



**EIILM UNIVERSITY**  
S I K K I M

## INDIAN AESTHETICS

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# Chapter 1

## Indian Aesthetics Introduction

### Meaning

Indian aesthetics is Indian art evolved with an emphasis on inducing special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience, or with representing them symbolically.

### Rasa theory



### Introduction

Of particular concern to Indian drama and literature are the term 'bhava' or the state of mind and rasa (Sanskrit lit. 'juice' or 'essence') referring generally to the emotional flavors/essence crafted into the work by the writer and relished by a 'sensitive spectator' or sahr̥daya or one with positive taste and mind. Rasas are created by bhavas. They are described by Bharata Muni in the Nāṭyaśāstra, an ancient work of dramatic theory.

Although the concept of rasa is fundamental to many forms of Indian art including dance, music, musical theatre, cinema and literature, the treatment, interpretation, usage and actual performance of a particular rasa differs greatly between different styles and schools of abhinaya, and the huge regional differences even within one style.

Experience of rasa (rasAnubhava)

A rasa is the developed relishable state of a permanent mood, which is called sthāyī bhava. This development towards a relishable state results by the interplay on it of attendant emotional conditions which are called Vibhavas, anubhavas and sancharī/ vyAbhichārī bhavas. The

production of aesthetic rasa from bhAvas is analogous to the production of tastes/juices of kinds from food with condiments, curries, pastes and spices. This is explained by the quote below:

Vibhavas means karana or cause. It is of two kinds: Alambana, the personal or human object and substratum, and Uddipana, the excitants. Anubhava, as the name signifies, means the ensuants or effects following the rise of the emotion. vyAbhichArI bhavas are described later.

Vedic concept

The Rishi Praskanva insists (Rig Veda I.46.6) that the sources of knowledge some of which are open and some hidden they are to be sought and found by the seekers after Truth, these sources are not available everywhere, anywhere and at all times. In this context Rishi Agastya (Rig Veda I.187.4) stating thus reminds the ardent seekers about the six kinds of Rasa or taste which food has but which all tastes cannot be found in one place or item, for these tastes are variously distributed throughout space. Food, in this context, means matter or objects or thoughts, which are all produced effects, effects that are produced owing to various causes. The Rasas are the unique qualities which bring about variety in things created whose source is one and one only.

**Lists of rasas**



## **Nāṭyakalpadrumam**

Nāṭyakalpadrumam is a book written by (late)Nāṭyāchārya Vidūshakaratnam Padma Shri Guru Māni Mādhava Chākyār (who was the ultimate exponent ofKoodiyattam and Abhinaya) about all aspects of ancient Sanskrit drama theatre tradition of Kerala- Kutiyattam. It was first published in Malayalam (1975) by Kerala Kalamandalam, with financial assistance of Sangeet Natak Academi, New Delhi.[3] This monumental work serves as the reference to scholars and students. The entire book is written in the oldSanskrit text style closely following Nāṭyaśāstra. Both structure and content of the book illustrates the excellence of the author in both Sanskrit and Nāṭyaśāstra. It has received the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for the year 1975. The book has been translated and published in Hindi by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

### **Introduction**

The author begins his work with an introduction and a few benedictory and introductory versus written in Sanskrit language. Here he salutes Gods, Goddesses and his great Gurus like Panditaratnam Pannisseri Sankaran Nampoothiripad andHis Highness Darsanakalanidhi Rama Varma Parikshith Thampuran. Then he summarises the beginning of Nāṭya andNāṭyaveda as told by the great sage Bharata in his monumental work Nāṭyaśāstra and salutes the sage. Then in one stanza the author narrates his horoscope (Jataka) which depicts his scholarship in Jyotisha. Then again he prays for the blessings of sage Bharatha the propagator of Nāṭya on the earth.

In the last stanza he compares his work to the Kalpadruma- the heavenly tree which gives everything requested. Nāṭyakalpadruma also gives all details about Nāṭya that is Koodiyattam and so the name of the work Nāṭyakalpadruma is meaningful in all senses.

### **Chapters**

The eight chapters included in this work are

- Samjnāprakarana
- Paribhāshāprakarana
- Mudra-Taalaparakarana
- Swaraprakarana
- Rasaprakarana
- Abhyasaprakarana
- Drishtāntaprakarana

- Vaisheshikaparakarana.

The first chapter Samjnaparakarana gives the names of costumes and other materials used in Koodiyattam. A detailed description of different names etc. used in Koodiyattam for different steps, actions etc. are also given in this chapter.



Satwikābhinaya- Guru Maani Madhava Chakkiyar as Ravana (kathi vesham) in Kutiyattam

The second chapter Paribhashapakarana gives the names and descriptions of different types of narration, inacting, characters, their languages, characteristic features etc. This chapter also narrates different types of acting which are included in koodiyattam on special occasions. For example how to act on stage without dialogue such things like capital city, mountain, trees, garden, hermitage, seasons, heaven etc. are given presicely. Famous Abhinayas (acting) such as Kailasoddhārana (lifting of Kailasa), Pārvaṭī Viraha (separation of Pārvaṭī) etc. are also included in this chapter. Details of wearing different costumes and different types of abhinaya are also given here.

The third chapter Mudra-Taalaparakarana gives elaborate narration of Mudras (movements of hands and fingers), their names and their usage in Abhinaya. Different Taalas used in Koodiyattam are also described here. The usage of different Taalas according to different Swaras(Rāgas) and different contexts is the next point discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter, Sw araprakarana deals with different Swaras (Ragas) used in Koodiyattam they are 20 in number which are called Muddan, Shreekanthi, Thondu, Aarthan, Indalam, Muralindalam, Veladhuli, Danam, Veeratarkan, Tarkan, Korakkurunji, Paurali, Poraneeru, Dukkagandharam, Chetipanchamam, Bhinnapanchamam, Shreekamaram, Kaishiki, Ghattanthari and Anthari. Details of their usage in abhinaya according to Rasas, Characters, Contexts etc. are also narrated with suitable examples.

The fifth chapter which is called Rasaprakarana deals with Satwika-Abhinaya (Satwikābhinaya)- the most important one among the four types of Abhinayas. Topics such as Nāṭya, Nritya, Nritta, Rasa, Bhava, Vibhava, Anubhāva, Satwikabhāva, Vyabhicharibhāva, their inacting, movements of eyes for different Rasas and Bhavas etc. are also discussed here . Some examples of Rasābhinaya (Rasa-Abhinaya) are also given. Thus this chapter gives a clear picture of the theory and practice regarding Rasābhinaya. The minute details of Netrābhinaya- enacting with eyes, eyes only are given here by the greatest master of Netrābhinaya.

The sixth chapter Abhyāsaprakarana deals with practical training in Koodiyattam. Here the author gives twenty one types of eye movement which are to be practiced by a Koodiyattam artist who specialises in Rasābhinaya. These are very important for Koodiyattam artist as well as artists from other classical art forms. Special duties of Chakiars (actors), Nangiarammas (actresses) and Nambiars (drummers who play Mizhavu) are also narrated here in detail .

Drishtāntaprakarana the seventh chapter contains examples of different types of abhinaya, narrations of different types of stories and conversations etc. used in Koodiyattams. Peculiarities of languages to be used in different contexts by different characters are also given here.

The last chapter Vaisheshikaprakarana gives Slokas used as benedictory verses in the beginning of different Koodiyattams with and without Abhinaya, Slokas used in Nirvahana, Slokas used at the time of elaborate special Abhinayas such as the beauty of heroine etc., Slokas used by Vidūshaka (Vidushaka) which are mostly in regional language Malayalam or Prakrit, examples of stories used by Vidushaka etc. It also gives the details of special stage arrangements to be made for the performance of some rare scenes. Then the author gives the special rules and regulations to be observed by the Koodiyattam troop at the time of performance especially when it is done in a Koothampalam (traditional theatre) or in a traditional Hindu temple which are the real stages of this traditional, classical art form. Some special rights of traditional families of

artists are also given. Details of special performance in some traditional Hindu temples in Kerala are also discussed in this chapter.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Indian Aesthetics**

Indian art evolved with an emphasis on inducing special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience, or with representing them symbolically. According to Kapila Vatsyayan, "Classical Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, literature (kāvyā), music, and dancing evolved their own rules conditioned by their respective media, but they shared with one another not only the underlying spiritual beliefs of the Indian religio-philosophic mind, but also the procedures by which the relationships of the symbol and the spiritual states were worked out in detail."

In the Pan Indian philosophic thought the term 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram' is another name for the concept of the Supreme. 'Sat' is the truth value, 'Shiv' is the good value & 'Sundaram' is the beauty value. Man through his 'Srabana' or education, 'Manana' or experience and conceptualization and 'Sadhana' or practice, through different stages of life (Ashramas) comes to form and realize the idea of these three values to develop a value system. This Value-system helps develop two basic ideas 1) that of 'Daksha' or the adept/expert and 2) of Mahana/Parama or the Absolute and thus to judge anything in this universe in the light of these two measures, known as 'Adarsha'. A person who has mastered great amounts of knowledge of the grammars, rules, & language of an art-form are adepts (Daksha), whereas those who have worked through the whole system and journeyed ahead of these to become a law unto themselves is called a Mahana. Individuals idea of 'Daksha' and 'Mahana' is relative to the development of the concept of 'Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram.' For example, Tagore's idea of these two concepts should be above any common man's and many perceive Tagore as a 'Mahana' Artist in the realm of literature. This concept of Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram, a kind of Value Theory is the cornerstone of Indian Aesthetics.

Of particular concern to Indian drama and literature are the term 'Bhava' or the state of mind and rasa referring generally to the emotional flavors/essence crafted into the work by the writer and relished by a 'sensitive spectator' or sahr̥daya. Poets like Kālidāsa were attentive to rasa, which blossomed into a fully developed aesthetic system. Even in contemporary India the term rasa denoting "flavor" or "essence" is used colloquially to describe the aesthetic experiences in films; "māsala mix" describes popular Hindi cinema films which serve a so-called balanced emotional meal for the masses, savored as rasa by these spectators.

Rasa theory blossoms beginning with the Sanskrit text Nāṭyashāstra (nāṭya meaning "drama" and shāstra meaning "science of"), a work attributed to Bharata Muni where the Gods declare that drama is the 'Fifth Veda' because it is suitable for the degenerate age as the best form of religious instruction. While the date of composition varies wildly among scholars, ranging from the era of Plato and Aristotle to the seventh century CE. The Nāṭyashāstra presents the aesthetic concepts of rasas and their associated bhāvas in Chapters Six and Seven respectively, which appear to be independent of the work as a whole. Eight rasas and associated bhāvas are named and their enjoyment is likened to savoring a meal: rasa is the enjoyment of flavors that arise from the proper preparation of ingredients and the quality of ingredients. What rasa actually is, in a theoretical sense, is not discussed and given the Nāṭyashāstra's pithy wording it is unlikely the exact understanding of the original author(s) will be known.

The theory of the rasas develops significantly with the Kashmiri aesthetician Āṇandavardhana's classic on poetics, the Dhvanyāloka which introduces the ninth rasa, shānta-rasa as a specifically religious feeling of peace (śānta) which arises from its bhāva, weariness of the pleasures of the world. The primary purpose of this text is to refine the literary concept dhvani or poetic suggestion, by arguing for the existence of rasa-dhvani, primarily in forms of Sanskrit including a word, sentence or whole work "suggests" a real-world emotional state or bhāva, but thanks to aesthetic distance, the sensitive spectator relishes the rasa, the aesthetic flavor of tragedy, heroism or romance.

The 9th–10th century master of the religious system known as "the nondual Shaivism of Kashmir" (or "Kashmir Shaivism") and aesthetician, Abhinavagupta brought rasa theory to its pinnacle in his separate commentaries on the Dhvanyāloka, the Dhvanyāloka-locana (translated by Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan, 1992) and the Abhinavabharati, his commentary on the Nāṭyashāstra, portions of which are translated by Gnoli and Masson and Patwardhan. Abhinavagupta offers for the first time a technical definition of rasa which is the universal bliss of the Self or Atman colored by the emotional tone of a drama. Shānta-rasa functions as an equal member of the set of rasas but is simultaneously distinct being the most clear form of aesthetic bliss. Abhinavagupta likens it to the string of a jeweled necklace; while it may not be the most appealing for most people, it is the string that gives form to the necklace, allowing the jewels of the other eight rasas to be relished. Relishing the rasas and particularly shānta-rasa is hinted as being as-good-as but never-equal-to the bliss of Self-realization experienced by yogis.

Aestheticism (or the Aesthetic Movement) is an art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes for literature, fine art, music and other arts. It was particularly prominent in Europe during the 19th century, but contemporary critics are also associated with the movement, such as Harold Bloom, who has recently argued against projecting social and political ideology onto literary works, which he believes has been a growing problem in humanities departments over the last century.

In the 19th century, it was related to other movements such as symbolism or decadence represented in France, or decadentismorepresented in Italy, and may be considered the British version of the same style.

### **Aesthetic literature**

The British decadent writers were much influenced by the Oxford professor Walter Pater and his essays published during 1867–68, in which he stated that life had to be lived intensely, with an ideal of beauty. His text *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) was very well regarded by art-oriented young men of the late 19th century. Writers of the Decadent movement used the slogan "Art for Art's Sake" (*L'art pour l'art*), the origin of which is debated. Some claim that it was invented by the philosopher Victor Cousin, although Angela Leighton in the publication *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism and the Legacy of a Word* (2007) notes that the phrase was used by Benjamin Constant as early as 1804. It is generally accepted to have been promoted by Théophile Gautier in France, who interpreted the phrase to suggest that there was not any real association between art and morality.



One of many Punch cartoons about æsthetes

The artists and writers of Aesthetic style tended to profess that the Arts should provide refined sensuous pleasure, rather than convey moral or sentimental messages. As a consequence, they did not accept John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold's conception of art as something moral or useful. Instead, they believed that Art did not have any didactic purpose; it need only be beautiful. The Aesthetes developed a cult of beauty, which they considered the basic factor of art. Life should copy Art, they asserted. They considered nature as crude and lacking in design when compared to art. The main characteristics of the style were: suggestion rather than statement, sensuality, great use of symbols, and synaesthetic effects—that is, correspondence between words, colours and music. Music was used to establish mood.

Predecessors of the Aesthetics included John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, and some of the Pre-Raphaelites. In Britain the best representatives were Oscar Wilde and Algernon Charles Swinburne, both influenced by the French Symbolists, and James McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The style and these poets were satirised by Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience* and other works, such as F. C. Burnand's drama *The Colonel*, and in comic magazines such as *Punch*.

Compton Mackenzie's novel *Sinister Street* makes use of the type as a phase through which the protagonist passes as he is influenced by older, decadent individuals. The novels of Evelyn Waugh, who was a young participant of aesthete society at Oxford, describe the aesthetes mostly satirically, but also as a former participant. Some names associated with this assemblage are Robert Byron, Evelyn Waugh, Harold Acton, Nancy Mitford, A.E. Housman and Anthony Powell.

#### Aesthetic visual arts

Artists associated with the Aesthetic style include James McNeill Whistler, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Aubrey Beardsley. Although the work of Edward Burne-Jones was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery which promoted the movement, it also contains narrative and conveys moral or sentimental messages hence it falls outside the given definition.

#### **Aesthetic Movement decorative arts**



Aesthetic Movement antiques at Florian Papp, New York City

The primary element of Decorative Art is utility. The convenient but trite maxim 'Art for Art's Sake', identifying art or beauty as the primary element in other branches of the Aesthetic Movement, especially Fine Art cannot apply in this context. Decorative art must first have utility but may also be beautiful. Decorative art is dissociated from Fine Art.

Important elements of the Aesthetic Movement have been identified as Reform and Eastern Art. The Government Schools of Design were founded from 1837 onwards in order to improve the design of British goods. Following the Great Exhibition of 1851 efforts were intensified and Oriental objects purchased for the schools teaching collections. Owen Jones, architect and Orientalist was requested to set out key principles of design and these became not only the basis of the schools teaching but also the propositions which preface *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which is still regarded as the finest systematic study or practical sourcebook of historic world ornament.

