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## CHAPTER – IV

### SOME PROBLEMS AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Various problems are raised regarding Abhinavagupta's philosophy of aesthetic experience. We shall try to answer these questions by following the views of Abhinavagupta.

At first let us turn our attention to the concept of pathos from which a *sloka* is originated as observed by Ānandavardhana – '*Krauñcadvandva-viyogotthaḥ śókah ślókatvamagataḥ*'. The impersonal and disinterested pathos generated through the sight of the death of the curlew-couple gives rise to a *śloka*. Both Vāṇiki and the curlew-couple blessed with human are under the sway of a feeling called pity. This pity being a pre-eminent feeling of the human heart has spread itself very widely. It affects easily men at different times and in different races in different degrees. Women are more moved by pity than men; civilised men than savages, and probably the northern more than the southern races. This pity rules most the mind of Christians. The area and scope of pity has expanded widely with the ease of communication in the world today.

Literature of the world has emerged from dramas called tragedies concern themselves necessarily with this human noble feeling called pity. Aristotle has rightly pointed out that tragedies could not exist and would not have any point if the human misfortunes would not have evoked pity. In poetry this

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pity is depicted and sometimes it is depicted elaborately. But the depiction of pity in poetry evokes surprisingly a kind of joy which is something strange. We cannot blame ourselves when we enjoy this pity at the time of witnessing scenes of pity and sadness in a play or in the times of poetry. The relation of cause and effect between pity and joy is a puzzle till today which no competent authority on literary criticism has discussed in a convincing way. The furious sentiment (*raudra*), the sentiment of frightful (*bhayānaka*) the sentiment of disgustful – all create also an ethos of joy in the spectators but the relation of cause and effect in these has not sparked any debate. The poetic sentiment is not within the purview of laws of nature as we meet in the relation of cause and effect between an earthen jar and clay. The sphere of poetry is simply super-mundane (*alaukika*) and hence, the relation between pity and joy, fear and joy cannot and should not be accounted for. The domain of poetry as per Mammata's observation is untouched by the claws of day-to-day human existence and the laws of nature that permeate it (*niyatikṛtaniyamarahitā*). The words expressive of sentiments, moods, when mentioned, do not put any handicap to aesthetic relish (*rasa*), but the explicit mention of such words are the good means for evocation of aesthetic relish (*rasa*). The experience of pain, fear, anger in a play removes the same from the mind of a connoisseur and the vacuum is taken hold of by joy. This is like removal of serpent's poison by an injection prepared by serpent's venom.

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Now we may turn our attention to another similar problem like a poet moved at a tragic sight at heart and giving vent to his experience in a metrical verse as in the case of the author of the Rāmāyana giving vent to his sorrow at the sight of the ghastly murder of the male curlew putting the female one into an ocean of sorrow. Sorrow grips the heart thoroughly and overflows from it to take the form of metrical poetry.

From this one could ask whether art is spontaneous or not. Both Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta are in favour of the spontaneity of art if the above mentioned episode of Valmiki is taken for consideration. In such cases of art plot, character, rhetorics, language follow spontaneously for the creation of a *kāvya*. It has been accepted by them that one whose heart is saturated with *rasa* receives the power of creativity (*rasāveśavaiśadyanirmānakṣamatva*). Someone may raised question – what is the utility of accepting creating genius (*kārayitrī pratibhā*) and practice (*anūsīlana*) as prescribed by some rhetoricians. It is also true that some great poets like Rabindranāth etc, being dissatisfied with their created words, are found to keep on changing the words, metres, etc. of the same works before giving a final shape to them. If these points are properly adhdred to the proposition that art is spontaneous will turn into a false one.

In response to this, some arguments may be put forth in support of Abhinavagupta and Ānandavardhana. What is more important in the creation of a poetry is the saturation of heart with aesthetic enjoyment which is called

