What is Aesthetics?

Traditionally, aesthetics is the branch of philosophy dealing with beauty or the beautiful, especially in art, and with taste and standards of value in judging art. Lipps Theodor defines Aesthetics as the science of the beautiful. For him, an object is beautiful if it is able to arouse in us a special feeling, which we call the 'sense of beauty'.

Aesthetics consists of the sense of beauty. It is characterised by love of beauty. It is concerned more with pure emotion and sensation and less with pure intellect. It means, broadly, a devotion to beauty and primarily to beauty as found in art and in whatever is attractive in the world around us. So any study of beauty be it natural or man-made, can be called aesthetic. The quest for beauty is inherent in every individual.

The Truth, the Good and the Beauty are considered both in the east and the west as the fundamental human values. Aesthetics is concerned with the last of the three. The judgement of beauty is taken as a mental act arising from a particular attitude or condition of the mind itself, independent of the object which is judged as beautiful.

Since art provides our aesthetic experience with the
highest degree of intensity, it plays an important role in the aesthetic thought of man. The artist, in creating, enriches an ordinary experience with depth and meaning and the highest degree of intensity of feeling. The aim of an artist is to communicate what he has experienced. Art is the expression of the intense intuition of the artist. Aesthetics studies all the modes of art - music, literature, theatre, dance, film, painting, sculpture, architecture, landscape design and town planning. The art whether it is useful art or fine art, whenever it appeals to aesthetic taste is studied by Aesthetics.

Aesthetics as a philosophic discipline studies art no doubt, but it is not to be confused with art. For the philosophical approach of aesthetics, it is not enough to create or enjoy works of art. It is necessary also to try to understand, explain and evaluate them. The critic is to bring art to the touchstone of the philosophy of aesthetics, which is much broader than the philosophy of art. Ruth L. Saw considers Aesthetics as unique among the evaluative disciplines as it has to do with feelings, expressed in art and in the appreciation of art and with the judgements that are usually taken to be based on these feelings.²

Aesthetic thought is to have the delight of art, which is peculiar. The delight of art is such that it is full. Artists and poets, in their art-activities, find themselves lost in an unending, all-engrossing sea of pleasure and they by
their artistic creation, make others also able to have such pleasure. It follows that unless the artist has enjoyed aesthetic experience, he cannot evoke the joy of this experience in others, for, as Plato says, "no one can give to another that which he has not of himself or teach that of which he has no knowledge." Whitehead considers aesthetic thought to be the enjoyment of 'vivid values' and the artist being impelled by the urge to express, expresses the values. He delights in the vivid values of life.

It seems that the artist has aesthetic insight or vision and so, he is able to discern the characteristic of beauty in circumstances in which its presence escapes the sight of ordinary man. Thus aesthetics studies the beauty of art. We have aesthetic thought in the contemplation of beauty in nature and in art. This contemplation of beauty is quite old in the history of civilization. "The sense of beauty", George Santayana says, "has a more important place in life." He adds, "The poets and philosophers who express their aesthetic experience and stimulate the same function in us by their example do a greater service to mankind and deserve higher honour than the discoveries of historical truth." Santayana thus emphasizes the importance of aesthetics.

Now the question arises, what is beauty? Since the beginning of speculation on beauty, several definitions of beauty have been presented by the poets, artists and philosophers.
Each definition brings out interesting features of beauty but not a single definition covers all the faces of beauty. As such, to give an all-embracing definition of beauty is really a stupendous task. Goethe holds that beauty is inexplicable, 'it is a hovering, floating, glittering shadow', whose basic outlines 'elude the grasp of definition'.

