INTRODUCTORY WORDS

APPROACH TO INDIAN AESTHETICS

The problem of aesthetics is not a recent product of human speculation but a fundamental philosophical problem which arose out of man's interest in beauty, its creation and appreciation. If epistemology deals with the problems of knowing, and ethics with those of moral action, aesthetics investigates the ineffable realm of imagination and feeling — an investigation made none the clearer by the light thrown upon it, by those who actually live in the world of feeling and articulate primarily through their vision and imagination, namely the artists. They create works of art out of the urge of their creative vision and imagination and do not, perhaps cannot generally analyse what they create. An artist can seldom formulate the actual steps of his creation and offer them to the public in neat recipes and formulae. Yet this lack of formulation does not mean that he can create in an undisciplined and wilful manner. Rather he feels compelled to conform to some criterion, to seek for some ideals, in other words, to work within a disciplined system.

If it were not so, his work would be purely personal and hence meaningless for others, perhaps even for himself. He would not be the creator of things which
are universally recognized to be beautiful but the author of a private dream, and his expression would be of no more value to mankind than the expression of a child in play.

On the other hand, philosophers who try to formulate the activity of artists in neat and precise logical formulations, are also in serious danger, of losing the correct perspective in their attempt to contain within an abstract system, experiences which are concrete, unique and particular.

It is not with reason that beauty can be known, but it can be experienced through feeling. The very attempt to understand it, to systematize it within defined boundaries is a self-defeating attempt. It is no wonder therefore that artists cry out in protest and ask the philosophers to confine their intellectual analysis to fields other than that of art. Why should we analyse our experiences of beautiful things at all?, they ask. Is it not enough to create them and to be content with our feelings of them? Is not each beautiful thing unique that it stands by itself? And is not the attempt to set up general criteria for the creation and appreciation of beauty, a violation of beauty itself? Is not theoretical speculation a murdering to dissect? In brief, it is asked if aesthetic theory is possible at all? And herein lies the aesthetic problem presenting itself as a fundamental paradox. On the one hand is the surge of
creative desire and flight of imagination as experienced by the artists in an actual confrontation with art and beauty; on the other there is the desire to understand that feeling, and to order the imagination within precise categories as stipulated by philosophers. Beauty defies rationality, and reason dispels beauty, so it seems to be argued.

The argument in favour of experiencing beauty in the most concrete terms possible is well stated by Walter Pater in the preface to his Renaissance. He points out the futility of discussing terms like beauty and trying to find a universal formula for them. Beauty is a relative value and its definition becomes unmeaningful and useless. The aim of the true student of aesthetics, he maintains, is "not to find its universal formula but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it."¹

¹"Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us little to enjoy what has been well done in art and poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proposition to its abstractness. To define beauty, not
The dispute between beauty and reason would perhaps be resolved in favour of this position were it not for the fact that despite resisting all attempts to be clearly analysed, the aesthetic experience yet implies a universal criterion. The very use of the term beautiful to any object implies a value which is universal, communicable and objectively knowable. When we say for instance "The Taj Mahal is a beautiful piece of architecture", it is clear that we expect others to agree with this statement. If it were not so we would simply say "To me the Taj Mahal is beautiful" in much the same way as we say "I like the taste of mango". That beauty is not wholly relative, is also evident from the fact that certain works of art having stood the test of changing fashions and tastes and have come down to us through the centuries as universally accepted masterpieces.

in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics. 'To see the object as in itself it really is' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever. 'And he who does this distinctly, who can experience vividly' has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what is its exact relation to truth or experience — metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being answerable or not, of no interest to him."

While it is indubitable that beauty is an individual thing and not a general concept yet we cannot overlook the fact that "there are certain kinds of objects which many people agree in calling beautiful, and certain kinds of mental experiences called aesthetic". This seems to lead to the assumption that there is an aesthetic quality which is recognizable.  

The aesthetic dilemma when stated briefly is simply this: man's direct commerce with art and beauty assures him of its universal value, yet knowledge of it escapes him, for in the very attempt to hold it within rational understanding it is dispelled. In the very consciousness that there is a beauty which is communicable and general is the awareness that its presentation to the intellect is impossible, for the moment we try to understand it we lose the complete enjoyment of it.  