Jones identified the need for a new and modern style which would meet the requirements of the modern world, rather than the continual re-cycling of historic styles, but saw no reason to reject the lessons of the past. Christopher Dresser, a student and later Professor at the school worked with Owen Jones on *The Grammar of Ornament*, as well as on the 1863 decoration of The Oriental Courts (Chinese, Japanese, and Indian) at the South Kensington Museum, advanced the search for a new style with his two publications *The Art of Decorative Design* 1862, and *Principles of Design* 1873.

Production of Aesthetic style furniture was limited to approximately the late 19th century. Aesthetic style furniture is characterized by several common themes:

- Ebonized wood with gilt highlights.

- Far Eastern influence.
- Prominent use of nature, especially flowers, birds, ginkgo leaves, and peacock feathers.
- Blue and white on porcelain and other fine china.

Ebonized furniture means that the wood is painted or stained to a black ebony finish. The furniture is sometimes completely ebony-colored. More often however, there is gilding added to the carved surfaces of the feathers or stylized flowers that adorn the furniture.

As aesthetic movement decor was similar to the corresponding writing style in that it was about sensuality and nature, nature themes often appear on the furniture. A typical aesthetic feature is the gilded carved flower, or the stylized peacock feather. Colored paintings of birds or flowers are often seen. Non-ebonized aesthetic movement furniture may have realistic-looking 3-dimensional-like renditions of birds or flowers carved into the wood.

Contrasting with the ebonized-gilt furniture is use of blue and white for porcelain and china. Similar themes of peacock feathers and nature would be used in blue and white tones on dinnerware and other crockery. The blue and white design was also popular on square porcelain tiles. It is reported that Oscar Wilde used aesthetic decorations during his youth. This aspect of the movement was also satirised by Punch magazine and in *Patience*.

In 1882, Oscar Wilde visited Canada where he toured the town of Woodstock, Ontario and gave a lecture on May 29 entitled; "The House Beautiful". This particular lecture featured the early Aesthetic art movement, also known as the "Ornamental Aesthetic" art style, where local flora and fauna were celebrated as beautiful and textured, layered ceilings were popular. A gorgeous example of this can be seen in Annandale National Historic Site, located in Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada. The house was built in 1880 and decorated by Mary Ann Tillson, who happened to attend Oscar Wilde's lecture in Woodstock, and was influenced by it. Since the Aesthetic art movement was only prevalent from about 1880 until about 1890, there are not very many examples of this particular style left nowadays.

## Chapter 3

### Abhinaya

Abhinaya is a concept in Indian dance and drama derived from Bharata's Natya Shastra. Although now, the word has come to mean 'the art of expression', etymologically it derives from Sanskrit abhi- 'towards' + nii- 'leading/guide', so literally it means a 'leading towards' (leading the audience towards a sentiment, a rasa)

Aside from its clear impact on dramatic tradition, it is used as an integral part of all the Indian classical dance styles, which all feature some kind of mimetic aspect to certain compositions, for example in depictions of daily life or devotional pieces.

Types

1 Lokadharmi and Natyadharmi Abhinaya

- 2 The Four Ingredients of Abhinaya
  - o 2.1 Āṅgika Abhinaya
  - o 2.2 Vāchika Abhinaya
  - o 2.3 Āhārya Abhinaya
  - o 2.4 Sāttvika Abhinaya
- 

**Lokadharmi and Natyadharmi Abhinaya**



Dancer performing abhinaya

A principal division is that between natyadharmi abhinaya and lokadharmi abhinaya. The former is poetic and stylistic in nature, following a codified manner of presenting emotion and expression which pertains to the conventions of the stage, which appear to have greater 'artistry' by virtue of taking something from natural life and rendering it in a suitably stylised way. Lokadharmi abhinaya is the opposite: realistic and un-stylised, involving very natural expression and movement, as occurs in daily life. Often this is the more difficult as the possibilities for interpretation of an emotion or a line of poetry are endless.

#### The Four Ingredients of Abhinaya

Abhinaya can further be divided into four categories, as set down by the Natya Shastra.

#### **Āṅgika Abhinaya**

This relates to the movement of the body, and how the thing to be expressed is portrayed by movement of the anga or limbs, which include facial expressions. There are different schools of Abhinaya, with the expressions ranging from the grotesque to the understated, from the crude to the refined. Āṅgika abhinaya forms either Padartha abhinaya (when the artiste delineates each word of the lyrics with gestures and expressions), or Vaakyartha abhinaya (where the dancer acts out an entire stanza or a sentence).

#### **Vāchika Abhinaya**

This relates to how expression is carried out through speech. It is obviously therefore more overtly used in drama, but also in music: in how the singer expresses the emotion through his or her singing. Traces of Vāchika Abhinaya are preserved in Kuchipudi and Melattur style of Bharatanatyam where the dancers often mouth the words of the songs to support Padartha abhinaya. Kerala still has on stage art forms (Naatya) which have Vāchika Abhinaya as a dominant component - Koodiyattam, Nangyar Koooothu, Ottan, Seetangan & Parayan - the tree types of Thullal, Mudi yettu are the most popular ones.

#### **Āhārya Abhinaya**

Another means of representation of the play is indeed the costumes and physical decorations of the actors and the theatre. In dramas, and dance dramas, costume and making are distinguished by the sex, race, sect or class or the social position of the characters, giving the production of the presentation some semblance of reality. The decorations of the stage theatre including lights and



accessories are related to the scene of the depiction in which enhances the rasa between the audience and artists also comes under this category.

Aharya Abhinaya is very prominent in kathakali where there are totally different dress and makeup for 4 different characters. For e.g.: The good characters have packha vesham (green makeup) while the demons are evil characters have kati vesham in which the nose is painted red. But in solo dance performances, aharya abhinaya is as a convention.

### **Sāttvika Abhinaya**

Sāttvika Abhinaya is often confused with facial expressions, which belong to Āngika Abhinaya. Sāttvika Abhinaya is the mental message, emotion or image which is communicated with the audience through performing of the inner emotions. The dancer or actor has to use her own experience, something out of which will be authentic, to capture the audience and to elicit an empathetic response. Examples of Sāttvika Abhinaya are a motionlessness, a perspiration, gooseflesh, a change of the voice, a trembling, a change of the colour, tears and a fainting.



### **Koodiyattam**

Koodiyattam also transliterated as Kutiyattam, is a form of Sanskrit theatre traditionally performed in the state of Kerala, India. Performed in the Sanskrit language in Hindu temples, it is believed to be 2,000 years old. It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.



**Koodiyattam [kutiyattam]**, meaning "combined acting," signifies Sanskrit drama presented in the traditional style in temple theatres of Kerala. It is the only surviving specimen of the ancient Sanskrit theatre. It has an attested history of a thousand years in Kerala, but its origin and evolution are shrouded in mystery. Kutiyattam and chakyar koothu were among the dramatized dance worship services in temples of ancient India, particularly Tamilakam (modern-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala). Several ancient kings and members of other professions are listed to have authored several works for these services. There is evidence of these services being done all over ancient subcontinent during time of cholas and pallavas.

### **Performance style**



Guru Mani Madhava Chakyar as Ravana in Kutiyattam.

Traditionally, Koodiyattam has been performed by Chakyars (a subcaste of Kerala Hindus) and by Nangyaramma (women of the Ambalavasi Nambiar caste). The name Koodiyattam, meaning playing or performing together, is thought to refer to the presence or more actors on stage who act in consonance with the beats of the mizhavu drummers. Alternatively, it may also be a reference to a common practice in Sanskrit drama where a single actor who has performed solo for several nights is joined by another.

After Chakyar's first tour to New Delhi, he was awarded immediately with Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1964 for his "contributions to Chakyar Koothu and Kutiyattam" — the first national recognition to the maestro and the art form. His supremacy in Rasa-abhinaya and Netrabhinaya and Kutiyattam attracted lot of people towards the art form.



### **Koodiyattam face makeup**

He performed Koodiyattam all over India and popularized the same. He and his troop did Koodiyattam performance in places like Madras(1962, 1973 and 1977), Madhura (1962), New Delhi (1964, 1966, 1974, 1979 and 1983), Varanasi (1964 and 1979), Bombay (1973), Ujjain(1982), Bhopal (1987), etc.

The President of India, scholar and philosopher, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan invited him to perform Kutiyattam at Rashtrapati Bhavan(presidential palace) in 1964 and was impressed by the guru's exceptional acting skill. His Kutiyattam performances, lectures and demonstrations at centres like Madras Music Academy in Chennai, International Centre for Kathakali in New Delhi, Experimental theatre in New Delhi and Bombay, and National Centre for the Performing Arts in Bombay fetched wide popularity and recognition for his Abhinaya and Kutiyattam.



Naayika (heroine) in Kutiyattam. Female roles are done only by women in Kutiyattam. Vasadattain Swapnavāsavadattam Kutiyattam.

He choreographed and directed acts of the plays like Kalidasa's Abhijñānaśākuntala, Vikramorvaśīya and Mālavikāgnimitra; Bhasa's Swapnavāsavadatta and Pancharātra; Harsha's Nagananda for the first time in the history of Koodiyattam. He and his troupe performed these Kutiyattams all over India.

He performed Chakyar Koothu and Koodiyattam for All India Radio and Doordarshan for the first time, which helped to attract thousands of listeners to these traditional art forms. It was he who started demonstrations in Koodiyattam to popularise the same.

In early 1960s Maria Christoffer Byrski, a Polish student doing research in Indian theatres at Banaras Hindu University came to study Koodiyattam from the maestro Mani Madhava Chakyar and became the first non-Chakyar/nambiar to learn the art form. He stayed in Guru's home at Killikkurussimangalam and studied the art form in traditional Gurukula way.

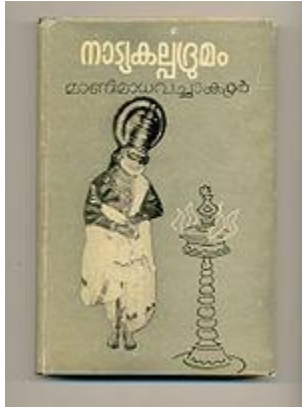
A dying art form

Koodiyattam has traditionally been an exclusive art form performed in special venues called koothambalams in Hindu temples and access to these performances were highly restricted to only caste Hindus. Also, performances are lengthy taking up to forty days to complete. The collapse of the feudal order in the nineteenth century in Kerala led to a curtailment in the patronage extended to Koodiyattam artistes and they faced serious financial difficulties. Following a revival in the early twentieth century, Koodiyattam is once again facing a lack of funding, leading to a severe crisis in the profession. UNESCO has called for the creation of a network of Koodiyattam institutions and gurukalams to nurture the transmission of the art form to future generations and for the development of new audiences besides fostering greater academic research in it. The Margi Theatre Group in Thiruvananthapuram is a notable organisation dedicated to the revival of Kathakali and Koodiyattom in Kerala.[13] The Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama, awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the highest award for performing artists, to Koodiyattam artists like, Kalamandalam Sivan Nambootiri (2007), Painkulam Rama Chakyar (2010) and Painkulam Damodara Chakyar (2012).

## Chapter 4

### Nrityacharya

#### 1 Nāṭyakalpadruma



Nāṭyakalpadrumam the master treatise on all aspects of Kutiyattam written by Guru Mani Madhva Chakyar

- Nāṭyakalpadruma (1975), a Kerala Sahitya Academy Award-winning book on Koodiyattam written by Guru Mani Madhava Chakyar, considered authoritative by scholars.
- The Nāṭya Shāstra, an ancient work of dramatic theory Bharata Muni describes the Sanskrit theatre of the Gupta Empire; Koodiyattam is believed to preserve some aspects of the performance style of that period.



#### Mohiniyattam

.Mohiniyattam performer striking a pose



Mohiniattam also spelled Mohiniattam, is a classical dance form from Kerala, India. Believed to have originated in 16th century CE, it is one of the eight Indian classical dance forms recognised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. It is considered a very graceful form of dance meant to be performed as solo recitals by women.

Mohiniyattam was popularised as a popular dance form in the nineteenth century by Swathi Thirunal, the Maharaja of the state of Travancore (Southern Kerala), and Vadivelu, one of the Thanjavur Quartet. Swathi Thirunal promoted the study of Mohiniyattam during his reign, and is credited with the composition of many music arrangements and vocal accompaniments that provide musical background for modern Mohiniyattam dancers. The noted Malayalam poet Vallathol, who established the Kerala Kalamandalam dance school in 1930, played an important role in popularizing Mohiniattam in the 20th century.

The term Mohiniyattam comes from the words "Mohini" meaning a woman who enchants onlookers and "aattam" meaning graceful and sensuous body movements. The word "Mohiniyattam" literally means "dance of the enchantress". There are two stories of the Lord Vishnu disguised as a Mohini. In one, he appears as Mohini to lure the asuras (demons) away from the amrita (nectar of immortality) obtained during the churning of the palazhi (ocean of milk and salt water).

In the second story Vishnu appears as Mohini to save Lord Shiva from the demon Bhasmasura. The name Mohiniyattam may have been coined after Lord Vishnu; the main theme of the dance is love and devotion to God, with usually Vishnu or Krishna being the hero. Devadasis used to perform this in temples. It also has elements of Koothu and Kottiyattom. Mohiniyattam is a drama in dance and verse.

The dance involves the swaying of broad hips and the gentle movements of erect posture from side to side. This is reminiscent of the swinging of the palm leaves and the gently flowing rivers

which abound Kerala, the land of Mohiniyattam. There are approximately 40 basic movements, known as atavukal.

The three pillars — Sri Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma, Sri Vallathol Narayana Menon (a poet and founder of the institution, Kerala Kalamandalam) and Smt. Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma (considered “the mother of Mohiniyattam”) — contributed to the shaping out of the contemporary Mohiniyattam during the later part of the 20th century. Guru Kallyanikutty Amma cleared the mythical mystery behind the name of this dance form and gave it the most convincing explanation based on truth, social and historical evolution, interpreting Mohiniyattam as the dance of a beautiful lady than that of a mythical enchantress from heaven.

The costume includes white sari embroidered with bright golden brocade (known as kasavu) at the edges. The dance follows the classical text of Hastha Lakshanadeepika, which has elaborate description of mudras (gestural expressions by the hand palm and fingers).

Mohiniyattam - Nritta or Pure dance

Mohiniyattam is a beautiful dance form of the women of Kerala and it is one of the classical dances of India too. Among the various vrithi-s (styles) detailed by Bharata Muni in his Natya Shastra, Mohiniyattam most resembles the kaisiki (graceful) type. Consisting, as it does, of gentle Angahara-s and belonging to the Lasya style which is feminine, tender and graceful: The kaisiki style is most appropriate for the erotic sentiment and its related expressions.

It has often been said that the movements of the limbs and body of the danseuse of Mohiniyattam should be gentle and graceful like the waves in a calm sea or the swaying of the paddy plants in the field, in a breeze.

To know some basic principles that govern the Mohiniyattam dance style will be of great help for all artistes and art lovers to enjoy this art form.

1. Standing erect without bending the knees is called Samamandalam.

2. The knees should be bent and spread apart to form the shape of a pot.

This is known as Aramandalam. (Vattakkal). The feet for Aramandalam should be set flat on the floor about two and a half inches apart, the right foot turned to the right corner and the left foot, to the left.

The distance between the toes being about twelve inches.

3. The third one is called Muzhumandalam. In this the knees should be bent and spread apart, the toes alone would touch the ground and the danseuse

should sit on her heels,producing a squatting stance.

4.When the knees are positioned between Muzhumandalam and Aramandalam

it is called Mukkalmandalam. (the word ‘mukkal’ means three forth ).

5.When the knees are positioned in between Aramandalam and Samamandalam it is called as Kaalmandalam.

(the word ‘Kal’ in Malayalam means one fourth).

### Dance in india

Bharata Muni enunciated the eight Rasas in the Nāṭyasāstra, an ancient work of dramatic theory. Each rasa, according to Nāṭyasāstra, has a presiding deity and a specific colour. There are 4 pairs of rasas. For instance, Hasya arises out of Sringara. The Aura of a frightened person is black, and the aura of an angry person is red. Bharata Muni established the following.