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*rasāvesa*. If somebody is covered with such sentiment, he becomes the sharer of the pathos or other sentiments of the dramatic characters. In fact, the creator's heart, spectators' hearts and the hearts of the characters are tuned in the same ware which is technically called *sahṛdaya*. Being *rasāvesa* or *sahṛdaya* is a precondition of the power of creativity, which is called *kārayitrī pratibhā* (creative genius). From this creativity follows spontaneously. This creative genius is not an isolated or arbitrary phenomenon, as it is due to the *rasāvesa* i.e. the feeling of sentiment. So far as practice or *anuśīlana* is concerned, it can be taken as a promoter to the phenomenon of creativity. Though a section of aestheticians gives an emphasis on the practice (*anuśīlana*), it should be borne in mind that mere practice without *rasāvesa* will not help much in creating a literary form of art. It should also be kept in mind that the practice can enhance the power of creativity already generated through *rasāvesa*. If there is quantitatively less in the enjoyment of aesthetic experience, the practice (*anuśīlana*) can fill up the gap, but it is not at all essential if someone's mind is completely saturated with aesthetic sentiment. The 'practice' can take an individual to certain extent, but not to the point of perfection if he has not '*rasāvesa*' at all. If there is no deficiency of such element, the creation of art becomes spontaneous.

We would like to point out the role of compassion arising out of pathos depicted in poetry for obtaining the ethos of universalisation. (*sādhāraṇikaraṇa*)

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experienced by a true connoisseur while enjoying a play or novel. The sentiment of pity or compassion as the resultant effect of sorrow described in literature acts also as a mighty bond for binding up the heart of the connoisseur with the theme of literature which we call the act of identification between the heart of a connoisseur and the theme told or enacted. Shelley has described the tale of saddest thought as the root cause of all sweetness in a song. The role of pity or sympathy resulting from it goes a long way in effecting the heart of a responsive soul and the literary theme presented before him.

Abhinavagupta has explained the universalisation as 'the melting of the knower hood' (*Pramātrbhāvavigalana*). Let us imagine the theatre hall which is decorated with leaves and flowers and illumined. The whole auditorium is full of various types of people having various dresses and various professions. All of them are eager to see the play though they are different in profession, nature, and culture. One does not know another. Among them, some are rich, some poor, some professors, some advocates etc. In spite of these differences what is common among them is that all of them are thinking themselves as inhabitants of a blissful world. When the play starts, they gradually forget their personal problems, sufferings, desires etc. Gradually the individual character of them gets lost in impersonal and non-individual feelings. The personal character of them gets lost in impersonal character after transcending their narrower and limited bindings. When an personal character turns into an impersonal one due

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to the influence of a particular place, time and situation, it is called generalisation or universalisation (*Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) which is rooted in the *sahṛdaya* – spectators. Under these circumstances a knower who has got a limited power (*parimitapramāṭā*) has extended himself to the objects. In other words, an object becomes subjectified through the extension of the self who is a knower (*pramāṭā*). Consequently, a subject has forgot all his own characteristics like – ‘I am a father of such person’, ‘I have such and such problems’ etc. By virtue of being subjectified the object has no independent status. It may otherwise be called – ‘objectified subject’ – as there are two-way traffic. There is hardly any difference between ‘subjectified object’ and ‘objectified subject’. The feeling of a measured individuality is lost in an unmeasured one. This objectification is beautifully described by Abhinavagupta as a ‘*tanmayībhavana*’ i.e. to become that (object). As this feeling remain in all the enjoyers, their minds, ears, eyes are tuned with one object which is described as ‘*sauvasamjikānāmekaghanatā*’ i.e., one-pointed attention or concentration of all the spectators. There is a common feeling in the hearts of all of them (*sakala-sahṛdaya-samvādaśīlatā*).<sup>1</sup>

It may be argued that Abhinavagupta’s sole contribution was on the literary form of art. It may seem to us that he was out of all interested in the phenomenon of aesthetic experience arising from other forms of arts like music, painting etc. This point may be highlighted from Abhinavagupta’s time. Though he was primarily concerned with literary form of art as his literature is introduced

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in the form of a commentary his theories can easily be applied to other forms of art. I think Abhinavagupta's theory is equally applicable of other forms of art if its basic tenets like spontaneity, universalisation, impersonal attitudes are concerned. It is stated by Ānandavardhana that a person, though conversant in apprehending a word, its meaning and their relation, cannot relish a literary form of art until and unless his mind is saturated with aesthetic sentiment. This phenomenon is expressed by him with the help of an example from the world of music. To him an individual, though expert in science of music, cannot understand melody and pleasure arising out of it, until and unless his heart is saturated with *rasa*.<sup>2</sup> Such is the case with the enjoyment of pictorial art and dance. A dancer will show his/her excellence in dance-performance if his/her heart is full of *rasa* arising from the dance, which echoed in Tagore's poetry – 'nṛtyarase citta mama uchal haye vāje' (i.e. my mind is ringing through the vibration arising from the saturation through the aesthetic delight coming from dance). Kuntaka, another celebrated thinker, in aesthetics has accepted that the literary form of art can provide pleasure (aesthetic) to the reader just as a music does.<sup>3</sup> This aspect is supported by Karlaila – who said – "... all speech, ever the commonest speech, has something of song in it .... Poetry, therefore, we will call musical thought." (The Hero as Poet).<sup>4</sup>