The question is: can the apparently contradictory poles of feeling and formulation of experience and knowledge of sense and contemplation be reconciled within the same situation?  

This paradox seems to have been offered a solution in traditional Indian speculative thought. Making no sharp distinction between art and ethics, aesthetics and

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\text{2 Ibid., p. 24.}
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metaphysics, this thought affirms that "beauty" is capable of being known to man intrinsically and positively in the innermost essence of his being. Knowledge and enjoyment are not contradictory terms but synonymous in the highest act of transcendence which secure absolute freedom (moksha) from phenomenal ends.  

The more deeply the "self" is absorbed in its being and the more conscious it becomes of its own true worth the more complete is the delight afforded to it. Absolute truth (sat), pure consciousness (chit) and bliss (ānanda) are the three aspects of the same reality to which all existence tends.  

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3 In Indian thought the concept of "beauty" comes from the metaphysical concept of ānanda which is pure delight. According to the Upanishads cosmic creation derives from ānanda, has its being, life and sustenance in it. "Who indeed could live, who breathe, should not this ānanda be in ākāsa? (Taittiriya Upanishad ii)" All shine after Him who shines. By his radiance is all this illumined." (Mundaka, 11.2.10). Ānanda is the beginning and the end of the world, the cause as well as the effect, the root as well as the shoot of the universe. (mūla and tūla) (Āitareya Āranyaka, 11.1.8.1). (Tr. S. Radhakrishnan).  


"The prayer of every human heart is 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality'." Asato ma sad gamaye, tamaso ma jyotir gamaye, mrtvo ma amrtam gamaye Brh. Upaniṣad, 1.3.27.
This fundamental postulate of Indian thought seems to be explained in the speculations of the Upanishads. Here the problem of knowledge (jnāna) and the problem of experience are bound together in an indissoluble unity. That which the "self" realizes subjectively in the innermost essence of its being in an act of intrinsic realization is the same as the essence of objective reality which it grasps in an act of total awareness. The conflict is not between reason and experience or knowledge and feeling but between a relative experience and an absolute experience, a lower knowledge (anarā) and a higher knowledge (parā). An act of intrinsic perception (darśana) is also an act of intrinsic experience (anubhava).

The problem of beauty in the speculations of the

5Ibid., p. 146. "Brahmanah koso'gi", Thou art the sheath of Brahman. (Teittirīya Upanishad).

"Whosoever worships another deity, in such a manner as he is another, another 'I am', does not know." (Brīhadāranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10) (tr. S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit.).

6"Two kinds of knowledge must be known, the higher and the lower." The lower knowledge is that which the Br., Śāma, Atharva Veda, Ceremonial, Grammar give... but the higher knowledge is that by which the indestructible Brahman is apprehended." (Mundaka, 1.1.4-5 Maitrāyana vi. 21) (tr. S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit.) As will be shown later aesthetic knowledge is a modality of metaphysical knowledge.
Upanishads is one of knowledge inextricably involved within the ethical situation. The question is not whether experience can be formulated and understood but whether it can be enjoyed absolutely. Unlike Plato, the Upanishadic seers never sought to discover a concept of beauty but rather a method and a process whereby it could be realized. This pragmatic approach which distinguishes the whole of Indian philosophy, when applied to aesthetics and art succeeds in avoiding the paradoxical situation resulting from the fundamentally rational approach of Western thought.

Aesthetics in Upanishadic thought not being divorced from ethics, sought not for the meaning and truth of external reality but for the essence which lay hidden behind the passing show of appearance. It's aim was to influence human conduct and thought, and through the disinterested contemplation of beauty in nature and art, to bring about the necessary state of mind required to transcend the ego and the mind.

