

# AN ASPECT OF INDIAN AESTHETICS

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Anything that can be termed an appreciation or study of the beautiful, be it natural or man-made, can be called aesthetic. An aesthetic approach is at the root of all being ; the quest for beauty is inherent in every individual though it may often be undeveloped or obfuscated. This talent for the appreciation of the beautiful can be latent and remain unexpressed ; it may be rendered inexpressible through lack of equipment, through faulty or incomplete knowledge of literature, poetry and of poetics ; it may express itself as the creation of a fine piece of literary work of prose or poetry without the writer being aware of the masterpiece he has created out of his own intuition; or it may express itself in manifestations such as creations of sculptural or architectural beauty, fine painting, or great music. For the appreciation of the beautiful two things are needed : a work of art—the product of nature's creative genius or man's ingenuity, and the ability to appreciate it. These two factors, the ability to create a work of beauty and the ability to appreciate anything beautiful, constitute roughly the business of aesthetics.

Perhaps of all the many subjects of philosophy, aesthetics is one of the most disputed and hotly discussed. Different methods of approach are possible because the matter treated is so vague and so vast—as vast as creation itself. Clive Bell has stated the case thus in his most widely discussed book, *Art* : “It is improbable that more nonsense has been

written about aesthetics than about anything else ; the literature of the subject is not large enough for that. It is certain, however, that about no subject with which I am acquainted has so little been said that is at all to the purpose". The reason for this is to be found in the fact that those who would talk sense about aesthetics must have a sane "artistic sensibility and a turn for clear thinking", without which aesthetics would remain "so enticing and so unprofitable".<sup>1</sup>

To continue in the words of Clive Bell, "Without sensibility a man can have no aesthetic experience and obviously, theories not based on broad and deep aesthetic experience are worthless. Only those for whom art is a constant source of passionate emotion can possess the data from which profitable theories may be deduced ; but to deduce profitable theories even from accurate data involves a certain amount of brain-work, and unfortunately, robust intellects and delicate sensibilities are not inseparable. As often as not, the hardest thinkers have had no aesthetic experience whatever . . .

"On the other hand, people who respond immediately and surely to works of art, though in any judgment, more enviable than men of massive intellect but slight sensibility, are often quite as incapable of talking sense about aesthetics. Their heads are not always very clear. They possess the data on which any system must be based; but generally they want the power that draws correct inferences from true data. Having received aesthetic emotions from works of art, they are in a position to seek out the quality common to all that has moved them, but in fact, they do nothing of the sort. I do not blame them. Why should they bother to examine their feelings when they are not very good at thinking ? Why should they hunt for a common quality in all objects that move them in a particular way when they can linger over the many delicious and peculiar charms of each as it comes ? So, if they write criticism and call it aesthetics, if they imagine that they are talking about particular works of art or even about the technique of painting, if loving particular works, they find tedious the consideration of art in general, perhaps they have chosen the better part. If they are not curious about the nature of their emotion, nor about the quality common to all objects that provoke it, they have my sympathy and, as what they say is often charming and suggestive, my admiration too. Only let no one suppose that what they write and talk is aesthetics : it is criticism, or just 'shop'".

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1. *A.B.C. of Aesthetics*, Leo Stein

Having said something about the difficulty of defining aesthetics with any degree of exactitude let us see why it is that it has continued to fascinate the human mind of all ages and of all generations. There is some quality in aesthetics which makes the expression of the beautiful something of an experience that is intuitive, personal and subjective, and which soon brings us into the domain of the metaphysical by asking and trying to answer the question, 'what is the beautiful'? Is it the physical or the spiritual or the seen or the felt that is the *ne plus ultra* of an aesthetic experience?

There is the Western approach which is chiefly pragmatic; that art concerns itself mainly with the investigation of what is beautiful when we talk or assert ourselves about it. As Osborne puts it, "Aesthetics is that branch of philosophy whose function is to investigate what is meant to be asserted when we write or talk correctly about beauty. It is concerned logically to elucidate the notion of beauty as the distinguishing feature of works of art and to propound the valid principles which underlie all aesthetic judgments. It is, or should be, a branch of critical philosophy and not a 'normative' study; its object is to increase understanding within its sphere and not to lay down rules for practice".<sup>1</sup> Another definition is: "Aesthetic theory is a branch of philosophy, and exists for the sake of knowledge and not as a guide to practice".<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of Aristotle, most Western thinkers, philosophers, poets and artists, in reviewing theories of beauty and art, emphasise the spiritual aspect of art. Therefore most concepts of beauty are related to concepts of spirituality. In the Western approach to beauty, utility though concomitant with it, does not become beauty. Next to rhythm is beauty, because of the harmony and proportion necessary for the emergence of rhythm as the beautiful. So also is beauty, especially natural beauty, enhanced by its adaptation and adjustment in its original environment. A tree, beautiful by itself, is rendered more beautiful if it is blended into its environment of hill and dale. The quest for beauty is due to the search by the spirit for Absolute Beauty, the circumstances which lend charm and fascination. Therefore all the great nations of the earth approached art as the emphasis of the spirit and the concept of spirituality. Greek art stressed the elements of rhythm, proportion, symmetry and grace; it also emphasised the unity of truth, beauty and goodness, arguing thus for a sane and balanced mind in a healthy and beautiful body. Thus to a great extent were Greek gods humanised. In

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1. *Aesthetics and Criticism*, F. Osborne

2. *The History of Aesthetics*, Bernard Bosanquet

Hebrew art the emphasis was on the ethical aspect while the Egyptians delighted in quantity and vastness and believed in an austere severity of outline as witness some of their monuments like the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

There were many ways in which the relationship of the notion of the beautiful with other spiritual concepts were expressed in the West. Here are some of these notions in the words of their expositors. Beauty and goodness were supposed to be one and the same. Socrates exclaimed that, "whatever is beautiful is for the same reason good". In more recent times Emerson has said that, "Truth, goodness and beauty are but different faces of the same All". The relationship between beauty and Absolute Beauty is brought out by Plato who shows that our love of beautiful things on earth is due to the search of our soul for the Absolute realized and enjoyed by us in the anterior and prior state of being. All visible things are types in which are memorised the beauty of eternal archetypes. In the 'Phaedrus' Plato depicts Absolute Beauty as that which is perceived by the mind thrown into ecstasy in its presence. The 'Symposium' of Plato equates Unity and Beauty, for "Beauty in every form is one and the same". And "at length the vision will be revealed to him by a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere". Coleridge puts it thus : "The secret of beauty is in unity and harmony. It results from a pre-established harmony between nature and man". Thus beauty and unity, as beauty and goodness, were considered to be one and the same by Western thinkers. Aristotle pointed out that the emotion of beauty was a disinterested emotion while the spiritual aspects were stressed by Plotinus and other neo-Platonists. According to Plotinus, "the mind could never perceive the beautiful had it not become beautiful itself. Everyone must partake of the divine nature before he can discern the divinely beautiful". To Hegel, "Poetry is the most universal and spiritual of all arts". Physical beauty is attractive because, said Comte, "it is a mirror of the spiritual which underlies it". In modern times Croce exclaimed that, "Beauty is the expression of intuition," while, "Art is independent of science and of the useful". Of similar strain is the equation of beauty and God ; of beauty and truth ; of beauty and morality. Topffer said, "God is beauty", and ideas of beauty are attributes of the divine as "the beautiful which is the Splendour of the true is the realm of God". Keats in his celebrated 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' pleads that the knowledge of truth, of beauty is all there is to be known : "Beauty is truth, truth beauty ; that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know". Carlyle emphatically states the case for the unity of beauty and truth thus : "The fine arts divorcing

