHETIC RECIPIENT

Who is at the receiving end? Who’s the receiver of aesthetics? Only a certain section of people have aesthetic interests and aesthetic experience. These interests produce and appreciate art, employ concepts such as beauty, expression, and form. But which factors help these people connect themselves with the so-called aesthetic realm? This question is not something new. Even Plato was asked this question. But, coming to modern times, one can see that this question on aesthetics received its most important elucidation in the philosophy of Kant, who argued that it is only rational beings who can exercise judgment or the faculty of aesthetic interest. Kant also argued that if not exercised in aesthetic judgment one’s rationality is incomplete. It is worth pausing to examine these two claims.

Who are the rational beings? The people whose thought and conduct are guided by concrete reason could be called rational beings. They deliberately take decisions about what to believe and what to do; and who affect each other’s beliefs and actions through argument and persuasion. But what’s reason? According to Kant, reason has both a theoretical and a practical employment. A rational person finds both his/her conduct and thought inspired and limited by reason. Morality, enshrined in the categorical imperative, which enjoins us to act only on that maxim which we can at the same time will as a universal law, is the guiding law of rational conduct. Here practical reason plays its own role. For a rational being, the satisfaction of the demand of reason is more important. He lives responsive to the law of reason. For him, every rational individual is being made by reason and by morality. The rational being, he recognizes, must be treated always as an end in himself, as something of intrinsic value, and never as a mere object to be disposed of according to purposes that are not its own. Reason has its own merits. It makes people capable to see things intrinsically valuable. But it is not exercised only practically or only in our dealings with other reasoning beings. It may also be exercised contemplatively toward nature as a whole. In this case, practical considerations are held in abeyance, and we stand back from nature and look on it with a disinterested concern. Such an attitude is not only peculiar to rational people but also necessary to them. Without it, they have only an impoverished grasp of their own significance and of their relation to the world in which they are situated through their thoughts and actions. This disinterested contemplation and the experiences that arise from it acquaint us, according to Kant, with the ultimate harmony that exists between the world and our faculties. They therefore provide the ultimate guarantee, both of practical reasoning and of the understanding, by intimating to us directly that the world answers to our purposes and corresponds to our beliefs. Disinterested contemplation forms, for Kant, the core of aesthetic experience and the ultimate ground of the judgment of beauty. He thus concludes (1) that only rational beings have aesthetic experience; (2) that every rational being needs aesthetic experience and is significantly incomplete without it; and (3) that aesthetic experience stands in fundamental proximity to moral judgment and is integral to our nature as moral beings.

How important is Kant among modern philosophers? Some followed him, sometimes some ignored him. However they rarely have ventured to show that aesthetic experience is more widely distributed than the human race. Take a cow for an example, that in staring at a landscape it is moved by the sentiment of beauty? What in a cow's behaviour or mental composition could manifest such a feeling? A cow can be uninterested, but it cannot surely be disinterested. But a rational person can be disinterested because for him disinterest is the most passionate form of interest. Only while analyzing such considerations one comes to understand that how deeply in human nature the aesthetic impulse is embedded, and how impossible it is to separate this impulse from the complex mental life. It's this mental life that distinguishes human beings from animals. This condition must be borne in mind by any thinker seeking to confront the all-important question of the relation between the aesthetic and the moral.

3.6 THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

In his book, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, Christopher Bollas defines aesthetic experience as a kind of *dejavu*, "an existential recollection of the time when communicating took place primarily through this illusion of deep rapport of subject and object". Can we really tell apart a faculty, an attitude, a mode of judgment, or a form of experience that is distinctively 'aesthetic'? And if so, can we attribute to it the significance that would make this philosophical endeavor both important in itself and relevant to the many questions posed by beauty, criticism, and art?

Western philosophers have always been interested in the nature and appreciation of art, and also more importantly on the psychology of the artists/individuals. Plato argued that aesthetic experience involved the apprehension of the good in nature. Starting with David Hume and Immanuel Kant, modern thinkers tried to explain aesthetic experience in psychological terms. Hume argued that aesthetic experience was associated with sensitivity to the association between a perception and a feeling. The particular aesthetic feelings were those of refined pleasure, delight, awe, admiration, joy and so on- in other words affects and passions considered to be of special, positive value. Hume believed that certain type of experiences, those possessing beauty, attained higher qualities in the formal expression of these feelings. Taking their cue from Kant, many philosophers have defended the idea of an aesthetic attitude as one divorced from practical concerns, a kind of "distancing," or standing back, as it were, from ordinary involvement. The classic statement of this position is Edward Bullough's "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," an essay published in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1912.

What kind of distance is exactly envisaged? Does distance imply a lack of practical involvement? If such is the case, how can we ever take up an aesthetic attitude to those things that have a purpose for us - things such as a dress, building, or decoration? But if these are not aesthetic, have we not paid a rather high price for our definition of this word - the price of detaching it from the phenomena that it was designed to identify? Kant's own formulation in this regard is considered more satisfactory. He described the recipient of aesthetic experience not as distanced but as 'disinterested', meaning that the recipient does not treat the object of enjoyment either as a vehicle for curiosity or as a means to an end. He contemplates the object as it is in itself and "apart from all interest." In a similar spirit, Arthur Schopenhauer argued

that a person could regard anything aesthetically so long as he regarded it in independence of his will - that is, irrespective of any use to which he might put it. Regarding it thus, a person could come to see the idea that the object expressed, and in this knowledge consists aesthetic appreciation (1819; *The World as Will and Idea*).