A word has got two forms – sound and sense. The *śabdālaṅkāra* remains in sound which is the property of music and *arthālaṅkāra* exists in meaning

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which is the property of painting. Hence, in the perfect literature we get the properties of a good music and paintings.<sup>5</sup>

Various experiences of our daily life are represented in the art-objects like literature, paintings, music etc. In order to represent the reality one should need deep concentration as found in the *Gitā – na cāyuktasya bhāvanā*. This abiding emotion or sentiment must exist in artist, dramatic characters and spectators. The pictorial art also deserves to have such sentiment among artist, pictorial presentation and critic. Hence, the properties of *sahṛdaya*, *tanmayatā* etc are not only in a *kāvya*, but in other forms of art like paintings, dance and music also. Moreover, the suggestive meaning is the instrumental to the relishment (*rasa*). In modern paintings there is the prominence of suggestive meaning, the understanding of which gives rise to aesthetic pleasure. Hence, Dhvani is equally important in understanding the beauty of pictorial art. Like *Kāvya*, other forms of art have got some power which makes us forget our day to day problems and hazards. Now-a-days, music therapy is given to a psychologically disorder or drug-addicted patients for the speedy recovery. Hence, the power of transcending problems of this mundane world is hidden not only in literary form of art but in other forms also.

Another problem, the universal character of aesthetic experience as accepted by Abhinavagupta may not be accepted by ordinary people. A particular literary art may not be enjoyed universally. The suggestive meaning

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which is essential for enjoying literary excellence may not be attained by all. The understanding of suggestive meaning of a sentence presupposes an individual's skill, intellect etc. If it is so, how can we say that this may surely communicable to others ? In reply it can be said that here the term "universal" is not to be taken in a restricted sense. The statement, 'the aesthetic experience is universal' means 'it is enjoyed by each and every individual whose heart is saturated with *rasa*. (*sahṛdaya*).' If someone is not *sahṛdaya* this feeling may not be attained by him. *Dhvani* or suggestive meaning alone can give the admiration of *Sahṛdayas* (*Sahṛdayasīlāghyaḥ*).

Let us now consider the question, whether aesthetic experience is mystic or not. Though a little discussion has already been made but here we shall consider the question in details. Our answer of the question by following Abhinavagupta stands in favour of the view that aesthetic experience is mystic.

The aesthetic experience from a *kāvya*, as Abhinavagupta has observed, is different from the experience from other sources. Those who enjoy *kāvya* becomes happy or unhappy after sharing the happiness or misery of the hero or heroin. Behind this happiness or misery of the audience there is no argument by which a logical mind can be convinced. As for example, *Sitā*, a character of a *kāvya* might be happy or unhappy, but there is no reason of being involved emotionally with the dramatic character and being happy or unhappy. Though it is true, it is found in each and every case. From this particular effect of

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audience it is quite rational to search for a cause of it. As this cause is not found through ordinary sense organs and reasoning, it can be taken as mysterious.

If it is argued that the scenes, background music etc. (in the case of dramatic performance) are the causes of realisation of aesthetic experience, it may be asked whether these causes are producer (*Kārahetu*) or revealer (*jnāpakahetu*). The *kārahetu* is destroyed just after the effect comes into being. As for example, a table is made by a carpenter; but it may last for long time even after the death of the carpenter. So far as aesthetic experience is concerned, it ceases if the scene, background music etc. are withdrawn and hence, they cannot be described as producers. On the other hand, they cannot be put under *jnāpakahetu* because aesthetic pleasure cannot remain previously (i.e. before scenes, background music etc. are set). When a cause reveals an object, it must be there. As for example, the opening of the door reveals the objects existing in the room and hence it is called revealer. It cannot be said that the aesthetic experience exists before the causes mentioned above are set. As at this time there is nothing to reveal, they are not revealer but they can at best suggest the aesthetic pleasure enjoyed by us. As an object which is neither caused (*Kāvya*) nor revealed (*Jnāpya*) is not found in this empirical world, the aesthetic enjoyment is mystic or transcendental.<sup>6</sup>