- Śṛṅgāram Love, attractiveness. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: light green
- Hāsyam Laughter, mirth, comedy. Presiding deity: Pramata. Colour: white
- Raudram Fury. Presiding deity: Rudra. Colour: red
- Kāruṇyam Compassion, mercy. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: grey
- Bībhatsam Disgust, aversion. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: blue
- Bhayānakam Horror, terror. Presiding deity: Kala. Colour: black
- Vīram Heroic mood. Presiding deity: Indra. Colour: yellowish
- Adbhutam Wonder, amazement. Presiding deity: Brahma. Colour: yellow

### Śāntam rasa

A ninth rasa was added by later authors (See History section). This addition had to undergo a good deal of struggle between the sixth and the tenth centuries, before it could be accepted by the majority of the Alankarikas, and the expression Navarasa (the nine rasas), could come into vogue.

- Śāntam Peace or tranquility. deity: Vishnu. Colour: perpetual white

Shānta-rasa functions as an equal member of the set of rasas but is simultaneously distinct being the most clear form of aesthetic bliss. Abhinavagupta likens it to the string of a jeweled necklace; while it may not be the most appealing for most people, it is the string that gives form to the necklace, allowing the jewels of the other eight rasas to be relished. Relishing the rasas and



particularly shānta-rasa is hinted as being as-good-as but never-equal-to the bliss of Self-realization experienced by yogis.

Other additions

In addition to the nine Rasas, two more appeared later (esp. in literature): Additional rasas:

- Vātsalya Parental Love
- Bhakti Spiritual Devotion

However, the presiding deities, the colours and the relationship between these additional rasas have not been specified.

List of bhavas

According to the nATyashAstra, bhAvas are of three types: sthAyI, sanchari, sAttvika based on how they are developed or enacted during the aesthetic experience. This is seen in the following passage:

Some bhAvas are also described as being anubhAva if they arise from some other bhAva.

sthAyI

The Natyasastra lists eight bhavas with eight corresponding rasas:

- Rati (Love)
- Hasya (Mirth)
- Soka (Sorrow)
- Krodha(Anger)
- Utsaha (Energy)
- Bhaya (Terror)
- Jugupsa (Disgust)
- Vismaya (Astonishment)

Sanchari

Sanchari Bhavas are those crossing feelings which are ancillary to a permanent mood. A list of 33 bhAvas are identified therein.

sAttvika

The sAttvika-bhAvAs themselves are listed below.

Thus, physical expression of the feelings of the mind are called sAttvika.

Rasas in the performing arts



Raudram rasa of the destructive fury of goddess Durga in Bharatanatyam

The theory of rasas still forms the aesthetic underpinning of all Indian classical dance and theatre, such as Bharatanatyam, kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Manipuri, Kudiyaattam, Kathakali and others. Expressing Rasa in classical Indian dance form is referred to as Rasa-abhinaya. The Nāṭyaśāstra carefully delineates the bhavas used to create each rasa.

The expressions used in Kudiyaattam or Kathakali are extremely exaggerated theatrical expressions. The opposite of this interpretation is Balasaraswathi's school of subtle and understated abhinaya of the devadasis. There were serious public debates when Balasaraswathi condemned Rukmini Devi's puritanistic interpretations and applications of Sringara rasa. The abhinaya of the Melattur style of abhinaya remains extremely rich in variations of the emotions, while the Pandanallur style expressions are more limited in scope.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Dance in India**

#### **Natyashastra**

Rasa theory blossoms beginning with the Sanskrit text Nātyashāstra (nātya meaning "drama" and shāstra meaning "science of"), a work attributed to Bharata Muni where the Gods declare that drama is the 'Fifth Veda' because it is suitable for the degenerate age as the best form of religious instruction. The Nātyashāstra presents the aesthetic concepts of rasas and their associated bhāvas in Chapters Six and Seven respectively, which appear to be independent of the work as a whole. Eight rasas and associated bhāvas are named and their enjoyment is likened to savoring a meal: rasa is the enjoyment of flavors that arise from the proper preparation of ingredients and the quality of ingredients.

#### **Kashmiri aestheticians**

The theory of the rasas develops significantly with the Kashmiri aesthetician Āṇandavardhana's classic on poetics, the Dhvanyāloka which introduces the ninth rasa, shānta-rasa as a specifically religious feeling of peace (śānta) which arises from its bhāva, weariness of the pleasures of the world. The primary purpose of this text is to refine the literary concept dhvani or poetic suggestion, by arguing for the existence of rasa-dhvani, primarily in forms of Sanskrit including a word, sentence or whole work "suggests" a real-world emotional state or bhāva, but thanks to aesthetic distance, the sensitive spectator relishes the rasa, the aesthetic flavor of tragedy, heroism or romance.

The 9th - 10th century master of the religious system known as "the nondual Shaivism of Kashmir" (or "Kashmir Shaivism") and aesthetician, Abhinavagupta brought rasa theory to its pinnacle in his separate commentaries on the Dhvanyāloka, the Dhvanyāloka-locana (translated by Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan, 1992) and the Abhinavabharati, his commentary on the Nātyashāstra, portions of which are translated by Gnoli and Masson and Patwardhan. Abhinavagupta offers for the first time a technical definition of rasa which is the universal bliss of the Self or Atman colored by the emotional tone of a drama.

#### **Inclusion of bhakti**

In the literary compositions, the emotion of Bhakti as a feeling of adoration towards God was long considered only a minor feeling fit only for Stothras, but not capable of being developed into a separate rasa as the sole theme of a whole poem or drama. In the tenth century, it was still

struggling, and Acharya Abhinavagupta mentions Bhakti in his commentary on the Natya Shastra, as an important accessory sentiment of the Shanta Rasa, which he strove with great effort to establish. However, just as Shantha slowly attained a state of primacy that it was considered the Rasa of Rasas, Bhakti also soon began to loom large and despite the lukewarmness of the great run of Alankarikas, had the service of some distinguished advocates, including Tyagaraja. It is the Bhagavata that gave the great impetus to the study of Bhakti from an increasingly aesthetic point of view.

### **Attention to rasas**

Poets like Kālidāsa were attentive to rasa, which blossomed into a fully developed aesthetic system. Even in contemporary India the term rasa denoting "flavor" or "essence" is used colloquially to describe the aesthetic experiences in films.

- Abhinaya
- Nātyasāstra
- Nātyakalpadrumam
- Rasa lila
- Sanskrit Literature
- Sanskrit Theatre

### **Abhinaya**

is a concept in Indian dance and drama derived from Bharata's Natya Shastra. Although now, the word has come to mean 'the art of expression', etymologically it derives from Sanskrit abhi- 'towards' + ni- 'leading/guide', so literally it means a 'leading towards' (leading the audience towards a sentiment, a rasa)

Aside from its clear impact on dramatic tradition, it is used as an integral part of all the Indian classical dance styles, which all feature some kind of mimetic aspect to certain compositions, for example in depictions of daily life or devotional pieces.

### **Aesthetic emotions**

Aesthetic emotions refer to emotions that are felt during aesthetic activity and/or appreciation. These emotions may be of the everyday variety (such as fear, wonder or sympathy) or may be specific to aesthetic contexts. Examples of the latter include the sublime, the beautiful, and the kitsch. In each of these respects, the emotion usually constitutes only a part of the overall aesthetic experience, but may play a more or less definitive role for that state.

## **Visual arts and film**

The relation between aesthetic emotions and other emotions is traditionally said to rely on the disinterestedness of the aesthetic experience (see Kant especially). Aesthetic emotions do not motivate practical behaviours in the way that other emotions do (such as fear motivating avoidance behaviours).

The capacity of artworks to arouse emotions such as fear is a subject of philosophical and psychological research. It raises problems such as the paradox of fiction in which one responds with sometimes quite intense emotions to art, even whilst knowing that the scenario presented is fictional (see for instance the work of Kendall Walton). Another issue is the problem of imaginative resistance, which considers why we are able to imagine many far-fetched fictional truths but experience comparative difficulty imagining that different moral standards hold in a fictional world. This problem was first raised by David Hume, and was revived in current discussion by Richard Moran, Kendall Walton and Tamar Gendler (who introduced the term in its current usage in a 2000 article by the same name). Some forms of artwork seem to be dedicated to the arousal of particular emotions. For instance horror films seek to arouse feelings of fear or disgust; comedies seek to arouse amusement or happiness, tragedies seek to arouse sympathy or sadness, and melodramas try to arouse pity and empathy.

## **Music**

In the philosophy of music, scholars have argued whether instrumental music such as symphonies are simply abstract arrangements and patterns of musical pitches ("absolute music"), or whether instrumental music depicts emotional tableaux and moods ("program music"). Despite the assertions of philosophers advocating the "absolute music" argument, the typical symphony-goer does interpret the notes and chords of the orchestra emotionally; the opening of a Romantic-era symphony, in which minor chords thunder over low bass notes is often interpreted by layperson listeners as an expression of sadness in music.

Also called "abstract music", absolute music is music that is not explicitly "about" anything, non-representational or non-objective. Absolute music has no references to stories or images or any other kind of extramusical idea. The aesthetic ideas underlying the absolute music debate relate to Kant's aesthetic disinterestedness from his Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, and has led to numerous arguments, including a war of words between Brahms and Wagner. In the 19th century, a group of early Romantics including Johann Wolfgang Goethe and E.T.A. Hoffmann

gave rise to the idea of what can be labeled as spiritual absolutism. "Formalism" is the concept of 'music for music's sake' and refers only to instrumental music without words. The 19th century music critic Eduard Hanslick argued that music could be enjoyed as pure sound and form, that it needed no connotation of extra-musical elements to warrant its existence.

### **Aesthetic interpretation**

An interpretation in philosophy of art, is an explanation of the meaning of some work of art. An interpretation expresses an understanding of a work of art, a poem, performance, or piece of literature.

### **One or many Ways**

There are many different theories of interpretation. On the one hand, there are an infinite number of interpretations for any given piece of art, any one of which may be considered valid. However, it may also be claimed that there really is only one valid interpretation for any given piece of art.

The aesthetic theory that people approach art with different aims is called pluralism. People's interpretations of art may be evaluated relative to these aims. The aim of some of these interpretations is such that they may be said to be true or false and the aim of others do not lend themselves to designating truth or falsity to art.

### **Intended interpretation**

Among those theories which permit for interpretations being named as valid or invalid, are ones which attempt to identify what the artist is trying to accomplish and interpret the art in terms of whether or not the artist has succeeded. In this view there is a single correct interpretation consistent with the artists intention for any given art work.

### **Evolutionary aesthetics**

Evolutionary aesthetics refers to evolutionary psychology theories in which the basic aesthetic preferences of Homo sapiens are argued to have evolved in order to enhance survival and reproductive success.

Based on this theory, things like color preference, preferred mate body ratios, shapes, emotional ties with objects, and many other aspects of the aesthetic experience can be explained with reference to human evolution.

## **Aesthetics and Evolutionary Psychology**

Many animal and human traits have been argued to have evolved in order to enhance survival and reproductive success. Evolutionary psychology extends this to psychological traits including aesthetical preferences. Such traits are generally seen as being adaptations to the environment during the Pleistocene era and are not necessarily adaptive in our present environment. All known cultures have some form of art. This universality suggests that art is related to evolutionary adaptations. The strong emotions associated with art suggest the same.

### **Landscape and other visual arts preferences**



San Rafael Gran Sabana, Venezuela.

An important choice for a mobile organism is selecting a good habitat to live in. Humans are argued to have strong aesthetical preferences for landscapes which were good habitats in the ancestral environment. When young human children from different nations are asked to select which landscape they prefer, from a selection of standardized landscape photographs, there is a strong preference for savannas with trees. The East African savanna is the ancestral environment in which much of human evolution is argued to have taken place. There is also a preference for landscapes with water, with both open and wooded areas, with trees with branches at a suitable height for climbing and taking foods, with features encouraging exploration such as a path or river curving out of view, with seen or implied game animals, and with some clouds. These are all features that are often featured in calendar art and in the design of public parks.

A survey of art preferences in many different nations found that realistic painting was preferred. Favorite features were water, trees as well as other plants, humans (in particular beautiful women, children, and well-known historical figures), and animals (in particular both wild and domestic large animals). Blue, followed by green, was the favorite color. Using the survey, the study authors constructed a painting showing the preferences of each nation. Despite the many

different cultures, the paintings all showed a strong similarity to landscape calendar art. The authors argued that this similarity was in fact due to the influence of the Western calendar industry. This may not explain why such calendars are so popular. Another explanation is that these features are those evolutionary psychology predicts should be popular for evolutionary reasons.

### **Physical attractiveness**

Various evolutionary concerns have been argued to influence what is perceived to be physically attractive.

Such evolutionary based preferences are not necessarily static but may vary depending on environmental cues. Thus, availability of food influences which female body size is attractive which may have evolutionary reasons. Societies with food scarcities prefer larger female body size than societies having plenty of food. In Western society males who are hungry prefer a larger female body size than they do when not hungry.

### **Evolutionary musicology**

Evolutionary musicology is a subfield of biomusicology that grounds the psychological mechanisms of music perception and production in evolutionary theory. It covers vocal communication in non-human animal species, theories of the evolution of human music, and cross-cultural human universals in musical ability and processing. It also includes evolutionary explanations for what is considered aesthetically pleasing or not.

### **Darwinian literary studies**

Darwinian Literary Studies (aka Literary Darwinism) is a branch of literary criticism that studies literature, including aesthetical aspects, in the context of evolution.

### **Evolution of emotion**

Aesthetics are tied to emotions. There are several explanations regarding the evolution of emotion.

One example is the emotion disgust which has been argued to have evolved in order to avoid several harmful actions such as infectious diseases due to contact with spoiled foods, feces, and decaying bodies.

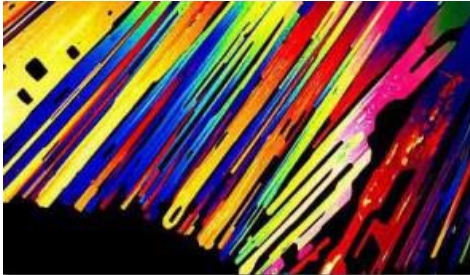




A male peacock does its best to court a female, dancing and displaying its extravagant plumage.

## Chapter 6

### Aesthetics in General



Aesthetics may be defined narrowly as the theory of beauty, or more broadly as that together with the philosophy of art. The traditional interest in beauty itself broadened, in the eighteenth century, to include the sublime, and since 1950 or so the number of pure aesthetic concepts discussed in the literature has expanded even more. Traditionally, the philosophy of art concentrated on its definition, but recently this has not been the focus, with careful analyses of aspects of art largely replacing it. Philosophical aesthetics is here considered to center on these latter-day developments. Thus, after a survey of ideas about beauty and related concepts, questions about the value of aesthetic experience and the variety of aesthetic attitudes will be addressed, before turning to matters which separate art from pure aesthetics, notably the presence of intention. That will lead to a survey of some of the main definitions of art which have been proposed, together with an account of the recent “de-definition” period. The concepts of expression, representation, and the nature of art objects will then be covered.

#### 1. Introduction

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The full field of what might be called “aesthetics” is a very large one. There is even now a four-volume encyclopedia devoted to the full range of possible topics. The core issues in Philosophical Aesthetics, however, are nowadays fairly settled (see the book edited by Dickie, Sclafani, and Roblin, and the monograph by Sheppard, among many others).

Aesthetics in this central sense has been said to start in the early eighteenth century, with the series of articles on “The Pleasures of the Imagination” which the journalist Joseph Addison wrote in the early issues of the magazine *The Spectator* in 1712. Before this time, thoughts by

notable figures made some forays into this ground, for instance in the formulation of general theories of proportion and harmony, detailed most specifically in architecture and music. But the full development of extended, philosophical reflection on Aesthetics did not begin to emerge until the widening of leisure activities in the eighteenth century.

By far the most thoroughgoing and influential of the early theorists was Immanuel Kant, towards the end of the eighteenth century. Therefore it is important, first of all, to have some sense of how Kant approached the subject. Criticisms of his ideas, and alternatives to them, will be presented later in this entry, but through him we can meet some of the key concepts in the subject by way of introduction.

Kant is sometimes thought of as a formalist in art theory; that is to say, someone who thinks the content of a work of art is not of aesthetic interest. But this is only part of the story. Certainly he was a formalist about the pure enjoyment of nature, but for Kant most of the arts were impure, because they involved a “concept.” Even the enjoyment of parts of nature was impure, namely when a concept was involved— as when we admire the perfection of an animal body or a human torso. But our enjoyment of, for instance, the arbitrary abstract patterns in some foliage, or a color field (as with wild poppies, or a sunset) was, according to Kant, absent of such concepts; in such cases, the cognitive powers were in free play. By design, art may sometimes obtain the appearance of this freedom: it was then “Fine Art”—but for Kant not all art had this quality.