themselves from truth are quite certain to fall mad, if they do not die". And Ruskin holds that men become more ethical by having a disinterested love of beauty; he emphasises the moral aspect of art. Thus all great artists uphold truth, and harmonize art with it, since without truth it would fail.

What is the function of art? The chief function of art is its ennobling influence on the mind. Whenever and wherever one comes in contact with something beautiful, the mind and heart are filled with such noble qualities and emotions and this constitutes the mark of a real work of art. Art should be *ramaniya* (beautiful) in order to inspire and ennoble. Then alone can it lay claim to greatness. Bacon declares that in art we have shows of things submitted to the desire of the mind which always accepts only the highest. Burne-Jones holds the view that it is the message, the burden of the picture, of a poem, that makes it real; the mind thus gets ennobled by such universal messages. Dryden claims that, "Poetry instructs as it delights".

It is in the nature of art to express a spiritual element even in pain; even in scenes of tragedy art manifests a purity and blessedness of the soul in unfavourable surroundings, for instance in the scene of the Crucifixion. Art makes beauty a transcendental experience. As Schelling remarks, "Art conducts us from the vestibule of reality into the innermost shrine and reveals the transcendental to our vision". Art does not merely imitate reality; it interprets it; it generalizes and idealizes and transfigures reality. For the purpose of art is not mere decoration but the expression of something immanently beautiful and moving. There is also significance of art; in the symbols of aesthetic representation (a) the straight line symbolises eternity, while (b) the curve symbolises variety and (c) the circle indicates the finite. Sculpture, architecture and painting deal with space, while music and poetry deal with time. Thus the contents of art are also metaphysical in scope and extent.

The real aim of art is to be the hand-maid of religion. The ultimate purpose of sculpture and painting is to make real to the eye the forms of gods, to indicate the many and infinitesimal varieties. Religious sculpture in Greece attains its culmination in Phidias. "It is the mark of great art that its appeal is universal and eternal. Significant form stands with the power to provoke aesthetic emotion in anyone capable of feeling it. The ideas of man go buzz and die like gnats, men change institutions and their customs as they change their coats; the intellectual triumphs of one age are the follies of another, only great art remains stable and unobscure. Great art remains stable

and unobscure because the feelings that it awakens are independent of time and place, because its kingdom is not of this world. To those who have and hold a sense of the significance of form, what does it matter whether the forms that move them were created in Paris the day before yesterday or in Babylon fifty centuries ago? The forms of art are inexhaustible; but all lead by the same road of aesthetic emotion to the same world of aesthetic ecstasy".<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify the position of aesthetics in Indian thought, a preliminary survey of the Western approach to aesthetics has just been made. A study of Indian aesthetics reveals that here, more than in the West, the stress is on the close resemblance between the joy of the art and the joy of spiritual experience. The end of aesthetic experience is to create joy and pleasure. This joy is variously described as *ānanda*, *rasa*, *brahma*. It must not be forgotten that the *ne plus ultra* of Indian aesthetics is merged with all highest truth, *brahma satyam*. The ultimate end of aesthetics is to help the aesthete to attain *mokṣa* (release from limitations or bondage). According to the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, *ānanda* is defined as conterminous with *brahman*, the all-highest principle—'*Ānando Brahmeti Vyajānāt*'. Any aesthetic experience through the pleasure it gives is only temporary; it is *kṣaṇika*. But it is only by attaining to the highest spiritual experience that the real purpose is fully realized. It is then only that there can be joy in the beautiful—'*Raso vai saḥ*'. *Ānanda* has two forms. It can be interpreted according to the Vedānta or according to the Sāṃkhya doctrine.

According to the Vedānta interpretation, *ānanda* is equated with *brahman*. *Ānanda* is bliss; *brahman* represents the inner universal harmony. *Brahman* is termed *ānanda* because of the restful bliss that results from realizing that harmony. *Brahman* is so termed for instance in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad-iii*. The appropriateness of the term *ānanda* consists just in this suggestion that the harmony of the universe must be realized in one's own experience and not merely intellectually apprehended; for there can be no such thing as mediated *ānanda*. This word contains the clue to the whole aesthetic theory of the Vedānta. Common experience takes for granted that variety is the ultimate truth. According to the Vedānta, the final truth lies in the unification of this variety through a proper synthesis. But this unification is what takes place in perfect knowledge. Commonly we are occupied with appearances which give only a fragmentary view of reality. They alone concern us in our everyday life. But he who attains perfect knowledge

1. *Art*, by Clive Bell

—the *jīvanmukta*—transcends this fragmentary view. He may continue to perceive variety ; but it ceases to have any ultimate significance for him. He merges in the unity which he realizes, all separate existence, including his own, and enjoys *ānanda*—“the peace that passeth understanding”. This higher viewpoint is not possible for us while we are yet on the empirical plane. We are absorbed in the narrow distinction between the self and the not-self. But sometimes, though rarely, there is a break in this routine and then in the sudden transition from one empirical state to another, we transcend our narrow selves. Our connection with the work-a-day world seems to snap. We do not indeed realize then, like the Knower, the unity of all that is, but we yet resemble him in one respect, in that we lose sight of ourselves and feel delight, however shortlived it may be. The Vedānta says everything is beautiful and nothing mars the inward universal harmony. This is the basis of the doctrine of the *ātman* ; the saint indeed being the greatest artist.

The Sāṃkhya view is pessimistic, being that nature is not wholly beautiful and pleasant, but is a mixture of *sukha*, *duḥkha* and *moha*. Nature does not please all at all times. Therefore for pure bliss we must look elsewhere than in the real world.

