In our discourse so far we have constantly been using words or phrases like "art", "the work of art", "the art activity" etc., which assumes an understanding on the part of the reader, of what is meant by such words and phrases. We must therefore now deal with these and find out as explicitly as possible as to what is meant when we refer to an activity as "artistic" and an artifact, object or composition as a "work of art".

The attempt to clarify the nature of art has invariably presented innumerable difficulties. The demand for a definition of art assumes the existence of some common characteristic present in all the arts, despite their differences in form and content, irrespective of whether the art form is dance or music, painting or poetry, pottery or architecture, for instance, The range of art works however is so vast that the very possibility of a definition seems to be inadmissible. What common set of characteristics, for instance, is there between a totem pole, carved, by a Red Indian craftsman and a sculptured work such as Rodin's Thinker, or between a group dance of a primitive tribe and the highly sophisticated rendering of the classical Indian
Bharatanātyam as performed by a modern dancer? Even art forms created within the same temporal or cultural milieu do not apparently share common characteristics. Each art due to the peculiar medium it uses—colour, sound, movement and so on—has its own unique technique and form which cannot be applied to the other. The art of bātik painting is subject to laws quite distinct from portrait painting in oils, or landscape painting in water colours. Sometimes the attempt to provide a common ground for all the diverse arts, leads to the interpretation of one art in terms of the other, as when we speak of the music of poetry, or the poetry of architecture, or the architectonic effects of a painting, or sculpture as dramatic. Confusion can only result in such sweeping comparisons. Even well-known terms like "music" and "painting" and "architecture" are likely to be more misleading than useful; for, popular music produced for entertainment is a different sort of composition from the poetic beauty of the ghazal or the rigid

1 A technique of wax painting on cloth.

2 The ghazal is the typical art form which combines lighter variations of classical Indian music with Persian poetry. Coming into existence with the Muslim urban cultural impact on Indian classical music it is even today one of the most popular forms of music prevalent in North India, mainly Uttar Pradesh, of which Lucknow and Delhi are the traditional focal centres.
purity of the rāga. And there is all the difference in the world, between a Kangra miniature and an Ajanta fresco, between the Taj Mahal and a country cottage.

Is art then to be defined in terms of some criterion by means of which its sphere can be distinctly marked from other human activities? It is interesting to note that till modern times, neither in the West nor in India any sharp distinction was made between what is today called the "fine arts" and "applied arts" or the common handicrafts. Plato included everything from the

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3 A musical composition made up of a fixed number of notes. It forms the basis of the Indian musical system and is based on a harmoniously permutation of notes. Theoretically thousands of rāgas are possible, but in fact, only a hundred or so are in use, of which approximately thirty are mastered by an artist. The Indian system requires strict conformity to the structure of the rāga, within the framework of which alone the musician can improvise. The rāgas are classified according to moods and seasons.

4 A miniature painting typical of the Kangra school of art which flourished in the Western Himalayas during the 18th and 19th century. It is noted for its fine line drawing and vivid colour schemes. Indian miniatures were painted for the pleasure of the royalty and the nobility who collected them in an album. The themes are generally religious but are very much secular in spirit.

5 The famous murals painted on a massive scale on the walls of the Ajanta caves in the district of Aurangabad in Maharashtra. These date back to the second through to the sixth century A.D. and like classical Indian sculpture are informed by the quality of inner movement, vitality and grace.
simplest skills of shoemaking and carpentry to the aesthetic arts of music, drama and poetry to the highest and most difficult art of life itself, under the term "art".

What then is meant by art? Taken in its widest and most general sense, that is, the sense in which it includes both shoe making and living, it means nothing more than the employment of human energy and skill towards the production of an organised result. In this broad sense inasmuch as it signifies an ordering of nature's chaotic elements it is not very different in its aim

It is significant that the Greeks used the same word technē which means literally technical or skillful in regard to the arts and crafts. The artist (craftsman or artisan) was a professional technites. Technē was applied broadly to the profession of the builder, potter, carpenter etc. as well as to the poet, painter and musician. The Greeks also considered rhetoric as a technē art. Cf. Plato's Theory of Art by Rupert C. Lodge Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. London, 1933.

Cf. Irwin Edman, Arts and the Man. W.W. Norton, New York, 1939, p. 35. "So far from having to do merely with statues, pictures, and symphonies, art is the name for that whole process of intelligence by which life, understanding its own conditions, turns them to the most interesting, or exquisite."

Also, cf. A.K. Coomarswamy, Transformation of Nature in Art, Dover Publications, New York, p. 35. "Neither the Society nor the specific arts can be rationally enjoyed without a recognition of the metaphysical principles to which they are thus related, for things can be enjoyed only in proportion to their intelligibility, speaking, that is, humanly and not merely functionally."
from science, logic and moral activity, for in all these fields the effort is primarily towards greater organisation whether it be of materials, facts, thoughts or actions.  

