CHAPTER- IV
4.1 Introduction

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty and taste with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory-emotional or sensory values. It is sometimes called as judgments of sentiment and taste. More elaborately, different scholars in the field define aesthetics as critical reflection on art, culture and nature. Specifically, aesthetic theory, with practical implications, relate to a particular branch of the arts is divided into areas of aesthetics such as art theory, literary theory, film theory and musical theory etc.

The great philosopher Socrates says, "The muse first of all inspire himself. For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but they are inspired and possessed. And as Corybantian revellers, when they dance, are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing and there is no invention in him until he has
inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him; when he starts not attained to this state he is powerless and unable to utter his oracles. Aristotle’s treatise therefore is not a treatise of whole poetic art or it can be scientific knowledge of a kind; indeed, it is only the beginning and principles even of poetic science, for it must be extended to keep commensurate with the generation and development of new forms.”¹

Greek writer Longinus’ theory on aesthetics finds expression in his work On the Sublime. The word ‘sublime’ means the most exalted and kind as distinguished by elevation or size or nobility or grandeur or other impressive quality as to inspire awe or wonder, aloof from and rose far above the ordinary. According to Longinus, “The mark of sublimity in literature when it reaches the peak in the domain of creative art, it can transport and lift us out of ourselves by a power which confounds our judgment, eclipses mere reason and illuminates a subject with the vividness of lightening”².

Plotinus said that all the loveliness of colour and even the light of the sun, being devoid of parts and so not beautiful by symmetry, must be ruled out of the realm of beauty. Sir Philip Sidney in his An Apology for Poetry describes his viewpoint regarding art. He says, “Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth, to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight. It is that figuring notable images of virtues,
vices or what else with that delightful teaching which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.”

According to Leo Tolstoy the aesthetic theories arose among the wealthy classes of the Christian European world and arouse simultaneously among different nations-Germany, Italy, Netherland, France and England.

Rene Descartes, the great philosopher, scientist and mathematician says that there are six different types of emotion. To him aesthetic experience is one kind of intellectual experience influenced by emotion. But, Herbert Reade in his book *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism* develops his own view regarding aesthetics. He says, “The doctrine of mind as an independent substance leads directly not only to provide worlds of experience, but also to private worlds of morals. It involves the breakup of all values that can't be proved within the strictly private world of psychological experience-and that involves not only all ethical values but also all aesthetic values”.

John Dryden in his literary work *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* writes about aesthetic value of a work. According to him “Delight is the chief, if not only end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place; for poetry only instructs as it delights”. Edmund Burke in his literary work *A Philosophy Inquiring into our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* writes about creative art. According to him the mind of man possesses a sort of creative process of its own. This imaginative process helps us to create work of art. He exclaims,
“Poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description as well as painting
does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation: to display
rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others than to present
a clear idea of the things themselves.”

During the first half of the 18th century the aesthetic theory got a new
direction. The great philosopher Baumgarten believes that beauty is based on
experience. He said that truths, strictly aesthetic are those which appear neither
entirely true nor false, probable truths. Shelling says that in the realm of
aesthetics conscious and unconscious work together.

William Wordsworth disapproves the poetic diction. According to him,
“Poetry is an overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion
recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-
action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which
was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself
actually exist in the mind.” He advocated the use of rustic language in poetry.
But, his theory of poetic diction is criticized by his successors even by Coleridge.
P.B. Shelley in his literary work based on aesthetics says, “Reason is the
enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the
value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole.”

Towards the middle of the 19th century the theory Arts for Art's Sake
was developed. According to them aesthetics can be achieved through our senses.
The theory believes, “Aesthetic activity is the intuition of the individual as it is in itself, transcending or escaping the concepts both of science and of history existence and further this individual, is, in the last resort, a state of our mind ...

...Beauty is not to be identified either with the desirable or with the moral. Nor can it be confounded with sensation or with pleasant sensation.” Modern critic and poet, T.S. Eliot in his *Tradition and Individual Talent* advocated that poet’s personality should be depersonalized in his art. He says, “The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.” Here, he brings the famous analogy of a catalytic agent. Theodor Meyer Greene categorically lays emphasis on the value of art. He said that style, perfection, truth and greatness are thus distinct but complementary concept.

Bharata has initiated the discussion of eastern cult of drama in *Natyasastra*. His book can be compared with Aristotle’s Poetics. *Natyasastra* is the first available work on dramatic art. It can be regarded as an encyclopaedia on the science of drama. Bharata defines *anubhava* as a factor which indicates a permanent mood, imitated through words, gestures and organic changes implying thereby that the term is to be taken not only to mean what occurs after a *bhava* but to mean what suggests or indicates a *bhava*. According to him the respective static emotions, the consequents and transitory emotions furnish the respective static emotions and create *rasa*. But, from the time of Sri Sankuka to
the present day *rasa* has been studied as an experience rather than as an aesthetic fact. The famous Indian critic Abhinava Gupta said that aesthetic gestation is nothing but a perception sui-generis, differing from all others.