True beauty according to the Vedānta is not what we see or experience outside. True beauty consists of that inner harmony underlying all diversities of beauty. This true beauty is the ultimate reality and it is revealed only to the man who knows. Even the secondary aspect of beauty, viz., its outward aspect which can be seen and felt, can create bliss, *ānanda*, at sight. But true beauty is seen only by the ‘inward eye’ because no words can describe it nor can it be objectively known ; it can only be realized. The Vedānta described *ānanda* as the intrinsic nature of the self (*ātman*). *Ānanda* is none other than joy or bliss. But the intrinsic nature of the self is hidden by the veil of *māyā* (nescience). If we tear it off we experience real *ānanda* bliss, joy. Life is characterised by strife, by conflict between pleasure and pain. Why ? Because of the ignorance of the real nature of the self. *Avidyā-kāma-karma* is the characteristic of life. In active participation in life there are always present strife and desire. When these are temporarily absent, then do we feel some joy. Yet, this feeling of joy is but deceptive because it is only temporary, for we have not yet probed the mystery of *avidyā*. The mind is always so inclined to be self-centered, that unless it transcends itself into something at least temporarily detached, no joy is possible. The aesthetic attitude is marked by the elimination of desire and action while nescience still exists latently. In the saintly person, who represents the highest form the aesthetic attitude can lead

to, even nescience ceases to exist. It is through their unselfishness that both these attitudes, that of the aesthete and the saint, resemble one another.

Therefore it will be seen that in Indian aesthetics the realization of *ānanda* is the means for the attainment of a higher and eternal joy. This *brahmānanda* as it is called makes it possible for the person to become a *jīvanmukta* (a liberated soul). Yet as a first step towards the realization of *ānanda*, the aesthetic attitude has a very useful role to play. Unlike the Western attitude which, while realizing the spiritual aspect, stops short there, the Indian attitude makes the gift of appreciation the spring-board for further spiritual conquest and advancement. The ability to appreciate the beautiful comes through the temporary cessation of strife and desire. It is the attempt to go beyond this temporary pleasant experience and realize the permanent ever-present beauty and harmony of the universe by the forceful snapping of the bonds of nescience, that constitutes the really highest and truest aesthetic experience. It is this experience which becomes the basis of the saintly life, the full life, the life of a liberated being—*jīvanmukta*. Towards the full development of such an ideal alone does Indian aesthetics strive.

The Sāṃkhya theory of art is slightly different from the Vedānta. *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are two separate elements. Their interaction produces, through the mediation of *buddhi*, *bhoga* and *apavarga*, that is the experience of pleasure and pain, and the attainment of spiritual poise, by correct knowledge. *Bhoga* is produced by the interaction of *guṇas* leading to *sukha*, *duḥkha*, and *moha*. Sāṃkhya merely evaluates things as means of pleasure or pain. The pleasure of one may be the pain of another and vice versa. This must be so until *puruṣa* disassociates himself from *buddhi*, when a mental state of no-pain-no-pleasure comes about. This is possible only for a person who has developed his *sattva* to the highest point. Thus the really wise should try to rise above pain and pleasure because of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* being separate. Such a man is a *jīvanmukta*. That man is in Vijnānabhikṣu's words, "serene like a mountain".<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible for the ordinary man to become so perfect or attain that detachment. Here it is the function of high art to help to restore that balance by leading us into a world of greatness in exchange for our own one of sordidness :

Niyatikṛta niyamarahitām  
Hladāikamayīmananya paratantrām,  
Navarasaruchirām Nirmitimādadhati  
Bhārati Kaverjayati

Kāvya Prakāśa—Mammata

1. Sāṃkhya Karika, VII-16



"Splendid is the poet's speech, comprehending a creation which is without the restraints of nature's laws, full of pleasure alone, independent of other helps, rejoicing in a nine-fold *rasa*".

Daṇḍin, the celebrated author of the *Kāvyaḍarśa* makes this dictum :

Bhāvaḥ Kaverabhiprāyaḥ Kāvyeṣvāsiddhi Samsthitah  
Parasparopakāritvam sarveṣām vastu parvaṇām  
Viśeṣaṇānām Vyarthānāmakriyā sthana varṇanā  
Vyaktiruktikramabalādgambhīrasyāpi Vastunaḥ  
Bhāvāyattamidam sarvamiti tadbhāvikam Viduḥ (ii—363-5)

"*Bhava* is the idea of the poet which pervades the poem. The interdependence of sections, subject matter, non-employment of useless epithets, use of apposite descriptions, the unfoldment of a majestic theme in proper style—all this is due to *bhāva* and therefore known as *bhāvika*".

We see here the emphasis laid on the role of intuition in poetic composition. By saying that sustained intuition is the basis for the successful execution of a poetic composition, Daṇḍin is declaring one of the cardinal truths now taken for granted in the construction of a work of art.

Intuition occupies so unique a place in Indian thought that a few words about it here may not be out of place. When Patanjali the author of the "*Yoga Sūtras*" made his great assertion "*Pratibhādvā sarvam*" (III 38) he was in fact saying that, to the *pratibhāśālin*, "the man who had developed his intellect through the help of intuition", nothing was impossible. This may seem at first sight to be a very tall claim to make but on a little reflection it will be seen that it is no more than within the plausible. For there are many things which though ordinarily out of reach can be easily accessible through special discipline, psychic, physical and mental. It is in order to develop this special faculty that much emphasis is laid and so much trouble taken. By specially developing this attitude of *pratibhā* the mind is trained to take a more detached view enabling the person to enjoy the *ānanda* created by a work of art. Ultimately, as has been pointed out before, *ānanda* can only come if such a detached frame of mind is in existence. When such a state exists it is possible for *pratibhā* to be most fully developed. Then *pratibhā* will broaden out into a world vision, taking in and understanding the inward harmony that lies at the basis of all that is beautiful ; and it can lead one to a state of fully experiencing *ānanda* and of realizing the condition : *ānando brahmeti vyajānāt*.

Therefore to the poet or the appreciator of the poet it is necessary to develop that appreciation that comes through intuition. In that context therefore we may seek to explain why it is that Daṇḍin lays so much emphasis on the need for a poetic composition being of sustained intuition. If intuition at any level fails, or does not satisfy, then the whole composition is in danger of crashing to the ground. In fact everything that comprises that poetic composition is based upon intuition (sustained intuition).