An instance of such a view is the popular theory of art as a kind of “play” activity, in which creation and appreciation are divorced from the normal urgencies of existence and surrendered to leisure. “With the agreeable, the good, the perfect,” wrote Friedrich Schiller, “man is merely in earnest, but with beauty he plays” (1794-95; *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*). Such thoughts have already been encountered. The problem is to give them philosophical precision. They have recurred in modern philosophy in a variety of forms - for example, in the theory that the aesthetic object is always considered for its own sake, or as a unique individual rather than a member of a class. Those particular formulations have caused some philosophers to consider aesthetic objects as though they were endowed with a peculiar metaphysical status. Alternatively, it is sometimes argued that the aesthetic experience has an intuitive character, as opposed to the conceptual character of scientific thought or the instrumental character of practical understanding.

The simplest way of summarizing this approach to aesthetics is in terms of two fundamental propositions:

1. The aesthetic object is an object of sensory experience and enjoyed as such: it is heard, seen, or (in the limiting case) imagined in sensory form.
2. The aesthetic object is at the same time contemplated: its appearance is a matter of intrinsic interest and studied not merely as an object of sensory pleasure but also as the repository of significance and value.

The first of these propositions explains the word aesthetic, which was initially used in this connection by the Leibnizian philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in *Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus* (1735; *Reflections on Poetry*). Baumgarten borrowed the Greek term for sensory perception (*aisthesis*) in order to denote a realm of concrete knowledge in which content is communicated in sensory form. The second proposition is, in essence, the foundation of taste. It describes the motive of our attempt to discriminate rationally between those objects that are worthy of contemplative attention and those that are not.

Almost all of the aesthetic theories of post-Kantian Idealism depend upon those two propositions and try to explain the peculiarities of aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgment in terms of the synthesis of the sensory and the intellectual that they imply - the synthesis summarized in Hegel's theory of art as “the sensuous embodiment of the Idea.” Neither proposition is particularly clear. Throughout the discussions of Kant and his immediate following, the “sensory” is assimilated to the “concrete,” the “individual,” the “particular,” and the “determinate,” while the “intellectual” is assimilated to the “abstract,” the “universal,” the “general,” and the “indeterminate” – incorporations that would in modern times be regarded with extreme suspicion. Nevertheless, subsequent theories have repeatedly returned to the idea that aesthetic experience involves a special synthesis of intellectual and sensory components, and that both its peculiarities and its value are to be derived from such a synthesis.

This idea at once gives rise to many paradoxes. The most important was noticed by Kant, who called it the 'antinomy of taste'. As an exercise of reason, he argued, aesthetic experience must inevitably tend toward a reasoned choice and therefore must formulate itself as a judgment. Aesthetic judgment, however, seems to be in conflict with itself. It cannot be at the same time aesthetic (an expression of sensory enjoyment) and also a judgment (claiming universal assent). Yet all rational beings, by virtue of their rationality, seem disposed to make these judgments. On the one hand, they feel pleasure in some object, and this pleasure is immediate, not based, according to Kant, in any conceptualization or in any inquiry into cause, purpose, or constitution. On the other hand, they express their pleasure in the form of a judgment, speaking "as if beauty were a quality of the object," and so representing their pleasure as objectively valid. But how can this be so? The pleasure is immediate, based in no reasoning or analysis. So what permits this demand for universal agreement?

However we approach the idea of beauty, we find this paradox emerging. Our ideas, feelings, and judgments are called aesthetic precisely because of their direct relation to sensory enjoyment. Hence, no one can judge the beauty of an object that he has never encountered. Scientific judgments, like practical principles, can be received "second hand" or through secondary assessment. It would seem to follow from this that there can be no rules or principles of aesthetic judgment, since the pleasure we get is subjective in the perception of the object and cannot be talked about it by any grounds of proof. It is always experience, and never conceptual thought, that gives the right to aesthetic judgment, so that anything that alters the experience of an object changes its aesthetic significance as well. As Kant explains, aesthetic judgment is "free from concepts," and beauty itself is not a concept. Such a conclusion, however, seems to be inconsistent with the fact that aesthetic judgment is a form of personal 'judgment'. When we describe something as beautiful, we do not mean merely that it pleases: we are speaking about it, not about us, and, if challenged, we try to find reasons to justify this view.

