

CHAPTER XII

The Concept of Disinterestedness in Recent Indian Thought III

Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya

The concept of detachment, in a sense, forms the very basis of Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's philosophical thought. The subject, or the speaker as it 'incarnates' in the world 'I', discovers itself inasmuch as it detaches or frees itself from the object. The subjective is speakable, but not a meant content as the object. The word 'this' is taken by Bhattacharyya as the symbol of an object or 'what is meant'. The subject and the object are, for Bhattacharyya, ontological polarities. The subject is known in itself, not as related to object, but as dissociated from the object.

Bhattacharyya has characterized his philosophical position as spiritual psychology. One of the tasks of this manner of philosophizing is to explain the modes of freedom or subjectivity. And the modes of subjectivity are the modes of 'freeing oneself from the modes of objectivity'. There are three modes of subjectivity, according to Bhattacharyya. There is, first, bodily subjectivity in which the body, as observed and felt, represents the subject in relation to the environment. The feeling of freedom is the feeling of 'the detachment from the object', and

the first given feeling is the feeling of the body, and subjectivity is rooted in this feeling. Secondly, there is psychic subjectivity. Bhattacharyya distinguishes 'image' from 'thought'. The idea of an object which cannot be defined or concreted into image is thought. It is detached from objectivity. Lastly, we have spiritual objectivity. Thought, in Bhattacharyya's idiom is 'the unobjective something about the object'. But feeling, he says, is purely subjective, there is no reference to object. Feeling is the positive consciousness of detachment from meaning.

We have hazarded above an almost truncated account of the contents of Bhattacharyya's rich intricate and sophisticated ideas as may be found in The Subject as Freedom¹. Our idea has been to introduce his notion of rasa, which, he says, can only be understood through feeling and in terms of feeling. Since rasa is a phenomenon that occurs in spiritual subjectivity, it was required that some idea of Bhattacharyya's analysis of the modes or grades of consciousness be prefaced to our discussion. In the present chapter we shall focus our attention on his essay, "The Concept of Rasa"² in order to see how does Bhattacharyya formulate the notion of disinterestedness in the context of aesthetic experience.

We may begin by making some clarificatory remarks. First, let us take Bhattacharyya's notion of feeling. He abstracts away every trace of cognitivity or objectivity from the feeling mode of consciousness. Feeling, he says, is the positive consciousness of detachment from meaning. Bhattacharyya presents a radical thesis. In Kant's usage 'aesthetic' means reference to the subject. The logic of the beautiful, as Kant had construed it, is such that it is not a predicate. Our feeling of pleasure in the beautiful is so de-intentionalized that if attains a reflexive character by referring to the speaker, or the speaker who makes a singular judgment with the pseudo-predicate 'beautiful'. And the pleasure is identified with the harmony or free play of the cognitive faculties. Bhattacharyya schematizes the affair differently. He appears to search for an ontology of the subject, and finds its core in feeling, which is completely free from objectivity. Sri Aurobindo's notion of 'objectless delight' comes as a parallel.

Secondly, Bhattacharyya agrees with Kant in holding that the aesthetic judgment is not a logical judgment. But Bhattacharyya has different reasons for asserting the non-logical character of the aesthetic judgment. His essay, "The Concept of Value"³ presents an analysis of the relation that obtains between an object that is valued, and the value that is ascribed to it. Beauty is referred to the rose, but it is not known as the character of the object. The rose is not felt as one with beauty,

but beauty is indeed felt as one with the rose. Beauty, as Bhattacharyya puts it, is a floating or free adjective of the rose. One might recall what Shelley had said in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", that beauty visits its objects with "inconstant wing". Value, for Bhattacharyya, is a reflective feeling. The reflective character of feeling consists in the fact that value is not felt as other than the object, but the object is felt as other than the value. Hence it follows that aesthetic valuation is not a logical judgment. The linguistic expression of such valuation may bear the semblance of information, though, as feeling, it is an exclamation in disguise.

We may now turn to Bhattacharyya's notion of rasa. He says that the word rasa means two things : essence and what is tested or felt, and that the aesthetic conception of rasa combines both the senses. When he says that Bhattacharyya deflects both from Anandavardhana as well as Abhinavagupta. We have remarked earlier that for Anandavardhana direct and oblique meaning are intimately connected. Abhinavagupta argues for a detachment of the oblique meaning, the vyāngya from the vācya or the direct meaning. Yet Bhattacharyya is a continuator of dhvani school, of course with a difference. Abhinavagupta's accent on the meaning of poetic discourse is not there is Bhattacharyya. His dialectic of feeling is projected to effect a freedom from meaning.