In the early stages of human development, when men were occupied wholly with the task of disciplining the physical forces around them, there was in fact no specific difference between these three fields of human activity which was a co-ordinated effort towards the mastery and control of the environment.

In India till modern times no distinction was made between the artist and the craftsman both of whom were expected to follow a routine in mental concentration and method similar to the saint and man of intellect. The goal of all these was to realise a clarity of vision, which revealing the inner law of outward things, would result automatically in right doing, thinking and making, whether it concerned the living of life as a whole or simply the construction of a single article such as a stone image, a chariot or an arrow, for instance. This all inclusive sense of art emphasizes its basic character which is simply to arrange and order through the force of the individual's physical, mental and emotional energy, disorganized elements, and to project them externally as the outer aspect of an inner principle.

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8Irwin Edman, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
This point of view typical of the Indian approach presupposes that the impulse to art springs from the same source as the impulse to science and religion, namely from the intuitive faculty of man. It also implies that art is not the product of an accidental, incidental or superfluous activity of man, like the impulse to play which he pursues only when his appetitive wants are satisfied; nor is it the result of any extra-mental faculty, or of a mysterious sixth sense. In other words, it is not a functional, symptomatic or mystic tendency but belongs to the essential part of his being, the same part from which springs his rationality, and morality.

Ultimately knowledge is one. It is only in the manner of its employment and the purpose for which it is used that the consequent distinctions of art, science and morality arise. Hence in Indian thought even as in Plato, art and morality are considered identical since both concern ultimately a perfection of "doing" and tap the same source from which epistemological truth too, derives. Art, being not different in its aim and source from the highest in man forms a part of his spiritual activity; in Indian traditional terminology one would say that it is the sātvik element as brought into human activity through the rājasik.9

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9 Knowing is an act of identity, wherein the subjective and objective are not irreconciliable categories,
This broad connotation of art, emphasizes no doubt its contemplative aspect, it should be added however that according to the Indian point of view the idea of art covers not only the moment of intuition but also execution. The methods of yoga employed mainly for religious purposes, apply equally to the practise of art, and yoga is also dexterity in action; *yoga karmasu kausalam*, so says the *Bhagavad-Gita* (11, 50).

but merge in a common unity. Reality (*satya*) like truth and Beauty subsists where the intelligible and sensible meet. Coomaraswamy elaborates this point which, he thinks, is implied "in the scholastic definition of truth as *adequatio rei et intellectus* and is also what is meant by Aristotle's identity of the soul with what it knows." In this connection he quotes St. Thomas 'knowledge comes about in so far as the object known is within the knower' (*Sum. Theol.*, 1, Q.59, A.2), and argues that what St. Thomas said was in "radical contradiction to the conception of knowledge and being as independent acts, which point of view is only logically and not immediately valid". (A.K. Coomaraswamy *Transformation of Nature in Art*, op. cit., p. 11). It is from this single source that the impulse to science and philosophy also springs; the mode of art, completes it.

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10 No distinction was made as is done today between the fine and grosser arts. What today goes under the category of skill, craft, applied art etc. was included in their comprehensive term *silpa*, under which was listed eighteen or more professional arts. Personal accomplishments were termed *kala* in which all the performing arts along with cookery and the performance of magic was included. (Cf. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 7). The status of the particular art depended not on the extent to which it was free from practical ends but on the status of the artist. (Ibid., p. 180) Crafts were considered equally worthy of embodying the artistic quality).
In the application of art to human ends, the term acquired also a narrower usage wherein it came to signify the production of those concrete works which embody in visible and tangible form the artist's intuition. In traditional Indian society, these works covered a wide range from the simplest article made for human use to the most elaborate.

When the term "art" is employed in its narrower sense wherein it signifies the production of particular objects according to a specific method, it can be defined more concisely in terms of this method. This method is distinct, and quite different from those which are employed in the pursuit of other human activities such as the scientific and practical.

In the first place it must be noted that the function of art is not to state facts, nor to analyze concepts, nor to act as an aid to prayer or meditation. Its function is chiefly that of providing a complete integrated area, a self-sufficient region within which the artist works with the main purpose of creating outward forms in perfect conformity with an inner vision. The process which ends in a work of art is at once a discovery and an act of self-realization. George Whalley expresses a similar idea when he says in his analyses of the poetic process, "a work of art is as it were an
extension of some valuable experience of the artist... not simply in mental, spiritual, or experiential terms, but also in physical. The artist's experience has somehow been embodied, incarnated, made physical while still preserving its spiritual identity."11

The work fails to imbibe the artistic quality if the inner vision is confused, vague and influenced by considerations other than those which pertain to the perfection of its form, or if the externalization is not skillfully executed. A perfect clarity of vision does not make the externalizing process an automatic one, as the medium has problems peculiar to itself and these can only be mastered by a studied application of technique. A skillful reproduction without the support of an inner vision is not art any more than is a pure mental vision, without its physical embodiment.