Aesthetics as a separate branch of philosophy is comparatively of recent origin in the west. The word is derived from the Greek word aesthesis, meaning sensory experience. The name Aesthetics first appeared in 'Reflections on Poetry' (1735) of Alexander Baumgarten. He was a follower of the rationalist school of philosophy under the influence of Rene Descartes, the father of modern philosophy and Gottfried Wilhelm Liebnitz, a polymath German philosopher. Leibnitz holds that our world has the greatest degree of perfection. Baumgarten accepts this view and maintains that nature, which is accessible to sense-perception is the standard of art, because nature contains the greatest variety of forms, which admit of harmonious combinations. Beauty, according to Baumgarten, is felt perfection. Distinction between beauty and truth is purely subjective. The same attribute (perfection) of reality is called truth or beauty according as it is grasped by reason and feeling. So, according to Baumgarten the object of Aesthetics is to investigate the kind of perfection proper to perception, which is a lower level of cognition but
autonomous and possessed of its own laws. Aesthetics is "the science of sensory cognition."^6

The older theories of beauty were generally metaphysical in contrast with our modern theories, which are mostly psychological. The metaphysical theories considered beauty as something real and objective—perhaps a kind of essence or entity.

Plato in certain of his Dialogues seems to hold a peculiarly metaphysical theory of beauty. Beauty is a kind of eternal and unchanging essence or "form", any individual beautiful object is believed to participate in this essential beauty. When in other places he speaks of harmony, proportion and symmetry as constituting beauty, he still thinks of them metaphysically as objective qualities of things. "This is the essential form of Beauty, absolute Beauty, not seen with the eyes but grasped conceptually by the 'mind alone'."^7 Again, in another place he conceives that "the beauty of this world reminds us of true beauty."^8

The aesthetic facts, on the basis of which Aristotle built up his theory, were not the products of the pictorial, plastic, sculptural or architectural art, but those of the poetic in general or of the tragic in particular. In fact, the whole of his aesthetic theory is summed up in his famous definition of tragedy, in which he touched upon all the topics.
The definition of tragedy, according to Buckley's translation, runs as follows - "Tragedy is an imitation of a worthy or illustrious and perfect action, possessing magnitude, in pleasing language, using separately several species of imitation in its parts, by men acting and not through narration, through pity and fear effecting a purification from such like passions."

A more spiritual theory of beauty is held by Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist (A.D. 205-70), who thinks that beauty is the pure effulgence of the divine Reason. When the Absolute expresses itself or shines forth in its full pristine reality, it is beauty. The artist is the "seer" who can see the divine Beauty.

Hegel's theory is an instance of a more modern metaphysical view. Nature is a manifestation of the Absolute Idea. Beauty is the Absolute Idea shining through some sensuous medium. It is a kind of disclosure of spirit.

Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of Beauty, is very striking. The artist is able to seek through the outer husk of things the ideal beauty lying behind the phenomena.

Another metaphysical theory has been offered by Ruskin, who believes that beauty in objects is found in certain qualities, such as, unity, repose, symmetry, purity and moderation, which typify divine attributes. The elements of repose and unity in harmonious functioning have been emphasized by Ethal D. Puffer in her admirable book, 'The Psychology of Beauty'. "The beautiful object possesses those
qualities which bring the personality into a state of unity and self-completeness."\(^{10}\)

A recent subjective metaphysical theory is that of the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, who says that beauty is wholly mental, not belonging to physical objects. Aesthetic creation is the mind's most primitive and elemental form of activity. Croce calls it "expression", but by this he does not mean the translation of a mental concept into some outer physical form. Aesthetic activity is a spiritual act, by which we convert mere impressions into intuitions.

An entirely new dimension has been given to aesthetic thought by Kant. He represents the beginning of the modern scientific and psychological study of aesthetics. The peculiar characteristic of aesthetic feeling is that it is disinterested. The beauty always provides disinterested satisfaction. Beauty, although mental, is objective, since it is always the object of a judgement, in which we say "This thing is beautiful", thus regarding beauty as a quality of objects.

It is obvious that in the part of the critique of judgement dealing with beauty Kant is interested chiefly in 'free beauty'.\(^*\) And it is his doctrines about free beauty that have been most influential in modern aesthetics. In fact,

\(^*\)Under 'free beauty' Kant includes those beauties which are unrelated to goodness except in being good to look at or listen to. (A New Theory of Beauty, by Gury Sircello)
beauty in modern times has been commonly identified with "free" activity.