The fact that Indians organized everything in life according to a *śāstra* explains the special care they took in regulating matter relating to poetry. Everything was carefully and properly regulated. Nothing was left to chance, and the art of making a poet was not left to chance. Elaborate rules and regulations, disciplines and trainings went to constitute the makings of a poet. A poet must be a born genius having vast learning free from faults ; he must have a mind intent on application. *Naisargikī ca pratibhā*—an inborn genius—this indeed is the great qualification. It behoves those who would study and benefit by poetry to pursue this intuition to its logical end so that it gives us the fruits we most seek to get from it—the realization of *ānanda*. If that does not take place or happen in a large measure, the usefulness of the poetic art will be lost ; lost to the appreciator and the author. As stated earlier the sole purpose of poetic art is to create, even if it is temporary, a feeling of joy and bliss. This joy and bliss come only when there is a temporary cessation of the strife and desire that characterise ordinary mortal life. If and when as a result of this temporary joy we could delve deeper and reach our innermost self and realize that harmony and beauty untouched by the world of desire and strife, we have really achieved a saintly attitude which enables everything to be looked at as part of the innermost being, the *ātman*, and hence beautiful, blissful and joyous.

It is to develop such an attitude of mind that the poet must strive hard. By cultivating speech and its proper use, patiently, diligently, thoroughly and relentlessly, he can make success possible.

Daṇḍin puts it thus :

Naisargikī ca pratibhā śrutam ca bahu nirmalam,  
Amandascābhiyogo S syāḥ kāraṇam kāvya sampadāḥ.  
Na Vidyate Yadyapi pūrvavāsanā  
Gunānubandhi Pratibhānamadbhutam,

Śrutena Yatnena ca vāgupāsītā  
Dhruvam Karotyeva Kamapyanugrahām.

Tadastatandairaniśam sarasvatī  
 Śramādupāsyā khalu kīrtimīpsubhiḥ,  
 Kṛṣe kavitve S pi janāḥ kṛtaśramāḥ,  
 Vidagdha goṣṭhiṣu vihartumīśate

(*Kāvyaadarśa*—I-103-5)

So, inborn genius, extensive reading free from error, and relatively constant practice are the three necessary ingredients for poetic success. To achieve this Daṇḍin advocates the worship of Sarasvatī, the goddess of *vāk* (speech) and *vidyā* (learning), and incessant practice. Polish and more polish is necessary and in this there can be no rest—not by day or night. It is an everlasting will to polish and polish in order that nothing may be left to chance. The faithful follower of this attains the grace of the goddess of learning which gives a position of honour in fields of learning and study.

The ultimate purpose is to lift a person from out of the realm of the ordinary, *sāmānya*, into the realm of the extraordinary, (*asādhāraṇa*). For the purpose of really great art is to enable to uplift a person. It ennoble him by making him identify himself with something greater, something immaculate. It brings him in contact with something nobler than the *avidyā-kāma-karma* which enshrouds ordinary life. The soul encased in ignorance cannot realize its full glory. The veil of ignorance once lifted or pierced through, the soul of a person is ennobled and becomes able to radiate pure bliss—*ānanda*. As the result of the contact with *ānanda*, the beautiful creates an atmosphere that enables the realization of the supreme *Ānanda*. It creates a vision of a world guided and strung together by an inner harmony which creates a beauty, an iridescence difficult to imagine and grasp until this ennobling experience takes us to it—*Ānandam Brahma*—as the supreme moment. Thus the whole object of intuition, sustained intuition, practice, and discipline is to achieve that supreme realization.

Ānando Brahmeti Vyajānāt,  
 Ānandādध्येva Khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante,  
 Ānandena jātāni jīvanti,  
 Ānandam prayantyaabhisamviśanti.

A study of Indian aesthetics reveals the fact that more than Westerners, Indians stress the close resemblance between the joys of spiritual and of aesthetic experience. The subject matter of *Alaṃkāra Śāstra* is patterned closely after the subject matter of *Brahma Vidyā*. Indian artistic studies institute a quest after the "soul of the arts".

Take for example the statement—‘*Rītirātmā Kāvyaśya*’, Vamana. One of the ingredients which heightens the grandeur of a poetic work is called *rīti*. *Rīti* may be briefly defined thus : In the world of the poetic word, the lightness, *lālitya*, of the words produced by their intermingling with one another, by conjunctions, *samāsa*, by the alternation of long and short, *dirgha* and *alpa*—the comingling of these diverse elements is called *rīti* (style). It is this which is called the *ātmā* of a work of poetics. In other words a composition not having this comingling of words and ideas is not a poetic work. The soul of poetic composition is suggestion, *dhvani* : ‘*Kāvyaśyātmā dhvaniḥ*’ (Ananda vardhana). Word, *śabda* meaning, *artha*, excellence, *guṇa*, defect, *doṣa*, decoration or embellishment *alaṅkāras*, style, *rīti*—all these increase the beauty of a poetic composition. That which shines with implied poetic beauty is the heart of the poetic composition. Consider this : ‘*Vākyam rasātmakam Kāvyaṃ*’ (Viśvanatha). Here the soul of the poetic composition is held to be *rasa*. Again as the conveyor of beautiful meaning the word is the heart (soul) of the poetic composition—‘*Ramanīyārtha pratipadakaśśabdaḥ kāvyam*’ (Jagannātha).

Similarly the Indian Vedānta constitutes an enquiry into the nature of the supreme soul. The *Brahma Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa open with these famous words ‘*Atha to Brahmajijnāsā*’. (And now for a discussion of *Brahman*). In the Upanisads we see that the search is *ātma vidyā*, the secret of the *ātma*. This brief comparison gives us a clue as the similarities of language and the mode of approach between Indian aesthetics and the Vedānta.

From the Indian point of view the purpose of art is to teach delightfully and even to lead one to supreme bliss. Therefore the aim of aesthetics is considered to be the same as the aim of Veda. The Veda speaks like the *prabhu*, the ruler. The Puraṇa speaks like the *mitra*, the friend. In the *kāvya* there is the appeal of the *kāntā* (the beloved). The message of the Veda is called *Prabhu Sammita* because it is the command of a master to be followed in unquestioning fashion, to be literally carried out without altering a word or syllable. The *Mitra Sammita* is that of the Purāṇas, acting like the friend who cannot bind by a strict injunction but does so by examples here given in the way of stories appealing to the heart and mind. In a poetic work this comparison, *Kāntā Sammita*, is to the soft implorations of the beloved, who by her mastery of the arts of love enmeshes her lover; so the poetic work by its beauty ensnares the listener. It is of interest to note here the distinction between the master and friend, and between the friend and the beloved. Mammata commenting on the usefulness of poetic

work gives this dictum that the message of polished composition is like the cajoling of the beloved : *Kāntāsammitatayopadeśayuje*.