In short, the expression aesthetic judgment seems to be a contradiction in terms, denying in the first term precisely that reference to rational considerations that it affirms in the second. This paradox, which we have expressed in Kant's language, is not peculiar to the philosophy of Kant. On the contrary, it is encountered in one form or another by every philosopher or critic who takes aesthetic experience seriously, and who therefore recognizes the tension between the sensory and the intellectual constraints upon it. On the one hand, aesthetic experience is rooted in the immediate sensory enjoyment of its object through an act of perception. On the other, it seems to reach beyond enjoyment toward a meaning that is addressed to our reasoning powers and that seeks judgment from them. Thus criticism, the reasoned justification of aesthetic judgment, is an unavoidable upshot of aesthetic experience. Yet, critical reasons can never be merely intellectual; they always contain a reference to the way in which an object is perceived. In modern times, Sigmund Freud viewed aesthetic experience as sublimation of forbidden sexual desires, a displacement and transformation of libido that denied direct expression, is allowed discharge in alternative, culturally valued ways. This act results in aesthetic pleasure. The close link between art and regressive processes and fantasies seems to support the sublimation approach. From this view point, symbolism, a fundamental component of most forms of aesthetic expression, is the same process as that occurring in dream work, and thus opens art to psycho-analytic interpretation.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the concept 'aesthetic recipient'?

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2) Explain the concept 'aesthetic experience'?

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3.7 SCOPE OF AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is broader in scope than the philosophy of art, which comprises one of its branches. It deals not only with the nature and value of the arts but also with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly. A problem is encountered at the outset, however, for terms such as beautiful and ugly seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the world successfully into those things that do, and those that do not, exemplify them. Almost anything might be seen as beautiful by someone or from some point of view; and different people apply the word to quite disparate objects for reasons that often seem to have little or nothing in common. It may be that there is some single underlying belief that motivates all of their judgments. It may also be, however, that the term beautiful has no sense except as the expression of an attitude, which is in turn attached by different people to quite different states of affairs.

Moreover, in spite of the emphasis laid by philosophers on the terms beautiful and ugly, it is far from evident that they are the most important or most useful either in the discussion and criticism of art or in the description of that which appeals to us in nature. To convey what is significant in a poem we might use such terms as ironical, moving, expressive, balanced, and harmonious. Likewise, in describing a favourite stretch of countryside, we may find more use for peaceful, soft, atmospheric, harsh, and evocative, than for beautiful. The least that should be said is that beautiful belongs to a class of terms from which it has been chosen as much for convenience sake as for any sense that it captures what is distinctive of the class. At the same time, there seems to be no clear way of delimiting the class in question - not at least in advance of theory. Aesthetics must therefore cast its net more widely than the study either of beauty or of other aesthetic concepts if it is to discover the principles whereby it is to be defined.

At a very basic level aesthetics involves the knowledgeable appreciation of art, an enquiry toward art for purposes of examination, refinement, and elaboration. To some degree, the study of aesthetics is applicable to all age groups and all levels of readiness simply because aesthetics, despite its seemingly esoteric character when part of formalized philosophical systems, is the study of how humans relate and give meaning to a particular type of phenomenon (art) in their environment.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the scope of aesthetics?

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3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a basic idea about aesthetics, by giving a definition, which becomes clarified in the process of the course. To investigate on the nature of aesthetics, we closely examined the three major approaches to aesthetics. We have also elaborately considered certain concepts like 'aesthetic recipient and 'aesthetic experience''. Finally we conclude the unit with a short consideration of the scope of aesthetics.

3.9 KEY WORDS

Aesthetic Object: An object or an event which focuses on the aesthetic interest or an aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic Judgment: sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object, not necessarily an art object.

Katharsis: The experience of useful purgation in art.

Rational Being: human being capable of using the capacity for consistent and valid reasoning.

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UNIT 4 AESTHETIC OBJECTS

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Aesthetics in Ancient Greek
- 4.3 Indian Aesthetics
- 4.4 Aesthetics in Medieval Period
- 4.5 Eighteenth Century German Aesthetics
- 4.6 Aesthetics Judgment
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Key Words
- 4.9 Further Reading References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The Aesthetics philosophy not only speaks about art and art judgment but also explains what art is. In philosophy Aesthetics is an autonomous entity as it harmonizes with sense that is the etymology of Aesthetics. Art is free from moral or political purposes. Aesthetics is neither epistemology nor ethics. To comprehend the essences of Aesthetics one has to understand: Sense of beauty, How to characterize beauty, The qualities of beauty, Relationship between mind and emotion, Idea, theory and technique of presentation. Oscar Wild rightly defines Aesthetics as, “Aesthetics is a search after the signs of the beautiful. It is the science of the beautiful thought which men seek the correlation of the arts. It is, to speak more exactly, the search after the secret of life.”

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy. Aesthetics deals with beauty, art and taste. It binds creator and the observer. It could be defined as “Science of sensory and sensori-emotional values. Aesthetics is called judgment of sentiment and taste. Some scholars have defined Aesthetics as “Critical reflection on art, culture and nature.”

Aesthetics in Indian context is, “Science and philosophy of fine arts” covering poetry, music and architecture. When Aesthetics is looked as science it is the technique of art. When looked as philosophy, “It is philosophy of fine art because the experience that a work of art arouses in an aesthete is accounted for in terms of different schools of philosophic thought in India and also because the authorities on three arts, poetry, music and architecture.....” It is the blend of creative language and the Aesthetics pleasure.