Bhamha is the first Indian critic who wrote book on aesthetics in the 7th century. According to different theorists figures of speech like simile, metaphor, paradox, irony, sarcasm, personification, etc. are used in art.

Oral tradition is confined only to the core of un-lettered people transmitted by word of mouth. The sentiments of the primitive or unenlightened men find expression through their mouth. The marriage songs are part of life cycle. In these life cycle songs of the unlettered people we fine use of figurative language. Preferably the composers of these songs use rhythm without any knowledge of artistic beauty. But, their artistic taste is quite astonishing.

### 4.2 Aesthetics of Assamese Marriage Songs

Assamese marriage song is an important genre of folk literature. These songs are composed mostly by the women folk and as such, this genre of oral literature is found to be full of aesthetic beauty. *Jora nam* or *khisa git* (teasing songs) is an important sub-genre of Assamese marriage songs. Through this genre the women folk mock at the groom, bride and their family members. The songs associated *sandah khunda* ceremony deals with figurative language.

66. *ami maru geet gai*  

*bisar chakari nase*
Meaning: We are tired of singing songs and taking pain of marriage tasks, but the groom's mother is riding on a bicycle. Oh! groom's mother listen to us and do as we advice. As you are arranging marriage of your son, you ought not to be overzealous now. Like a shining bell metal dish of Hajo, she is seen smiling.

In the above mentioned song the mother's smile is compared to a bell metal plate. The ironic comment is passed pointing towards the mother. The mother's riding (Line-4) having a tail etc. is metaphorically used to present a different picture of the mother. In our patrilineal society a woman figure riding on a bicycle made for male members of society is considered an offence.
The *jora nam* (teasing song) sung by women folk in different stages of a marriage is also known for its aesthetic grandeur. In the *jora nam* (song no-54) the first line which talks of Burmese invasion has no thematic co-relation with the succeeding line. It is only used as a non-sense utterance to maintain the rhyming pattern. It does not bear any contextual meaning with the next line. But, the speaker’s awareness about the Burmese invasion is reflected in the song.

In the song [no - 57(i) ] the composer mentions a kind of insect *kumti* to rhyme it with *ghunti* in the second line. The composer has also used alliteration in the song. In the first line each word is repeated twice. The alliteration gives rise to the melody of the song. The musical quality of the song catches the listener’s attraction.

In another song [No-57(ii) ] the male members of the groom’s party come under the ironic comment. They are on the butt of criticism. In the song mentioned here, rhyming is matched by mentioning the place names-Sivasagar and Nazira. Again in song (no-55) the singer draws a parallel between *khoda* and male members. Here, in the song *ada* rhymes with *khada*.

After the *dara/ kaina dhuowa* ceremony a person is invited to carry the bride/groom. The women folk tease the person like, brother in law or maternal uncle out of their physical appearances etc. The following song is sung on the occasion:
67.  
kainadhora, tor murot nai suli

agtu sisa, gortu sisa pettu bhanga duli

garakhya choli bore khabo tekalipitha buli

kainadhora, tor murot nai tel

bastir parai hapai ahi murot muti gel

**Meaning:** The women folk address the man who will carry the bride to the front yard. They say, “You don’t have hair on your head. Your stomach is like a big bowl. The cowherds will mistake it to be a big tekeli pitha (traditional food stuff). You don’t put oil to your hair; the wild cat will urinate on your hair.” In the song the reference of head without hair (in line no-1) and hair without oil is brought into the context. These are contradictory statements. It seems to be absurd. But, the singer deliberately brings into comparison the two things for two reasons. The first, simile is to maintain the rhyme scheme. Secondly, her aim is to heighten the degree of mockery. It is also contextual in its meaning that elderly persons are assigned to do the work.

So, we can say that most of the *jora nams* are the examples of irony and sarcasm. Here in these songs non-sense utterances are used to maintain the rhyming pattern. The singer’s intelligence is also reflected in these songs as these songs are situational.

