I. Introduction:

The preceding three chapters have carefully considered Santayana's theory of beauty and art. In the present chapter a comparative study has been made between his aesthetics and Indian aesthetics. Such discussion, very brief as it is, seems not to be meaningless, since we can have a better understanding of a theory in the light of comparison.

It may be mentioned here that there is a notable point of difference between Western aesthetics and Indian aesthetics. In the West we meet so many rival theories of aesthetics, and miss a connecting thread underlying those theories. Indian aesthetics also bristles with many theories. It has been enriched by Bharata, Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta in the past and by Rabindranath, Abanindranath and Nandalal among others in the present century. But modern Indian aesthetics bears a close relation to the traditional aesthetics of India. This is, perhaps, due to the peculiar philosophic outlook cherished by the Indians, both in the past and in the present. Spiritualism, which forms their philosophic outlook, remains at the basis of their aesthetic attitude also. Aesthetic delight, to the Indians in general, is a spiritual awakening and a joy divine. Thus we can bring about a single character of Indian aesthetics, whereas we fail to do so in the case of Western
aesthetics. Anyway, let us see how Santayana's aesthetics differs from the traditional theory of Indian aestheticians of the past.

II. Santayana's aesthetics and Indian aesthetics of the past:

To Santayana, as to Indian thought in general, beauty is subjective. But the aesthetic experience of which Santayana speaks is mainly sensuous experience. Beauty, according to him, is a positive value, a pleasure experienced immediately by our emotional consciousness. The Indian aestheticians of the past, unlike Santayana, maintain that aesthetic experience is rasa-svādāna which is spiritual and a joy divine. Rasa is the key-term in Indian aesthetics. Hence the theory of rasa needs to be explained.

The theory of rasa

The literal meaning of rasa is taste. The doctrine that rasa is the essence of poetry starts from Bharata (first century A.D.) and is advocated by Abhinavagupta (10th century A.D.) and Visvanath (4th century A.D.). The theory of rasa arises from the theory of suggestion or Dhvanivāda. The essence of poetry, Indian aestheticians hold, lies in dhvani or suggestion. Now, what is the meaning they attach to dhvani? As the gracefulness of a lady is something over and above the structure of the different limbs of her body, so the poetry of the great poets expresses something more than words, meaning and style.
embodied in it. This extra something is called 'suggestion' or dhvam which implies a different world transcendental to the literal meaning of poetry. An example can be cited. Kalidasa, a great Indian poet, speaks of Parvati in his Kumārsambhava:

"Evaṁ vādini devaṁ pārśve pîrūrādhumukhī,
Līlākamalapatrāni gaṇayāmāsa Pārvati." (When the great sage was thus speaking, Pārvati sitting beside her father counted the petals of the toy lotus with her face lowered in blush.)

Here the excellence of poetry lies in a rich suggestion that transcends the literal meaning expressed by it. The phrase "the counting of the petals of toy lotus" suggests something transcendent, viz., modesty of courtship.

The theory of suggestion proves that Indian aestheticians do not, while Santayana does, fail to understand that aesthetic experience is deeper and wider than the mere enjoyment of symmetry, balance and proportion. Now, suggestion which constitutes the essence of poetry is always of some or other rasa. We realise rasa when we feel the aesthetic sentiment or emotion, devoid of all of

1. "Pratīyamānam punaranyadeva vastvasti vānīśu
   mahākavīnām,
   Yattathprasidhvāvayavātiriktāṁ vibhāti
   lāvanyamivāṅganāsu".
   - Dhvanyāloka, 1.4.

(Translation: But the implied aspect (of meaning) is quite different (from the expressed aspect of meaning). In the words of great poets, it shines out supreme and towers above the beauty of the outer parts even as charm does in ladies.)
its usual conative tendencies. This emotion is suggested by the representations in art of those objects that excite it in nature, such as characters, their actions and their physical expressions of emotions in the case of drama, and words, figures of speech, rhythm etc. in the case of poetry. Now, the emotion, which, being thus variously suggested, is awakened in the mind of audience, has a different quality from that aroused in real life. It is at once dislodged from the specific object (by which it is aroused in life) and from the particular subject who enjoys it. It is apprehended in the aesthetic attitude in an impersonal manner. It is no longer felt as a personal psychical affection, but as an impersonal ideal object of contemplation.

The theory of rasa also suggests that in aesthetic experience the self is placed above narrow egoism and assumes an impersonal contemplative attitude. And the contemplative self, being free from all craving and external necessity, is blissful. Thus rasāsvadana is a kind of relish of one's own blissful consciousness.