The ease with which even the uninitiated in the Vedas can achieve the four *puruṣārthas* the four pedestals that constitute the basis of life *dharma*, duty, *artha*, material good, *kāma*, desire, and *mokṣa*, liberation by a knowledge and appreciation of poetry is aptly and truly brought out by Viśvanatha in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* :

Chaturvargaphalaprapṛtiḥ Sukhādalpādhiyāmapi,  
Kāvyaḍeva yatastena tatsvarūpam nirūpyate.

For the study of poetry gives ability to attain the four *puruṣārthas* with ease ; it enables a person to achieve facility in the subject matter of the arts and this grants fame and joy, delight and pleasure, *ānanda*, to the person concerned.

Dharmārtha Kāma Mokṣeṣu vaichakṣaṇyam kalāsu cha  
karoti Kīrtim Prītim cha sādhu kāvya niṣevāṇam.

He who knows grammatically the uses of a word, having discovered its full meaning, is capable of realizing all his desires in the heavens. This is the meaning of the sentence :

Ekaḥ sabdaḥ suprayuktaḥ samyag jñātaḥ svarge loke  
kāmadhugbhavati.

Patanjali—*Mahābhāṣya*.

The aim of Indian aesthetics has ever been to purify man by its richness and put him into a state of delight. The variety and richness of aesthetic experience is so vast that it is a veritable storehouse to strengthen the spirit of man, to cure him of any maladies to which he may be subject, to give him a new meaning, to reaffirm his faith in himself and to enable him to look forward hopefully. For art *Śivatarakṣataye* destroys the inauspicious *Sadyaḥ para nirvritaye* (*Kāvyaaprakāśa*) immediately creates unalloyed joy.

Kālidāsa enumerated four important aims of art :

(a) that art is intended chiefly to cause delight to the gods and Rṣis have declared the drama to be a means by which the gods are offered delight through pleasure afforded by the eyes and the imagination.

Devānāmidamāmananti munayaḥ kāntam kratum cākṣuṣam.

(b) Art deals also with the conduct of man, whose life is based

chiefly upon the admixture of the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* :

Traiguṇyodbhavamatra lokacharitam.

It displays the joys and sorrows of life, which are engendered chiefly by the *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas guṇas*. By displaying the interaction of these forces a great drama could be created. The implication is that just as God, by His divine *līlā* (sport), creates the Universe with the help of *prakṛiti*, nature, which acts as His instrument of creation, the poet creates from his *līlā*, imagination, the Universe, the poetic work, with the help of *prakṛiti*—*śabda*, *ālaṃkāra*.

(c) Art brings home to the devotee many types of transcendental pleasures that exist because of its genius, *kavyasvarūpa*, which is to display pleasures arising out of the employment of the nine *rasas*, “*Nānārasaṃ-dṛśyate*”.

(d) Art is the universal delighter, the giver of universal joy, of pleasure, happiness and all that is beautiful. It is because of this that it is called *Ekam samārādhnam* by Kalidasa. There is nought else which can delight all types of people, young and old, the joyful, the grief-stricken, the sick and ailing as well as the hale and hearty as art does.

Many of the concepts of the Indian *Ālaṃkāra śāstra* are taken from the Vedānta. Compare the concept of *ānanda*. In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*—*Ānandā Valli*, is the following declaration :

Ānandō brahmeti vyajānāt Ānandādeva khalvimāni  
bhūtāni jāyante.

Ānandena jātāni jīvanti.

Ānandam prayantyaabhisamviśanti.

*Ānanda* truly is *brahman*, so realize it. The whole world is born out of this *ānanda*. Also from *ānanda* it subsists and in the end merges in *ānanda* itself.

Again consider this statement :

Ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān na bibheti kutaschaneti.

“The person who realizes for himself the joy of *brahmānanda* need never be frightened by anything in this world”.

Or compare it with this :

Tasmādvā etasmād vijñānamayāt anyontara

Ātmā ānandamayāḥ.

Tasya priyameva śiraḥ. Modo dakṣiṇaḥ pakṣaḥ.

Pramoda uttaraḥ Pakṣaḥ ānanda ātmā,

brahma puccham pratiṣṭhā.

"More subtle than the *viññānamaya* sheath is that of the *ānanda-maya*. Its form is like that of the bird. The pleasures of the senses, the joy of meeting friends and the joy of regaining lost possessions have been described as the head, the left side and the right side of this bird ; its *ātmā* is *ānanda*. That evertruthful conscious *ānanda*, the *para-brahma* itself, is its supporting tail". These three concepts taken from the *Taittiriya* describing the form of Vedāntic *ānanda* closely tally with the *ānanda* mentioned in Indian aesthetics :

Raso vai saḥ.

Rasam hyevāyam labdhvānandī bhavati.

*Taittiriya ii—7*

"That (*Ananda Brahma*) is *rasa* : it is deserving of absorption because it is capable of giving *ānanda*". Merely practising Vedic injunctions may not reveal the *ātmā*.

Nāyamātmā pravachanena labhyaḥ.

*Kaṭhopanīṣad ii—23*

An artistic creation should contain within it artistic excellences and be without blemish as is the *Brahman*. To lower poetic work from the highest standards is itself a blemish. To raise the standards to the very highest excellence is itself a great virtue ; it is what is called true *Alaṃkāra* and *rīti*.

Doṣāḥ tasyāpakarṣakāḥ

Utkarṣaḥetavaḥ proktāḥ guṇāṅkārārīṭayaḥ.

*Sāhityadarpana—Viśvanatha*

This is how the merits and demerits of poetic composition are enumerated. Compare this with the words which describe the deity as the ideal for every devotee to have before his mind :

"He who is the repository of all great qualities, faultless, realizable through mental concentration, worthy of being realized as the means by which one can achieve liberation, such a one is Nārāyaṇa, to Him and to the spiritual preceptor, the *guru*, are prostrations due".

Nārāyaṇam guṇaiḥ sarvaiḥ udīrṇam doṣa varjitam.

Jñeyam gamyam guruṃschāpi Natvā sūtrartha uchyate.

We must remember that, as previously stated, the purpose of art is to elevate, to uplift. This, however short and temporary it may be, is but the means to induce in us some moment of *ānanda*, which will be an

encouragement to discover more deeply what real *ānanda* (Vedāntic *ānanda*) is. Towards that end this (the *upadeśa* and appreciation of art) is a strong incentive.

The realization of *kavyānanda* is supposed to be a preliminary state to the realization of *brahmānanda*. The relationship of *kavyānanda* to *brahmānanda* is like that of the *bimba* (image) to the *pratibimba* (reflection). The teacher who instructs a pupil in the mystery of a thing teaches him through what he knows. Therefore, of literature too, this holds good :

Upāyāḥ Sikṣamāṇānam Bālānām upalālanāḥ,  
Asatyē Vartmanisthitvā tataḥ satyam samīhate.