A suggestion made by Kant and followed by the poet Schiller was later developed by Herbert Spencer into the so-called Play-impulse theory. The word play may be applied to all those human activities which are free and spontaneous and pursued for their own sake alone. They are not continued under any internal or external compulsion. According to Spencer, when this playlike activity involves the two higher senses, sight and hearing, and our mental powers and even our emotions, the conditions are fulfilled for the requirement of aesthetic pleasure, which arises in the use of surplus energy. What we generally consider to be an aesthetic pleasure is nothing but an overflow of energy such as we find in children's play.

In the contemplation of beauty, in its many forms, the eye, ear and the mind are at play, and the accompanying pleasure is aesthetic.

Art makes beauty a transcendental experience. It is in the nature of Art to express a spiritual element even in pain, even in scenes of tragedy. Art does not merely imitate Reality, it interprets it. It generalizes, idealizes and transfigures reality. For, the purpose of art is not merely to decorate but to express something immanently beautiful and moving. "It is the mark of great art that its appeal is
universal and eternal. Significant form stands with the power to provoke aesthetic emotion in anyone capable of feeling it. Great art remains stable and unobscure because the feelings that it awakens are independent of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world. The forms of art are inexhaustible; but all lead by the same road of aesthetic emotion to the same world of aesthetic ecstasy."

Indian Conception of Aesthetics : The Origin and Evolution of Indian Aesthetics :

The word "aesthetics" in the context of Indian Aesthetics means "science and philosophy of fine art". Fine art presents the Absolute in sensuous garb and aesthetical relation. Aesthetics examines the principles and concepts that are assumed by art critics. Thus aesthetics is more philosophical in character, in so far as it examines the fundamental presuppositions of the artistic activity and its concepts. Hence aesthetics is defined as the philosophy of art.

Architecture, music, poetry, sculpture and painting are recognised to be fine arts by Hegel. Indian authorities admit architecture, music and poetry alone to be fine arts, for they alone have independent being. Poetry is the highest of all arts and drama is the highest of all forms of poetry.
In India, the study of aesthetics was at first restricted to the drama. The most ancient available text on dramaturgy is Natyasastra (4th and 5th century A.D.) of the mystic Bharata. In drama, both sight and hearing collaborate in arousing in the spectator, a state of consciousness experienced intuitively and concretely as a juice or flavour, called Rasa.* This Rasa when tasted by the spectator pervades and enchants him. Aesthetics is, therefore, the act of tasting this rasa by immersing oneself in it to the exclusion of all else.

The theory of Rasa was first proclaimed by the mythical sage-priest, Bharata and developed by Abhinavagupta, a great rhetorician and philosopher. Bharata attempted to transform the content of poet's mind into the stage-language. This language, according to Barlingay, was called Rasa by Bharata.12 Bharata listed the following principal feelings of human nature: delight, laughter, sorrow, anger, heroism, fear, disgust and astonishment. These are called bhavas or sthayibhavas.** They are transformed by art into the rasas: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, terrible, odious, marvellous and quietistic - qualities into which ordinary feelings can be analysed.

*Spencer also in his play-like activity lays emphasis upon the two higher senses, sight and hearing.

**The word 'bhava' is derived by Bharata from the causative of 'bhu', to be bhavas - feelings. The meaning of the 'sthyain' is permanent, basic, sthyai-bhavas - permanent, basic feelings.
P.V. Kane referring to Bharata explains why the aesthetic pleasure is called rasa. Persons, taking delicious food prepared with many condiments, taste many flavours and feel pleasure. Likewise spectators relish sthayi-bhavas, suggested by various bhavas, acting, recitation etc., and enjoy delight, and they are therefore called natya-rasas.

Each of Bharata's successor went through his rasa theory and interpreted it according to their own understanding. First came Dandin (7th century), and then Bhatta Lollata (9th century). According to them, rasa is simply the permanent mental state (anger, fear etc.) raised to its highest pitch by the combined effect of the Determinants, consequents and transitory mental states. According to another thinker Sankuka, 'Rasa' is an imitated mental state, which was refuted by Abhinavagupta. According to another important figure in the history of the doctrine of Rasa, Bhatta Nayaka, the aesthetic state of consciousness be it anger, love or pain etc. is last concerned with everyday life. It is completely independent of any individual interest, rather he views it in a generalized way.