Artistic truth is attained when the outward embodiment conforms to the inner visualization, hence the work of art is not simple expression but the complex process of discovery and self-discovery. The inward intuition and the outer form working in a close and intimate relationship go to form an organic structure, the outward aspect forming the manifested body, so to speak, of the intuitive soul.

While the ultimate purpose of art in general is that of creating forms in perfect conformity to an inner vision, specific works of art can be made, indeed have been and should be made for numerous social and utilitarian ends as well. Artists have been known to compose for name, fame, and wealth among other reasons, to say nothing of amusement, political motives and instruction.¹²

The fact that works have been made for a specific purpose does not make them lesser works of art. However, it is when such external considerations distort the mental vision and effect the formal principles of construction that the artistic content diminishes. It is quite possible that art can be made for a specific end and yet maintain its integrity of form. If this were not so, architecture which always serves an end would never be considered to be art. Some of the world's greatest masterpieces like Michelango's massive mural covering the roof of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, would never have come into existence if the artist had not been compelled to work according to the dictates of a Pope whose only motive was to find a decoration grand enough to bring

honour to his name as a patron of arts. The images of gods and religious icons which abound in Indian art, have all been made for the purpose of providing an adequate symbol to the devotee and act as aids to his meditation. There is no contradiction here with the earlier statement that the purpose of art is to form a self-sufficient system and not to serve any external ends. All that is meant is that while the process of art is pure it can be applied to an end. The application does not effect the process. Music, dance and drama in the East have been for centuries a hieratic art,\textsuperscript{13} and it is well-known that Shakespeare wrote his plays mainly for the purpose of earning a livelihood. If art be the employment of man's creative energy towards the production of objects according to an inner law, the most important quality of an art-work is the clarity with which the artist's intuition has been embodied within. The fact that a work has been made for a functional purpose should not by itself be sufficient to debar it from being an art work.

Similarly the fact that an object has been made with no end in view (if this is possible, for every

human activity pre-supposes some end) is not sufficient to make it an art work if it lacks the necessary qualities of energy, clarity and vigour which should have gone into its making. In other words, a musical composition, an abstract design, or a fantasia in colour or sound is not art just by virtue of its being non-functional. If it were so every naive and superficial effort to construct things for pure perceptual value would have to be taken for art. It is often argued that artefacts once constructed for use, such as the stone implements and pottery belonging to a remote civilization, "become" works of art through the passage of time when however they lose their functional purpose.\textsuperscript{14} Such a view gives to art an accidental quality not belonging to it. A work of art is that alone, which reflects the individual, conscious vision of the artist; whether it serves a specific purpose or not is incidental to its value. The question of ends is in any case a relative one. All human activity presupposes some end and every medium imposes its natural limitations upon the artist who is never really free. A musical piece with tones, sounds, harmonies and rhythms has its own laws to which the composer must conform, even as the craftsman conforms to the functional requirement of the article he makes. The degree of conformity may

vary but in every case, whether it be in the so called "fine arts" or in "handicraft", the end is ever present; art lies in the manner in which the end is worked out and absorbed into the whole pattern, the manner must be such so as not to intrude and disrupt the autonomy of the art process but to fit into it organically. It is this conformity of ends and means, form and content, which is referred to as the integrity of the art work, and which must be maintained at all costs. Poetry has its own rules of composition, as painting has its techniques, and though these devices of art creation can be and are transcended from time to time, the artist always works within a framework, even though it be self-imposed. In the strict sense of the term a totally free artist is not an artist at all. In fact the fixed forms within which the artist is often required to work and the limitations of the medium are a challenge to his creative powers. He endeavours to put the stamp of his individuality.

15 Cf. Anand K. Coomaraswamy and G.K. Duggirala, op. cit., p. 3. "Indian acting or dancing — the same word, nātya covers both ideas — is thus a deliberate art. Nothing is left to chance; the actor no more yields to the impulse of the moment in gesture than in the spoken word.... It is the action, not the actor which is essential to dramatic art.... The more deeply we penetrate the technique of any typical Oriental art, the more we find that what appears to be individual, impulsive, and 'natural', is actually long-inherited, well-considered and well-bred."
The artist projects his idea through the difficult medium of matter, organizing and arranging it in a manner most suitable to the successful projection of his vision.

Art is not an end in itself but a process, a way of making things. The art object is the working out of this process, which can apply equally to handicraft as to fine art, to religious icons as to secular images.

The difference between craft and art lies not in the fact that the latter is a pure form of art and the former mixed, but in the purpose for which each is made.