Ancient art and beauty largely started in eight great ancient civilizations – Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, Mayan, Greece, Persian and Rome. Each civilization came out with unique

understanding of art and style. Each civilization represented its culture, tradition and philosophical comprehension when they came out with the theory of Aesthetics. At the time of Greek civilization, art saw adoration to the human physical 'Form' the art work depicted – musculature poise, beauty and anatomically correct proportion. Greek philosophers in the beginning felt that the Aesthetic objects were beautiful in themselves. "Plato felt that beautiful objects incorporated proportion, harmony and unity among their parts. Similarly, in *Metaphysics*, Aristotle found that the universal elements of beauty were order, symmetry and definiteness." Aesthetics became a part of philosophy when Plato attacked educational value of art form in "*Republic*". Aristotle wrote about art in his work '*Poetics*'. Aristotle defended art as universal truth which can be readily understood, unlike, for example, history, which deals with a particular fact. He further said from art one can experience moral truth. Such understanding can be important to development of morality.

Greek has a great influence on Western Aesthetic thought. Starting from 17th century to early 20th century Western philosophers moved from past understanding to "modernism". Philosophers gave importance to "Beauty" as the most important key to Aesthetics experience. So, they argued that 'art' is absolute beauty. According to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's opinion, Aesthetics is a science of sense experience, a younger sister of Logic. So, beauty is the perfect experience that the sense can experience. Immanuel Kant says "Aesthetics is the subjective judgment of beauty but similar to human truth as all people agree that "this rose is beautiful." As for Friedrich Schiller Aesthetic appreciation of beauty is combination of sensual and rational part of human nature.

Post – modern Aesthetics has various theories in defining art and beauty. Even though the older Aesthetic ideas of Aristotle's theory of 'beauty' and his theory of drama were respected, Kant made a differentiation between beauty and sublime. In early twentieth century understanding of beauty, art and aesthetic gained broader scope. In 1941, Eli Siegel an American philosopher started, "Aesthetic Realism" and said, "The word, art, and self explain each other: each is the aesthetic oneness of opposites." In 1990s Jurgen Schmidhuber came up with 'algorithmic theory' of beauty which takes up subjective view. This theory is parallel to algorithmic information theory and minimum description length. He gives two examples one of mathematics where a short and simple proof is used for description and another that of 15th century drawing of human face which expresses pleasure and beauty with minimal lines, like works of Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Durer.

In theoretical Aesthetics, mathematical consideration like symmetry and complexity are relevant. This understanding is different from applied Aesthetics relevant in the study of mathematical beauty. Symmetry and simplicity are significant in the area of philosophy such as ethics and theoretical physics and cosmology to talk about truth beyond empirical consideration. Beauty and truth have been regarded as synonymous; this idea is reflected in Keat's poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn," – "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty."

Indian scholars from the beginning looked at Aesthetics as philosophy and they have examined the characteristics of art as 'philosophy of fine arts in terms of Aesthetics experience'. As an example to comprehend the Aesthetics experience, Shakuka has given an analogy of "*citraturaganyaya*" (the picture of horse logic). He explains: one, who looks at the painting of a

horse, knows that it is not a real horse but still understands it as a horse and at the same time he will not doubt whether it is a horse. When one looks at the horse painting it create delight and pleasure. This relation of the creator and spectator is the Aesthetics sentiment. It is strongly stressed in Indian Aesthetics that there need to be '*Sahrdaya*' between creator and spectator.

Japanese culture blends with Zen philosophy and art. Aesthetics is the way of life. It is highlighted in day to day activities - like gardening, flower arrangement and serving tea. Daisetz T. Suzuki in his book "Zen and Japanese Culture" writing on tea serving, "The character for "harmony" also "gentleness of spirit" (*yawaragi*), and to my mind "gentleness of spirit" seems to describe better the spirit governing the whole procedure of the art of tea." "Haiku", Japan art of poetry has deep meaning, a Zen master, Saigyō (1118 – 90) composed, "The wind – blown; Smoke of Mount Fuji; Vanishing far away! Who knows the destiny; Of my thought wafting with it?" In china and Japan letter writing is an art, brush and paint are used to draw a letter. Even in Islamic Aesthetics calligraphic art grew out of an effort to devote to the study of Quran.

4.2 AESTHETICS IN ANCIENT GREEK

Plato's contribution to Aesthetics is rich. He has given a lot of time in discussing about art and beauty in his dialogues. According to Plato the art of poetry is of greater evil than any other phenomenon, where as beauty is closer to greatest good. Plato's aesthetics is more an "exploratory Aesthetics". It is difficult to find any Aesthetics theory in his dialogues. In "Hippias Major" beauty is described as canonical Platonic form. Socrates asks Hippias to explain essence of beauty, the cause of all occurrences of beauty, and more in particular the cause not the appearance of beauty but of its real being. Socrates further says that Beauty is of not any Form, even though it bears close resemblance to Good but still Beauty and Form are distinct. In "Symposium" discussing beauty, Socrates quotes his teacher Diotima who taught him the subject of Love. She calls beauty the subject of every one's yearning for love. She further declares "the soul's progress towards ever - purer beauty, from one body to all, then through all beautiful souls, laws and kinds of knowledge, to arrive at the beauty itself." (210a – 211d) This suggests that work of art is a beautiful thing. She declares the task of the poet is to beget wisdom and virtue. To attain ultimate desire to attain beauty, the poet produces the verse.