According to the Indian theory of rasa, aesthetic experience is spiritual, through which knowledge of the self in its contemplative aspect becomes possible. The desire to know the true nature of the self lies at the root of the philosophical speculation of the Indians. Aesthetic experience also, according to them, gives us a glimpse of the nature of the self in its true aspect.

But Santayana, like Indian aestheticians, does
not take aesthetic experience as the realization of the impersonal contemplative aspect of the self. He regards beauty as a naturalistic fact. The aesthetic pleasure of which he speaks is a simple psychological experience. Santayana, like Indian aestheticians, refers to the contemplative state of aesthetic experience. But while, to Indian aestheticians, contemplative state is an active state of enjoyment, to Santayana, on the other hand, contemplation is a passive state of enjoyment.

Santayana says that in all "expression" two terms can be distinguished: "the first is the object actually presented, the word, the image, the expressive thing; the second is the object suggested, the further thought, emotion, or image evoked, the thing expressed." Santayana attaches paramount importance to the first term, viz., "the object actually presented", while the advocates of the theory of rasa attach importance to the second term, viz., "the object suggested, the further thought, emotion, or image evoked, the thing expressed". That to Santayana the first term is of primary importance can be proved from his saying, "Beauty in the first term - beauty of sound, rhythm, and image - will make any thought whatever poetic, while no thought whatever can be so without that immediate beauty of presentation."

But Indian aestheticians hold the quite opposite view. They say that poetry, as a species of art,

3. Ibid., p.203.
can be 'excellent when a central emotion is suggested and evoked by the word, meaning, style and rhythm embodied in it. In this connection we can suggest one point of the rasa theory of poetry. Emotions which are aroused in poetry are of two classes, viz., (1) permanent or dominant emotions and (2) transient emotions. The latter are subservient to the former. In a poem transient emotions appear and disappear, but a certain dominant emotion, suggested by them, remains always steady. The aesthetic delight or rasa is derived from the contemplation of this central dominant emotion. The essence of poetry, Santayana would say, lies in the meaning of words, in harmony, rhythm that are expressed in it. As he says, "...poetic language is language at its best. Its essential success consists in fusing ideas in charming sound or in metaphors that shine by their own brilliance." But the Indian aestheticians hold that the essence of poetry lies, not in the rhythm, but in the aesthetic delight had from the contemplation of a dominant emotion expressed in it. They, of course, say that rhythm, figure of speech, meaning of words have their utility in helping to arouse the aesthetic delight. The poet Rabindranath Tagore also says, "Rhythm is not the essential element in a poem. Its essence lies in the aesthetic delight; rhythm only reveals this delight and is an accompaniment."

4. Reason in Art, p.76.
5. Sahityer Swarup, 35.
III. The aesthetical theory of Rabindranath Tagore:

We have briefly compared Santayana's aesthetical theory with that of Indian aestheticians of the past. Rabindranath Tagore can be viewed as an important figure in modern Indian aesthetics. Let us compare his aesthetical theory with that of Santayana. Rabindranath has been inspired by traditional Indian aesthetics. But his extraordinary genius, instead of remaining confined to the traditional Indian thought, absorbs all that is essential in Western thought. It may be said that the aesthetical thought that Tagore develops is the outcome of the elements of truth that he perceives in India and the West.

As already explained, the traditional aesthetical theory of India is spiritualistic. Rabindranath too constructs his aesthetical thought in accordance with this theory. He holds that art is not a matter of feeling only but a bodhi, an illumination of the spirit. He thinks after Indian aestheticians that aesthetic experience is contemplative.

Tagore's conception of beauty is derived from the metaphysical principle of the Upanishads. According to such principle, the self is present in everything. As our self is in all, we have a desire to make all nature our kin. Tagore says, "The function of our soul is to fraternize with others." Through this fraternizing activity self-enlargement and thereby self-knowledge become possible. The Upanishad says, "Verily, it is not that thou lovest

6. Panchabhut, 32.
everything because thou desirest everything, but thou lovest everything because thou desirest thine own self." Thus the delight which is due to the realization of one's own self by fraternizing itself with the whole world is a joy which is purer and more deeply satisfying than pleasure in the ordinary sense. Aesthetic experience, according to Tagore, means experience of this delight.