In all, Kant’s theory of pure beauty had four aspects: its freedom from concepts, its objectivity, the disinterest of the spectator, and its obligatoriness. By “concept,” Kant meant “end,” or “purpose,” that is, what the cognitive powers of human understanding and imagination judge applies to an object, such as with “it is a pebble,” to take an instance. But when no definite concept is involved, as with the scattered pebbles on a beach, the cognitive powers are held to be in free play; and it is when this play is harmonious that there is the experience of pure beauty. There is also objectivity and universality in the judgment then, according to Kant, since the cognitive powers are common to all who can judge that the individual objects are pebbles. These powers function alike whether they come to such a definite judgment or are left suspended in free play, as when appreciating the pattern along the shoreline. This was not the basis on which the apprehension of pure beauty was obligatory, however. According to Kant, that derived from the selflessness of such an apprehension, what was called in the eighteenth century its

“disinterest.” This arises because pure beauty does not gratify us sensuously; nor does it induce any desire to possess the object. It “pleases,” certainly, but in a distinctive intellectual way. Pure beauty, in other words, simply holds our mind’s attention: we have no further concern than contemplating the object itself. Perceiving the object in such cases is an end in itself; it is not a means to a further end, and is enjoyed for its own sake alone.

It is because Morality requires we rise above ourselves that such an exercise in selfless attention becomes obligatory. Judgments of pure beauty, being selfless, initiate one into the moral point of view. “Beauty is a symbol of Morality,” and “The enjoyment of nature is the mark of a good soul” are key sayings of Kant. The shared enjoyment of a sunset or a beach shows there is harmony between us all, and the world.

Among these ideas, the notion of “disinterest” has had much the widest currency. Indeed, Kant took it from eighteenth century theorists before him, such as the moral philosopher, Lord Shaftesbury, and it has attracted much attention since: recently by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, for instance. Clearly, in this context “disinterested” does not mean “uninterested,” and paradoxically it is closest to what we now call our “interests,” that is, such things as hobbies, travel, and sport, as we shall see below. But in earlier centuries, one’s “interest” was what was to one’s advantage, that is, it was “self-interest,” and so it was the negation of that which closely related aesthetics to ethics.

## **2. Aesthetic Concepts**

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The eighteenth century was a surprisingly peaceful time, but this turned out to be the lull before the storm, since out of its orderly classicism there developed a wild romanticism in art and literature, and even revolution in politics. The aesthetic concept which came to be more appreciated in this period was associated with this, namely sublimity, which Edmund Burke theorized about in his “A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.” The sublime was connected more with pain than pure pleasure, according to Burke, since threats to self-preservation were involved, as on the high seas, and lonely moors, with the devilish humans and dramatic passions that artists and writers were about to portray. But in these circumstances, of course, it is still “delightful horror,” as Burke appreciated, since one is insulated by the fictionality of the work in question from any real danger.

### 3. Aesthetic Value

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We have noted Kant's views about the objectivity and universality of judgments of pure beauty, and there are several ways that these notions have been further defended. There is a famous curve, for instance, obtained by the nineteenth century psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, which shows how human arousal is quite generally related to complexity of stimulus. We are bored by the simple, become sated, even over-anxious, by the increasingly complex, while in between there is a region of greatest pleasure. The dimension of complexity is only one objective measure of worth which has been proposed in this way. Thus it is now known, for instance, that judgments of facial beauty in humans are a matter of averageness and symmetry. Traditionally, unity was taken to be central, notably by Aristotle in connection with Drama, and when added to complexity it formed a general account of aesthetic value. Thus Francis Hutcheson, in the eighteenth century, asserted that "Uniformity in variety always makes an object beautiful." Monroe Beardsley, more recently, has introduced a third criterion—intensity—to produce his three "General Canons" of objective worth. He also detailed some "Special Canons."

### 4. Aesthetic Attitudes

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Jerome Stolnitz, in the middle of the last century, was a Kantian, and promoted the need for a disinterested, objective attitude to art objects. It is debatable, as we saw before, whether this represents Kant's total view of art, but the disinterested treatment of art objects which Stolnitz recommended was very commonly pursued in his period.

Edward Bullough, writing in 1912, would have called "disinterested attention" a "distanced" attitude, but he used this latter term to generate a much fuller and more detailed appreciation of the whole spectrum of attitudes which might be taken to artworks. The spectrum stretched from people who "over-distance" to people who "under-distance." People who over-distance are, for instance, critics who merely look at the technicalities and craftwork of a production, missing any emotional involvement with what it is about. Bullough contrasted this attitude with what he called "under-distancing," where one might get too gripped by the content. The country yokel who jumps upon the stage to save the heroine, and the jealous husband who sees himself as Othello smothering his wife, are missing the fact that the play is an illusion, a fiction, just make-believe. Bullough thought there was, instead, an ideal mid-point between his two extremes,

thereby solving his “antinomy of distance” by deciding there should be the least possible distance without its disappearance.

Art is not the only object to draw interest of this pleasurable kind: hobbies and travel are further examples, and sport yet another, as was mentioned briefly above. In particular, the broadening of the aesthetic tradition in recent years has led theorists to give more attention to sport. David Best, for instance, writing on sport and its likeness to art, highlighted how close sport is to the purely aesthetic. But he wanted to limit sport to this, and insisted it had no relevance to ethics. Best saw art forms as distinguished expressly by their having the capacity to comment on life situations, and hence bring in moral considerations. No sport had this further capacity, he thought, although the enjoyment of many sports may undoubtedly be aesthetic.

## **5. Intentions**

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The traditional form of art criticism was biographical and sociological, taking into account the conceptions of the artist and the history of the traditions within which the artist worked. But in the twentieth century a different, more scientific and ahistorical form of literary criticism grew up in the United States and Britain: The New Criticism. Like the Russian Formalists and French Structuralists in the same period, the New Critics regarded what could be gleaned from the work of art alone as relevant to its assessment, but their specific position received a much-discussed philosophical defense by William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in 1946. Beardsley saw the position as an extension of “The Aesthetic Point of View”; Wimsatt was a practical critic personally engaged in the new line of approach. In their essay “The Intentional Fallacy,” Wimsatt and Beardsley claimed “the design or intention of the artist is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.” It was not always available, since it was often difficult to obtain, but, in any case, it was not appropriately available, according to them, unless there was evidence for it internal to the finished work of art. Wimsatt and Beardsley allowed such forms of evidence for a writer’s intentions, but would allow nothing external to the given text.

## **6. Definitions of Art**

Up to the “de-definition” period, definitions of art fell broadly into three types, relating to representation, expression, and form. The dominance of representation as a central concept in art lasted from before Plato’s time to around the end of the eighteenth century. Of course, representational art is still to be found to this day, but it is no longer pre-eminent in the way it once was. Plato first formulated the idea by saying that art is mimesis, and, for instance, Bateaux in the eighteenth century followed him, when saying: “Poetry exists only by imitation. It is the same thing with painting, dance and music; nothing is real in their works, everything is imagined, painted, copied, artificial. It is what makes their essential character as opposed to nature.”

In the same century and the following one, with the advent of Romanticism, the concept of expression became more prominent. Even around Plato’s time, his pupil Aristotle preferred an expression theory: art as catharsis of the emotions. And Burke, Hutcheson, and Hume also promoted the idea that what was crucial in art were audience responses: pleasure in Art was a matter of taste and sentiment. But the full flowering of the theory of Expression, in the twentieth century, has shown that this is only one side of the picture.

## **7. Expression**

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Response theories of art were particularly popular during the Logical Positivist period in philosophy, that is, around the 1920s and 1930s. Science was then contrasted sharply with Poetry, for instance, the former being supposedly concerned with our rational mind, the latter with our irrational emotions. Thus the noted English critic I. A. Richards tested responses to poems scientifically in an attempt to judge their value, and unsurprisingly found no uniformity. Out of this kind of study comes the common idea that “art is all subjective”: if one concentrates on whether people do or do not like a particular work of art then, naturally, there can easily seem to be no reason to it.

We are now more used to thinking that the emotions are rational, partly because we now distinguish the cause of an emotion from its target. If one looks at what emotions are caused by an artwork, not all of these need target the artwork itself, but instead

## **8. Representation**

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Like the concept of Expression, the concept of Representation has been very thoroughly examined since the professionalization of Philosophy in the twentieth century.

Isn't representation just a matter of copying? If representation could be understood simply in terms of copying, that would require "the innocent eye," that is, one which did not incorporate any interpretation. E. H. Gombrich was the first to point out that modes of representation are, by contrast, conventional, and therefore have a cultural, socio-historical base. Thus perspective, which one might view as merely mechanical, is only a recent way of representing space, and many photographs distort what we take to be reality—for instance, those from the ground of tall buildings, which seem to make them incline inwards at the top.

## **9. Art Objects**

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What kind of thing is a work of art? Goodman, Wollheim, Wolterstorff, and Margolis have been notable contributors to the contemporary debate.

We must first distinguish the artwork from its notation or "recipe," and from its various physical realizations. Examples would be: some music, its score, and its performances; a drama, its script, and its performances; an etching, its plate, and its prints; and a photograph, its negative, and its positives. The notations here are "digital" in the first two cases, and "analogue" in the second two, since they involve discrete elements like notes and words in the one case, and continuous elements like lines and color patches in the other. Realizations can also be divided into two broad types, as these same examples illustrate: there are those that arise in time (performance works) and those that arise in space (object works). Realizations are always physical entities. Sometimes there is only one realization, as with architect-designed houses, couturier-designed dresses, and many paintings, and Wollheim concluded that in these cases the artwork is entirely physical, consisting of that one, unique realization. However, a number a copies were commonly made of paintings in the middle ages, and it is theoretically possible to replicate even expensive clothing and houses.



## Chapter 7

### The State of the Study of Indian Aesthetics

Then and Now



By Parul Dave Mukherji, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Interest in Indian aesthetics has revived in recent times since its resurgence in the middle of 20th century. During mid 1950s, a space for dialogue between Indian and western aesthetics had opened at a time when the newly independent nations like India were expected to turn to their past to reinterpret it from an unshackled standpoint. It is to be noted that in 1965, a special issue of the *Journal of Art and Art Criticism* was devoted to Oriental aesthetics with contributions from leading Indian thinkers and scholars of the time ranging from K C Pandey, P J Chowdhury and Ramendra Kumar. Participating in this debate were Archie Bahm, Eliot Deutsche and Thomas Munro whose investment in this cross cultural study of aesthetics was remarkable. The euphoria for exploring new avenues and alternative models to Eurocentric understanding of aesthetics was short-lived and in more than a decade and a half, it was displaced by scholarly indifference.

One of the reasons for this failure was the kind of framework of comparative aesthetics subscribed by the Indian scholars was still conditioned by colonial notions of aesthetics. So if one of the leading experts of Indian aesthetics, K C Pande asserted equivalence

between classical Sanskrit notions of imitation (*anukrti*) and the Greek theory of mimesis, A K Coomaraswamy,

following P Masson Oursel, underlined the difference between the two traditions. How else does one understand the alternation between feverish search for Sanskrit equivalents for every western terminology- catharsis, mimesis, and tragedy and so on, by K C Pandey and repudiation of such comparativism by Orientalists like Coomaraswamy and Masson P. Oursel ?

More recently, the time seems ripe for an ascendancy of comparative aesthetics and that has got to do with our era of globalization when the media and the easier modes of travel have brought diverse cultures face to face. Aesthetics which had come under censure during the cultural studies turn in social sciences has also made a recent comeback in the west. Meanwhile, the study of Indian aesthetics has received more serious attention outside India. In a strange way, the 1950s moment is back again but with a difference.

Perhaps in the wake of the cultural studies turn, the discipline of art history is again poised for a theoretical

rethinking and experiencing exhaustion with Eurocentric art theories. For art historians and aestheticians in the west, there seems to be an urgent need to explore an alternative space that may yield to a different starting point for understanding aesthetic concepts.

### **More Recent Works on India Aesthetics:**

At first, while exploring writings on Indian aesthetics, I had assumed that keeping a narrow focus on comparative aesthetics will allow me to grasp the specificity of theoretical concerns. But wading through tomes of recent writings on Indian aesthetics, I arrived at a startling conclusion that it was only under the rubric of comparative aesthetics that any kind of research on Indian aesthetics was carried out. The comparativist moment was not exclusive to 1950s following Indian Independence when a new post colonial space was offered to Indian scholars to revisit their past and throw light on pre-modern concepts of aesthetics in India. In other words, comparativism informed the very enterprise for studies in Indian aesthetics that has continued up to the present times even if the specific nature of the questions asked has changed over decades.

Before I take up more recent writings on Indian aesthetics, let me consider two publications during 1970s in India and abroad.

It is important to place two important books in comparison- Edwin Gerow's *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* and G Hanumantha Rao's *Comparative Aesthetics: Eastern and Western*. Gerow's entry into Indian aesthetics is through Sanskrit poetics and he raises salient questions about the interrelationship between poetics, aesthetics and dramaturgy. In place of simple comparison between eastern and western aesthetics, he identifies a problematic within comparativism- the persistence of a Crocean bias that has led the scholars of Indian aesthetics to ignore the school of rhetoric or Alamkara school which was driven by formalist concerns.

Almost re-scripting the title of K C Pandey's two volumes which had appeared in the 1950s, is G Hanumantha Rao's work -*Comparative Aesthetics: Eastern and Western*. In the Introduction, Rao makes clear the continuation of the enterprise of comparative aesthetics:

This comparative study of the concepts of aesthetics and art begins where previous studies like those of A K Coomaraswamy's *Transformation of Nature in Art* and K C Pandey's *Comparative Aesthetics* leave off.

While this book offers interesting insight into comparativism, it tends to engage largely with western aesthetic theories and references to Indian aesthetics appear as an afterthought and almost relegated to footnotes. Rao makes it a self-conscious project to compare traditional Indian aesthetic

theories with what he calls as the contemporary western philosophy of art-this by itself is a viable enterprise but it ends up in an asymmetrical comparison between Indian and western aesthetics where the main focus is on Hegel, Croce, Cassirer, Plato, Aristotle, I A Richards, Freud, Langer, Ruskin and other western aestheticians while discussions on Abhinavagupta, Bharata, Anandavardhana, Bhamaha, Bhavabhuti, Rajasekhara are restricted mainly to one chapter on Indian Philosophy of Art.

On the other hand, Eliot Deutsche's *Comparative Aesthetics*, charts a more nuanced terrain in the way he carefully steers the middle ground between cultural specificity and universalism without ascribing it to the eastern and western aesthetics respectively. Alert to the possibility of exoticizing Eastern aesthetics, he posits the culturally different formulation of the *rasa* aesthetics, for example, as enriching both the disciplines of aesthetics and philosophy.

Unlike K C Pandey and Hanumatha Rao, his primary focus rests upon Indian discourse-particularly as formulated by Abhinavagupta even if the kind of questions he asks draws from the tradition of western aesthetics about subjectivity of emotions in aesthetic experiences.

The decade of 1980s witnessed the publication of Padma Sudhi's *Aesthetic Theories of India*, which revived comparative approach advocated by K C Pandey. However, the sections on Indian and western aesthetic theories remain juxtaposed and do not speak to each other. Leaving large tracts of references from Sanskrit sources un-translated hampers her flow of her arguments and assumes a singular address to a 'native' reader. It is in the 1990s with the publication of V K Chari's *Sanskrit Criticism* that a coherent comparativism is carried out from the perspective of a literary critic. If Gerow's concern was to highlight formalist dimension of literary poetics, Chari shifted his focus on semantics and in the process, underlined the bearing of philosophy, logic and linguistics on literary/aesthetic theories. Much more critical than his predecessors, Chari deployed comparativism that set up a conversation between western and Indian theories of aesthetics and brought out cultural specificity of both. It problematized the reception of Abhinavagupta's aesthetics which was largely assumed to be dictated by his transcendentalism.