7The highest good in the philosophy of the Upanishads "is a state of rapture and ecstasy, a condition of ananda where the creature... becomes one with the Creator, or more accurately realises his oneness with Him." S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 237.
While the ultimate aesthetic consciousness like the ethical ideal is purely contemplative the steps prescribed to achieve it through the artistic process are marked by a high degree of activity, an intense act of concentration. It is not therefore without reason that the language of yoga is applied to the artist and to art activity as it is to the seeker of truth and the saint to their spiritual exercises; the basic objective in both cases is the cultivation of dispassionate and disinterested feeling rather than rational understanding. The true creator and appreciator of beauty is not the most rational thinker or skillful craftsman but the one who possesses the greatest sensitivity, literally the greatest heart (hrdaya). 3

These aesthetic speculations lying implicit in the ethical thought of the Upanishads were unearthed centuries later by the classical and medieval Indian rhetoricians whose initial cognate interest in the principles of literary criticism, led them at first along totally different lines of thought but landed them


"The terms heart (hrdaya), thought (vimarsa), bliss (ananda), vibration, (sphūratta, ghūrni), etc. express the same concept." Also cf., pp. 84, 87, 104.
eventually at the same intellectual position. Parenthetically, aesthetics concerning the nature of art and its creation started from the empirical study of grammar, language, and rhetoric and prosody leading to the allied fields of drama and dance, poetry, music and the plastic arts.

Till the time of Bharata the study was purely academic concerning grammatical rules, techniques of versification, dramatic production and the style of presentation alone. The fundamental question posed by Bharata, namely, what is that essential quality of a work of art (a poem or drama) which constitutes its universal appeal? gave a completely new direction to the

Bharata is the reputed author of the most ancient text on dramaturgy, that has come down to us, the famous Nāṭyaśāstra. The exact date of the compilation of the extant version of the text is unknown, but it may perhaps be placed anywhere between the third to sixth century A.D., though there must have been an earlier, perhaps pre-Christian version. It is a collection of rules and instructions pertaining mainly to drama, music, dance and poetry. A great deal of emphasis in this work is laid on aesthetic mood and feeling. It presents indeed a comprehensive psychological analysis of the subject.

In fact the sole aim of Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra is to instruct (Abhinavabhāratī, Vol. 1.7) the dramatist, the stage-manager and the actors in regard to the ways and means of producing the drama, to tell them the necessary constituents of the drama and the manner and material of their presentation. K.C. Pandey, Comparative Aesthetics, Vol. I, The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Benares, 1950, p. 2.
hitherto objective field of art. His solution lay not in the discovery of a conceptual norm, as his predecessors had tried to do, but in the evocation of a subjective state called rasa aroused by the combined aural-visual effect of the drama.  

This rasa, concretely understood as juice or flavour, eventually became the focal theme of controversy for all later Indian aesthetic thinkers and raised the practical study of art from its mundane setting and brought it on a par with other philosophical disciplines. At the same time Bharata's colossal attempt to codify the principles of poetry and drama succeeded in investing a field which had hitherto been considered to be related to mere sensory experience and hence superficial, with a status of respectability and to gain for his voluminous work the distinction of a philosophical-cum-religious treatise. Indeed, the authentic Nātyaśāstra is even today in India the most authoritative work of its kind. Bharata's realistic approach and eventual

11 Nātyaśāstra, VI, V.33 "Out of the union of the Determinants (vibhāva), the consequents (anubhāva) and the transitory mental states (vābhcāripbhāva) the birth of rasa takes place." (tr. Raneiro Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta, Roma, Is M.E.O. 1956, p. 29).

12 The term Nātya is really a composite term including dance and music. It was given the authoritative status of śāstra or veda, in order to establish the higher ethical value of art and aesthetics as against the mere pleasure of entertainment. For this Bharata
location of the aesthetic and artistic quality in a psycho-physical state is comparable to Aristotle's attempt in the West. *Rasa*, as conceived by Bharata is a kind of physic-psychological state induced by the actual secretion of bodily glands which is not perhaps unlike the *katharsis*, is indeed derived from the medical terminology current at the time.  

The problem of aesthetics is for these earliest thinkers primarily psycho-physiological. The experience of beauty is an actual state of pleasure, induced by the systematic presentation of artistic form and is not an objective quality which can be inferred analytically or discerned conceptually.