In books of 2 and 3 of "Republic" Socrates discuss the curriculum for the future guardians of the state. In book 2, the works of Homer is highly criticized for the images of Gods and demigods. He calls them blasphemous and setting a wrong example to the young learner. He further talks about the "style" (*lexis*), he insist that the verse should be in narration. It should be of only narration or '*mimesis*' are both combined. The critics feel that the explanation is a bit odd. In "Republic" 10, Plato comes up with three theories, first being 'mimesis like painting nothing but 'imitation of a appearance', so it is below truth, second poetic mimesis corrupt the soul, weakens the rational impulse's control over the person's other desires, and lastly as it does not have any good qualities it should be banned from a good city. Explaining the "imitation of appearance", Plato gives three examples, Form (furniture like - chair) made by a God, Individual things (furniture) made by humans, and finally paintings (furniture) made by artist. "If the Form is an object of knowledge, then human creation at least posses true opinion. Without being philosophers, they stand in the legitimate relationship to philosophical knowledge."

“*Ion*” the shortest of Plato’s dialogue can be looked at as the work of Aesthetics. “*Ion*” focuses on the artistic inspiration, and trigger questions about the inspiration of poetry’s merits. *Ion* is a performing artist of Homer. While talking, Socrates talks of ‘idiosyncrasy’, inspiration’, and ‘ignorance’. Socrates argues idiosyncrasy shows that *Ion* performing Homer, for *Ion*, Homer becomes of him. Socrates says that Homer is ignorant of all the important things that *Ion* claims him to know. By repeatedly performing Homer *Ion* had learnt all that Homer can teach him. So Homer’s global ignorance implies *Ion*’s ignorance too; but when it comes to choose between divine inspiration and drab brand of knowing nothing, *Ion* agrees to be called inspired.

Aristotle’s ‘*Poetics*’ is the earliest work on philosophical treatises that focused on literature. “*Poetics*” in Greek means “making.” Aristotle deals with drama - tragedy, comedy and satyr as well as lyrics, poetry, epic poetry and dithyramb. Aristotle distinguishes poetry in three ways – matter, melody and subject. Matter deals with language, rhythm and melody. The work of epic poem is centered on language alone. The blending of language, rhythm and melody is seen in Greek tragedy. The singing chorus and musical language are the part of performance. The subject according to Aristotle deals with tragedy and comedy to show human nature. Aristotle considers tragedy woven around serious, important and virtuous people, whereas comedy according to him; deals about unimportant, undignified and laughable people. He further says that tragedy is in embellished speech by different characters. It has the magnitude of pity, terror and catharsis of such emotions. “Embellished speech” has rhythm and melody in spoken verses. The importance of the play is in the plot that reveal action in logical and natural way.

Tragedy is in the situation where the hero is driven into a tragic situation. It can be of two kinds, wherein the hero goes to a tragic situation knowingly like in “*Media*” or unknowingly like “*Oedipus*”. To visual effect of a play depends on set, costume and props. When all these are met then the audience experience the Aesthetics pleasure. He writes, “The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agent who are necessary either good man or bad – the diversities of human character being nearly always derivative from the primary distinction, since the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind.” (*Poetics II*)

When discussing the techniques, he draws heavily from the topics treated in logic, ethics and psychological writing. He highlights poetry to be philosophical, universal much more important than history. He says that poetry has the capacity to look into the depth of human nature, and assesses how people behave in a situation, the test of character in a given situation makes a character virtues or vice. He further justifies that play is not for entertainment. A tragedy he says “learning, that is, figuring out what each thing is” (poetics) According to Aristotle watching tragedy teaches us about ourselves.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

1) How does Plato define ‘Beauty’?

2) What is the difference between tragedy and comedy according to “Poetics”?

4.3 INDIAN AESTHETICS

While discussing Indian poetics, Indian scholars are aware how the language plays a primary role in creative art of poetry. Krishnaswami has rightly said, “The whole field of (Indian) poetry may be regarded as one continued attempt to unravel the mystery of beauty of poetic language.” The history of Sanskrit poetics started with a theory of Drama propounded by Bharata in his work “Natyasastra” It is the first encyclopedic work on – dance, drama and music. He deals with *Gunas*, 4 *Alankaras*, and 36 *Laksanas*. He is the first one to mention ‘*Rasa*’ as a technical requirement in dramas. The famous ‘*Rasa sutras*’ of Barata says “*Vibhavanubhavavyabhicarisamyogatanasaisampattih*” combination is possible through the combination of or integration of these - ‘*vibhava*’ cause and determinants of the rise of an emotion, ‘*anubhava*’ gesture expressive of what is going in the heart or the mind of the main character and ‘*vyabhicharibhava*’ transitory emotions, (Barata Ch.VI, 31)

There are two major emotional experiences in the worldly life – ‘*Sukha*’ or ‘*Dukha*’. The Aesthetics experience is above pain or pleasure. Bharata in Natyasastra says that dramatic presentation’s main purpose is to give ‘*Rasa*,’ Aesthetics sensation in the aesthete and later lead to moral improvement. He further justifies that dramatic presentation gives pleasure to those who are unhappy, tired, bereaved and ascetic. Later on scholars watching the effect of drama on the audience said that audience realize through experience as the plot is generalized and they are able to recognize four ends of life – “*Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksa*.” Bhama (6th c.) states, “*Kavya* (poetry) promotes *Pususarthas* – righteousness, worldly possessions, desire and salvation. *Kriti* and *priti* are also in the sense of Aesthetics pleasure of *kavya prayojana* (the purpose on poetry).