"In the case of boys who are about to learn something new it is necessary to teach them just by arousing their interest in familiar created things, which resemble the truth as near as possible". Since *kavyānanda* is something more easily appreciated and realized than *brahmānanda*, it is also something which people more readily like because it is more within the realm of the feasible. Through it we can advance to the realization of *Brahman*, and thus proceed from the known to the unknown.

*Kavyānanda* and *brahmānanda* have this in common—they are both *alaukika* (unworldly, not of this world) in nature. They both contain bliss, *ānanda*, without the slightest touch of pain. Their only difference is, that in the realization of *kavyānanda* the realization of bliss is temporary, lasting only until the passing away of *vibhāvas*. Whereas in *brahmānanda* it is permanent. We may further illustrate this point by saying :

Brahmāsvāde (Muktidaśāyām) Brahmamātram  
prakāśate,

Rase tu vibhāvādyapīti bhedātsādṛśyam.

*Kavyaparakāśa*—Commentary pp. 93

The realization of *Brahman*, *brahmānanda*, and the realization of aesthetic experience, *kavyānanda*, have this difference. In this difference the former, only the attributeless is realized but in the latter in accordance with many images realized through *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhichāri bhāva*, many temporary delights are experienced. And therefore, aesthetic experience resembles somewhat the delight of the realization of *Brahman*.

Brahmāsvāda Sahodaraḥ,  
Brahmāsvāda Sadṛśaḥ.

*Sāhityadarpaṇa*



Similarly a close resemblance is suggested between the creative artist or poet and the creator of the universe. Both are artists out to create something fresh, interesting varied and pulsating with life. As Kavyaprakāsa puts it :

Niyatikṛta Niyamarahitām  
Hlādaikamayīmayanyaparatantrām,  
Navarasaruchirām nirmitimādadhati  
Bhārati kaverjayati.

*Kavyaprakāsa*, P. 1

"The creation of the poet has nothing left to chance, as it has unalloyed joy, is not bound by anything ordained and is replete with the entire emotional gamut by the employment of the *navarasas*". Therefore it is complete in itself like the creation of the Lord.

It is said that the gifts of the poet and those of the *aparokṣa jñānin* are the same ; both are gifted with and cultivate *pratibhā* ; the latter concentrates only on realizing *Brahman*. "*Prātibhadvā sarvam*", says Patanjali.

*Pratibhā* or poetic imagination is the real cause of artistic creation. It has been stressed by Indian rhetoricians from very early times. However, ideas about imagination were nebulous at first ; and the credit of fixing its status goes to Bhāmaha. Bhāmaha declares that a *kāvya* can be composed only by a man gifted with *pratibhā*.<sup>1</sup>

The knowledge of a word, sense, stories, worldly affairs and the arts, all these cause the artistic imagination<sup>2</sup> ; nevertheless it is imagination that is its *sine qua non*. Daṇḍin, his successor, also spoke of *pratibhā* as the cause of *kāvya*.<sup>3</sup> But he thought learning and assiduity were enough for poetic creation, a view which represents a retrogression, for many Indian *ālankārikas* do not share it. Daṇḍin's reflections on the nature of imagination are interesting. He makes two important points in regard to *pratibhā*. Firstly, that it is the cause of "*rich poetry*"<sup>4</sup> —*kāvya sampat*. Secondly, that the intuitive faculty of intelligence called *pratibhā* flows from earlier latent impression.<sup>5</sup>

1. "Gurūpadeśādadyetum śāstram jādadhīyo'pyalam,  
Kāvyaṃ tu jāyate jātu kasyachitpratibhāvatah.  
*Kāvyaālankāra*, 1-5

2. Śabdaśchando'bhidhānārtha itihāsāśrayaḥkathaḥ,  
Lokoyuktiḥ kalāsceti mantavyaḥ kavyayonayah.  
*Kāvyālankāra*, 9-11

3. Naisargiki ca pratibhā śrutam ca bahunirmalam,  
Amandaschābhiyogosyaḥ Kāranam Kāvyaśarīrapadan.

*Kāvyaśāstra*, I-103

4. Kāvyaśāstra, I-103.

5. Pūrvavāsanāgunānubandhi Pratibhānam Adbhutam.

*Kāvyaśāstra*, I-104

Vāmana, the next great *ālankārika*, restores to *pratibhā* its prestige and argues that *pratibhāna* or *pratibhā* is the "germ of poetry."<sup>6</sup> He emphasises the importance and necessity of *pratibhā* in poetic creation when he declares that "without *pratibhāna* a composition cannot be produced and even if produced it would be ridiculous".<sup>7</sup>

Rudrata also sees the necessity of imagination in artistic creation ; instead of *pratibhā* he calls it *śakti*.<sup>8</sup> His contribution in this respect is in dividing *śakti* into "natural" and "acquired."<sup>9</sup> He is partial to the natural variety and treats the acquired *śakti* as next to it.<sup>10</sup>

Mammata continues to call imagination by the name of *śakti*. He holds that literary composition has three causes which make it great : (i) *śakti* or imagination, (ii) worldly experience and (iii) practice. He sees three causes for a poetic composition and emphasis *pratibhā*.<sup>11</sup> He declares that without *pratibhā* a composition will not be produced at all ; and even if produced, it becomes a prey to ridicule.<sup>12</sup>

Of later *ālankārikas*, Vāgbhata talks of imagination in appreciative terms. So does Rājaśekhara. The credit of declaring unambiguously that *pratibhā* alone counts in the creation of a literary composition goes to *ālankārika* Jagannātha.<sup>13</sup>

Ānandavardhana declared that if a poet had *pratibhā* there would be no limit to productions of art at all.<sup>14</sup>

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- |     |  |                                      |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 6.  | Kavitvabījam pratibhānam.  | <i>Kāvyaālankāra Sūtra</i> , 1-3-16. |
| 7.  | Yasmādvinaṁ kāvyam na niṣpadyate,<br>Niṣpannam vā hāsyāyatanaṁ syāt.                     | <i>Kāvyalankāra sūtrā</i> , 1-3-16.  |
| 8.  | Tritayamidam Vyāpriyate Śaktiḥ Vyutpattirabhyāsaḥ,                                       | <i>Kāvyaālankāra</i> , 1-14          |
| 9.  | Pratibheti aparairuditā sahajotpādyā ca-sā-dvidhā<br>bhavati,                            | Rudrata                              |
| 10. | Anayastu jyāyāsī sahajā.   | Rudrata                              |
| 11. | Saktirnipunatā lokaśāstra kāvyādyavekṣanāt,<br>Kāvyañāśikṣayābhyāsa iti hetustadubbhavē. | <i>Kāvyaaprakāśa</i> , 1-3           |
| 12. | Yām vina kāvyam na prasaret,<br>Prasratam vā upahasaniyam syāt.                          | <i>Kāvyaaprakāśa</i> , p. 11         |
| 13. | Tasya ca kāranam kavigatā kevalā pratibhā.   | <i>Rasagangādhara</i> , p. 8         |
| 14. | Na kāvyārth Virāmo'sti yadi syāt pratibhagunaḥ.  | <i>Dhvanyāloka</i> 4-6               |