Bhattacharyya's aesthetic philosophy is based on what may be called a dialectic of feeling. Feeling, he says, does not mean anything but itself. It can only have an unmeant content from which it is not distinguished. That is, content and consciousness determine each other in feeling. And hence, while defining the concept of rasa in the aesthetic content, Bhattacharyya remarks that rasa combines both the essence and what is tested in the form of an indermination of content and consciousness. Bhattacharyya considers the aesthetic consciousness as 'the feeling par excellence'. There is freedom from meaning, since the meant or significantly speakable content is indistinguishably fused with consciousness. The felt value cannot be spoken about without reference to the feeling.

Aesthetic feeling, according to Bhattacharyya, is a feeling of the third-order, the first one being the natural feeling. The natural or primary feelings are characterized as 'object-immersed' feelings. A 'feeling of a feeling' is a higher order feeling, it is freer, and more so would be the feeling at the third level. The feeling of sympathy is taken as an instance of a 'feeling of a feeling'. Bhattacharyya describes the feeling at the third level as 'a duplicated sympathy'. Such a feeling is described as 'spiritual' and 'contemplative'.

Bhattacharyya's inquiries into the working of human consciousness reveals the fact that there are levels of experience,

and also that from the point of view of each higher level the entire content of the lower level gets reoriented, it comes to be viewed in a new perspective altogether. The attitude at each higher level is more subjective than the level transcended. It should be noted that for Bhattacharyya, the word 'spiritual' is adjectival upon the ontological substantive called 'subjectivity'. The degrees of the one corresponds to that of the other, and hence, regression into subjectivity parallels to progression into freedom. The grades of subjectivity are but a graduated process of 'dropping of self-consciousness'⁴, i.e., a process of being freed from the personal or private dimensions of experiences. This is how the notion of disinterestedness comes to be formulated in Bhattacharyya's thought.

Let us now try to understand the notion of 'duplicated sympathy'. The contrast between an emotional reaction and an aesthetic reaction to a play is illustrated very clearly in the scene of a play within a play in Ksemisvara's Naisadhānanda, Act VI⁵. Nala, incognito, is sitting with Rtuparna in the audience seeing a play about the terrible experiences of Damayanti, his wife. Rtuparna has an aesthetic experience, but Nala instead reacts emotionally, though Rtuparna keeps reminding him that it is a play and is puzzled at his strange excitement. Perception produced by art does not arouse our everyday concerns but takes us away from them. It is a detached perception of the

emotion of others.

According to Bhattacharyya when an object is aesthetically enjoyed, the subject and the object are so indistinguishable as to affect each other mutually, the object seems to have a value, and the subject feels attracted to it. Now to take the case of sympathy. To sympathise with a person is to feel him feeling. Bhattacharyya's logic of 'sympathy' might recall Hume's notions of 'sympathy' and 'compassion'. It is well known that Hume explains the possibility of enjoying tragedy on the basis of the twin principles⁶. Hume's epistemological scheme that ideas can be converted into impressions could be of some significance in understanding Bhattacharyya's notion of sympathy.

For Hume the problem is how a passion or feeling "in the mind of one person, and afterwards appears in the mind of another"? The manner, of their appearance, says Hume, is "first as an idea, then as an impression". Sympathy denotes the causal part of the phenomenon, while compassion stands for the emotive awareness of the state of the other mind. It may be said that what Hume means by the twin principles of sympathy and compassion is encapsulated by Bhattacharyya by the single term 'sympathy'.

But the question of importance is : How does sympathy relate itself to freedom? In order to retain its aesthetic character sympathy has to retain freedom, or its detachment from

its object. The Buddhists argue that karunā is not emotionalized identification with other's suffering. To "lose" oneself in concern for another is mere sentimentality. The ideal compassionate is like a physician rather than a fellow mourner. He fully appreciates the suffering of the patient, but does not give way to emotional sympathy for that patient. Instead, emotionally self-controlled, he analyzes the diseased condition and prescribes for it in a detached impersonal manner. There may be something of the Buddhist understanding of karunā in Bhattacharyya's notion of sympathy through its ascending modes of freedom.