Abhinavagupta accepts and elaborates the core of Bhatta Nayaka's aesthetic ideas, that is, the concept of generalization, but he rejects the other concepts of Nayaka's aesthetics. Abhinavagupta maintains that rasa is not revealed, but suggested, or manifested. He says, "The Rasa does not
in the actor. Rasa is not limited by any difference of space, time and knowing subject." Abhinavagupta says, "Rasa is tasted through the act of tasting the beatitude of one's own consciousness. This tasting is pleasant in that the consciousness is coloured by the latent traces of the mental states of delight, etc., pre-existing (in the minds of the spectators). Such traces are aroused by the corresponding determinants and consequents which are pleasant (beautiful etc.) by virtue of the consent of the heart - are afforded by the words." 

Barlingay holds that Rasa was originally intended to refer to an object (or medium or language) of Natya; but in the post-Abhinavagupta era, it meant a mental state, a pleasure, and aesthetic consciousness. It was then associated not only with Natya but also with Kavya in general.

The concept of Visuddha-sattva beginning with Sankhya-Patanjala, has deeply influenced Bharata's Rasa speculations. There are two references in the "Sankhya-karika" to aesthetics. According to one, the actor does not imitate but himself becomes the hero. Just as the subtle body becomes a man or an animal so does the actor becomes the character that he represents. The other asserts that in aesthetic experience, the subject is free

*Sankhya-karika - Isvarakrsna's Sankhya-karika is the earliest available and authoritative text-book of the Sankhya.
from two gunas, Rajas and Tamas, and therefore, free from the selfish and purposive attitude and the determinative cognitive activity. This is the concept of Visuddha-sattva. Later Alamkarikas return to this concept again and again. Sankhya-Patanjala, Vedanta, Pancaratra, Saiva and Sakta branches of Indian philosophy agree so far as this concept of Visuddha-Sattva is concerned. Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism also contributed to the evolution of this concept of Indian Aesthetics. In eighteenth century, Kavi Karnapura reiterates Bharata's standpoint that Rasa enjoyment is based on Visuddha-Sattva.

Ahara* in the form of Vibhava** in the world of art, undergoes a transformation. This is then the ahara of the Visuddha-Sattva. The Vibhavas themselves help the impure Sattva to attain the stage of purification and once this purification is earned, there is no bar or hindrance to Rasa-enjoyment. Rasa-enjoyment is thus only the privilege of Visuddha-Sattva, a concept which has dominated Indian thought for more than two thousand years.

To have this stage, man must be able to harmonise all the discordent elements, which throw him off his balance. The great purpose of the artist and the poet is to help him to attain such a harmonious state of peace and concord with

*Ahara - Indriyartha, in the form of Vibhava is ahara (food).
**Vibhava - Determinants.
himself. It is only when he has succeeded in uniting his whole self, he is fit to enjoy the bliss of aesthetic enjoyment. Art in India has its roots in aesthetic contemplation. The principal aim of the artist is to produce a work which has a flavour (rasa), harmony, balance, rhythm and pattern. For Indian Aesthetics, the primary value of art is rasamuhava.

The aesthetic purpose of the poet and the dramatist is to provide his reader and audience, first of all with vibhavas, which with anubhava* and vyabhicharabhava** will strengthen the latent sthayi-bhava. This will help the man to attain perfect samata or balance. The attainment of balance liberates him from the thraldom of vibhas. Suddha-Sattva is such an ideal, perfectly equipoised state. Rasa-enjoyment is possible for a man who attains such Suddha-Sattva.

