

Prefatory Note

The thrust of the thesis is to understand what does it mean to say 'judging aesthetically' or what goes by the name of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment is quite complex a matter, standing intermediate between cognitive judgment *per se* and exclamatory utterances. The cognitive status of the so-called aesthetic judgment has often been called into question, since the predicates used in judging something aesthetically are non-referential or non-descriptive. They may be, to follow the suggestion made by R.M.Hare, commendatory predicates. In that case, aesthetic judgments would involve the problem of meaning and criteria, they will have a sort of descriptive meaning, however secondary they might be. The problematic concerning aesthetic judgment is there, and yet people do go on making such judgments. And hence the need of probing into the concept of aesthetic judgment, what is it ? and why is it there ?

The thesis is a study of the views concerning aesthetic judgment in its historical development from Hume to our own time, and therefore, it is presented in the form of interconnected essays, taking into account the significant thinkers, their views and the concepts they have offered. There are ten chapters in the form of essays, the first three are devoted to understanding the nature of judgment in relation to aesthetic experience. Aesthetic judgment presupposes a unique sort of experience that calls for judgments with a special class or set of predicates. We have opened with Hume and Kant. Kant's account of aesthetic experience in terms of disinterested delight and purposiveness without a purpose is deservedly well-known. But Kant's thesis has had its roots in such Scottish Philosophers as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume in particular. We have tried trace the idea of disinterestedness

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as it developed from Shaftesbury and reached its full classic explication in Kant's third *Critique*.

Kant's thesis developed into Schopenhauer's views about contemplative attitude of the beholder in encountering beauty in art or nature. Aesthetic experience as contemplation has had a long history, and that too of a respectable ancestry. We have put Schopenhauer, immediately after our consideration of Kant's ideas, and shown the linkage.

For Kant, it is the form that delights, and it is the idea of "Significant form" that held its sway in the early decades of the origin of modern art. There are difficulties enshrined in the concept of significant form, but it can not be denied that it has been a very fertile concept, at least in the areas of judging paintings. It is uncertain if it can have any fruitful employment in considering poetry or any literary art for that matter. There is no denying the fact that the idea of *form*, in distinction from *content*, comes up again and again in discussions on art, plastic or non-plastic. There has been Croce's thesis about the identity of form and content.

The chapter -IV: "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience as Contemplation" is directly related to chapter-VI : "Aesthetic Attitude, Experience and Judgment". The concept of *psychical distance* has been influential in circles where phenomenologically oriented approach to aesthetic experience is recommended. Its roots may be found in Kant's norm of disinterestedness, but Bullough strikes a delicate balance between *over distanced* and *under distanced* view of

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the aesthetic object. In many a way psychological distance help us to free ourselves in judging the object from imposing or superimposing practical concerns and pre-conceived ideas on the object of aesthetic apprehension. The concept has been found fertile in our enjoyment of literature and painting, and even films and drama. The attitude of maintaining psychological distance is much like adjusting our mental focus or contemplation to judge the object *aesthetically*. One might recall G.E.Moore's invocation of "appropriate emotions" corresponding to the qualities of the aesthetic object. Moore's contribution to aesthetic is worth considering in itself, and may be looked upon as a contribution to analytic aesthetics. This however is another matter. It appears after all that Aristotle's concept of catharsis (as interpreted by James Joyce in terms of *stasis*), Kant's *disinterestedness*, Bell's idea of *not borrowing anything from life* and achieving *significant meaning*, Schopenhauer's contemplative *will less ness* and Bullough's *psychical distance* are all variations on phenomenologically possible experience, and the ideas or concepts have amongst themselves considerable family resemblance.

With VII : "Aesthetic Qualities" we enter the contemporary debate about the status and value of the aesthetic object. Such objects are valued, and the issue turns on the question, what the aesthetic objects valued for ? We are again reminded of Moore's distinction between *natural* and *non-natural* qualities, brought to focus in aesthetic by Roman Ingarden by distinguishing aesthetic qualities from non-aesthetic ones. Is 'beauty' a quality ? And in answering this question a lot of debate has been carried on. It is true that quite a number of properties have been

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found as candidates for aesthetic appraisal. Philosophers, who are inclined towards linguistic analysis, have favoured, in some way or other, the view that 'beauty' should be dropped from aesthetic discourse. Allied to this contention is the problem of definition of *art*. This is an issue which arose from Wittgenstein's views on meaning in terms of the analogy of *game* and *family resemblance*. While the logic and the point of the views in the debate are philosophically commendable, yet the candidature of "beauty" remains with us.

