

PREPARATORY NOTE

The present project which is completed so belatedly was begun when my eldest child started going to school. But despite honest intentions domestic chores and my indifferent health did not permit me persevere enough to make a significant headway. Years rolled by glancing through Kant's Critique of Judgment, often a sense of guilt overcame me. I had almost given up the hope that I should ever be able to do the work I had undertaken. In the mean time, my second child arrived, and soon after we moved to Shimla for a year as my husband joined the Indian Institute of Advanced Study as a Fellow. There I met my former teacher at Visva Bharati, Professor Margaret Chatterjee, who was then the Director of the Institute. She instilled the faith in me that I had lost.

Coming down to the University of North Bengal I checked the matters with my Supervisor, Professor Sanat Kumar Sen. He was all gentleness and courtesy in inspiring me to pick up the lost threads. I feel immensely grateful to Professor Sen for not only encouraging me all along, but also for the freedom he granted me to think in my own way. I learnt a lot in this manner.

My father would have been happier to see the dissertation done, but he remained no more to see it. My mother of course is lovingly alive and would indeed be very happy to see that her naughty little daughter has at last done something of worth.

May I put on record a note of personal nature? I cannot ever adequately say what I have had from Pabitra Kumar Roy. He was once my teacher, and now the most loved person of my world, my husband. I leave it unsaid.

My two sons, Chandra Kirti and Ratna Kirti have not been able to make any sense of my preoccupation with the thesis, and bore more or less patiently the distressing fact that writing a philosophical work does not necessarily conduce to the display of a philosophical temper.

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Raso vai sah. Rasam hyevayam labdhānandī bhavati
Ko hyevānyāt kah prānyāt. Yadeṣa ākāsa ānando
na syāt

Taittiriya Upaniṣad

Range na vidyate citram na bhūmou na ca bhājane

Lankāvatāra Sūtra

Beauty in things exists in the mind which
contemplates them.

David Hume

The most beautiful thing than we can experience
is mystery.

Albert Einstein

Beauty is no phantasy, it bears the ever lasting
meaning of Reality.

Rabindranath Tagore

Synopsis of the thesis entitled : "Kant's Critique of Taste with special reference to the concept of Disinterestedness and its bearings on Recent Indian Thought".

The thesis is intended to concentrate on Part One of the Critique of Judgment. This part of the Critique has exerted considerable influence upon writers as different in their philosophical persuasions as Schiller and Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Goethe and Coleridge. The development and extension of Kant's theory of taste could be shown be part of the on going work of aesthetics, not only abroad, but in recent Indian thought as well.

The thesis is divided into two parts :

Part I : The Historical Background to Kant's Aesthetics.

The development of the concept of aesthetic experience can be shown from Shaftesbury of Kant. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume and Kant all take for granted that a discussion of beauty, the sublime and taste are central to philosophical discussion. From their discussions there emerges a concept of aesthetic experience which, in one form or another, dominates subsequent aesthetic theory. It is worth while to reexamine some of the underlying commitments which inform the discussions of taste from Shaftesbury to Kant. In his correspondence as well as in the Critique of

Judgment Kant himself has referred to Hume, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

The Analysis of the Beautiful The question that Kant poses in Part One of the Critique of Judgment is : How are judgments of the beautiful are possible? Beauty is the central term in Kant's aesthetics, it is logically prior to all other aesthetic terms, such as totality, harmony, clarity, precision, perfection, etc. Kant appears to maintain that the beautiful is the necessary filter, or category through which any work of art, or aspect of Nature, must pass in order to count as an object of taste.

It follows from the centrality of the beautiful in Kant's aesthetics that we should ask, how aesthetic evaluation in general is to be explained, since many aesthetic predicates or values presuppose the beautiful. Kant asks, how assertions of aesthetic worth are to be justified? And his answer to the question takes the form of an analysis, conceptual of a sort, which he calls, transcendental. Therein lies the origins of the Four "Moments".

The Theory of Reflective Judgment (Based on Kant's first introduction to the Critique of Judgment and the published introduction).