Ideal aesthetic attitude is characterised by certain qualities. It is, as Bharata says, characterised by equal attentiveness to everything or samarata which is possible due to Suddha-Sattva. According to Abhinavagupta, it is marked by equal dominance of all the ingredients. It is the meeting point of ksara and asksara purusas stated in the Bhagavad Gita. It is the null point of prana and apana mentioned in the tantras. It is the madhya-bindu according to yogic practice. Here is the

*Anubhava - consequents
**Vyabhicharabhava - Transitory mental states.
If meeting point of jnana and abhava, knowledge and emotion. Here sat and cit are blended together in perfect harmony, making possibly the bursting out of Ananda. The concept of this perfectly equipoised and balanced state of the mind, marks the peculiar character of aesthetic attitude. Even the punishment of sin is beautiful since it is in order, and all that is ordered is beautiful. The beauty of day is augmented by its comparison with night, a white colour is more beautiful when it is next to black, the hangman and the prostitute are necessary in a community. The ugly parts of the body are also necessary. So great is the power of wholeness or soma, that things which are not good in themselves, become good when they are joined together and considered in their entirety. As the presentation of contraries lends beauty to language, so the beauty of this world is achieved by the presentation of contrasts of things. According to the majority of aestheticians, the nature of aesthetic object is unworlly (alaukika). This alaukika state is unique in as much as it is presented as a unitive, homogeneous experience. It is characterised by a state of self-sufficiency, the self does not feel the need for anything other than itself. This type of beatitude cannot be enjoyed in practical life where things external to the subject are always desired. The distinction of subject and object which is
present in all ordinary experiences is obliterated in the aesthetic experience.

However, in the aesthetic experience, the feelings and the facts of everyday life, even if they are transfigured, are always present. Art is not absence of life — every element of life appears in the aesthetic experience. But it is life itself, pacified and detached from all passions.

Aesthetician Bhatta Nayaka was a profound scholar of Mimamsa and Vedanta metaphysics. Aesthetician Anandaardha was a profound philosopher of Kashmir saivism. Aesthetician Abhinavagupta was proficient in practically all systems and wrote authoritative works on the Pratyabhijna system of philosophy. Aesthetician Bharata himself was a mythical sage-priest. Yet they never allowed their aesthetics to be swamped by metaphysics. They use their philosophic acumen to clarify aesthetic ideas and not to substitute metaphysical concepts for aesthetic ideas. They laid down that Pratibha* alone is the supreme means of aesthetic experience.

In Indian thought, the aesthetic experience is considered to be an experience of the whole man, and not a part of him. Taken in this very wide sense, a mathematician, can in the course of his study gain the aesthetic perspective.

*Pratibha — The creative or artistic intuition.
The peculiarity of the aesthetic state is not consequently in terms of that which isolates it from other experiences but that which elevates it to a different level.

It is found in traditional texts that the aesthetic experience is akin to the religious experience. There is yet a difference between the two. The aesthetic thought transmutes the occurrences and feelings of everyday life no doubt, but still it remains conscious of them whereas the mystic state of religious experience marks the complete disappearance of all polarity and in it the contents of everyday life are transcended. In aesthetic experience, the empirical and rational order of things (Samsara) is not eliminated, as it would be in the religious state, but transfigured. This transfiguration effects the mysterious conversion of pain into pleasure, sadness into delight, mobility and inequietude into rest and the fulfilment of desires. 20

An emotional reaction is a sensuous organic experience within which the ego predominates while an aesthetic response is a mental and spiritual reaction, a supersensuous experience within which the ego is transcended. It is the full realisation of the self. The self is no longer a limited, narrow empirical ego, it becomes the ultimate unbounded consciousness where there is a full participation of the subject with the aesthetic object. Here of course the subtle difference between the aesthetic and
mystic experiences becomes negligible. And in this state, the magical conversion of pain into pleasure takes place.

This extra-ordinary power of transmuting sadness into pleasure may be called the unique capacity, the differentia which belongs to the aesthetic experience, which makes it a different kind of experience from the other empirical experiences. This sudden transformation of pain into pleasure is not a miraculous phenomenon. It is the result of the individual consciousness finding its identity within the larger whole of the universal consciousness. This unique state is the fundamental basis of Indian aesthetics.

Reniero Gnoli after studying Abhinavagupta’s ‘Abhinavavarati’ realizes that the aesthetic thought beginning with Bharata, later with slight modified state of Bhatta Nayaka along with that of Abhinavagupta, reaches conclusions which are still to-day living and valid and even relatively novel to Western thought. Abhinavagupta simply polishes Bharata’s view of the aesthetic object. We are also to admit this.