Contesting such easy appropriation of Indian aesthetics as theology, Chari extricated the aesthetic strands from Abhinavagupta's contribution and argued for its total autonomy from religious discourse. But, despite the transcendentalist vocabulary, neither Abhinavagupta nor the other exponents actually seek to subsume aesthetics under theology or illuminist metaphysics of one brand or another. Again, although these critics tend to describe rasa experience in mystical terms, they never fail to seek validation for their theories at the logical, phenomenological level and to secure for criticism an objective aesthetic basis

While the critical retake on Abhinavagupta is commendable in the way certain stereotyping of Sanskrit aesthetics has been contested, the continual concentration on the rasa theory and its interpretation offered by the 11<sup>th</sup> century aesthete, Abhinavagupta has led to homogenization of Sanskrit aesthetics as 'Indian aesthetics'; it has occluded wide ranging discourses within Sanskrit aesthetics such as anukrtivada or theory of mimesis, for instance and a highly sophisticated but under-researched discourse of Tamil aesthetics. Recently, the most dominant discourse that informs contemporary art theory is that of inter-culturalism that appears to be a direct response to globalization. World Art

Studies is a new field that has emerged in the west which claims to correct traditional art history's euro centrism. Within World Art Studies, aesthetics emerges as a universalist component through which cross cultural comparisons again become possible in a postmodernist era of the celebration of cultural difference. It is against the valorization of cultural differences that the current ascendancy of humanist universalism has to be situated. Perhaps, as a reaction to the last decade of the dominance of culture studies approach that underlined plurality of cultural specificities, the new trend of global aesthetics foregrounds commonality of sense perception that cuts across cultural difference. At its extreme lies the stress on universalism that has led many practitioners towards the biological given of human brain and to explore the emerging field of neuro-esthetics. On one hand, the World Art Studies aims to contain the whole world in its global sweep and yet adopt pure empirical 'case study' approach. World Art Studies examines the phenomenon of art through a broader cultural, global and temporal perspective, bringing together a uniquely exhaustive range of perspectives on art and borrowing approaches from the study of neuroscience, evolutionary biology, anthropology and geography as models--alongside more conventional art historical perspectives. In that spirit, this volume goes beyond abstract models, using case studies to demonstrate and examine specific methods of investigation.

Indian aesthetics gets subsumed under world aesthetics and is grouped with African, Chinese and Japanese aesthetics. In this clubbing of Indian aesthetics with other world aesthetics, again it is via rasa theory and the canonized figures of Abhinavagupta and Anandavardhana that Indian aesthetics gets represented- pushing other facets of Sanskrit aesthetics and particularly Tamil aesthetics into oblivion.

### **Beyond the Logic of Binarism & Synthesis**

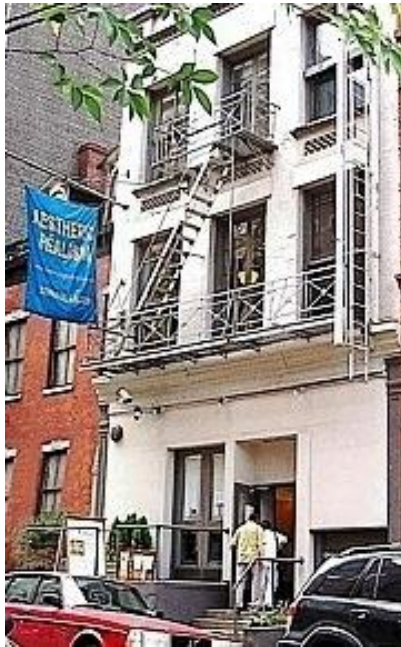
I am certainly not suggesting that finding differences between the east and west is more heroic than looking for homologies. Rather, collapsing differences located within the cultural specificities of any two given traditions in the name of grand universals like Beauty, Aesthetics and so on or erecting insuperable boundaries of differences between the two are equally problematic. It seems to be more productive to acknowledge that there is neither a simple transcendence possible, if that is even desirable, itself being a fraught concept nor a synthesis.

The very fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between terms like ‘naturalism’, ‘imitation’ or ‘mimesis’ and the Sanskrit terms, is itself an important conceptual pointer. Of course, the absence of a word does not imply that the concept does not exist. But it offers a significant clue as to rich problematic that needs to be articulated and developed.

It will be too reductive to simply level a charge of ethnocentrism against Masson-Oursel for his denial of naturalism or conscious imitation of the visible world in Indian art but it has to be seen as an attempt of one culture to theorize another at a time when India was still a British colony. Or for that matter, Pandey’s unproblematic acceptance of the terms of western aesthetics has to be seen against the history of Aesthetics around the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century when comparative aesthetics constituted a powerful genre of this discipline. However, in the contemporary, post-colonial present, one cannot subscribe to the dated methods or assumptions structuring “the comparative method”. An alternative cannot be sought in postulating the east as a separate entity and searching for lost past and indigenous criteria, untouched by the western contact, for evaluating its art traditions. That will amount to substituting the nationalist with the nativist discourse and result in methodological insularity and ahistoricity. The only way to break out of the double binds of the east/west polarization is to- a) critically historicize first the discipline of aesthetics as it emerged in the west and the terms central to western aesthetics rather than taking it as Aesthetics, a given and ahistorical, universalistic concept; b) in a double gesture, to not only problematized their application in a non-western context by foregrounding cultural differences and the rich, complicated terrain of translatability but to anticipate repercussions that this problematisation could have within western aesthetics.

## Chapter 8

### Aesthetic Realism



The Aesthetic Realism Foundation is located in SoHo (NYC)

Aesthetic Realism is the philosophy founded by poet and critic Eli Siegel (1902–1978) in 1941. It is based on three core principles. First, the deepest desire of every person is to like the world on an honest or accurate basis. Second, the greatest danger for a person is to have contempt for the world and what is in it—contempt defined as the false importance or glory from the lessening of things not oneself. Third, the study of what makes for beauty in art is a guide for a good life: "All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves."

The philosophy is principally taught at the Aesthetic Realism Foundation, a nonprofit educational foundation based in SoHo, New York City, through a variety of lectures, classes in poetry, anthropology, art, music, and individual consultations.

The Foundation faced controversy for its assertion that men changed from homosexuality through study of this philosophy. In 1990, it stopped presentations and consultations on this subject, explaining that it did not want to be involved in the atmosphere of anger surrounding the issue, and saying that "we do not want this matter, which is certainly not fundamental to

Aesthetic Realism, to be used to obscure what Aesthetic Realism truly is: education of the largest, most cultural kind.”

## **Philosophy**

Aesthetic Realism is based on the idea that reality, or the world, has a structure that is beautiful. Siegel identified beauty as the making one, or unity, of opposites.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

In Siegel’s critical theory, “the resolution of conflict in self is like the making one of opposites in art.” A successful novel, for example, composes opposites that people are trying to put together: oneness and manyness, intensity and calm, sameness and change. His studies led him to conclude that any successful work of art or music combines essential dualities. In the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism, Siegel developed this concept, writing that the arts and sciences all give evidence that reality has an aesthetic nature. He described the world as having a construction like art: it, too, is composed of opposites. In Siegel's eyes, freedom at one with order could be seen in an electron, a tree, or the solar system. Siegel reasoned, "If...the structure of the world corresponds to the structure [of art], that much the world may be beautiful in the deepest sense of the word; and therefore can be liked."

A primary concept of Aesthetic Realism is that the world can be liked honestly by seeing it as an aesthetic oneness of opposites. Further, a core teaching of Aesthetic Realism is that it is “every person's deepest desire to like the world on an honest or accurate basis.”

However, Siegel recognized another competing desire which drives humans away from such an appreciation—the desire to have contempt for the world and what is in it, in order to make oneself feel more important. Siegel argued that when a person seeks self-esteem through contempt—“the addition to self through the lessening of something else”—he or she is unjust to people and things. Contempt, the philosophy maintains, may seem like a triumph, but ultimately results in self-dislike and mental distress, and lessens the capacity of one's mind to perceive and feel in the fullest manner. Siegel held that, in the extreme, contempt causes insanity.

Aesthetic Realism attests that one’s attitude to the world governs how all of life's components are seen: a friend, a spouse, a lover, a book, food, people of another skin tone. Accordingly, Aesthetic Realism argues, individuals have an ethical obligation to give full value to things and people, not devalue them in order to make oneself seem more important. Aesthetic Realism



states that the conscious intention to be fair to the world and people is not only an ethical obligation, but the means of liking oneself.

The philosophy identifies contempt as the underlying cause of broader social problems as well: societal evils like racism and war arise from contempt for “human beings placed differently from ourselves” in terms of race, economic status, or nationality. Siegel stated that for centuries ill will has been the predominant purpose in humanity’s economic activities. The philosophy asserts that humanity cannot overcome its biggest problems until people cease to feel that “the world’s failure or the failure of another person enhances one’s own life.” Siegel stated that until good will rather than contempt is at the center of economics and in the thoughts of people, “civilization has yet to begin.”

### **Major texts**

The philosophic basis of Aesthetic Realism was set forth systematically by Siegel in two major texts. The first, *Self and World: An Explanation of Aesthetic Realism*, was written from 1941-3. Individual chapters, including “Psychiatry, Economics, Aesthetics” and “The Aesthetic Method in Self-Conflict,” were printed in 1946. The full text was published in 1981 (NY: Definition Press). His second text, *Definitions, and Comment: Being a Description of the World*, completed in 1945, defines 134 terms used in the philosophic thought of Aesthetic Realism, including Existence, Change, Fixity, Freedom, Thought, Will, Wonder, Fear, Hope, Negation, Reality, and Relation. The work was published in 1978-9 as a series in the journal *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*.

### **Poetry**

Siegel stated that ideas central to the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism were implicitly present in “Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana,” the poem that brought him widespread fame when it was awarded *The Nation's* esteemed poetry prize in 1925. The philosophic principle that individuality *is* relation, “that the very self of a thing is its relations, its having-to-do-with other things,” is in this poem. It begins with a hot, quiet afternoon in Montana and travels through time and space, showing that things usually thought of as separate and unrelated “have a great deal to do with each other.” These are lines near the end of the poem:

Hot afternoons are real; afternoons are; places, things, thoughts, feelings are; poetry is;

The world is waiting to be known; Earth, what it has in it! The past is in it;  
All words, feelings, movements, words, bodies, clothes, girls, trees, stones, things of  
beauty,  
books, desires are in it; and all are to be known;  
Afternoons have to do with the whole world....

The search for that which connects all branches of knowledge led Siegel to discover a key concept of Aesthetic Realism: "The world, art, and self explain each other: each is the aesthetic oneness of opposites." Aesthetic Realism classes were scholarly and sought to demonstrate that poetry is related to the problems of everyday life. The viewpoint of Aesthetic Realism is that "what makes a good poem is like what can make a good life." This contradicts the Freudian view of art as sublimation.

Siegel defined poetry as "the oneness of the permanent opposites in reality as seen by an individual." In Aesthetic Realism classes he explained that the greatest desire of a person is to put together opposites, as, in a good poem, "emotion changes into logic: there is no rift between the two."<sup>1</sup> He maintained that music distinguishes true poetry, whatever the language, period or style; the music of a poem shows the poet has honestly perceived opposites as one, and sincerely united personal feelings with the impersonal structure of the world. "Poetry," he wrote, "arises out of a like of the world so intense and wide that of itself, it is musical." Therefore, Aesthetic Realism teaches, even a poem that in substance seems to condemn the world, in its technique and music is praising the world, seeing it truly.

In thousands of Aesthetic Realism lectures, Siegel demonstrated the centrality of poetry to every aspect of life, including "Poetry and Anger," "Poetry and Love," "Educational Method Is Poetic," "Poetry and Time," "Poetry, Money, and Good Will," "A Poetic Technique of Parenthood," "Poetry and History," and "Hamlet Revisited; or, The Family Should Be Poetry." His students affirm that an important aspect of the philosophy continues to be the study of how a good poem has within it "the composition, beauty, sanity we want in ourselves." This education, they assert, "makes it possible for poetry to be, as Matthew Arnold said, a *criticism of life*."

## History

In 1946, Siegel began giving weekly lectures at Steinway Hall in New York City, in which he presented what he first called Aesthetic Analysis (later, Aesthetic Realism), “a philosophic way of seeing conflict in self and making this conflict clear to a person so that a person becomes more integrated and happier.” From 1948 through 1977, Siegel continued teaching in his library at 67 Jane Street in Greenwich Village, where he also resided. Individuals studied Aesthetic Realism in classes such as the Ethical Study Conference, the Nevertheless Poetry Class, and classes in which Aesthetic Realism was discussed in relation to the arts and sciences, history, philosophy, national ethics, and world literature.



The Aesthetic Realism Theatre Company performing "Ethics is a Force!--Songs About Labor" (2006)

## The arts

Among the earliest students of Aesthetic Realism were Chaim Koppelman (1920–2009), a painter, sculptor, printmaker, and founder of the printmaking department of the School of Visual Arts, and his wife, painter Dorothy Koppelman, who opened the Terrain Gallery in 1955, introducing Aesthetic Realism to the cultural scene of New York City with art exhibitions and public discussions of the Siegel Theory of Opposites in relation to painting, sculpture, photography, poetry, and later, music, theatre, and architecture.”

Chaim Koppelman's interviews of Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Anuszkiewicz, and Clayton Pond, in which these artists discussed the relevance of Aesthetic Realism and Eli Siegel's Theory of Opposites to their work, are now part of the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Artists began using Aesthetic Realism in writings about their fields, including Ralph Hattersley, editor of the photography journal *Infinity*, and Nat Herz, author of articles in *Modern Photography* and of the *Konica Pocket Handbook: An Introduction to Better Photography*. *Aesthetic Realism: We Have Been There* (NY: Definition Press, 1969), a book of essays by working artists in the fields of painting, printmaking, photography, acting, and poetry, documents how the Siegel Theory of Opposites "relates life to art and is basically a criterion for all branches of aesthetics".

Some artistic productions inspired by the philosophy were surrounded by controversy. A theatrical production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* by The Opposites Company of the Theatre, in which the title character was presented as "essentially good", in keeping with Siegel's interpretation of the play, was highly praised in *Time* magazine, but severely criticized in the *New York Times*, which also published Siegel's response to the critics.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Aesthetic Realism Foundation**

The not-for-profit Aesthetic Realism Foundation was established by Siegel's students in 1973. Located at 141 Greene Street in SoHo, New York, it is the primary location where the philosophy is taught, in public seminars and dramatic presentations, and in consultations for individuals. The Foundation offers classes in poetry, anthropology, art, music, acting, and singing, and classes for children.



Ellen Reiss, Chairman of Education

In 1977, Siegel appointed Ellen Reiss chairperson for the teaching of Aesthetic Realism. Since that time, she has conducted professional classes for the Foundation's faculty. Herself an Aesthetic Realism consultant since 1971, Reiss also taught in the English departments of Queens and Hunter Colleges, City University of New York. She is a poet, editor, co-author (with Martha Baird) of *The Williams-Siegel Documentary* (Definition Press, 1970), and instructor of the course "The Aesthetic Realism Explanation of Poetry".

Siegel died on November 8, 1978. His work is continued by Reiss, whose editorial commentaries on literature, life, and national ethics appear regularly in the periodical *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*.

#### Aesthetic Realism and homosexuality

A controversial aspect of the philosophy concerns the assertion that men and women could change from homosexuality through studying its principles. In 1946 writer and WW II veteran

Sheldon Kranz (1919–1980) was the first man to report that he changed from homosexuality through Aesthetic Realism. Kranz said that as his way of seeing the world changed, his sexual preference also changed: from a homosexual orientation (he was no longer impelled toward men) to a heterosexual one that included love for a woman for the first time in his life. Kranz was married for 25 years (until his death) to Obie award-winning actress Anne Fielding.



Sheldon Kranz and Anne Fielding (1980)

In keeping with its general approach, Aesthetic Realism views homosexuality as a philosophic matter. A fundamental principle of the philosophy is that every person is in a fight between contempt for the world and respect for it.[68] Siegel stated that this fight is present as well in homosexuality. He explained: “All homosexuality arises from contempt of the world, not liking it sufficiently. This changes into a contempt for women.” According to the philosophy, in the field of love and sex, a homosexual man prefers the sameness of another man while undervaluing the difference of the world that a woman represents. This undervaluing of difference is a form of contempt for the world; therefore, as a man learns how to like the world honestly, his attitude towards difference changes and this affects every area of his life, including sexual preference.