From Chapters VIII to X we have ventured giving accounts of three contemporary views in aesthetic. Marxism, along with Freud's interpretation of dreams and psycho-analysis, had revolutionary effect in the intellectual climate of the last century. It is not a political or party ideology alone, it has deeper implications for sociology as well. Marxism has inspired the view of social realism in art and aesthetics, and it has been formulated variously both in Russia and Europe. As an ideology, it has inspired poets, in not painters worth reckoning, in many countries. As a world view, Marxism enjoyed great popularity with novelists too. Even the god failed, yet the socio-political dimension of our being remains a reality, and great sophistication has been achieved in the formulation of Marxist aesthetics, and it may also be said that Marxism has been one of inspiring factors in the development of post-colonial approaches and ideas in a global perspective.

Wittgenstein's legacy in theory of meaning has flowered in newer ways in literary criticism. Academic philosopher in the universities of Britain and America has barely suspected that Wittgenstein could come out a prophet in literary

and aesthetic criticism too. The ideas of *criticism* and *interpretation* have been revolutionized, and an altogether new discourse has found itself established. The seminal ideas originated perhaps with Nietzsche, but theorisation took place in France, in the existential mode of thinking by Sartre. But Germany led the way with Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer and Habermas.

In contemporary criticism such names have come up as of Frank Kermode, Roland Barthes, and the philosopher, Richard Rorty, Sociological theories like structuralism has a share in arguing differently as regards analysis of literature. There have been reader response theorists, and once again one would be reminded the beholders' response and attitude theories that one had come across in Kant, Schopenhauer and Bullough. But in their case it was the unique experience that was being understood. In the case of post-structuralism it was the text, that was at the centre of focus, and the stability of meaning being questioned.

Chapter -X is devoted to following the train of ideas of the previous chapter. In Deconstruction and Anti-aesthetics we have endeavoured the post-structuralist phenomenon as presented by Jacques Derrida. He questioned both logocentricism and phonocentricism. The ideal of classical Indian aesthetics, *vāgartha pratipatti*, the unity of *vāk* and *artha*, has come to be challenged. Derrida holds that there is no reliable or intimate relationship between words and things or knowledge or reality. Language is not anything stable, and no reading can take us to the meaning, for all meaning is fiction. In language there are only differences

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without positive terms. If Derrida is taken to suggest that everytime we attempt to say something we may be moving towards meaning and reality, but we never reach it. There is no transcendental signifier or reality principle behind any text or word. All our hunt for meaning is only a wild goose chase. All that is obtained is a freeplay.

This is logically and theoretically true. The Buddhist theory of *apoha*, as against the theory of meaning suggested and argued for by Nyāya has something to do with Derrida's contentions. Is Derrida sceptical of his scepticism ? Scepticism is strength, but when it declines into Pyrrhorism, it becomes weakness. We need not only the strength to defer a decision but the strength to make one. It of course remains to be said that the challenging of the truth claims of all modes of discourse is and may be a process of disentangling. In a world of flux, a world of movement, all concepts of truth can only be relative and tentative. When we look at life and art, every moment of our perception of an object or event contains within itself the traces of the past moments and the seeds of the future. Deconstruction encourages interpretative freedom.

We have not tried to institute parallelisms between the Western and the Indian theories of art and poetry. The presuppositions, cultural, social and philosophical ones, are different, though there does obtain significant similarities. But that is another story. We simply indicated the Kindred notions, but have not ventured beyond that.

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It will be seen and noticed that, and it has been the focal point of attention on our part, aesthetic judgment is a complex matter, it is not simply a matter of saying that something is beautiful or ugly, or I like or dislike it. If I could have been able to bring the complexity of the issue in a cogent and inter-connected manner, our attempt would be deemed successful.

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