Bhatta Lollata while commenting on *Natyasastra* says, “*Rasa* is the unity of a basic mental state in the midst of multiplicity of emotive situation, mimetic changes and transient emotions which are connected with the basic mental state in one way or the other.” According to him Aesthetics relationship is the unity of *satyaibhava* in the diversity of *vibhavas* etc. being supported, strengthened and brought to prominence by these very constituents of multiplicity.

Anandavardhana author of “*Dhanyaloka*” (theory of suggestion) probably occupies the most distinguished and central position in Sanskrit literature. Through ‘*Dhanyaloka*’, Indian poetics reached a turning point. It breathed new life to the earlier poetics theories with a new orientation. Later thinkers were greatly influenced by his work. Anandavardhana was a poet, literary critic and a philosopher. He took over the idea of ‘*Rasa*’ of Natyasastra and extended its scope to cover

the entire field of *Kavya* both poetry and drama. Ananadavardhana states, “The ways of expressions are infinite and there is no end to poetic individuations.” (I, 5 -6) Scholars are of the opinion that the literary language that is used may either delight or disturb the reader. It is the language that has the power to bring about ‘*Sahrdhya*’ (reader/spectator) of the fine taste and is sufficient for the Aesthetics experience.

Abinavagupta’s study on Aesthetics knowledge is unique and most realistic. He presents Aesthetics experience recognizing different levels such as sense, imaginative, emotive, kathartic and transcendental levels. Abinavagupta’s considers Aesthetics of two types - worldly pleasure and divine pleasure. Worldly pleasure is considered as lower compared to divine pleasure. To understand Brahma (the absolute being) and to occupy topmost status, ‘*Kavyananda*’ Aesthetics pleasure falls intermediate between the two.

4.4 MEDIEVAL THEORIES OF AESTHETICS

Aristotle poetics was available in the medieval period and early Renaissance period through Latin translation of the Arabic version. This work had a great influence on philosophers. Aristotle poetics was translated by two Arabian scholars – one is by Abu Nasr Al Farabi and another by Averroes. Abu Nasr interpretation of ‘poetics’ endeavors a logical faculty of expression receiving validity in Islamic world, whereas Averroes commentary focused on harmonizing moral purposes of poetry and does not reconcile with Abu Nasr logical interpretation. It is Averroes version of ‘poetics’ that is accepted by the ‘West’ as it blends with their ‘humanistic’ view point. Medieval Aesthetics philosophy stands on classical thoughts and unifies with theology. Philosophers gave importance to Proportion, Light and Symbolism in the work of art. Especially these three predominantly gained importance in Architecture that too in Cathedrals. Light is to reveal colour and symbolism to reveal God. Three philosophers – St. Augustine, Pseudo –Dionysius and St. Thomas Aquinas were the great contributors to Aesthetics theories. St. Augustine and to Pseudo –Dionysius were greatly influenced by Plato and Neplatonism where as St. Thomas Aquinas was greatly influenced by Aristotle’s ‘Poetics’.

Proportion, Light and Symbolism

Medieval philosophers have explained Proportion, Light and Symbolism in great detail. Proportion is considered important in architecture and music. Aerial view of cathedral looks like a Cross. The shape has created a balance when seen within the Cathedral. Painting is to balance composition and Music to harmonize beauty. Philosophers emphasized that the notion of light is developed with the belief in God. God is light. Light allows the beauty of the object, especially illuminate colour that brings about the Beauty. The purpose of God is disclosed to mankind through four kinds of lights, “the light of skill in mechanical arts which discloses the world of artifacts; which light is guided by the light of sense perception which discloses the world of natural forms; which light consequently, is guided by the light of philosophy which discloses the world of intellectual truth; finally, this light is guided by the light of divine wisdom which discloses the world of saving truth.”

Pseudo –Dionysius writes, “What is Sun ray? Light comes from the Good, and light is an image of the archetypal Good. Thus the Good is also praised by the name ‘Light’, just as an archetype is revealed in its image.” Symbolism is to understand the deeper meaning in the text especially Bible. The main thinking of the time is that universe reveals God, His creation through beauty. Pseudo –Dionysius argues that it is natural to understand the appearance of beauty in the sign on ‘invisible loveliness’. St. Thomas Aquinas’s Aesthetics writing has great influence on 19th and 29th century thinkers and writers. His inspiration is seen in James Joyes and Thomas Mann’s writings. Umberto Eco (1986) writing on Medieval Aesthetics, has mentioned in his work, “Firstly there was metaphysical symbolism, related to the philosophical habit of discerning the hand of God in the beauty of world. Secondly there was universal allegory; that is, perceiving the world as divine work of art, of such a kind that everything in it possesses novel, allegorical and analogical meanings in addition to its literal meaning.”