From another standpoint aesthetic experience may be considered as mystic. Each and every type of experience must be either determinate

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(*Savikalpaka*) or indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*). Such type of experience is not indeterminate because it gives rise to bliss (*ānanda*). In the determinate stage one has the feeling of indifference. But in the aesthetic experience there is a feeling of bliss and hence it is not indeterminate. It cannot be described as determinate also (which is definite and related to name, quality etc.), because this experience though blissful, is beyond the reach of direct expression. After enjoying a *Kāvya* one may have blissful experience which cannot be explained with the help of descriptions (like name, quality etc) like ordinary pleasure and hence, it is not determinate. As this does not come under the purview of both types of knowledge, it is considered as mystic.<sup>7</sup>

Further, each and every type experience will be wholly true or false. Such type of experience (i.e. aesthetic experience) is not wholly true because this knowledge becomes contradicted by this worldly knowledge just after the absorption breaks up. When we come back to this practical world from the world of aesthetic experience, we do realise that the characters and the incident occurred (in the drama) are not real at all, but false. Again, this experience cannot be described as wholly false, as it gives rise to a particular kind of pleasure by which we are drawn again and again and hence, it cannot be ignored as saying mere unreal. If on account of this it cannot be ignored as partially true and partially false, which is not possible at all, because such type

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of object is not found in this world, it can be concluded that it is mystic in character.

That the aesthetic pleasure is mystic can again be known from the fact that the emotional mood involved in grief also gives rise to the realisation of joy. How a joy is realised from a painful situation? In this situation our mind is absorbed in the performances and this absorption depends on the equilibrium of mind. When our mind is disturbed, the pain follows. If our mind remains in the state of equilibrium, there is bliss.<sup>8</sup> The restlessness in the mind is the sole cause of misery in ordinary human life. In the state of aesthetic experience there is something which forcibly snatches our mind and keeps it in a state of complete rest. It is the aesthetic pleasure which only can do this thing. This joy is endowed with such type of mystic power by which audience can enjoy this bliss out of painful situation, but in our practical life human nature is found averse to experience of pain.

When a person gets a joy from painful, horrible and terrible situations presented in a literary work or through a drama there is some sort of identity between the enjoyer and the object of enjoyment. This notion of identity emerges from having self-involvement (*Ekatmatā*) with it. Let us consider here our earlier example, when an individual is perceiving a scene in which Dusyanta enjoys happiness in company of Sakuntalā, he is realising bliss just as Dusyanta. For the time being he is identified himself with the character of the drama. Due

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to this identification (with the hero) the spectator loses individuality and forgets his personal this worldly matters. This shows the mystic power of the aesthetic pleasure.

It has been stated earlier that this worldly pleasure is not aesthetic because aesthetic pleasure must be disinterested, impersonal and universal in character. But this worldly pleasure is not impersonal, disinterested, universal in character. When a man is completely absorbed in aesthetic pleasure he forgets his individual fear, love etc. when a terrific scene is represented, there is enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure called *Bhayānaka*. In this case, also a proper enjoyer makes himself free from all barriers like individualistic elements and he generally forget that this fear realised by him belongs to the dramatic character and enjoy the universal character of fear. The generalisation is the process of idealisation through which an individual may go from his personal emotion to the serenity of contemplation of poetic sentiment. The poet and the audience must have capacity of idealisation. For this reason a poet can present personal emotion as an impersonal aesthetic pleasure which is enjoyed by others. As this pleasure transcends the limitations of personal interest, it is disinterested universal pleasure. So we may argue here that the pleasure which transcends this worldly pleasure is transcendental and hence mystic.

Mystic character can also be proved from the spontaneity of aesthetic creation. *Vālmiki* created a *śloka* out of grief arising out of the perceiving the

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separation of the curlew couple. His intense feeling of pathos in which he had lost himself. Due to the complete loss of personality he had a sense of joy out of grief. This joyous experience of pathos provided him with the power of creating a śloka spontaneously. Vālmiki's grief was not this worldly. This-worldly bliss makes a man idle. Poet's creation flows automatically from his heart. If a poet's heart is filled with emotion, it finds its spontaneous outlet. This spontaneity comes when there are no barriers like personal interest, inclination, desires etc. for the realisation of aesthetic pleasure. The spontaneous outlet of aesthetic creation from a person who was idle before having aesthetic absorption proves again the mystic character of aesthetic experience.