Feeling, to speak negatively, is unobjective, i.e., it does not bear any reference to objective fact. Accordingly, the feeling of sympathy is free from the object of feeling sympathized with. The consciousness of the object of sympathy implies a detachment of the conscious subject. But there are further steps to freedom, and it is possible that feeling can be emotionally contemplated in a detached manner. This happens in the case of duplicated sympathy, i.e. sympathy with a person's sympathy. The feeling of sympathy in this case is felt as dissociated from its character 'as a given felt' and is realised as self-subsisting value.

Bhattacharyya distinguishes 'expression of an object' from 'object'. In the case of duplicated sympathy, the expression of an object, for example, the beauty of a rose, is a self-subsisting reality to which the object is a symbol. As detached from the

object, it enjoys an eternity. Beauty of an object appears to be seen, but it does not manifest as the quality of an object, in neither of Locke's senses of the term 'quality'. Beauty, says Bhattacharyya, is a 'transcendent expression', detached from the object. An object of art is said to be beautiful by looking upon it as a symbol of the aesthetic value. The under-structure, the thingness of the work of art is nothing that matters to aesthetic consciousness.

Bhattacharyya's concept of sympathy has a further mode of distancing. It is a degree higher than or further removed from duploicated sympathy. Bhattacharyya presents this case in terms of the following example. A spectator contemplates a grand parent watching his grandchild playing with a toy. There obtains a triadic relation. The child enjoys its toy; the grand parent sympathises with the child's joy. The spectator, in his turn, contemplates on the grand parent's sympathy. In the grand parent's heart the child's feeling is reflected as an eternal emotion. And the spectator's interest lies in contemplating the impersonal emtoion. In Bhattacharyya's scheme of detachment the personal nature of feeling is, by degrees, impersonalized. And inasmuch as it is impersonalized, it becomes freer from its object. It is noticeable that in Bhattacharyya's triadic scheme the parents of the child are dropped from consideration since the parents, as they are related to the child by care and condern, are likely to fail in distancing themselves so as to sympathise with the child's joy in its purity. A grand parent, on the contrary, stands in a freer relation to the child, and can therefore duplicate the

sympathy felt by the parents at the joy of the child.

Ingenious as Bhattacharyya's triadic schema is, there are interesting literary parallels to it. According to the conventions of Bengal Vaisnavism the readers of the poems that celebrate the Srngāra of Radhā and Krsna are to contemplate the emotion in a detached manner as though it were nitya, or timeless experience. That is, the reader would have to poise himself to the point of the spectator of Bhattacharyya's tridic schema. It is not enough to undergo a mental experience which detaches one from personal concerns. Rather one should have in view Radha's feeling of love for Krsna as reflected in the poet's mind or presented in the poem. It is only then that an experience of unselfish, impersonal and free delight would become possible. In a poem entitled "The Unheeded Pageant" in The Crescent Moon Tagore has spoken of the play of a child being joyfully witnessed by the mother. In course of the poem the mother's experience is gradually lifted up to cosmic dimensions. The child's play is so generalised as the Sun, the sky and the wind watch over the scene. "The world keeps her seat by you [the child] in your mother's heart. He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window with his flute".⁸

The epistemological point involved in the aesthetic experience is a distinction between two mental acts, those of imagining an object as actual, and imagining it as imaginary. The case of the former is plain enough, an object is imagined as presented to an actual feeling. The latter is of deeper aesthetic

import. Bhattacharyya says that to imagine as object as imaginary is to have the object imagined as what would be imagined by another person having the actual feeling. Aesthetic response or enjoyment is not the feeling of the enjoyer on his own account, but involves a dropping of self-consciousness.

To bring home the point, Bhattacharyya employs his triadic schema, of three levels of feeling, contemplative, synthetic and primary. He does this with the help of an explanatory model of three persons having three types of feelings. No person with a taste for drama would ever imagine Othells or Lear as actual persons. In course of our enjoying these tragedies what we do, according to Bhattacharyya, is that we imagine some one imagining Othells or Lear as actual persons. The imagined person is a variable locus of a feeling, a "felt-person-in-general", or the Heart Universal, as Bhattacharyya calls it. He remarks that the aesthetic feeling" is contemplated as reflected in or sympathised with by this Heart Universal and the person who contemplates the feeling merges his personal or private heart in his ubiquity"⁹. It appears that the mythic ontology of the Heart Universal is something like the Platonic Idea in which the particulars participate and thereby become possible bearers of the ideal predicate. Analogically, Bhattacharyya suggests that feelings, through the filter of the Heart Universal, lose their private character and get eternalised.