When man realizes himself through self-aggrandizement, he really contemplates his self. That the universal Spirit realizes itself through self-expansion has been the doctrine of many Western philosophers like Hegel and Schopenhauer. Beauty, Tagore says, is a product of man's contemplative nature. For aesthetic experience, he adds, self-culture and concentration are necessary. But immediately he warns us that self-culture requisite for having aesthetic experience is not a product of intellect, since intellect gives us knowledge of the object as distinguished from the subject. But aesthetic experience which is the same as intuitive experience does not look at the self as distinguished from the not-self; here the objects remain united with ourselves. Thus aesthetic experience is not knowledge given by the intellect.

We have seen that beauty, according to Tagore, is born of man's desire to make his self united with the rest of the world. Beauty, then, is a tie between self and matter. And this tie can be firmly established if the objects of the universe are loved for their own sake.

Aesthetic enjoyment should be emancipated from all interest and desire. Thus Rabindranath takes the principle of disinterestedness as a fundamental differentia of aesthetic experience. Kant, A.C. Bradley and other Western philosophers also have made the principle of disinterestedness central in aesthetic experience. But according to Rabindranath, aesthetic experience is not totally 'will-less', the very term in which Schopenhauer describes it. In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad we find, "thou lovest everything because thou desirest thine own self." The self, in order to realize itself, fraternizes itself with the things of the world. Thus the love of the worldly objects is not wholly disinterested, but interested in a deeper sense.

Again, Tagore holds that the aesthetic delight is not a kind of pleasure. The term 'pleasure' hints at the satisfaction of some 'sense'. But the aesthetic enjoyment of which our poet speaks is the antithesis of pleasure, it is ananda or spiritual bliss.

IV. Rabindranath and Santayana:

(a) Rabindranath's conception of beauty is, then, spiritual. It speaks of self-enlargement and self-realization. It includes the not-self within the self. But Santayana's conception of beauty is diametrically opposite to the view of Tagore. The former reduces beauty to a simple and primitive psychological experience. He says, beauty "exists in perception and cannot exist otherwise. A beauty not perceived is a pleasure not felt, and
Santayana takes beauty as a pleasure, as a kind of sensuous experience. But Rabindranath treats beauty as a kind of spiritual experience.

Santayana says that beauty is "a pleasure" which can be experienced by us. But our point is that we cannot experience pleasures, but we have experiences which are pleasant. Again, to Santayana, aesthetic pleasure stands as substantial, since he speaks of the contemplation of it. But here what is mentionable is that pleasure, whether aesthetic or not, is not an element in experience, but a quality of experience. It is adjectival, not substantial. Further, Santayana sometimes gives to aesthetic pleasure the name of an emotion or a feeling. In one place of The Sense of Beauty he says, "Beauty is a value......it is an emotion, an affection of our volitional and appreciative nature." But our objection against Santayana is that pleasure cannot be the name of a distinct feeling or emotion with a quality of its own. We can never become conscious of a pleasure, but only of an experience or a mental state or condition which is more or less pleasant.

From the above discussion we conclude that aesthetic pleasure cannot stand as a substitute for aesthetic delight. For Rabindranath aesthetic experience is ananda or spiritual bliss, it is more than ordinary sensuous experience.

(b) Rabindranath and Santayana differ from each other as to the basis of art. Santayana, as we have seen

8. The Sense of Beauty, p.47.
9. Ibid., p.51.
Tagore gives a spiritualistic account of the origin of art and literature. The basis of art, he says, lies in the principle of unity. He learns from the Upanishads that what lies at the root of all things in the universe is nothing but the self which is indivisible and one. The one spirit has been manifested in infinite ways. Tagore's aim is like that of the mystics. He wants to see the one in many, to fraternize his self with the world of not-self. When the outer world of not-self is appropriated to the inner world of self, one feels a more pervasive mode of being, and gets delight in such a feeling. Art arises out of the deep feeling of union of one's self with the rest of the world. Tagore says, "The union of the human heart with the universe beyond, soothes the sorrows of man and out of this union arises literature." But here the poet says that everybody has not got the same capacity to feel the oneness with the outer world, since everyone is not endowed with the faculty of imagination through which the feeling of union is made possible.

11. Sahityer Pathe, 70.
We find the poet saying, "Everybody has not the same capacity to feel and enjoy this union with the universe. For the power through which the union becomes not merely one of the senses, but one of the mind and soul, is the power of imagination."  