Contemporary thinkers of India cannot neglect the intuitions of older thinkers like Bharata and Abhinavagupta. They are the perennial sources of new light.
Aesthetic Thought of Modern India:

In India, tradition has been a unifying force and has kept alive what has been termed the perennial philosophy. It is through the strength of tradition and cultural heritage that India has succeeded, age after age, in retaining its subtle unity in spite of so much of diversities.

The peculiarity of oriental civilization is that abrupt changes are not welcomed here. In India, the assimilation of new forces has always been taken place, but no trace of breaking with the past is noticeable. So deep is the sense of continuity that we may quote here a Bergsonian phrase - "The past gnaws into the present." "In no other country" says Max Muller, "is the past so visibly present as in India." Indian culture is like a banyan tree which has grown and begotten new roots and grown again simultaneously.

Very often whenever necessity arises, an Indian writer is found to use the word 'naturally' instead of 'surprisingly', because deep down in the Indian consciousness there is a conviction that the new, in order to be worthwhile, must subsume the old within itself so that the total harmony is not interrupted.

All the prominent Indian thinkers of the modern age have shown adequate appreciation of the value of tradition. They have criticised and rejected the negative side, but have
not tried to overturn the tradition as a whole. Their feet are planted firmly in the soil of India. This will be borne out in subsequent chapters when we discuss the thoughts of Tagore, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy, Iqbal and Radhakrishnan.

Tradition while accepted uncritically, becomes a blind guide leading the people into pitfalls whereas it can be a stimulant if used with wise judgement. The modern Indian thinkers have interpreted tradition not as something immutable but as something which must be continually reassessed in the light of fresh experience. They do not glorify the past as such, but only that aspect of the past which has survived in a changing and growing world. This is true also in case of aesthetic thought of modern India.

It is clear, therefore that reverence for tradition and for the 'heritage of the past' has not prevented Indian thought from moving forward.

From Ram Mohan Roy to Radhakrishnan, the common assumption has been that though Indian thought needs orientation, it cannot abandon its traditional concern with the transcendental and the timeless. Modern Indian Aesthetics too abides by this principle.

The story of Indian thought since the end of the eighteenth century is, indeed, the story of a long line of
dynamic thinkers who combine earnestness, sincerity and
compassion with unusual reflective and speculative powers.

So, the continuity of Indian tradition is seen in the
aesthetic sensitiveness of the leading thinkers of the modern
age. One of the persistent features of Indian culture is the
close interconnection between philosophy, religion and art.
The founders of the tradition who composed the Vedas, and the
Upanishads were philosophers, sages and poets. They had fine
aesthetic sense. They were most intimately related to nature.
Every beautiful phenomenon of nature was deified by them.

Philosophical concepts and religious beliefs have
always permeated the different modes of art in India. In
medieval India, philosophical and religious thoughts were
practically merged into poetry. A glance at modern Indian
thought shows that the aesthetic element continues to be very
important and three of the thinkers of modern India - Tagore,
Sri Aurobindo and Iqbal are philosophers and at the same time
poets of the highest order. Sri Aurobindo is even known as a
sage. Each of them has a significant contribution to
aesthetics. Even Mahatma Gandhi, a stern moralist living a
simple life is not at all indifferent to the aesthetic side of
life. Coomaraswamy's entire philosophy is centred in aesthetics.
K.C. Bhattacharya also does not keep himself indifferent to
aesthetics.
There are two types of manifestations of this aesthetic response which again show how the continuity of Indian thought has been maintained in the modern age: the use of parables, allegories and metaphors is traced in some of their writings and the constant awareness of the close kinship between man and nature is also discerned.

In the Indian tradition, it is observed that the wise men prefer to live in natural surroundings to work out their thoughts, they seem to be disturbed by the mechanical monotony and bustle of the city life. It is highly significant that the two most important thinkers of modern India - Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore - lived in rural surroundings. Their love for nature is both directly and indirectly reflected in their aesthetic thoughts.