In this chapter following topics will receive special attention :

- (a) Aesthetic and Reflective judgments.
- (b) Pleasure and Subjectivity.
- (c) The Singularity of Aesthetic judgment.
- (d) The Necessity of Aesthetic judgment.

Disinterestedness: A chapter will be devoted to a consideration of the theme : The Disinterestedness of Aesthetic judgment. Along with it the notions of interest, concept and existence will receive clarification.

It will be argued that disinterestedness is the aesthetic analogue of Kant's notion of objectivity. An attempt will also be made to trace the notion of interest from the Critique of Practical Reason, and to see how does the notion gets transformed the third Critique.

As an outcome of this chapter it will be seen that when we use 'beautiful' and many other aesthetic predicates, we do attempt to ground publicly valid assessments of objects on peculiarly private feelings and responses. And in this respect Kant's critique of taste is addressed to a question importance : The justification of the inter-subjective validity of aesthetic judgments.

Part II : The intentions of the Critique of Judgment are various, and many of them are developed by thinkers of varied philosophical persuasions. A passing reference to them has already been made in the opening paragraph of this synopsis. In the present chapter an attempt will be made to find a conceptual connection between the notion of disinterestedness and the view called aesthetic deontology on the one hand, and disinterestedness and communication on the other.

(a) Aesthetic deontology or the view which finds expressed in Theophile Gautier's slogan l'autonomie absolue de l'art was enunciated by Frederick Schiller as a development of Kantian intentions. It was embraced by the French Romantists, who held that art does not prove anything, nor does it say anything, it simply expresses. If Kant's intention was to counter empiricism (mutatis mutandis, utilitarianism) in aesthetics (as he did in epistemology and ethics in the earlier Critiques) his notion of disinterestedness is then a formalist version of a non-consequentialist theory of art.

(b) Disinterestedness has something to do with a mode of being, a state of the self, and it presupposes an absence of egoistic privations. A disinterested state of awareness is non-

private, and hence communicable. Such a variant of the notion has been there in the Indian tradition. A bodhisattva's awareness is said to be disinterested, he is said to apperceive the world around ecolessly or without the intervention of the will, a la Schopenhauer. The Sahrdaya is one who has escaped the privations of the ego. It should be possible to say that a metaphysical conception of a non-private awareness or mode of being is presupposed by the critical notion of sahrdaya. In recent times K.C. Bhattacharyya's apotheosis of 'heart universal' as the locus of both aesthetic apperception as well as communication looks back to a willless, for that matter, disinterested, non-judgmental state of mind.

In K.C. Bhattacharyya there is a three tier mode of dissociation from the object of perception ensuring a fuller disinterestedness. His line of argument appears to be as follows: The more one is dissociated the more one is disinterested, and the more one is disinterested, the more one is on a spiritually subjective plane of being.

In Rabindranath Tagore one finds a non-naturalistic, non-utilitarian account of the creative art process and the ontology of the object. Many of the nuances of Tagore's thought are specifically Kantian, and this matter of conviction is with developing as a philosophical exercise.

Concluding Remarks : Kant's view that what is called "aesthetic experience" is supposed to be non-practical, detached, contemplative, or "disinterested" links him with the tradition of aesthetic ideas in recent Indian thought, even though the metaphysical presuppositions have not been always similar.

The dichotomy that the literal is opposed to the metaphorical (Max Black, "Metaphor" in Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, New York, 1968) is the product of the Kantian dichotomy between "determinate" and "indeterminate" concepts. Tagore's theory of poetry has much to contribute to the polarity, though with a significant difference. The traditional notion of vyanjanā vis-a-vis the literal mode of meaning finds a new relevance in Tagore's accounts of the matter. 'Why do we prefer suggestion to representation?' asks E.H. Gombrich (Art and Illusion, p. 385). An answer is to be looked for in Kant as well as in recent Indian Thinkers. Perhaps our preference has something to do with disinterestedness as a liberating experience.