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declared *nātya* to have a supernatural origin, the word having been given by Brahmā himself (A. Bh. Vol. 1.1).


Three meanings are given to the term *katharsis* - 1) The medical 2) the moral, *purificatio* 3) the religions, *lastratie*. In certain works a particular meaning is prominent. As for instance in Plato's *Sophist* 230c the medical metaphor is more emphasized. The term *rasa* undergoes similar changes of emphasis in meaning. In the *Ṛg-Veda* *rasa* implies the idea of "taste" or "savour". For instance the poet asks "may the satisfying taste (*āśvāda*) of the mixed honey come to me." (*Atharva-Veda* III.13.15). In the *Upanishads* the meaning of *rasa* came to imply the essence of a thing. "Life, breath or the vital air is the *rasa* or essence of the limbs" (Bh. Upan. 1.3.19). And later it came to mean the ecstatic state of bliss, "He is *rasa*, having obtained Him the soul becomes full of bliss" (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, V.7). Cf. Nulk Raj Anand, *The Hindu View of Art*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1957, p. 57.
Bharata’s concept of *rasa* enunciated in a famous aphorism, became a subject of study and analysis to a whole series of thinkers. But its full import was not realized till the time of Abhinavagupta in the 11th century, who freely elaborating on the original concept used it not only to establish the unique character of the aesthetic emotion, but also the essential quality found in an art work, which produces the aesthetic emotion.

Abhinavagupta’s predecessor, Anandavardhana had in his treatise *Dhvanvaloka*, centered his attention around the fact that words which are the material of poetry, used in a certain way possess the power to evoke aesthetic emotion and are not merely symbols for the conveying of fact in a literal manner. This was certainly an important discovery, since his predecessors, namely, Dandin belonging

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14 Abhinavagupta was the chief among Anandavardhana’s followers. He accepted his theory of *dhvani* (cf. note 15) and elaborated it into his own theory of *rasa*. He was a Kashmiri Brahmin and lived during the second half of the tenth century. Apart from being a rhetorician, he is the chief representative of the Saiva metaphysics and religious thought. His most famous works in aesthetics are the 1) *Abhinavabhāratī*, commentary on the *Nātyaśāstra* of Bharata and 2) *Dhvanvalokalocana* of Anandavardhana. He remains without doubt one of the most important thinkers on aesthetics in India.

15 Anandavardhana lived in the middle of the ninth century. He is the author of the *Dhvanvaloka* and was the first to formulate the theory of *dhvani* or poetic meaning.
to the 7th century and Bhaṭṭa Lollata and Śaṅkuka, both to the 8th century, had been unable to distinguish aesthetic knowledge from intellectual knowledge and were trying the impossible task of deriving the art quality from logical and empirical categories. The aesthetic emotion too, was taken by them to be an ordinary mental condition different only in degree from feeling as a psychological condition.

Ānandavardhana's enquiry into the meaning of words and his analysis of the two-fold function of language viz. logical and suggestive, introduced a new level of discussion. The problem which had hitherto sought a solution within the clear range of logical boundaries, now broke out into the ineffable beyond of feeling. If his predecessors had tried to define the essence of art in clear-cut terms, Ānandavardhana drew attention to the inexpressible qualities of a good poem. The essence of poetry he held, lay not in its representational or descriptive powers, no matter how aptly they were presented, but in the emotional mood the poem could arouse. Consequently he drew attention to the fact that it was not the outward formal construction of a work that lent it beauty, but an intangible inexpressible quality given to it by the suggestive power of the words.

This inexpressible suggestive quality called dhvani cannot be analysed scientifically nor explained
in ordinary psychological terms since the feeling aroused by it is not an actual one as that aroused by natural causes but one which is caused by literary and dramatic events. In other words an emotion like a real emotion is aroused and not an actual one. The phenomena is not psychologically but artistically real.

About the same time as Ānandavardhana another aesthetician, Bhatta Māyaka, drew attention to the generalized state of the aesthetic consciousness. This state, arising from an illusory situation, is unconditioned, he contended, by the events and reactions of everyday life. Consequently it derives its universality by the elimination of time, space, and the particular subjective state. Aesthetic experience, he pointed out for the first time, marks a definite break with the world (samsāra) which is dominated and conditioned by the law of cause and effect.