Many aestheticians have tried to explain this mystic condition. Abhinavagupta has explained this mysterious state i.e. aesthetic pleasure as limiting adjunct of Brahman which is the *Rasasvarūpa*.<sup>9</sup>

After the realisation of Brahman a man has such type of pleasure. As both types of pleasure (from *kāvya* and realisation of Brahman) is impersonal, disinterested and universal, there is no qualitative difference between them in so far as the pleasure from the realisation of Brahman is eternal while aesthetic enjoyment is temporary.

The view of Benedetto Croce may be put forward in favour of substantiating the mystic character of aesthetic experience. Croce has also admitted that at the time of aesthetic experience a man forgets his past or his

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practical world. According to him, "he knows nothing as to what has happened prior to having absorbed it." In order to explain the mysterious state of aesthetic experience he has described it as an intuition which is completely different from ordinary intuition. To put it in his own words, "Art is intuition, but intuition is not always art, artistic intuition is a distinct species different from intuition in general by something more."<sup>10</sup> Here the phrase "something more" is significant, as it indicates the existence of a world which is beyond the ordinary intuition. As that world is beyond the reach of the ordinary intuition which a man possesses, it can be taken as mysterious.

Due to the mysterious character of the aesthetic enjoyment Samkaracarya and Sri Aurobindo have described it as a form of the Divine and hence art is worship. This is because the ideal of art, the Beautiful, is one with the Divine.<sup>11</sup>

The mystic element can be traced in dance music etc. also. A man is found to forget his grief in his personal life at the time of enjoyment of the performance of music or dance. That the spontaneity is as already pointed out, one of the vital characteristics of aesthetic experience from *Kāvya* can be applied to the music and dance etc. How far the performance of dance and music is artistic can be known from the spontaneity of them along with other qualities. If the qualities or music is not spontaneous, they will seem artificial. As the spontaneity comes from within, it belongs to an artist whose heart is absorbed in

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aesthetic pleasure. If a musician or a dancer is absorbed in this enjoyment in heart (which is usually called 'mood' in ordinary language), he or she cannot help dancing or singing. In this stage only spontaneity comes. Music and dance forms begin and end in aesthetic pleasure. The dance like other arts also has, as Ānanda Coomār Swami observed, spiritual significance, independent of its theme or charm. As music and dance clearly express the aesthetic pleasure and enable man to taste it they give them the wisdom of Brahman.<sup>12</sup> This again leads us to the world of mysticism.

The mystic power of art is revealed to us more clearly when we find the children stop their crying and engage in taking food being absorbed in music. Even the snakes are found to forget enmity and become spell-bound with music performed by a charmer, not to speak of the human beings. If art in the form of poetry is taken as a vehicle for being united with the Divine, as observed by Samkara and Sri Aurobindo then the medium of the beautiful in form (in the case of idol) colour (in the case of picture), rhythm and harmony (in the case of music) may also be taken as vehicle for the same and hence all forms of art spiritually culminate in mysticism.

Lastly, Abhinavagupta is a commentator of Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* where the emphasis is laid on the external structure of language i.e. *Dhvani*. In other words, the objective criterion is taken into account for the manifestation of *Rasa*. As a commentator Abhinavagupta should have

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emphasised on this. But emphasis was how shifted from objectivity to subjectivity. What may be the cause of such shifting? Because commentator is likely to follow the text. Hence one may argue that Abhinavagupta has not done proper justice to the text. In reply, it can be said that Abhinavagupta has emphasised on the subjectivity because to him, without the acceptance of self or self-involvement no feeling, no love is possible, not to speak of aesthetic feeling.

The subjectivity is not new in Indian aesthetics, but aestheticians prior to Abhinavagupta have laid much importance on the objective character of language. The subjectivity follows from the concept of *Sahṛdayatva* which is accepted as a key concept in *Dhvanyāloka* as absorbed by Abhinavagupta. The *Sahṛdayas* alone can appreciate the suggestive meaning or *Dhvani* as said earlier.

In fact, *Sahṛdaya* and *dhvani* - is complementary to each other. It is *dhvani* through which *rasa* is manifested while it is *Sahṛdayatva* through which suggestive meaning is appreciated. It is not true that Abhinavagupta has not laid much importance on *dhvani*. To him, *dhvani* alone cannot give rise to aesthetic pleasure unless one extends oneself to the dramatic character etc. Hence, self-extension is main factor for the aesthetic enjoyment, *dhvani* - of course has got some instrumental value so far as Abhinavagupta's view is concerned.

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