According to the aesthetic thought of modern India, the aesthete or the artist should be regarded as the total man. When we consider the life-value of an aesthetic object, it will be difficult to distinguish the moral from the aesthetic. Some philosophers have identified 'the beauty' with the 'good'. The truth, the good and the beauty are the fundamental human values. Their counterpart - satyam, sivam and sundaram - are considered in India as the trium of supreme existence. Regarding the relation between the three basic human values the great Indian poet, Tagore writes, "Whenever we see the good and the true in perfect accord, the beautiful stands revealed." Radhakrishnan
also expressed similar view. According to him, "... we cannot be artistic if we are not nourished by thought and sustained by morals. Highest art, philosophy and morality are manifestations of spiritual unity. We should be whole man before we can be artists, philosophers, heroes."  

K.C. Bhattacharyya has presented his aesthetic views succinctly in the chapter on 'Rasa' in his 'Studies in Philosophy' (vol. I). He wants to make the present generation acquainted with 'Rasa' which was used to denote the aesthetic enjoyment in the aesthetic thought beginning from Bharata to Abhinavagupta.

According to him, 'Rasa' means either aesthetic enjoyment or that which is aesthetically enjoyed. In the Indian conception, this 'Rasa' is appreciated purely through feeling. Feeling has, of course, different gradations. In the direct feeling, the enjoyer feels no distinction between his enjoyment and the object. The object appears to him as having a value, not merely as a fact. The subject feels attracted to the object.

Next to direct feeling, there are feelings where the object is not a particular thing, but another feeling, say in a separate mind. This is sympathetic feeling. To sympathise with a person is to feel his feeling, which is the direct object of my feeling. This may be considered as a higher level than the feeling of an object. Aesthetic enjoyment belongs to a
still higher level than both object-feeling and sympathetic feeling.\(^{24}\)

In sympathy, the detachment is felt from the objective fact but not from subjective fact. But there may be such a feeling as sympathy with sympathy. This is duplicated sympathy. K.C. Bhattacharyya observed, "To this duplicated sympathy, the expression of the object is not only detached, as in the case of simple sympathy, but self-subsisting, having a felt independent reality of which the given object is only a kind of symbol. Since it is altogether detached from the particularity of fact, it is a kind of eternal reality, a real eternal value."\(^{25}\) "Beauty is such an eternal value and aesthetic enjoyment accordingly belongs to the level of duplicated sympathy - sympathy with sympathy."\(^{26}\)

So, the indication is - the beauty of an object is not a mere fact - a quality of the object like its colour but an expression or value. It is to aesthetic feeling a real eternal value. Thus expression, detachment from the object and eternity are three distinguishing characters of the beauty of an object. In the Indian theory of art, the aesthetic essence is conceived as a subjective absolute or rasa rather than as an objective absolute or beauty.\(^{27}\)

The aesthetic attitude in itself is not creative. It discovers beauty or ugliness. There are spirits where aesthetic
attitude is so deep and penetrating that they may evolve a beauty even out of presented ugliness. The 'patient faith of courageous love' helps in this transmutation of ugliness into beauty. K.C. Bhattacharyya says, "Potentially, I believe the artistic spirit can swallow and assimilate every kind of feeling, subordinate the most refractory of feelings to itself, transmute all painful feelings into enjoyment."  

The faith that the ugliness can be transmuted into beauty is familiar enough in the artistic sense. K.C. Bhattacharyya observes, "As the aesthetic faith turns into vision and attainment, there emerges a Beauty Triumphant in which ugliness is itself realised in its quintessence as an object of enjoyment. This enjoyed quintessence of ugliness is just what Indian aesthetic daringly recognises as a rasa, viz., bibhatsa-rasa. Such recognition does credit to the virility of Indian art and to the Indian theory of art."  