The notion of eternalisation of feelings is an important point. Eternity is one of three features of an object aesthetically apprehended, the other two being expression and detachment from fact. One may recall that Keats said that the "silent form" of the Grecian Urn "tease us out of thought as doth eternity"¹⁰. Or, as Rabindranath Tagore says of the "form" of the aesthetically apperceived object "gathering light/Through the dark dimness of Eternity"¹¹. What Bhattacharyya means by 'eternity' is a matter of transfiguration of feelings, sort of a release from their spatiotemporal determinations. Bhattacharyya spoke of Sādhāranikarana or universalization of experience. A feeling, freed from personal dimensions, becomes universally shareable. It may be the case that Bhattacharyya's point about the eternity of the object of aesthetic experience is congruent with Bhattacharyya's thesis of Sādhāranikarana.

It is noteworthy that Bhattacharyya explains the interrelation of the three levels of feeling in terms of his explanatory model of three persons. Schematically the model could be presented as under.

A	B	C
The aesthetic Subject :	The Heart Universal : The Third person	
The first person contemplative	The second person sympathetic	Primary feeling
feeling	feeling	Expression
Eternity	Detachment	

The point made by Bhattacharyya is significant. It is that the aesthetic subject can live on three different emotional levels at the same time. The grade of contemplative feeling comprehends both sympathetic and primary feelings, and hence it is, says Bhattacharyya, feeling par excellence. A similar point was made by Roger Fry, when he said that in art we not only experience the feeling, but also watch it.

The process of gradual disentanglement from fact may also be noted. At the level of primary feeling there is no distinction between feeling and the object of feeling. It is "object-immersed feeling". Now there may obtain two alternative attitudes, objective and subjective. Classicism in art celebrates the objective attitude. It recommends a lapse of self-feeling, the object is perceived sharply out-lined, "the expression adjectival to it". A recent protagonist of classicism, T.S. Eliot has said that poetry is not letting loose of emotions, but an escape from personality¹².

Bhattacharyya may be taken as clearing grounds for a Romantic theory of art, or a variety of attitude theory in which the response of the beholder assumes momentous importance. He speaks the subjective attitude, reminiscent of Kant and Abhinavagupta. If the subjective attitude, i.e. "the feeling attitude" prevails with the subject, the object, Bhattacharyya says, would get indefinite. In other words, the object gets dissolved in the subject's feeling. The world is sucked into the

subject, as it were, is the case of obverted empathy. Shelley, in his "Hymn to Apollo" says, "I am the eye through which the world beholds itself". Or where Tagore sings "I feel that all the stars shine in me"¹³, we have instances of the objects dissolving in the subject's feeling. "The feeling here becomes subjectively real; it stands by consuming the object"¹⁴. Bhattacharyya's theory extends the Einfuenlung theory by rendering the aesthetic experience not only a protection of the self, but equally an introjection of objects.

There are, or could then be, two "directions of object-feeling", and accordingly, sympathy may also take two forms. When A sympathises with B, the distinction between A the sympathiser and B, the person sympathised with is not lost. A may either feel through B's heart in feeling out towards B. And A feels his detachment from B. It may also be the case that A feels B's feeling as his by "assimilating or drawing in" B's feeling. Bhattacharyya calls these the projective and the assimilative types of sympathy. In both the cases the sympathiser feels his freedom.

The forms or types of sympathy can have to corresponding directions. When an object is enjoyed as beautiful, the object is related to the aesthetic value as its symbol. The relation between the symbol, the object, and the aesthetic value may obtain in a two-fold manner. The 'fact-character' may remain in the symbol, and the value is expressed as its "transcendent

significate". The canvas and the pigments are the facts of a character, while the painting that is enjoyed is enjoyed is their transcendent significate. This is much like G.E. Moore's thesis that non-natural qualities manifest through the natural ones¹⁵. Or, what Tagore said, a poem has its grammar and vocabulary, and it exceeds all its parts and transcends all its laws¹⁶. Bhattacharyya calls it to be the case of transfiguring the fact into a value. Art of this nature is "dynamically creative". But there remains another possibility when the facticity, as Heidegger has put it, of the symbol gets evanescent, and the value symbolized float, to quote Bhattacharyya, "as in a dream in the ether of the heart and nowhere in space and time"¹⁷. Art-experience or rasa is like that. It is contemplative in nature.