These deductions were the pillars upon which Abhinavagupta erected his aesthetic theory. Accepting Ānandwardhana's bifurcation of the aesthetic from the logical and Bhatta Māyaka's aesthetic experience as a state of generalized consciousness, not unlike the subjective universality which Kant was to discover centuries later, Abhinavagupta built a comprehensive theory of pure feeling undisrupted by rational considerations, existing as an

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16 Bhāṭṭa Māyaka is placed around 900 A.D.
independent, consistent whole which soon found a kinship with the religious state rather than with the logical. The norm of artistic creation which his predecessors had tried to discover as an objective quality, was for him none other than the creative energy of the poet (pratibhā) which filling him entirely with itself, is transferred spontaneously into poetic expression.

Abhinavagupta's singular contribution lies in freeing the artistic consciousness from all natural and practical relationships and in investing it with meaning and positive value, the meaning and value lying not in any end outside but wholly within the work itself. The aesthetic consciousness being of a different order from discursive consciousness, transcends the domain of intellect and language and illumines, so to speak, the thing-in-itself (svarūpa = svalaksana). Freed from all practical interests, the aesthetic consciousness disengages itself also from the bondage of the ego and worldly passions. Detached and distanced from the phenomenal order of things, it exists autonomously on a different plane and is no less real than the world, even though it belongs to no part of it. In fact, its reality is greater than the world because by discarding the outward appearance, transitory events and fleeting moods (bhāva) it reveals the universal essence of things. In this the art work and the aesthetic emotion are identified into an inseparable whole. This
act of identify invariably accompanied by the greatest job, Abhinavagupta shows to be the true meaning of \textit{rasa}.

The term \textit{rasa} however continued to designate apart from the experience, the aesthetic quality present in the work of art, which may be said to be \textit{rasavant}; the critic, connoisseur or spectator who appreciates the work may be called \textit{rasika}; the act in and through which the aesthetic emotion is enjoyed or contemplated may be technically styled \textit{rasāsvādana}.

Consequently in an art work, \textit{rasa} is that unique quality which moves the audience; in the spectators' experience it is the distinctive emotion produced by the art object, and in the artists-intuition it constitutes his creative energy. Strictly it is an all inclusive indivisible experience analyzed separately for purposes of academic discussion alone.

This solution to the aesthetic paradox which Bharata had indicated but not resolved and which had totally evaded those who came after him was accepted unquestioningly by Abhinavagupta's successors; indeed, they added little of real value to his theory. Consequently Abhinavagupta till today remains the most important and characteristic Indian aesthetician. His basic conception of art as an independent spiritual activity freed from all egoistic taints, an attitude rather than a quality,
has been since the time of Kant the main postulate of Western aesthetics as well. Many of his findings though developed in a totally different time and context, find an echo in modern theories. Clive Bell's "significant form" provokes a state of mind which is not very much unlike the rasa experience. "Art", says Bell "transports us to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; one's anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life."^{17}

In working out the full implications of the concept of rasa Abhinavagupta is also led to accept the ethical value of the aesthetic experience and thereby he returns to the basic Indian stand-point articulated in the Upanishads. He does not however totally identify the two, but holds that aesthetics belongs to the same realm as ethics and religion, the two being twins born of the same source, as it were.^{18} The calm reposeful state of rasa (viprānta) is essentially good as not only does it release the personality from daily tensions but enables the individual to realize its intrinsic nature (svabhāva) the realization of which, according to the

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^{17}Clive Bell, Art, Chatto and Windus, London, 1914, p. 36.

^{18}Raneiro Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. op. cit., p. xxiv, xxv, also p. 100.
Upānishads, leads to pure bliss (anandam). It is a liberating experience, for in its final moment the inner essence of the individual is completely identified with the essence of the art-work. This identification is the core of the ātman theory given in the Vedānta and when freely applied to art, gives a striking similarity. Rāsa then, is taken to be the ātman or soul of the art work.