Beginning in 1965 supporters of the philosophy began an effort to have press and media report on the change from homosexuality through Aesthetic Realism. In 1971 men (including Kranz) who said they changed through Aesthetic Realism were interviewed on New York City’s WNET Channel 13 Free Time show and the David Susskind Show, which had a national syndication. The book *The H Persuasion*, published that year, contained writing by Siegel detailing his premise about the cause of homosexuality, transcripts of Aesthetic Realism lessons, and narratives by men who said they changed, describing both why they changed and how. In

response to requests from men and women wanting to study Aesthetic Realism, Siegel designated four consultation trios, one of which, Consultation With Three, was for the purpose of teaching men who wanted to change from homosexuality. In 1983, five other men who said they had changed from homosexuality were interviewed on the David Susskind Show. The transcript of this interview was published in the 1986 book *The Aesthetic Realism of Eli Siegel and the Change from Homosexuality*.

With the exception of a brief 1971 review calling *The H Persuasion* “less a book than a collection of pietistic snippets by Believers,” the New York Times never reported that men said they changed from homosexuality through Aesthetic Realism. Students of the philosophy who said they changed from homosexuality or in other large ways accused the press of unfairly withholding information valuable to the lives of people. In the 1970s they mounted an aggressive campaign of telephone calls, letters, ads, and vigils in front of various media offices and at the homes of editors. Many wore lapel buttons that read “Victim of the Press”.

In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. In 1978, ads were placed in three major newspapers stating “we have changed from homosexuality through our study of the Aesthetic Realism of Eli Siegel.” They were signed by 50 men and women. With few exceptions, the press in general either ignored or dismissed the assertion of persons who said they changed.

The gay press and gay reporters were generally hostile to Aesthetic Realism. A 1982 Boston Globe article written by “the first openly gay reporter” on its staff, interviewed primarily gay therapists and then reported that the “assertion” of change through Aesthetic Realism was “a claim staggering to psychiatrists and psychologists.” About 250 people protested the article on the Boston Common. The Globe’s ombudsman later wrote in his column that the article was biased against Aesthetic Realism and that it contained “strong, negative words without attribution” and “inaccuracies”.

Some gay advocacy groups and gay activists presented Aesthetic Realism as “anti-gay”, accusing the philosophy of offering a “gay cure” and expressing skepticism that homosexuality could or should change.[89] Persons within the gay pride movement associated the desire of a

man to change from homosexuality with a lack of pride in a gay identity, and saw Aesthetic Realism as biased against those living a gay lifestyle. The Aesthetic Realism Foundation stated unequivocally that it supported full, completely equal civil rights for homosexuals, including the right of a man or woman to live their life in the way they chose.

#### Opposition to prejudice and racism

In one of his earliest essays, “The Equality of Man” (1923), Siegel criticized writers who were promoting eugenics. He argued that thus far in the history of the world, people have not had equal conditions of life, to bring out their potential abilities, and he asserted that if all men and women had “an equal chance to use all the powers they had at birth, they would be equal.”

According to Aesthetic Realism, racism and prejudice of all kinds begin with the human inclination towards contempt, “the addition to self through the lessening of something else.” Students of the philosophy assert that the racist attitude is not inevitable, but can change if one learns to recognize and criticize contempt. In public forums, individuals of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds have described how, through study of Aesthetic Realism, their racism and prejudice changed, not into mere “tolerance” but into a respectful desire to know and to see that the feelings of another are “as real, and as deep, as one’s own.”

On an international level, proponents advocated the study of contempt and good will, as described by Aesthetic Realism, as “The Only Answer to the Mideast Crisis,” in a 1990 advertisement on the op-ed page of the New York Times. To oppose prejudice they recommend that persons of nations who are in conflict “write a soliloquy of 500 words” describing the feelings of a person in the opposing land.

The UN commissioned filmmaker Ken Kimmelman, a consultant on the faculty of the Aesthetic Realism Foundation, to make two anti-prejudice films: *Asimbonanga*, and *Brushstrokes*. Kimmelman credits Aesthetic Realism as his inspiration for these films, as well as his 1995 Emmy-award winning anti-prejudice public service film, *The Heart Knows Better*, based on, and including, a statement by Eli Siegel.[95]



"The People of Clarendon County"—A Play by Ossie Davis, & the Answer to Racism, presented at the Congressional Auditorium, US Capitol Visitor Center on October 21, 2009 with Lee Central HS Chorus and the Thelma Slater Singers of Bishopville, South Carolina.

Another noted speaker on the subject of Aesthetic Realism and how it opposes prejudice and racism is Alice Bernstein, whose articles on the subject have been published in hundreds of papers throughout the country, including in her serialized column, "Alice Bernstein & Friends." Mrs. Bernstein is the editor of *The People of Clarendon County* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2007), a book that includes a play by Ossie Davis re-discovered by Bernstein, together with historical documents, photographs, and essays about Aesthetic Realism, which she describes as "the education that can end racism." The late Ossie Davis, noted actor and civil rights activist, stated: "Alice Bernstein has dedicated her life to ending racism in this country. ...[She] is writing an introduction [to my play] based on what she has learned about people and history from Aesthetic Realism which she has studied for decades."

A production of *The People of Clarendon County*—a Play by Ossie Davis, & the Answer to Racism, presenting Aesthetic Realism as the educational method that explains and changes prejudice and racism, was staged in the Congressional Auditorium of the US Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, DC on October 21, 2009, with introductory remarks given by House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn.

#### Criticism and response

The organization has also been accused by some ex-students and cult researchers for operating as a cult. Some former and current students of the philosophy have responded in a website titled "Countering the Lies," saying that the technique of the persons who want to discredit Aesthetic Realism is "1) to find out what characteristics a cult is supposed to have and, 2) then say Aesthetic Realism has them (though of course it doesn't)."

#### References[edit]

#### Notes

1. Jump up^ Statement of the Aesthetic Realism Foundation, 1990: "It is a fact that men and women have changed from homosexuality through study of Aesthetic Realism. Meanwhile, as is well known, there is now intense anger in America on the subject of homosexuality and how it is seen. Since this subject is by no means central to Aesthetic Realism, and since the Aesthetic Realism Foundation has not wanted to be involved in that atmosphere of anger, in 1990 the Foundation discontinued its public presentation of the fact that through Aesthetic Realism people have changed from homosexuality, and consultations to change from homosexuality are not being given. That is because we do not want this matter, which is certainly not fundamental to Aesthetic Realism, to be used to obscure what Aesthetic Realism truly is: education of the largest, most cultural kind."
2. Jump up^ James H. Bready, "Eli Siegel's system lives" in the Baltimore Evening Sun, 28 July 1982: "In brief, the Siegelian lifeview holds 'all reality, including the reality that is oneself [to be] the aesthetic oneness of opposites.' Motion and rest, surface and depth, love and anger, and so on, once identified, can and must be reconciled..."
3. Jump up^ Eli Siegel: "In Aesthetic Realism, beauty is the putting together of things that can be thought of as opposites....Aesthetic Realism says that reality is aesthetics....Reality is, when completely seen, beautiful: that is, reality consists of a mingling in aesthetic relation, of such opposites as the orderly and disorderly...." Aesthetic Realism: Three Instances
4. Jump up^ Deborah A. Straub in Contemporary Authors: "This philosophy sprang from Siegel's belief that 'what makes a good poem is like what can make a good life..., for poetry is a mingling of intensity and calm, emotion and logic.'" URL: [http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get\\_item/1/Sad7df8w16\\_1/SB976\\_01.pdf](http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get_item/1/Sad7df8w16_1/SB976_01.pdf)
5. Jump up^ William Packard: "And as far as Aesthetic Realism goes, it is eminent good sense. Eli Siegel has boiled it down to a simple formula: 'In reality, opposites are one; art shows this.' An artist will try to see the opposites in action, in himself and in his world and eventually in his own work." "How a Major Poet Is Ostracized by Lit Cliches: Eli Siegel in View," published innewsArt The Smith, (1978) URL: <http://www.aestheticrealism.net/NewsArt-Packard-article.htm>

6. Jump up^ Ralph Hattersley: "The solution to our problem with opposites and the use we can make of photography in finding it is pointed to succinctly in the Eli Siegel dictum, 'In reality opposites are one. Art shows this.'" "Form and Content in Color," *Popular Photography*, July 1964,
7. Jump up^ Lawrence Campbell in *Art Students League News*: "According to Siegel all the arts and sciences are really attempts at liking and understanding the world." (March 1983, Volume 37, Number 3)
8. Jump up^ Eli Siegel: "Philosophers have often seen reality as freedom and order, simultaneously and continually. Indeed, the first opposites I chose in my *Is Beauty the Making One of Opposites?*, 1955, were Freedom and Order. You can see these right now in the world if you look at it: freedom and order are in the street, in the ocean, in woods in upper New York State." "Good Sense for the World," *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*, #221 (22 June 1977); URL: <http://www.aestheticrealism.net/tro/tro221.html>.
9. Jump up^ Eli Siegel: "Verlaine...has some of the subtlest music in French verse. And here we have the first description of the world which beauty and art illustrate: that is, the world is simple and various at once. It is one universe, even as it has many twigs in twilight." "Good Sense for the World" (op. cit.).
10. Jump up^ Eli Siegel: "If...the structure of the world corresponds to the structure music may have or a novel may have [or any art], that much the world may be beautiful in the deepest sense of the word; and therefore can be liked." "Good Sense for the World," (op. cit.).
11. Jump up^ Martha Shepp: "Aesthetic Realism teaches that the deepest desire of every person is to like the world, honestly. This is the purpose of art education, and actually, ALL education." (Cataloguing Critiques: Submission to C. Staples & H. Williams, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.)  
URL: [http://www.marthashepp.com/cv\\_syll\\_phil/CritPresent4Website.pdf](http://www.marthashepp.com/cv_syll_phil/CritPresent4Website.pdf).
12. Jump up^ Daily Poetics, URL:  
[http://dailypoetics.typepad.com/daily\\_poetics/2006/09/the\\_world\\_art\\_a.html](http://dailypoetics.typepad.com/daily_poetics/2006/09/the_world_art_a.html).

13. Jump up^ Eli Siegel, "Aesthetic Realism: a Tripartite Study," *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*, #247 (21 December 1977) URL: <http://www.aestheticrealism.net/tro/tro247.html>.

14. Jump up^ Deborah A. Straub: "Aesthetic Realism describe[s] the two opposed purposes in everyone's life. As Siegel once observed, even though 'every person, in order to respect himself, has to see the world as beautiful, or good, or acceptable,' there is also 'a disposition in every person to think he will be for himself by making less of the outside world.' According to the philosopher, contempt for the world causes tremendous damage to the self (with effects ranging from boredom to insanity) and, on a larger scale, to the entire world when one nation's contempt for another leads to war." *Contemporary Authors*, URL: [http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get\\_item/1/Sad7df8w16\\_1/SB976\\_01.pdf](http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get_item/1/Sad7df8w16_1/SB976_01.pdf).

15. Jump up^ Bryan Patterson: "Eli Siegel, the great American poet and historian, defined hatred and contempt of people different from ourselves as the false importance or glory people received from the lessening of people not like themselves." *Herald Sun of Melbourne, Australia* (19 April 2009); URL: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/sunday-heraldsun/better-to-try-world-on-love/story-e6frf92o-1225700167216>.

16. Jump up^ Deborah A. Straub: "According to the philosopher, contempt for the world causes tremendous damage to the self (with effects ranging from boredom to insanity)." *Contemporary Authors*; URL: [http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get\\_item/1/Sad7df8w16\\_1/SB976\\_01.pdf](http://pdfserve.galegroup.com/pdfserve/get_item/1/Sad7df8w16_1/SB976_01.pdf).

17. Jump up^ Lawrence Campbell: "Among many bold pronouncements none by Siegel are stronger than the assertion that contempt of the world produces insanity." *Art Students League News*(March 1983, Volume 37, Number 3).

18. Jump up^ Michael Kernan in *The Washington Post* (16 August 1978): "There are two elements: oneself and everything that is not oneself, which he calls 'the world.' These two opposites must be brought into harmony: By liking the world, one can come to like oneself. If, on the other hand, one feels disdain, or what he calls contempt, for the world, unhappiness results. 'Contempt can be defined as the lessening of what is different from oneself as a means of

self-increase as one sees it,' he says. Contempt can lead to insanity, according to Siegel.” URL: <http://www.aestheticrealism.org/Press-Articles-on-Aesthetic-Realism/Wash-Post-Article-Kernan.htm>.

19. Jump up^ Eli Siegel: “An attitude to the world...governs one in one's everyday life. If you feel that the world is ill-managed, is contemptible, is unkind, you have to show that in how you see Mildred or how you see Morton...” “Aesthetic Realism; or, Is a Person an Aesthetic Situation?” (14 January 1969); URL: <http://www.annefielding.net/Aesthetic-Situation-by-Eli-Siegel.html>.

20. Jump up^ Deborah A. Straub:

## Chapter 10

### Evaluating Indian Aesthetics

**Saam Trived**

Globalization is... the next big artworld idea” – Noël Carroll<sup>1</sup>

Do the art and aesthetics of the four oldest human civilizations – those of Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq!), Egypt, India, and China, all of which incidentally flourished long before such landmark dates in world history as 1066, 1607, and 1776 – have anything to teach us today? More specifically, I focus here on classical Indian (not Native American!) aesthetics and the *rasa* theory; leaving it to others with greater expertise in ancient Chinese, Egyptian and other aesthetics to undertake similar projects. Does Indian aesthetics have anything of value and modern relevance to us today, both generally and in the West? In what follows, I suggest that the answer to this question is in the affirmative.

#### I. Exposition

I begin by setting out some basic ideas of the *rasa* theory of classical Indian aesthetics as found in Bharata’s *Natyasastra*<sup>2</sup> – hereafter NS – an ancient Sanskrit text on dramaturgy the precise dates of which we need not be much concerned with but which various scholars – who disagree about such things – place anywhere in time from the fifth century BCE to the eighth century CE. Note in passing that it is not my purpose in this essay to engage in comparative aesthetics, and so, for the most part, I will not compare ideas and passages in Bharata’s text with thoughts about drama and the other arts in Western aesthetics such as, for example, in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; some might, in any case, doubt how far such a comparison and contrast might go given that while we have the entire text of Bharata’s NS, we sadly do not possess all of Aristotle’s work. Note also that, for the most part, I will set aside later commentators on Bharata (such as the tenth and eleventh century CE Kashmir Shaivite Abhinavagupta), for there is reason to think that many of these later writers may have given a religious and cosmological twist to what is at core an aesthetic theory and can be understood as such, quite apart from religion;<sup>3</sup> here I disagree with

writers such as Susan Schwartz who suggests that the goal of Indian aesthetics is to facilitate religious transformation.<sup>4</sup> Note too that while the *rasa* theory's claims were originally about drama (which included dance and music as part of theatrical performances of ancient Indian plays) and literature understood broadly, over time they have also been extended to dance, sculpture, architecture, and music; claims about *rasa* probably cannot, however, be extended outside the arts to cover such things as beauty in nature.

The central ideas of Bharata's *rasa* theory of aesthetics can be found chiefly in chapters 6 and 7 of the NS (VI & VII). Bharata distinguishes ordinary, real-life psychological states (*bhava*) from aesthetic sentiments or emotions or flavors or relishes (*rasa*). There are forty-one psychological states of which eight are durable (*sthayibhava*) while the other thirty-three (which we need not be much concerned with) are transient even if complementary. It is these eight durable psychological states – love, laughter, compassion, anger, energy, fear, disgust, and astonishment – that when presented in a play (or an artwork broadly) give rise to or develop into the eight *rasas* or aesthetic emotions or flavors recognized in drama in a way, as will be explained later, that involves both what is expressed on stage and also the audience's uptake, and with which they have a one-one correspondence. The eight *rasas* are: erotic love (*sringara*), comic laughter (*hasya*), grief (*karuna*), fury (*raudra*), heroic spirit (*vira*), fear (*bhayanaka*), revulsion (*bibhatsa*), and wonder (*adbhuta*). And of these eight *rasas*, four – erotic love, fury, heroic spirit, and revulsion – are considered original, the other four *rasas* arising from them; a mimicry of erotic love gives us comic laughter, grief emerges from fury, heroic spirit yields wonder, while revulsion gives rise to fear. Note also that for any given play, one *rasa* must predominate so as to give unity to the discourse, and the others if present must be subsidiary to it.