The following song of the *suwagar dhan bandha (bana)* ceremony can be cited in connection to the aesthetic beauty of marriage song.
68.  o keheni bandhila batore batsora  
o keheni sasila kami oi ram  
o keheni karila bapur bijar khati  
o batori napalu ami oi ram  
o pite kaina khoje arange darange  
o maye kaina khoje ghare oi ram  
o apunar najare kaina sai ahila  
o bayekthek jabare chole oi ram  
o nize chowa kaina neribi bapa toi  
o ar kaina pabare nai oi ram  
o osore pajore kayo kaina nede  
o mayerer khuswabhab dekhi oi ram.\footnote{12}

**Meaning**: Nobody knows when did you build the *batghara* (portico) for marriage. Your father is seeking for a bride at many places; mother is seeking for bride in different houses. But you have chosen her secretly on your way to sister’s house. Now you should never leave her. It is very difficult to seek a bride. Nobody will offer you one since everyone is aware of the ‘doubtful character’ of your mother.

The word *khuswabhab* (good character) describes the positive attributes in Assamese terminology. In the song the women folk used the word ironically. By using opposite word they made a damaging remark on the mother’s character.
They sarcastically say that nobody is willing to offer bride to the groom. The women folk told that the character of the groom’s mother is doubtful. They also ironically commented on the behaviour of the groom. Here, the beauty lies in the fact that positive word reveals the utmost negative meaning in the context. The women folk are very precise and careful in the choice of words.

In another *suwagor dhan bandha (bana)* song (No-3) the women folk used the image of the pomegranate tree. The pomegranate tree in the front yard has small leaves. Our son becomes rude in his behaviour since nobody arranges his marriage. Our son even does not have food at home since nobody thinks of his marriage. In the song the reference of the heap of earth (Line-2), to hunting birds (Line-5, 6), to the pomegranate tree (Line-9, 10, 14, 15) are used to enhance the rhythmic quality of the song. Here lies the artistic taste of the composer of the song.

The songs associated with *joran* ceremony are also known for its aesthetic grandeur. The following song is an example of aesthetic grandeur.

69. *hari he deutar alanker*

*hari he thowa he aideu*

*hari he marar alankar thowa ki rama ram*

*hari he dwrakar srikrishnai*

*hari he alanker pathaise*

*hari he hatjore kari lowa ki rama ram*
hari he barir pich phele
hari he kajala orahi
hari he pate tire bire kare ki rama ram
hari he aideur galoike
hari he chabake nowari
hari he ki mukuta jwale ki rama ram
hari he tulite dalisha
hari he bahise lalita
hari he sarai pai melise chuli ki rama ram
hari he daho angulite
hari he ratna jwalise
hari he nupure dharise tuli ki rama ram.\textsuperscript{13}

Meaning: O dear sister keep aside the ornaments given by your father. Keep aside the ornaments given by your mother. Please put on the ornaments sent by Srikrishna of Dwaraka. The orahi (Indian bean) tree in the backyard has small leaves shining in light. The body of the bride is shining like a gem. Her ten fingers are also shining by different gems.

The phrase \textit{hari he} is used in the beginning of every line. The phrase has no significant contribution to the substantial meaning of the song. The repetition only produces the musical quality. The phrase \textit{rama ram} is repeated after the
interval of two lines. It only enhances the rhythmic quality of the song. These words have no academic value. Here, the body of the bride is compared to that of gem. It is the example of simile, a figure of speech. The reference of Indian bean and its leaves have no connection with the comparison.

The songs associated with dara/ kainak dhuowa ceremony are the finest specimen of aesthetic beauty.

70.  
aha baideu aha oi kalar gurit baha oi

gangar jol anisu tomak dhuwabalo

alap panite aha baideu aha oi

biya nami nahe aha baideu aha oi

nimile kapalar rasi he aha baideu aha oi

kalar gurit baha goi

gangar jol anisu tomak dhuwabalo

Meaning: The above mentioned song included in Chapter III is very lucid. In the above song /oi/ sound is repeated in every line. Though the sound has no contextual value, still it has enhanced the melody of the song. The singer of the song has included it to maintain rhythm. The composition of the song is quite amusing. The proceeding line rhymes with the succeeding line. The rhyming words like, nam, pam, rol, hol are included in the song. The song possesses another interesting factor. The singer is left open to include the name of the
bride. Through the song the women folk address the bride lovingly and try to console her by saying different things.

During the *dara/kaina sajowa* ceremony women folk sing different songs. At the time of the performance of the song entitled *nilakoi akaxot* (Song No-40) the women folk use to repeat the last two words twice. As the musical initiate the song the other members of the group remain silent. After the completion of the first line of the musical leader the other women use to repeat only the last two words twice as a refrain. They do it to make the meaning more effective. Besides, the same rhyming pattern is followed throughout the song.
Notes and References

1. Jowett, B. *Dialogues of Plato*. P-8


4. Read, Herbert. *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*. P-12


8. ibid. P-225


11. Informant, Daivaki Deka

12. Informant, Renuka Das

13. Informant, Minati Borah