Clive Bell's concept of art also leads him to realize its ethical value. "A work of art", he says, "is ethical because it is a means to a good state of mind. Art is above morals or rather all art is moral because... works of art are immediate means to good.... A work of art has immense ethical value because it provokes aesthetic ecstasy."19 Further he compares art to religion, using almost the same terminology of the rasa theorists. "Art and religion", says he, "belong to the same world. Both are bodies in which men try to capture and keep alive their shyest and most ethereal conceptions. The kingdom of neither is of this world. Rightly therefore, do we regard art and religion as twin manifestations of the spirit." The identification of subject and object sought for by the Indian aestheticians to the exclusion of all else is realised partially by Leo Tolstoy. "And however poetic, realistic, striking, or interesting a work may be,

19 Clive Bell, Art, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
it is not a work of art if it does not evoke that feeling (quite distinct from all other feelings) of joy and of spiritual union with another (the author) and with others (those who are also infected by it)."20

The theory of poetic appreciation and creation developed by the medieval rhetoricians is perhaps the only independent aesthetic theory in Indian thought, wherein problems are raised concerning exclusively the nature of the experience afforded by works of pure art, the nature of the art activity, the nature of the work of art and the criteria for the evaluation of such works. Nonetheless it must be noted that though this theory of art was developed autonomously and therefore bears some resemblance to modern aesthetic theories even, it does not imply as modern aesthetics seems to do, an isolation from metaphysical and utilitarian principles. While the concept of rasa which epitomises the whole of Indian thought, does suggest that the aim of art is nothing beyond that of pure aesthetic delight, rasa derives itself from the metaphysical concept of ananda and is in the ultimate analysis an integral experience, transforming the individual personality as a whole. The delight afforded by the rasa experience pervades all aspects of life and being, and is not confined to any single phase of life

or to any exclusive human faculty. The self-sufficiency of the aesthetic experience does not suggest an isolation from other kinds of experience; it is not an existence in vacuum, but an all inclusive compactness. The aesthetic experience is different from other experiences in as much as it is a total state of being. Within the complete fullness of the aesthetic state all elements, such as the mental and sensuous are transformed, and not simply evaded. The aesthetic delight arises out of the transformation which the personality undergoes in its experiences of everyday life. The withdrawal from daily experiences that is suggested is only an initial withdrawal at a lower level in order to repesses them at the highest level. For instance, an ordinary psychological emotion (bhāva) which in everyday life is suffered passively, is in the poetic and dramatic form transformed and enjoyed as rasa. The point to be noted is that even though the medieval Indian rhetoricians developed the theory of an aesthetic state as an independent, autonomous area of experience, and in this respect are similar to modern aestheticians, it did not lead them, likewise, to the development of a theory of art for arts' sake.

The concept of an aesthetic experience as pure sensuous delight, devoid of any intellectual, utilitarian and metaphysical content is not the obvious conclusion
to which their point of view leads. The presentation of an undiluted sensuous content devoid of ulterior interest, is a prerequisite to the aesthetic experience as it enlists the undivided attention of the spectator and involves him in a direct participation with the work of art. Direct, discriminating perception at the sense level must however lead to the plane of intuitive knowledge, wherein beauty is felt as an immediate experience. The level of intuitive knowledge in Indian thought, wherein the highest value obtains, is a state of being, knowing and feeling beyond that of normal sense-perception and intellectual categories. It is essentially a metaphysical state, in as much as it involves the transformation of the entire personality when it comes into direct contact with the Real. It is at this level that the experience of Ananda is afforded. When this delight comes to the spectator through the appreciation of a work of art, it is termed Rasa.

That art while fully satisfying the aesthetic function fulfils at the same time an ethical and metaphysical function is a point of view which becomes clearer in those technical discussions which deal with the methods and principles of production pertaining to the plastic arts, such as sculpture, painting and architecture. These discussions are contained fully in the texts,
technically called śilpaśāstras, written in classical and early medieval India.