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

1) How does drama affect the spectator, according to Bharata’s *Natyasastra*?

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2) What is the importance of – proportion, light and symbolism in ‘Medieval Aesthetics’?

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4.5 EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GERMAN AESTHETICS

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten a German philosopher is the first one to introduce the word “Aesthetics” to describe art to that of older theory of “Beauty”. He derived the term from the Greek word ‘*aisthanomia*’, which he equated with a Latin word ‘*Sentio*’. He comprehended it to designate the outer, external bodily sense, as opposed to the inner sense consciousness. He not only took the classical sources but also extended it to logic and science. He took into account the basic rationalist and epistemological divisions between what is distinctly known on one side and on the other according to concept and reason what is known as sense. Understanding of senses went back to medieval discussion of the problem of universe. For example, the reference to the “Rose” not only refers to a particular rose but also to the universal type. His contribution helped latter on the development of Aesthetics. He concentrated on the affective side of perception. “Sensate representations are ‘marked degrees of pleasure or pain’ (1735:47) Stronger impressions are more poetic because their impressions are extensively clearer (1735:27)” He looks at the effect of Aesthetics quantitatively rather than qualitatively. He argues that the sense of pleasure is intrinsically precious but at the same time it is more effective in the contribution to a greater perfection of the discussion. Baumgarten considered aesthetic science with its own logic. He said that sensate knowledge is the foundation of clarity and that Aesthetics must come to the aid of logic. “The Aesthetics is limited by its sensate representations and the imagination

must be restricted in order to avoid license, but within these limits the Aesthetics is a legitimate source of a kind of knowledge.”

Immanuel Kant wrote “Critique of the Power of Judgment”. He talks about three distinct characteristics on Aesthetics – experience of beauty, clearly natural beauty, second, sublime experience, once again it is nature’s sublimity and finally experience of fine art – each of these forms of Aesthetics experience finally leads to distinctive connections to morality. The judgment of beauty is a response to the perception of the Form of an object, for example painting, ‘the drawing is what is essential’. He further says while the “colours that illuminate the outline Can ... enliven the object in itself for sensation, but cannot make it ... beautiful” (CPJ 14, 5:25). Fine art according to Kant is a human production that requires skill and talent. He introduces his theory on sublime between pure beauty and fine art. He recognizes two forms of sublime: ‘mathematical’ and the ‘dynamical’. He says while experiencing of pain and pleasure, pain is due to the initial sense of limits of imagination followed by pleasure at the recognition that reveals the limitations of one’s own imagination. The mathematical sublime has a relationship between imagination and theoretical reason. When one looks at the vista of nature so vast, it triggers the effort to understand it as a single image bound to fail, but at the same time it gives the pleasure to have the imagination to formulate the idea of infinite.

Kant came up with six connections between Aesthetics and morality. 1) Object of Aesthetics experience can present morally significant ideas without sacrificing what is essential to the objects of Aesthetics response and judgment; 2) Aesthetics experience of dynamic sublime is nothing but to experience the power of one’s own practical reasons to acknowledge pure principle of morality and to overcome the hurdle that might arise in one’s way. 3) Consideration of the crucial aspects of moral condition is symbolized by beauty rather than from the sublime. 4) He connects Aesthetics and ethics in his work, “Intellectual Interest” in the beautiful. 5) He states that Aesthetics experience is conducive to moral conduct. Analyzing beauty and sublime, he writes; “The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, to esteem it, even contrary to our (sensible) interest” (CPJ, General Remark following 29, 5:267)”. 6) In “Appendix on the methodology of taste”, Kant suggest that by developing common standard of taste in the society, one establishes a stable polity on the basis of principles of justice rather than by force.

Friedrich Schiller followed Kant when he discusses ethics and Aesthetics. Schiller criticized and developed Kant’s ideas in both the areas. In his work “*On Grace and Dignity*,” Schiller points out the limitations of Kant’s work on account of human beauty. He says that Kant’s ideas are lacking while discussing the outer appearance when taken as the expression of moral condition. Schiller says there are two different moral conditions of human beings, grace and dignity. These two have different effect on the appearance of human beings. So, the idea of beauty according to Kant is lacking. In his other philosophical work, “*On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*” Schiller says, “It is only through Beauty that a man makes his way to freedom.” Through freedom man achieves morality and external realization of political justice.

4.6 AESTHETICS JUDGMENT

One can say that a house, natural scenery, a person, symphony, a fragrance and a mathematical proof are beautiful. What characteristics do they have to share such a status? What is the possible resemblance between a proof with a symphony and what is the beauty that they share? Enjoying music and painting are two different experiences. Each art has its own language of Aesthetics judgment. One's capacity to judge Aesthetic value depends on ability to discriminate at sensory level. Kant gives two examples at personal and general level. He writes, "If he says that canary wine is agreeable he is quite content if someone else corrects his terms and reminds him to say instead: It is agreeable to me. Because, everyone has his own (sense of) taste. The case of 'beauty' is different from mere 'agreeableness' because, if he proclaims something to be beautiful, then he requires the same liking from others; he then judges not just for himself but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things."