With regard to the psychological states, four sorts of things are distinguished. The first is the determinant or external cause or stimulus (*vibhava*) of the psychological state, so in the case of erotic love, for example, the stimulus might be the season or a flower or ornaments or anything beautiful or desirable. The second is the consequent (*anubhava*), the immediate and involuntary reaction to the stimulus, so in our example, this might involve glancing coyly or mouthing sweet words. The third thing is the deliberate or conscious reaction (*vyabhicaribhava*), which in the case of erotic love might involve such of the thirty-three transient, complementary states as

languor or suspicion or jealousy. Finally, there is the total effect of the durable psychological state (*sthayibhava*) – love in this case – which dominates the other three even as all four together make up the relevant *rasa*, which in our example would be erotic love.

All literary meaning, Bharata tells us, involves some kind of emotion or sentiment, thus giving us an emotive theory of literary and, more broadly, artistic meaning. *Rasa*, we are told, arises or emerges from a combination of the psychological states, amongst other things, just as taste in food is the result of combining various condiments and ingredients. The analogy with food here need not entail a view of cooking as an art-form, but it is worth noting nevertheless that like most Sanskrit words, the word *rasa* has multiple meanings, including (amongst others) juice, sap; liquid; taste, flavor, relish; condiment; an object of taste; taste or inclination for a thing, liking, desire; sentiment; and essence.

Pursuing the analogy with food further, the NS claims that just as well-disposed people can taste and enjoy food cooked with many kinds of condiments, likewise a cultured person (*rasika*) can experience and relish *rasa*, as a final state of satisfaction, when they see dramatic representations and expressions of the various psychological states accompanied by words, gestures, and the like; the appeal to cultured persons here is reminiscent, of course, of the Humean notion of ideal critics and also similar notions of ideal or competent observers often appealed to in Western aesthetics. Cultured persons are described in the NS (XXVII. 50 ff.) as being impartial and sensitive; honest; alert; good at making inferences; capable of sympathizing with others; imaginative; open-minded; knowledgeable about music, dance, acting, dialects, grammar, prosody, customs, costumes, and make-up; having a fine sense of the *rasas* and the psychological states; expert at discussing pros and cons and at detecting faults and appreciating merits; and so on. It is conceded, however, that no one person is known to have all these qualities (much like Hume's granting that it is embarrassing to ask where true critics can be found).

While the actors in drama portray various psychological states (*bhava*), what cultured people experience when they taste and enjoy *rasa* is not the same mental state that is dramatically represented but instead an aesthetic emotion or flavor that is generalized from, and thus



transcends, such particularities as character, situation, place, time etc. that are associated with the psychological state represented: the experiencer must universalize their own emotion, transcending its particularities so as to recognize the universalized emotion in the work. Moreover, the psychological states portrayed infuse the meaning of the play in spectators, pervading them with words, gestures, and representations. Also, as Eliot Deutsch<sup>6</sup> points out, *rasa* is constituted by the process of aesthetic perception, involving both the work and an experience of it, and is not something that exists solely in the work (in an objectivist-formalist sense) nor solely in us (in a subjectivist-romantic-sentimentalist sense). The artwork controls or determines rather than causes the response of the experiencer, and the impersonality of its aesthetic content allows the work to be intersubjective even while its intensity also makes it highly individual.

## II. Criticisms

Before examining what, if anything, we might learn from the *rasa* theory, here are some quick concerns. To begin with, the emotive theory of literary and artistic meaning, more broadly, that we are offered is too narrow, at least for us today. Not all literature and art is emotive or expressive of (or portrays) emotions and other mental states, and some is in fact purely formalist; nor is expression of mental states the sole aim of literature and art.<sup>7</sup> To be fair to Bharata, though, let us focus on drama, which after all is the main subject of the NS. Here again there is experimental, short drama that need not be emotive or expressive; one example might be Samuel Beckett's 35-second work "Breath" which has no characters, but even if this example does not work, there is no reason in principle why there could not be purely formalist, experimental theater that is not expressive or emotive.

Here is a different worry. If writers such as M. Hiriyanna are right,<sup>8</sup> then pleasure is represented in Indian aesthetics as the sole aim of art. But such a view of art is clearly too narrow, for art may also have other aims such as educational or socio-political ones. The Indian context itself provides examples: the ancient Indian epic poems *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* not only afford pleasure but also often give insights into moral issues and human character and

emotions.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, even the NS (I.111-3) itself sees drama – conceived as imitating the actions and conduct of people – as instructive through its depictions of actions and psychological states and through its giving rise to *rasa*.

To turn to a different doubt, the NS specifies many elaborate rules about drama, pertaining to such things as hand gestures, bodily movements, gaits, rules of prosody and different kinds of language, metrical patterns, diction, modes of address and intonation, kinds of plays, costumes, make-up, styles, and so on. These are often accompanied by many neat – perhaps too neat and artificial – classifications and sub-classifications, reflecting the ancient Indian excellence at and indeed obsession with such things. One might worry though (as in the case of Aristotle's similar pronouncements about drama in *The Poetics*) if such rules might be too rigid, stifling genuine and revolutionary creativity. To mention just one example, the NS (XIV.12) suggests that dramatic characters are to enter and exit using the same door, and against this, one might wonder if an occasional variation might be called for in some dramatic situations (such as a chase) or otherwise generate surprise. Sure, some rules may be needed for creativity, and great art is often created within the bounds of possibilities set by such rules. But such rules are at best rules of thumb, and great artists (e.g. Amrita Shergil and M. F. Hussain in the Indian context, as well as those such as Picasso, Joyce, Beckett, and Beethoven in the West) often master rules or current conventions only to break them and create revolutionary art.

A different set of related criticisms concerns what Bharata says about many mental states and their dramatic representation. For example, the comic and laughter are seen as inferior in the NS (VI.47-61), as in the ancient Greeks, laughter of ridicule being associated with persons of the so-called middling type, and vulgar and excessive laughter with so-called inferior people. While there may be some concern, as with the Greeks, that excessive laughter is uncontrollable and thus verboten, nevertheless Bharata seems not to appreciate sufficiently that humor can help one bond with others and can also release both physical and psychological tension. Likewise, the NS (VII.14) claims (much like Plato) that sorrow relates to women and people of supposedly inferior types who weep in relation to it, in contrast to people of allegedly superior and middling types who are patient. Perhaps there is an assumption here in Bharata that boys or at least real men don't cry, though we should certainly question how repressed and mentally unhealthy it is not to

be in touch with and appropriately and moderately express one's emotions, especially the negative ones such as sorrow. Similarly (as in Plato), fear is said by the NS (VII. 21 ff.) to relate to women and supposedly inferior types. But, contra this, one might wonder if moderate and appropriate fear might warn us about threats in the world and also tell us something about ourselves,<sup>10</sup> besides playing a role in developing our imaginations and survival skills. In like manner, the NS suggests (VII. 25) that disgust relates to women and supposedly inferior types. But here one must ask if we are not dealing with plain bias against women and the so-called inferior in a patriarchal culture that has also witnessed a lot of caste-related and other forms of oppression. For, after all, disgust gives rise to revulsion, one of the eight *rasas*, as we are told in the NS (VI. 72).

One final worry. The NS makes associations between *rasas* and colors (VI. 42-3); for example, erotic love is said to be light green (which may or may not signify fertility), comic laughter white, and so on. For the most part, though, such connections seem without sufficient justification; leaving aside such exceptions as fury being red, presumably the basis of the association here being the color of blood and also often of raging faces. Similarly, it is not always clear what the rationale is behind the NS (XIX.38-40) associating the seven different musical notes of the scale with the *rasas* when it comes to recitation; or when it comes to songs using stringed instruments (XXIX.1-16).

### III. Learning from Indian Aesthetics?

So, are there any insights for us today in the *rasa* theory? Here are some possible lessons from classical Indian aesthetics; and while I do not have space here to develop these at length, I hope to do so on a different occasion.

Does the *rasa* theory entail that some sense dramatic works, and artworks generally, are not complete until a competent audience experiences and interprets them in a fully absorbed way, thereby tasting and relishing the *rasas* in them? While such a view may be compatible with the kind of performativism urged by Richard Shusterman, it is ontologically problematic on its own. For all sorts of plays may exist undiscovered as complete scripts and be discovered later in time

in a forgotten cellar, but we would not say that a recently discovered Kalidasa (an ancient Indian playwright) or Shakespeare or Ibsen or Tennessee Williams play is incomplete solely because it has not yet been performed and appreciated appropriately by cultured persons.

However, the thought that a play is not fully realized until experienced appropriately by a competent audience has more promise and may well be the greatest insight in the *rasa* theory, assuming that plays are meant to be performed and, like all artworks, to be experienced and appreciated appropriately, which in the case of Indian aesthetics involves savoring the dominant and other *rasas* in it, amongst other things. This is perfectly compatible with Edwin Gerow's claim<sup>12</sup> that *rasa* is the end or purpose of the play, and organizes it; and it is compatible with Schwartz's suggestion that the aim of dramatic performance is that cultured persons experience and relish *rasa*.<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting here that on the ancient Indian conception of theater, drama is essentially a performing art, a visual spectacle; even though (as with theatrical performances during Shakespeare's time) actual performances of ancient Indian plays did not use much painted scenery or sets and instead used prose and poetry, gestures, plot, characters etc. to conjure up the illusion of place and time. Merely reading a play silently as a literary work (as we might do today with Shakespeare or Ibsen or Tennessee Williams) was not seen as being on par with actually performing a play; even if some Western writers such as Peter Kivy have argued recently that silently reading a play or a literary work is also a kind of performance.<sup>14</sup>

Another plausible candidate for insight from the *rasa* theory is the idea that the success of a performance of a play is determined by the extent to which cultured audiences relish its dominant and subordinate *rasas*.<sup>15</sup> However, does the cultured person have to be aroused to some kind of psychological state, which they must actually feel, to taste and enjoy *rasa*? Or instead of full-fledged arousal, can it suffice if the psychological state in question is merely contemplative and called to mind? While the text of the NS (VI. 31-5) may suggest the former view, measured modern critics such as V. K. Chari opt for the latter.<sup>16</sup> Chari suggests that mental states such as moods need not be evoked or produced in readers (or spectators), per the *rasa* theory, but rather the purpose of literary (and artistic) works is to present emotional situations so that the situation is called up in the reader's or spectator's mind in its fully imagined detail and is recognized as the situation of a particular emotion. *Rasas* are thus made available to perception regardless of

whether the corresponding emotions are actually aroused in the reader or spectator. Also worth noting is the idea that to appreciate a play or an artwork appropriately, its experience must be relished or savored or enjoyed, the way suitably disposed diners enjoy food. Mere cold, cognitive appreciation of a play or an artwork will not suffice.

Yet another thing we might learn from the *rasa* theory is the idea that aesthetic enjoyment is the highest experience of life and is a kind of contemplative feeling that is higher than ordinary feelings such as sympathy, for it is a universalized feeling not tied down to the particularities it transcends. K. C. Bhattacharya puts the point well when he uses the example of a child playing with a toy, her grandfather affectionately watching the child, and my enjoying contemplating the scene.<sup>17</sup> While the child's feeling is primary, the grandfather's feeling is sympathetic, and my feeling is contemplative. Also, while the grandfather's feeling has a personal interest in this particular child and her play, my contemplative feeling is not personal but is rather generalized as I enjoy the pure essence of the feeling,<sup>18</sup> as a universalized feeling stripped of its particularities, as an impersonal feeling as I contemplate with relish the very idea of a grandparent (or any human being for that matter) sympathetically delighting in a child's play.

A different valuable lesson from the *rasa* theory is the idea that the cultured person can lose herself in the artwork, identifying herself with it and losing her sense of self-consciousness as *rasa* fills her. However, this need not involve believing with Kathleen Higgins (following Abhinavagupta)<sup>19</sup> that the cultured person must be spiritually prepared per traditional Hindu philosophical and religious ideas, involving transcending the supposedly illusory ordinary, empirical self to realize that one's true self, Atman, is identical with Brahman, the ground of all things that is ultimate reality. For one can immerse oneself fully in an artwork and lose one's sense of self in it without believing in or appealing to such Hindu notions; this is possible not just for those in the West outside the Indian tradition, but even for those within the Indian philosophical tradition who reject Hindu philosophies and instead embrace heterodox non-Hindu ideas such as those of the atheist, materialist Carvaka school of Indian philosophy. Indeed, there is no reason in principle why a Carvaka or someone grounded in Western traditions could not be a cultured person (*rasika*) in the sense the *rasa* theory has in mind. There is a notion of transcendence, to be sure, in the *rasa* theory, but this need not be understood in traditional Hindu

terms, as spiritually transcending the mundane to realize unity with Brahman. Instead, the relevant notion of transcendence could just be understood, as discussed above, as transcending the particularities (characters, situation, place, time etc.) of the emotion theatrically presented, as the cultured person savors a contemplative feeling, consisting of a generalized aesthetic emotion; as Lewis Rowell puts it, *rasa* is “...an awareness that rises above the circumstances which awakened it.”<sup>20</sup>

A final lesson may be that even though poetry and the arts in general are emotive discourse according to the *rasa* theory, a lot of thinking or intellection is involved in emotional expression; as Chari puts it, the alleged opposition between thought and emotion is a misconception.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

I hope to have shown through the case of Indian aesthetics that it is not completely insane – as some readers might think – to engage with non-Western art and aesthetics. While there are both similarities and dissimilarities between Western and non-Western aesthetics, a careful look should reveal that non-Western aesthetics, evaluated on its own merits, has its own insights. Harking back to the quote from Noël Carroll at the start of this essay, in this age of globalization (when some are talking of the decline of the West and the rise of the rest), readers would do well to explore similarly the aesthetics of various non-Western cultures, which are, for lack of knowing better, sadly too often simply lumped together under the generic category of “non-Western aesthetics,” without paying due attention to the differences between, say, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Islamic, and African aesthetics.

# Chapter 11

## The Concept of the Aesthetic

### CHAPTER 11

#### The Concept of the Aesthetic

Introduced into the philosophical lexicon during the Eighteenth Century, the term "aesthetic" has come to be used to designate, among other things, a kind of object, a kind of judgment, a kind of attitude, a kind of experience, and a kind of value. For the most part, aesthetic theories have divided over questions *particular* to one or another of these designations: whether artworks are necessarily aesthetic objects; how to square the allegedly perceptual basis of aesthetic judgments with the fact that we give reasons in support of them; how best to capture the elusive contrast between an aesthetic attitude and a practical one; whether to define aesthetic experience according to its phenomenological or representational content; how best to understand the relation between aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. But questions of more *general* nature have lately arisen, and these have tended to have a skeptical cast: whether any use of "aesthetic" may be explicated without appeal to some other; whether agreement respecting any use is sufficient to ground meaningful theoretical agreement or disagreement; whether the term ultimately answers to any legitimate philosophical purpose that justifies its inclusion in the lexicon. The skepticism expressed by such general questions did not begin to take hold until the later part of the Twentieth Century, and this fact prompts the question whether (a) the concept of the aesthetic is inherently problematic and it is only recently that we have managed to see that it is, or (b) the concept is fine and it is only recently that we have become muddled enough to imagine otherwise. Adjudicating between these possibilities requires a vantage from which to take in both early and late theorizing on aesthetic matters.

- 1. The Concept of Taste
  - 1.1 Immediacy
  - 1.2 Disinterest
- 2. The Concept of the Aesthetic
  - 2.1 Aesthetic Objects

- 2.2 Aesthetic Judgment
- 2.3 The Aesthetic Attitude
- 2.4 Aesthetic Experience

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## **1. The Concept of Taste**

The concept of the aesthetic descends from the concept of taste. Why the concept of taste commanded so much philosophical attention during the Eighteenth Century is a complicated matter, but this much is clear: the eighteenth-century theory of taste emerged, in part, as a corrective to the rise of rationalism, particularly as applied to beauty, and to the rise of egoism, particularly as applied to virtue. Against rationalism about beauty, the eighteenth-century theory of taste held the judgment of beauty to be immediate; against egoism about virtue, it held the pleasure of beauty to be disinterested.