An important point emerges from these texts, namely, the great technical skill and efficiency required for the production of an art work. Indeed the term śilpin is nearer in its meaning to craftsman than to artist in the sense we understand the term today. The perfection of work as an external act is a necessary aspect of the work of art. The technique of art production is two-fold, incorporating simultaneously the acts of visualization and of execution. The former giving the inner meaning and vitality to the outward form, and the skillful accurate execution of the work according to prescribed standards helping to discipline the mind for its act of visualization. The emphasis on the disciplined externalization of the work makes the art activity an ethical one, and the artist akin to a karmavogī, that is to a man who works under strict ethical regulations. "The śilpin", according to one śilpaśāstra, should understand the Atharva-veda, the thirty-two śilpa-śāstras and the Vedic mantras (hymns) by which deities are invoked. He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of holy beads and a ring of kusa grass on his finger, delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding strange women, piously acquiring a knowledge of the various
sciences, such one is indeed a craftsman. In another place it is said that the painter must be "no sluggard", not given to anger, holy, learned, self-controlled, devout, and charitable, such should be his character.


22 From a Tamil Silpaśāstra translated by Kearns, Indian Antiquary, Vol. V, 1876.

Ibid., from Grunwedel, Mythologie des Buddhismus, p. 192.

Also cf., "The artist is subject, in the sphere of his art, to a kind of asceticism, which may require heroic sacrifices. He must be fundamentally in the direct line as regards the end of his art, forever on his guard not only against the vulgar attractions of easy execution and success, and against the slightest relaxation of his interior effort, for habits diminish, if unexercised and ever so much more by any careless exercise not proportionate to their intensity. The artist must suffer sleepless nights purify himself without ceasing, voluntarily abandon fertile places for barren places, full of insecurity. In a certain sphere and from a particular point of view, in the sphere of making and from the point of view of the good of the work, he must be humble and magnanimous, prudent, upright, strong, temperate, simple, pure, ingenious. All these virtues which the saints possess simpliciter, purely and simply and in the line of the sovereign good, must inform the artist secundum quid, in a certain relation, in a line apart, extra-human if not inhuman. So he easily assumes the tone of a moralist when speaking or writing about his art, and he is well aware that he has virtue to preserve. 'We shelter an angel whom we never cease to offend. We ought to be the guardians of that angel. Shelter your virtue carefully...." (Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, tr. J.F. Scanlan, Charles Scribner's and Sons, New York, 1943, p. ).
There is in all this a great deal of priestly and pedantic scholasticism, heavily tinted by Brahmanical ideology. But the meaning that the artist must be pure of heart and self-disciplined, active and efficient in work and a responsible member of the society or community to which he belongs, is perfectly clear. He should be one who could help the healthy functioning of a social order by the production of useful articles and is not an eccentric individual who lives as a parasite on society with the sole purpose of producing works for aesthetic pleasure alone.

The technique of mental visualization in art through the physical act of externalization is akin to the psycho-physical ritual of yoga which forms in Indian philosophical thought the practical basis for working out abstract truths, and thereby making intellectual awareness into a living realization. Art like yoga consequently became a method and process rather than an attainment, the emphasis being laid not on the quality of the finished work as an end in itself but on the working out of that end according to a disciplined method.

In modern times, A.K. Coomarswamy and Rabindranath Tagore interpreted the traditional Indian position in the light of modern theories and showed the rationale of
accepting the point of view that art is a total human activity. Both maintain the position that the primary function of art is self-development or in Upanishadic terms "atma-sanskṛti." Thereby they returned to the basic Upanishadic position wherein beauty is experienced as an integral part of reality and the function of art is the transformation of the human personality from a lower to a higher order. While A.K.Coomarswamy emphasized the approach similar to that held by the Christian scholastics which makes art akin to human intelligence, Rabindranath Tagore like the devotees (bhaktas) of India, stressed the deeply emotional aspect of art. The two approaches are distinct but as we have stated, not irreconciliable. They appear simultaneously in Indian aesthetic theories, the stress being at times on one aspect, at others on the other. The overall aim of Indian aesthetics nonetheless remains predominantly metaphysical, wherein the conflict between sense and contemplation, between feeling and form or experience and knowledge is ultimately resolved.