The two modes of aesthetic enjoyment, creative and contemplative, are subtly distinguished by Bhattacharyya. The point of his distinction is that in either of the modes there obtains freedom through the feeling of enjoyment, but differently. In one case, "there is freedom in spite of enjoying contact", in another, there is "enjoyment or reality in spite of detaching freedom"¹⁸. The spectator, undergoing art-experience, is either purusa-like, as in Sāmkhya, or sāksi - like as in Vedānta. But are the two modes so sharply distinguishable? Can we not say that the two modes alternate in one and the same person's experience? And, if they are distinguishable at all, do they not interpenetrate? There appears to be a sort of ontological hide and seek

between freedom and the object aesthetically enjoyed in so far as Bhattacharyya's account is concerned. Does enjoyment ensure freedom? That appears to be Bhattacharyya's apprehension. And in order to ensure freedom different grades of feelings and modes of enjoyment are deciphered into experience. No loss of freedom can be properly aesthetic. Art-experience is the search for freedom through feeling. It should of course be borne in mind that Bhattacharyya's notion of enjoyment is much that it precludes absolute detachment of the subject from the object. The self in its aesthetic poise is essentially an enjoying state of being, a delight-self as Sri Aurobindo called it. Or, what Bullough has termed as "the psychical distance"¹⁹, i.e. neither over distanced nor under-distanced from the object is that which Bhattacharyya has intended to bring house with his notion of aesthetic enjoyment. Whether the enjoyment is creative or contemplative, freedom persists. But the distinction he has proposed need not be taken as an exclusive disjunction. Tagore, for example, in his "Religion of an Artist"²⁰, explains the notion of 'creation' both as a "freedom from any biographical bondage", and "representing a personal reality". In fact a unity of the two processes constitutes creativity. Bhattacharyya's notion of 'duplicated sympathy' parallels closely to Tagore's idea, even though the distinction between creative and contemplative enjoyment appears to dichotomize the organic wholeness of creativity and appreciation.

It should be observed that Tagore writes from the point of view of the creator, while Bhattacharyya voices the beholder's view of art-experience. But must we suppose that the processes of creation and contemplation need fall apart? Not necessarily, even if they are conceptually distinguishable. Tagore often invokes the Upanisadic images of two birds, one that merely looks on, while the other is found in the reactive attitude. And this is done in order to drive home the idea of the unity of contemplation and creation. There may also be another consideration to offer.

Indeed the distinction between the two modes of enjoyment is difficult to make, however they might differ in terms of concepts. In course of a perceptive essay, "Some Reflections on Art"²¹, Professor Kalidas Bhattacharyya has brought about a perspicacious extension of the seminal ideas of Bhattacharyya. We may once look to that direction hoping if we could get clear about the distinction between creative and contemplative modes of enjoyment.

According to Professor Bhattacharyya, even though creation and appreciation occur in the field of free, autonomous emotions, yet creation sublimates the primary feelings in the way of the will, whereas appreciation does that in the way of cognition. The appreciator looks at art from the point of view of the work of art itself, he surrenders himself to its ontology, as one does to God. But such a viewing is looking at the work of art in retrospect, in the way of cognition. The creator has a 'different

'breathing', as Rilke²² remarks in one of his sonnets. He moves concretely, brings something into being. He does not simply look at an object, as the appreciator does. This of course does not amount to saying that cognition has no room in creation. Cognition and will in creation figure as internal dimensions of an autonomous feeling or subjectivity par excellence, called rasa. The processes of creation and appreciation are equally enlivening, and their overlap is hardly ever denied. What binds the two into a unity is the ubiquity of autonomous feelings in both the creator and the appreciator. And one may add that autonomous feelings get embodied in terms of a work of art. And it is there the creator and the connoisseur meet each other, as if one speaks and the other hears through the created object. This is a novel explanatory model which encapsulates the creative and the contemplative modes of enjoyment in terms of speaker-hearer relation subsisting between the creator and the appreciator highlighting their 'essential appreciator highlighting their 'essential humanity',²³. The identity of feeling is freedom in enjoyment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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7. Ibid.
8. Rabindranath Tagore, Collected Poems and Plays, p. 55.
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