(c) Both Rabindranath and Santayana hold that art is not imitation, but creation. But this is an apparent agreement between them. According to Santayana, art is always a new construction. It gives an ideal form upon matter. The function of the artist is to appropriate matter to ideal uses. Of course, Santayana speaks of imitative art (p.228). Here imitation includes similarity, but it is more than similarity. In an imitative art the forms of things are reproduced in a fresh substance to a new purpose.

To Rabindranath also, art is not imitation, but not in the Santayanian sense. Art, according to him, consists in giving an ideal form to what was in the mind, to the feeling of oneness with the outer world. Artistic creation is always new, since the artist is inspired by a spiritual vision. To know that the one infinite spirit is manifested in everything in the universe, even in a blade of grass or an atom of dust is to have a vision which is perfectly spiritual in character. Art should always try to reveal this spiritual ideal which lies hidden in the actual or the natural. Of the spiritual or ideal vision which should be embodied in any true art, Dr. Radha-

12. Ibid., 70.
krishnan says in The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, "Without this philosophic vision no great poetry can exist. Poetry may charm us by its wit, surprise us by its skill, thrill us by its richness, amuse us by its variety, lull us into sleep by its rhythm and satisfy our craving for extraordinary incident; but let it lack the vision, it sinks to the level of verse and ceases to be poetry."

(d) Both George Santayana and Rabindranath Tagore are humanists. Both hold that art is for the sake of human life. For Santayana, the artist should portray an ideal picture of life which cannot be found in the actual world we live in. Art is "a rehearsal of rational living". The world fancied by the artist gives us a glimpse of perfect life, life in unison with peace and equanimity. Such a life would be an ideal to human mortals who in their actual lives meet with unhappiness and rivalry.

But Rabindranath's humanistic art has a spiritual side which is absent in Santayana's. That art lies unrelated to human life is meaningless to Rabindranath. He says that art is the expression of the essential nature of man. By the essential nature of man is meant his spiritual nature, his contemplative self. Art, Tagore says, never expresses man in actuality, besmeared with sorrows and pains and sins. Art reveals the greater self, the self which is beyond all sorrows and evils, the self in which intellect, desires and experiences are mixed into a perfect

unity. What is eternally true in life is not the actual self that we suffer, but the real or ideal self which is one, infinite and ubiquitous. Shelley also writes, "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal Truth."

(e) If, according to Tagore, art be the expression of man's self-realization, if it be the revelation of the feeling of union of the self with the rest of the world, it, then, expresses a basic Upanishadic truth which is, viz., "That Thou art", the meaning of which is that what is at the root of all perceptible things of the universe is the self which is indivisible and one. This truth which is revealed by art is not achieved through intellect, but through a mystic process called intuition. This intuition is also called imagination. What intellect gives us is an actual truth. It gives a knowledge of the object as distinguished from the subject. But what intuition gives us is a truth which is higher than the actual truth. It gives a vision of the unity of self and not-self. The truth with which art deals does not lie in a faithful reproduction of facts but in realization. What Tagore accepts as real is this artistic truth. Naturalistic truth given by intellect is not called by him truth, but fact.

Now, let us see what Santayana says about the truth of art. Art, Santayana would not say, reveals the actual truth or what Rabindranath calls "fact", since art lies in the region of imagination. If art does not reveal fact or the natural truth, does it express the spiritual

truth? But this problem cannot arise in respect of Santayana, since he does not treat art in a way in which Rabindranath treats it.

When art, according to Santayana, does not express truth, either naturalistic or spiritualistic, then what does it reveal? Santayana says, "What nature does with existence, art does with appearance". The artist by his imaginative power would draw an ideal picture out of the materials found in the natural world. Santayana says, "In every poet, indeed, there is some fidelity to nature, mixed with that irrelevant false fancy with which poetry is sometimes identified". The artist's world, being fancy-born, is one of appearance which seems to be insignificant in comparison to reality. Santayana writes, "A play of appearance is accordingly some little closed circle in experience, some dream in which we lose ourselves by ignoring most of our interests, and from which we awake into a world in which that lost episode plays no further part and leaves no heirs."

Though art is concerned with appearance, though its idealization of reality seems to be insignificant, yet rational art, says Santayana, is possible and can serve as a significant ideal to human life. A rational poet, by dint of his extraordinary genius, gives all existence an ideal setting which, although it is a fiction, will not be falsified in any of its elements. Santayana says that the poetry

17. Ibid., p.81.
18. Ibid., p.143.
of a rational poet "would be an ultimate truth in its practical scope. It would present in graphic images the total efficacy of real things." 

19. Ibid., p.80.