### **1.1 Immediacy**

Rationalism about beauty is the view that judgments of beauty are judgments of reason, i.e., that we judge things to be beautiful by reasoning it out, where reasoning it out typically involves inferring from principles or applying concepts. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, rationalism about beauty had achieved dominance on the continent, and was being pushed to new extremes by “les géomètres,” a group of literary theorists who aimed to bring to literary criticism the mathematical rigor that Descartes had brought to physics. As one such theorist put it:

The way to think about a literary problem is that pointed out by Descartes for problems of physical science. A critic who tries any other way is not worthy to be living in the present century. There is nothing better than mathematics as propaedeutic for literary criticism. (Terrasson 1715, Preface, 65; quoted in Wimsatt and Brooks 1957, 258)

It was against this, and against more moderate forms of rationalism about beauty, that mainly British philosophers working mainly within an empiricist framework began to develop theories



of taste. The fundamental idea behind any such theory—which we may call *the immediacy thesis*—is that judgments of beauty are not (or at least not primarily) mediated by inferences from principles or applications of concepts, but rather have all the immediacy of straightforwardly sensory judgments; it is the idea, in other words, that we do not reason to the conclusion that things are beautiful, but rather “taste” that they are. Here is an early expression of the thesis, from Jean-Baptiste Dubos's *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music*, which first appeared in 1719:

## 1.2 Disinterest

Egoism about virtue is the view that to judge an action or trait virtuous is to take pleasure in it because you believe it to serve some interest of yours. Its central instance is the Hobbesian view—still very much on early eighteenth-century minds—that to judge an action or trait virtuous is to take pleasure in it because you believe it to promote your safety. Against Hobbesian egoism a number of British moralists—preeminently Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume—argued that, while a judgment of virtue is a matter of taking pleasure in response to an action or trait, the pleasure is disinterested, by which they meant that it is not self-interested. One argument went roughly as follows. That we judge virtue by means of an immediate sensation of pleasure means that judgments of virtue are judgments of taste, no less than judgments of beauty. But pleasure in the beautiful is not self-interested: we judge objects to be beautiful whether or not we believe them to serve our interests. But if pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested, there is no reason to think that pleasure in the virtuous cannot also be (

As our language contains no other *useable* adjective, to express coincidence of form, feeling, and intellect, that something, which, confirming the inner and the outward senses, becomes a new sense in itself. There is reason to hope, that the term *aesthetic*, will be brought into common use.

The availability of an adjective corresponding to “taste” has allowed for the retiring of a series of awkward expressions: the expressions “judgment of taste,” “emotion of taste” and “quality of taste” have given way to the arguably less offensive “aesthetic judgment,” “aesthetic emotion,” and “aesthetic quality.” However, as the noun “taste” phased out, we became saddled with other perhaps equally awkward expressions, including the one that names this entry.

## **2. The Concept of the Aesthetic**

Much of the history of more recent thinking about the concept of the aesthetic can be seen as the history of the development of the immediacy and disinterest theses.

### **2.1 Aesthetic Objects**

Artistic formalism is the view that the artistically relevant properties of an artwork—the properties in virtue of which it is an artwork and in virtue of which it is a good or bad one—are formal merely, where formal properties are typically regarded as properties graspable by sight or by hearing merely. Artistic formalism has been taken to follow from both the immediacy and the disinterest theses. If you take the immediacy thesis to imply the artistic irrelevance of all properties whose grasping requires the use of reason, and you include representational properties in that class, then you are apt to think that the immediacy thesis implies artistic formalism. If you take the disinterest thesis to imply the artistic irrelevance of all properties capable of practical import, and you include representational properties in that class, then you are apt to think that the disinterest thesis implies artistic formalism.

### **2.2 Aesthetic Judgment**

The eighteenth-century debate between rationalists and theorists of taste (or sentimentalists) was primarily a debate over the immediacy thesis, i.e., over whether we judge objects to be beautiful by applying principles of beauty to them. It was not primarily a debate over the existence of principles of beauty, a matter over which theorists of taste might disagree. Kant denied that there are any such principles (Kant 1790, 101), but both Hutcheson and Hume affirmed their existence: they maintained that although judgments of beauty are judgments of taste and not of reason, taste nevertheless operates according to general principles, which might be discovered through empirical investigation (Hutcheson 1725, 28–35; Hume 1757, 231–233).

### **2.3 The Aesthetic Attitude**

The Kantian notion of disinterest has its most direct recent descendents in the aesthetic-attitude theories that flourished from the early to mid Twentieth Century. Though Kant followed the British in applying the term “disinterested” strictly to pleasures, its migration to attitudes is not difficult to explain. For Kant the pleasure involved in a judgment of taste is disinterested because such a judgment does not issue in a motive to do anything in particular. For this reason Kant refers to the judgment of taste as contemplative rather than practical (Kant 1790, 95). But if the judgment of taste is not practical, then the attitude we bear toward its object is presumably also not practical: when we judge an object aesthetically we are unconcerned with whether and how it may further our practical aims. Hence it is natural to speak of our attitude toward the object as disinterested.

To say, however, that the migration of disinterest from pleasures to attitudes is natural is not to say that it is inconsequential. Consider the difference between Kant's aesthetic theory, the last great theory of taste, and Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory, the first great aesthetic-attitude theory. Whereas for Kant disinterested pleasure is the means by which we discover things to bear aesthetic value, for Schopenhauer disinterested attention (or "will-less contemplation") is itself the locus of aesthetic value. According to Schopenhauer, we lead our ordinary, practical lives in a kind of bondage to our own desires (Schopenhauer 1819, 196). This bondage is a source not merely of pain but also of cognitive distortion in that it restricts our attention to those aspects of things relevant to the fulfilling or thwarting of our desires. Aesthetic contemplation, being will-less, is therefore both epistemically and hedonically valuable, allowing us a desire-free glimpse into the essences of things as well as a respite from desire-induced pain:

ternalism to externalism has not been without costs. One central ambition of internalism—that of fixing the meaning of “aesthetic” by tying it to features peculiar to aesthetic experience—has had to be given up. But a second, equally central, ambition—that of accounting for aesthetic value by tying it to the value of aesthetic experience—has been retained. Indeed most everything written on aesthetic experience since the Beardsley-Dickie debate has been written in service of the view that an object has aesthetic value insofar as it affords valuable experience when correctly perceived. This view which has come to be called *empiricism about aesthetic value*, given that it reduces aesthetic value to the value of aesthetic experience—has attracted many advocates over the last several years (Beardsley 1982, Budd 1985 and 1995, Goldman 1995 and 2006, Walton

1993, Levinson 1996 and 2006, Miller 1998, Railton 1998, and Iseminger 2004), while provoking relatively little criticism (Zangwill 1999, Sharpe 2000, D. Davies 2004, and Kieran 2005). Yet it can be wondered whether empiricism about aesthetic value is susceptible to a version of the criticism that has done internalism in.

For there is something odd about the position that combines externalism about aesthetic experience with empiricism about aesthetic value. Externalism locates the features that determine aesthetic character in the object, whereas empiricism locates the features that determine aesthetic value in the experience, when one might have thought that the features that determine aesthetic character just are the features that determine aesthetic value. If externalism and empiricism are both true, there is nothing to stop two objects that have different, even wholly disparate, aesthetic characters from nevertheless having the very same aesthetic value unless, that is, the value-determining features of an experience are bound logically to the character-determining features of the object that affords it such that only an object with those features could afford an experience having that value. But in that case the value-determining features of the experience are evidently not simply the phenomenological features that might have seemed best suited to determine the value of the experience, but perhaps rather the representational or epistemic features of the experience that it has only in relation to its object. And this is what some empiricists have been urging of late:

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## Chapter 12

### Other Aesthetics



The modern study of Japanese aesthetics in the Western sense only started a little over two hundred years ago. The Japanese aesthetic is a set of ancient ideals that include *wabi* (transient and stark beauty), *sabi* (the beauty of natural patina and aging), and *yūgen* (profound grace and subtlety). These ideals, and others, underpin much of Japanese cultural and aesthetic norms on what is considered tasteful or beautiful. Thus, while seen as a philosophy in Western societies, the concept of aesthetics in Japan is seen as an integral part of daily life. Japanese aesthetics now encompass a variety of ideals; some of these are traditional while others are modern and sometimes influenced from other cultures.

#### **Shinto-Buddhism**

Shinto is considered to be at the fountain-head of Japanese culture. With its emphasis on the wholeness of nature and character in ethics, and its celebration of the landscape, it sets the tone for Japanese aesthetics. Nevertheless, Japanese aesthetic ideals are most heavily influenced by Japanese Buddhism. In the Buddhist tradition, all things are considered as either evolving from or dissolving into nothingness. This "nothingness" is not empty space. It is rather a space of potentiality. If the seas represent potential then each thing is like a wave arising from it and returning to it. There are no permanent waves. There are no perfect waves. At no point is a wave complete, even at its peak. Nature is seen as a dynamic whole that is to be admired and appreciated. This appreciation of nature has been fundamental to many Japanese aesthetic ideals,

"arts," and other cultural elements. In this respect, the notion of "art" (or its conceptual equivalent) is also quite different from Western traditions

## Wabi-sabi

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*Main article: Wabi-sabi*



Hanami ("blossom viewing") parties at Himeji Castle

Wabi and sabi refers to a mindful approach to everyday life. Over time their meanings overlapped and converged until they are unified into *Wabi-sabi*, the aesthetic defined as the beauty of things "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete".<sup>[5]</sup> Things in bud, or things in decay, as it were, are more evocative of wabi-sabi than things in full bloom because they suggest the transience of things. As things come and go, they show signs of their coming or going and these signs are considered to be beautiful. In this, beauty is an altered state of consciousness and can be seen in the mundane and simple. The signatures of nature can be so subtle that it takes a quiet mind and a cultivated eye to discern them. In Zen philosophy there are seven aesthetic principles for achieving Wabi-Sabi.

**Fukinsei**: asymmetry, irregularity; **Kanso**: simplicity; **Koko**: basic, weathered; **Shizen**: without pretense, natural; **Yugen**: subtly profound grace, not obvious; **Datsuzoku**: unbounded by convention, free; **Seijaku**: tranquility.

Each of these things are found in nature but can suggest virtues of human character and appropriateness of behaviour. This, in turn suggests that virtue and civility can be instilled through an appreciation of, and practice in, the arts. Hence, aesthetic ideals have an ethical connotation and pervades much of the Japanese culture.

## Miyabi



The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (*Kinkaku-ji*)

Miyabi is one of the oldest of the traditional Japanese aesthetic ideals, though perhaps not as prevalent as Iki or Wabi-sabi. In modern Japanese, the word is usually translated as "elegance," "refinement," or "courtliness" and sometimes refers to a "heart-breaker".

The aristocratic ideal of Miyabi demanded the elimination of anything that was absurd or vulgar and the "polishing of manners, diction, and feelings to eliminate all roughness and crudity so as to achieve the highest grace." It expressed that sensitivity to beauty which was the hallmark of the Heian era. Miyabi is often closely connected to the notion of Mono no aware, a bittersweet awareness of the transience of things, and thus it was thought that things in decline showed a great sense of miyabi.

## Shibui



An 18th century tea bowl, exhibiting the aesthetics of Shibui

Shibui (adjective), shibumi (noun), or shibusa (noun) are Japanese words which refer to a particular aesthetic or beauty of simple, subtle, and unobtrusive beauty. Originating in the

Muromachi period (1336–1392) as shibushi, the term originally referred to a sour or astringent taste, such as that of an unripe persimmon. Shibui maintains that literal meaning still, and remains the antonym of amai (meaning 'sweet'). Like other Japanese aesthetic terms, such as *iki* and *wabi-sabi*, shibui can apply to a wide variety of subjects, not just art or fashion. Shibusa includes the following essential qualities. (1) Shibui objects appear to be simple overall but they include subtle details, such as textures, that balance simplicity with complexity. (2) This balance of simplicity and complexity ensures that one does not tire of a shibui object but constantly finds new meanings and enriched beauty that cause its aesthetic value to grow over the years. (3) Shibusa is not to be confused with *wabi* or *sabi*. Though many *wabi* or *sabi* objects are shibui, not all shibui objects are *wabi* or *sabi*. *Wabi* or *sabi* objects can be more severe and sometimes exaggerate intentional imperfections to such an extent that they can appear to be artificial. Shibui objects are not necessarily imperfect or asymmetrical, though they can include these qualities. (4) Shibusa walks a fine line between contrasting aesthetic concepts such as elegant and rough or spontaneous and restrained.

### **Iki**

*Iki* is a traditional aesthetic ideal in Japan. The basis of *iki* is thought to have formed among urbane mercantile class (*Chōnin*) in Edo in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). *Iki* is an expression of simplicity, sophistication, spontaneity, and originality. It is ephemeral, straightforward, measured, and unselfconscious. *Iki* is not overly refined, pretentious, complicated. *Iki* may signify a personal trait, or artificial phenomena exhibiting human will or consciousness. *Iki* is not used to describe natural phenomena, but may be expressed in human appreciation of natural beauty, or in the nature of human beings. The phrase *iki* is generally used in Japanese culture to describe qualities that are aesthetically appealing and when applied to a person, what they do, or have, constitutes a high compliment. *Iki* is not found in nature. While similar to *wabi-sabi* in that it disregards perfection, *iki* is a broad term that encompasses various characteristics related to refinement with flair. The tasteful manifestation of sensuality can be *iki*. Etymologically, *iki* has a root that means pure and unadulterated. However, it also carries a connotation of having an appetite for life.

## Jo-ha-kyū

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Jo-ha-kyū (序破急) is a concept of modulation and movement applied in a wide variety of traditional Japanese arts. Roughly translated to "beginning, break, rapid", it infers a tempo that begins slowly, accelerates, and then ends swiftly. This concept is applied to elements of the Japanese tea ceremony, to kendō, to the traditional theatre, to Gagaku, and to the traditional collaborative linked verse forms renga and renku (haikai no renga).

## Yūgen

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*The Dragon of Smoke Escaping from Mt Fuji*, Hokusai

Yūgen (幽玄?) is an important concept in traditional Japanese aesthetics. The exact translation of the word depends on the context. In the Chinese philosophical texts the term was taken from, yūgen meant "dim", "deep" or "mysterious". In the criticism of Japanese waka poetry, it was used to describe the subtle profundity of things that are only vaguely suggested by the poems, and was also the name of a style of poetry (one of the ten orthodox styles delineated by Fujiwara no Teika in his treatises).

Yūgen suggests that beyond what can be said but is not an allusion to another world. It is about this world, this experience. All of these are portals to yūgen:

"To watch the sun sink behind a flower clad hill.

To wander on in a huge forest without thought of return. To stand upon the shore and gaze after a boat that disappears behind distant islands. To contemplate the flight of wild geese seen and lost among the clouds.

And, subtle shadows of bamboo on bamboo." Zeami Motokiyo

Zeami was the originator of the dramatic art form Noh theatre and wrote the classic book on dramatic theory (Kadensho). He uses images of nature as a constant metaphor. For example, "snow in a silver bowl" represents "the Flower of Tranquility". Yūgen is said to mean “a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe... and the sad beauty of human suffering”. It is used to refer to Zeami’s interpretation of “refined elegance” in the performance of Noh.

Geidō



Hasegawa Tōhaku *Pine Trees*, 1593

Geidō (芸道?) refers to the various traditional Japanese arts disciplines: Noh (能?) (theater), *kadō* (華道?) (Japanese flower arrangement), *shodō* (書道?) (Japanese calligraphy), *Sadō* (茶道?) (Japanese tea ceremony), and *yakimono* (焼物?) (Japanese pottery). All of these disciplines carry an ethical and aesthetic connotation and teach an appreciation of the process of creation.<sup>[8]</sup> To introduce discipline into their training, Japanese warriors followed the example of the arts that systematized practice through prescribed forms called kata - think of the tea ceremony. Training in combat techniques

incorporated the way of the arts (Geidō), practice in the arts themselves, and instilling aesthetic concepts (for example, yugen) and the philosophy of arts (geido ron). This led to combat techniques becoming known as the martial arts (even today, David Lowry shows, in the 'Sword and Brush: the spirit of the martial arts', the affinity of the martial arts with the other arts). All of these arts are a form of tacit communication and we can, and do, respond to them by appreciation of this tacit dimension.



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