In the first chapter, I have discussed the aesthetic view of Tagore. Tagore's approach to philosophy is aesthetic. His ideas are delicate and subtle. He seems to flit from thought to thought with the delight of a carefree butterfly. His thought is anti-ascetic through and through. He shows towards human frailty an indulgence which only a poet can afford. Tagore's humanism is coloured by his aesthetic and mystical experiences. To him there can be no duty nobler than the pursuit of loveliness. For Tagore, the real is beautiful.
The universe remains for him perennially interesting. He tastes every stimulus with undiminished joy. He is deeply influenced by the Upanishads and to some extent by Buddha. For the comprehensive study of his aesthetic thought I have dealt with his view of art, his concept of the Reality or God from aesthetic point of view, his path of harmony and the creative middle path based upon aesthetic experience and his aesthetic base of humanism, freedom and bondage.

The second chapter of my work has been devoted to the study of the aesthetic thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was a stern moralist, but he could not remain indifferent to the aesthetic side of life. Beauty, for Gandhi, is not an isolated aspect of reality. He maintains that art cannot be cultivated apart from the other processes of life. Beauty, inseparably related to truth and goodness, is for him part and parcel of existence. He regards life itself as an art. In ancient and medieval times, it is assumed that beauty and utility both belonged to a single life style. Gandhi adopts this traditional approach to the aesthetic side of life. According to Gandhi, the basis of aesthetics is not the absence of work. His argument for this is, "Just as both Prince and Peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must they labour for supplying their common wants." In the absence of such a provision, aesthetics becomes a luxury only for the few. So, in this chapter, I have discussed Gandhi's pragmatic Idealism,
its relation to aesthetics, the necessity of Art for mass communication, his view of Aesthetics and ethics, his philosophy of art and spiritualism, his deep feeling for natural beauty, his affirmation of the ideal of asceticism as the greatest art.

The third chapter presents the modern aesthetic thought of Sri Aurobindo. As a man of profound scholarship and deep insight, he is always guided by the purest of motives. His unique achievement is that he has constructed a complete, comprehensive system. His philosophic theory basically deals with evolution and involution. Through evolution, he endeavours to arrive at the divine level which is beautiful and through involution he desires to bring down the divine into the earth. This divine is beautiful from his aesthetic point of view. In the chapter on Aurobindo, I have discussed his aesthetic ideas as related to Indian culture, aesthetic significance of his philosophy of evolution, aesthetic thoughts of 'Life Divine', 'savitri', 'synthesis of yoga', 'Essays on the Gita' and 'the ideal of Human unity'.

The fourth chapter consists of the aesthetic thought of Iqbal. Iqbal occupies a unique position in contemporary Indian thought. There is no doubt that he carries the Islamic tradition with him, yet he appears to be close to other contemporary Indian thinkers in many respects. He moves away from extreme monism, adopts a more positive additude to the
phenomenal world and the finite individual, and recognises the importance of movement and change. He is a poet-philosopher. He regards the human self as active, dynamic, creative and free. Perfection cannot be earned through passivity rather it is the fruit of activity. Perfection is beauty to him. He conceives time as the core of reality. Power and love find significant place in his thought. The topics as influence of traditional culture of India upon Iqbal, his attitude to the phenomenal world, the finite individual self, movement and change, Iqbal as a poet, his philosophy of power and love have been emphatically discussed here as they are saturated with aesthetic speculation.

Fifth chapter of my work is confined to Coomaraswamy's aesthetic thought. His approach is consistently aesthetic and his entire philosophy is founded on aesthetic experience. I have discussed in this chapter his aesthetic orientation to all and its significance in the traditional way of life, his 'Dance of Shiva', his statement of the all-round excellence of the arts and crafts of India, aesthetic implications of perennial philosophy.

The subject of my sixth chapter is Radhakrishnan's aesthetic thought. He views things comprehensively. Real spiritual beauty lies in the comprehension of wholeness and aesthetic delight is acquired from this spiritual beauty. Art helps us in realizing this wholeness. He is of the opinion
that aesthetic experience is the revealer of reality. He regards the aesthetic value to be spiritual. The selected issues of this chapter are those which are sufficient to cover Radhakrishnan's aesthetic ideals and outlooks. I have given emphasis on Radhakrishnan's Idealism and its relation to aesthetics, the role of art in his 'An Idealist view of life', his view of Art and spiritualism, his conception of literature and science and his aesthetics and religious experience.

The last one is the concluding chapter.
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