David Hume declares that Aesthetics judgment is beyond sensory discrimination. He states, "The ability to detect all ingredients in a composition, and also our sensibility, to pains and pleasure, which escape the rest of mankind." (Essays on Moral and Political and Literary, Indianapolis, Literary Classics 5, 1987). It is the combination of sensory, emotional and intelligence while judging the beauty of Aesthetics. Interpretation is at levels - taste and Aesthetics. Taste is the result of education, awareness and cultural values. So taste is learnt, whereas Aesthetics is philosophical notion of beauty. Judgment of Aesthetic value has many spontaneous sensory reactions – disgust, pleasure etc. These reactions are spontaneous to one's taste, values and some time cultural upbringing. To see a stain of soup on a shirt looks disgusting, even when neither soup nor the shirt is disgusting by itself. Aesthetics judgment is connected to emotions such as happiness, awe and delight. When seeing a landscape one may spontaneously show the emotion of awe and open the eyes wide, and experience increase in heart beat.

At times Aesthetics judgment can be conditioned to time and culture. In Victorian England, African sculptures were seen as ugly. As the time and intellectual cultural attitude changed, then they were looked as beautiful. Mary Mothersill, ("Beauty and the Critical judgment," in The Blackwell Guide of Aesthetics, 2004,) writes, "Aesthetics judgment might be seen to be based on the senses, emotions, intellectual conscious decision, training, instinct, sociological institutions behaviour or some complex combination of these depending on exactly which theory one employs."

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

1) What is the contribution of Baumgarten Alexander Gottlieb to Aesthetics philosophy?

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2) What are the factors which decide Aesthetics judgment?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

The objective of Aesthetics is the perfection of sensible cognition of “beauty”. “There is potential for beauty in the form of a work as well as in its content because its form can be pleasing to our complex capacity for sensible representation...” In Indian context, ‘Beauty’ is the experience of unity of sensuous and aesthetic as well as religious spiritual experience; it is an experience of totality. There is a connection between macrocosm and microcosmic body, internal and external sense organs, speech and vital air. K.D. Tripathi in his article, “From Sensuous to super sensuous some term of Indian Aesthetic”, writes “The traditional Indian art and aesthetic is an inquiry into the Indian view of time, space, direction, universal, substance or elements, numbers, relations and actions etc. is an imperative for the clear understanding of Indian art and aesthetic as in the inquiry into the nature of ‘Atman’.” Beauty is a freedom of expression and a boldness of sensitive human adventure in the pursuit of Truth.

In India, drawing of *Mandals* at the time of sacrifice is considered symbolic. They had a definite proportion, symbol and considered as energy. It has the unity of beauty, religious significance and sublimity. Aristotle justifies that literature is an art of imitation. “It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. 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 also natural for all to delight in works of imitation.” (Poetics: translated by Ingram Bywater, 1- IV)

An artist depicts life and readers/spectators are influenced and inspired to imitate in some fashion, what they read, hear or see on the stage. But audiences avoid imitating comic characters. The comic characters are not morally bad but ludicrous, ugly but not painful or destructive. The critic says, “The social function of epic as an exemplar of good behaviour was easier for Aristotle to assume in classical Greece...” “Unity, equality, number, proportion and order are the main elements in Augustine’s theory of beauty.” (Beardsley – 99) Augustine in his aesthetic theories gives importance to rhythm. He believed rhythm originated with God. According to Pseudo – Dionysius, “For Beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community. Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things.” He further sates, “This – the one, The Good, the beautiful - is in its uniqueness the cause of multitudes of the good and the beautiful.” (Pseudo – Dionysius, 77) St. Thomas Aquinas writes, “Beauty is that which gives pleasure when seen.” (St. Thomas I –II, 27.1) According to him knowing beauty is an action of mind. Knowledge occurs when the form of an object exists in the mind of the knower.

Baumgarten express, “Beauty is perfection perceived by means of the senses rather than by the pure intellect.” (Metaphysik 488 page 154 -5) he further states that the source of beauty leads one to recognize the different potential sources in the work of art; “The harmony of the thoughts insofar as we abstract from their order and the signs”, means of expression, “the harmony of the order in which we meditate upon the beautifully thought content,” and “the harmony of the signs” or means of expression “among themselves and with the content and the order of the content.” (*Aesthetica*, 18 - 20; Schweizer pp. 116 -117) Baumgarten strongly expresses that aesthetic is, “Wealth, Magnitude, Truth, Clarity and Liveliness.” Philosophers from ancient time to modern have defined and understood ‘Aesthetics Value’ and the meaning of ‘Beauty’ and

came up with theories and understanding. Awareness of Aesthetics values is dynamic, it is time and cultural oriented

4.8 KEY WORDS AND SENTENCES

Symmetry: proper proportion

Complexity: state of being complex

Embellishment: decoration

4.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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