For instance Indian classical music is highly technical. The structure of the rāga, is based on scientific principles without an understanding of which no proper and adequate appreciation is possible. But, despite these fixed rules (bandish) of the rāga the performer can express great individuality in its rendering. The true artist in India is not necessarily the one who composes a new melody, but the one who can express himself well within the prescribed musical form. In the West the composers like Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Wagner are of far greater consequence than those who play their music. In India the composers names are practically unknown. The same principle holds in Indian classical dancing where new compositions and innovations are rare. The fixed form does not upset the Indian artist, rather it offers a challenge to him and helps him to achieve great depth of expression.
The question now arises as to what does the artist express. Evidently he does not express abstract ideas and concepts which are best done through the logical syntax of language, but directly experienced laws and principles through concrete imagery. Art is not the expression of intellectual knowledge but of intuitive knowledge. The artistic process does for subjective experiences what logic does for ideas, it clarifies and brings them to an objective plane. In doing so it helps to release the individual from the passive condition of suffering his own private feeling (tamas) and brings him through a state of intense activity (rajas) to that of calm clarity (satva). The final stage is reached when the art intuition has been physically externalized and the artist can contemplate it as does an aesthete.

Art then acquaints us with the experiential side of life, bringing the subjective life of man to an objective plane. This does not mean as some recent exponents of the cognitive theory of art, like Susanne Langer have tried to make out, that our feelings are

17 Tamas, Rajas, Satvika are, according to Sāmkhya metaphysics, the three intertwinnable qualities of phenomenal nature, ever present in varying degrees. Pure tamas is the lowest limit of blind nature, and pure satvika, the highest point of clarity. These points are ideal conceptions only; existence implies an intermingling of all three. In the human psyche, these three strands signify the development of the spirit.
thereby rationally understood and that art is merely a kind of knowing. All that we have just said means that the artistic feeling is experienced by itself in a generalized way, apart from the experience of the personalized emotion that produces it. Borrowing a phrase from Susanne Langer, we can say justifiably that the experience is "abstracted" from the background of emotions of which it is composed. Art, no doubt is also concerned with the perception of form as it is abstracted from its physical elements; we only wish to emphasize the fact that it deals primarily with experience, its intrinsic characteristic being not perceptual alone, but inclusive of feeling and awareness. At this level art develops ranges of sensibility and widens the dimensions of man's inner life.

If science is the formulation of thought, art is the transformation of feeling. This transformation is universal, in as much as it is within the capacity of all human beings to undergo it, yet every articulation is a unique experience.

18 Langer uses the term "abstraction" in connection with visible form which she says is abstracted from the background of materials of which the art work is composed. Feeling and Form, pp. 49, 59.
Art is not a mechanical reproduction but an individual process, produced at the cost of a tremendous personal effort. If the view of "craft as art" has fallen into disfavour now, it is mainly because there is a tendency to mass produce objects and blindly repeat forms which have long since lost their vitality.

From the foregoing discussion we can see how difficult it is to provide a concise formula that will serve as a definition of art. Most of the brief definitions that are generally offered such as "art is intuition", or "art is disinterested pleasure", or "art is significant form" etc., fall short of being true definitions. For, while they cover one or another aspect of the art process, they fail to take into consideration many other aspects which are equally important.

Therefore, if at all we undertake the almost impossible task of defining art, it should be done in the broadest manner possible.

To define art simply as intuition as Benedetto Croce and the adherents of the Expressionist theory do, is to take an extremely one-sided view of the problem; Similarly to regard it merely as a form of manual dexterity as the Greeks did is also to misunderstand the total nature of the art activity. There is also a general
tendency to call the practioner of any fine art, an artist. This sweeping definition overlooks the fact that art is a special kind of activity rather than the production of a special kind of result. As James Cousins points out, "To be a practioner of an art is not necessarily to be an artist, any more than to practise thinking is to be a philosopher, or to practise speech is to be a poet." ¹⁹ It would perhaps be nearer the truth to call an artist, "one who makes his craft a fine art". Ambigious as this definition is, it does draw attention to the basic characteristic of art, that is, to its being essentially a means and a process (whatever be the medium it uses) for the individual to gain greater dimensions of experience and perception, such as cannot be gained through the means of ordinary knowledge and activity.

As such we might define art as a kind of dexterity in thought as well as in execution, a special mode of knowledge and a special method of execution which liberates and transforms the artist from the ordinary to a unique and higher level of experience. Understood in this way art is a quality which belongs as much to the artist himself as it does to the mode of knowledge and action he employs.

¹⁹ James Cousins, The Faith of the Artist, Adyar, 1941, p. 49.
We have said that when the term art is used in its narrower sense, it is taken to mean the production of concrete objects which are called works of art. What are the qualities that such works must possess in order to distinguish them from ordinary products is the problem to which we must now turn.