As for his commentator, Abhinavagupta, he talks of *pratibhā* or *prakhyā* in the very opening verse of his *Lochana*.<sup>15</sup>

Kṣemendra thinks that *pratibhā* is the ornament of poetry.<sup>16</sup>

How important the role and concept of *pratibhā* is can thus be seen. Naturally, ancient *āṅkārīkas* decided to fix its meaning by offering definitions of the term. The most telling of the definitions is that of Bhatta-Tauta.<sup>17</sup>

He said: “*Pratibhā* is intuitive intellect which visualises and creates things ever anew”. The other definitions offered seem to be but amplifications of this definition of Bhatta-Tauta. Thus Rudrata says that “it is the flash of ideas and effortless words in a meditative mind.”<sup>18</sup>

Abhinavagupta calls it an intuitive vision ; a vision by which the poet sees the truth of the world.<sup>19</sup>

In his *Abhinavabhārati*, he says that “it is the wonderful faculty of creation”.<sup>20</sup> In another place, he defines it as “the ability to form new ideas in regard to the subject of description”.<sup>21</sup>

Mahimabhatta talks of it as “the sudden flash of intuitive intellect which sees the truth of things”.<sup>22</sup>

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15. Kramāt prakhyopākha prasara subhagam bāsayati.  
*Dhvanyaloka Lochana* p. 1
16. Pratibhābharanam kāvyam uchitam śobhate kaveḥ.  
*Auchityavicāra Carcā*, 35
17. Prajñā navanavollekhaśālinī pratibhā matā.  
*Auchityavicāra Carcā*, 35
18. Manasi sadā susamādhini visphurana manekadhā'bhi  
dheyasya,  
Akṣiptāni padāni ca vibhānti yasyāmasau śaktiḥ.  
*Kāvyaṅkārā*, 1-15
19. Yadunmilanaśaktyaiva viśvamunmīlati kṣaṇāt,  
Svātmāyatana Viśrantām tām vande pratibhām śivām.  
*Dhvanyāloka Lochana*, p. 60
20. Pratibhābhidhāna.....Vicitrāpūrvanirmāna-  
śaktiśālināḥ.  
*Nāṭyasāstra, Com.*, p. 4.  
Pratibhā apurvavastunirmana kṣamā prajna.  
*Lochana*, p. 29
21. Śaktiḥ pratibhānam Varnanīyavastuviśaya nūtanolle-  
khaśālitvam.  
*Lochana*, p. 137.
22. Kṣaṇam svarūpasparśothā prajñaiḥ Pratibhā kaveḥ.  
*Vyakti Viveka* p. 391

Mammata defines it as "the pre-natal impulse which is the cause of poetic creation".<sup>23</sup>

Jagannātha thinks of it as "the mastery over words and sense necessary for creating poetry".<sup>24</sup>

Kṣemendra contents himself with quoting Bhatta-Tauta's definition.<sup>25</sup>

It only remains now for us to indicate the relationship between *pratibhā* and *rasa*, and to describe the role of *pratibhā* in the delineation of *rasa*. It is the sage Bharata who first proclaims that delineation of sentiment, *rasa*, is the end and aim of all artistic creation.<sup>26</sup>

A similar view is held by Ānandavardhana.<sup>27</sup> His commentator Abhinavagupta entirely agrees with him in this respect.<sup>28</sup>

Jagannatha Pandita explicitly says that, "a *kāvya* rich in *rasadhvani* is the best of literary productions".<sup>29</sup>

Abhinavagupta also talks about the excellences of *rasadhvani*. He says that "*rasa* is suggested by the association of the *vibhāvas* (cause) *anubhāvas* (feeling) and *vyabhichari-bhāvas* (accessories) which in turn arouse the latent impressions of the reader or the spectator."<sup>30</sup>

Now it is here that *pratibhā* steps in. This innate faculty of the poet helps in the proper delineation and association of the *vibhāvas*,

23. Śaktiḥ kavitvabijarūpa samskāra viśeṣaḥ.

*Kāvya-prakāśa*, p. 11.

24. Sā ca kāvyaghatanānukūla śabdārthopasthitiḥ.

*Rasagangādhara*, 8.

25. Yadāha Bhatta tautaḥ—prajñā Navanavonmeṣaśalīni  
pratibhā matā.

*Aucityavicāra Carcā*, 35.

26. Tatra rasāneva tāvadādāvabhivyākhyāsyāmaḥ,  
Nahi Rasādṛte kascidārtha pravartata Iti.

*Nāṭyaśāstra*, p. 62.

27. Mukhya Vyāpāra Viśayāḥ sukavinām rasādayaḥ,  
Teṣām Nibandhane bhāvyam taiḥ sadaivāpramāḍibhiḥ."

*Lochana*, p. 164.

28. Rasenaiva sarvam jivati kāvyam.

*Lochana*, p. 65

29. Evam pancātmake Dhvanau paramaramaṇīyatayā rasa-  
dhvanestādātmā rasastāvadabhidhiyate.

*Rasagangādhara* p. 21

30. Rasadhvanistu sa Eva yo'tra mukhyatayā vibhāvanubhā-  
vavyabhicāri saṁhyojanodita sthāyipratipattikasyapra-  
tipattuḥ sthāyīyāmsācarvanāprayukta eva āsvādapra-  
karṣaḥ.

*Lochana*, p. 67

*anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas* which alone can produce *rasa*. It is this aspect of *pratibhā* which is contemplated by Abhinavagupta in his opening verse of the *Lochana*.<sup>31</sup>

Imagination is *rasavyaṅjaka*—is the suggestive cause of sentiment.<sup>32</sup>

From this we can infer that what makes imagination important is the fact that it forms part of the world of suggestions; and it always plays the role of "the suggestor" to bring about the free play of *rasa* which is the suggested.

*Rasa* or aesthetic delight is brought about by artistic creation. Now, for this creation, it is *pratibhā* which is solely responsible.<sup>33</sup>

This is illustrated by the imaginative powers of the first poet Vālmiki (Ādikavi). Vālmiki saw the Crauñcha Bird crying piteously. This was his perceptual experience. Later, he had the experience transferred to his imagination. This in its turn stirred up within him his instinct of pathos; and, in such a moment of intense feeling, he burst out into spontaneous verse. Later he used this verse to write the *Rāmāyaṇa* in which he depicted the sentiment of pathos. All this is intended to be conveyed by Ānandavardhana in his *śoka-śloka*-equation.<sup>34</sup>

*Pratibhā* is a faculty which exists both in the poet and also in the man of taste. This is indicated by the term *sahṛdaya* given to a man of taste. The expression denotes one who has a like heart. Thus *pratibhā* being common to *kavi* and *sahṛdaya*, makes it possible for a *sahṛdaya* to

31. Apūrvam yadvastu prathayati vinākāranakalām,  
Jagadgrāvapraṅkhyam nijarasa bhārātsārayati ca,  
Kramātpṛakhyopākhyā prasara subhagam bhāsayati.  
Tatsarasvatyāstatvam kavisahṛdayākhyam vijayate.  
Sārayati—Saramkaroti Vibhāvāditva  
Yojanena rasavyaṅjakam karo iti yāvat.

*Bālapriya*, p. 2.

32. Bhāsayati—Nisargeṇa aramanyamapī sarvam vastu rasa-  
vyāṅjakatvasaṃpādanena ramaṇīyam sat prakāśayati-  
tyarthaḥ.

*Bālapriyā-Lochana*, p. 2.

33. Atra prakhyopākhyāprasarasya apūrva vastu nirmāṇe  
sarasatva karaṇe ca hetutvamārthikam bodhyam.

*Bālapriyā*, p. 2.

34. Kraunca Dvandvaviyogotthah  
Sokaḥ slokatvamāgataḥ

*Dhvanyaloka*, 1-5.

relish a composition created by the imagination of a poet. *Pratibhā*, thus, is a bridge between the *kavi* and *sahṛdaya*.

Again, the delineation of sentiment depends mainly upon three things; *vastu*, *alankāra* and *rīti*. Imagination helps a poet in the creation of subject matter. Thus the *Mālati-Mādhava* is a pure creation of the imaginative mind of Bhavabhūti. As for *alankāra*, Ānandavardhana shows that a poet of imagination need not struggle for suitable figures of speech at all, but that they come to him in a flood, in his imaginative mood.<sup>35</sup>

In this connection we must also take into consideration the concepts of Lokadharmi and Nātyadharmi developed by the sage Bharatha.<sup>37</sup>

The gist of it all comes to this that the function of a poet is not to represent merely things as they are in the world. This would become *lokadharmi* or realism. But when a poet by means of his imaginative power or *pratibhā* creates a new world, then he makes his writings interesting. This would be turning the world of realism to that of idealism; and this transformation is done by poetic imagination. Such transformation is the exclusive privilege of the poet.<sup>38</sup>

Yet another case may be made out to show the close relationship which exists between *pratibhā* and *rasa*. It was Kṣemendra who argued in his *Aucitya-vicāra-carcā* that imagination shines only when it is touched by propriety.<sup>39</sup>

But Ānandavardhana shows, that when a poet displays great imagination, then, even if he does not observe propriety, the composition shines at its best.<sup>40</sup>

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35. Alankārāntaraṇi hi nirūpyamāṇa durghatanānyapi rasa samāhita  
cetaṣaḥ pratibhānavataḥ kaverahaṃpūrvikayā parāpatanti.

*Dhvanyāloka*, p. 86-87

36. Sarasvatisvādu tadarthavastu  
Niḥṣyandamāṇā mahatām kavīnam,  
Alokaśāmanyamabhivyanakti  
Pratisphurantam Pratibhāviśeṣam.

*Dhvanyāloka*, 1-6.

37. *Natyasāstra*, Ch. XIV, 62-76.

38. Apāre kāvyasamsāre kavirekaḥprajāpatih,  
Yathāśmai rocate viśvam tathedam parivartate.

*Dhvanyāloka*, p. 222

39. *Aucityavicāra Cārcā-Kārikā*, 35.

40. Avyutpatti kṛto doṣaḥ Śaktyā samvriyate kaveḥ,  
Yastvaśakti kṛtastasya sa jhatityavabhāṣate.

*Dhvanyāloka*, p. 137.

He cites here the instance of the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa. The poet depicts here the *Sambhoga Śṛṅgāra*, the love passages of a god and goddess—a highly improper thing to do. But the rich imagination displayed by Kalidāsa in the *Kumārasambhava* has made the text, otherwise objectionable, one of relish.

Lastly, it is argued by the *ālankārikas* that imagination always creates the beautiful, and *rasa* falls under the category of the beautiful.<sup>41</sup>

Rudrata says that by *śakti*, *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa*, a poet can avoid the ugly and depict the beautiful.<sup>42</sup>

*Pratibhā* as responsible for creating the beautiful composition is also referred to by Abhinavagupta in his *Lochana*.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, we may state that *pratibhā* is the most important cause for poetic composition; which in its turn produces aesthetic delight. We may also state finally that the relationship which exists between *pratibhā* and *rasa* is that of cause and effect—*kārya-kāraṇa-bhāva*.

The treatment of *rasa* culminates in the sentiment that *śṛṅgāra* is the best of *rasas*: “that which reaches the pinnacle of aesthetic experience”. In the *Purāṇas* like the *Bhāgavata* or in the *Dravida prabhandas* the ‘*nāyika-nāyaka bhāva*’ is based on *śṛṅgāra*. This is so developed as to be applicable to God and the devoted. For many *bhāvas* are of the feminine approach and feeling.

*Bhāvas* look upon god as the husband and devotee as the wife. The god and the devotee give the essence of that self-surrender and devotion and love that exists between the man and woman as husband and wife and as the lover and his beloved. According to Rūpa Goswami *bhakti* itself is a *bhāva* greater even than that of *śṛṅgāra*. Kṛṣṇa is called by his devotees *Ujjvala Nīlmani* (the blazing blue sapphire). The mere thought of Kṛṣṇa’s blue body brings forth *Kṛṣṇa rati*. It is a *sthāyibhāva*, whereas the devotee *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa is a *sahṛdaya*. Here let us note that God is *ālāmbana vibhāva* and his devotees—*vibhūtis uddipana vibhāvas*. *Ānanda baṣpa* (tears of joy) are the *anubhāva*. *Bhakti rasa* fills the mind with

41. Kramāt prakhyopākhyaprasarasubhagam bhāsayati.

*Lochana*, p. 1.

42. Tasyāsāranirasāt saragrahanācca caruṇaḥ karāṇe  
Tritayamidam Vyāpriyate Śaktirvyutpattirabhyāsaḥ.

*Kāvyaālankāra*, 1-14.

43. Pratibha apūrvavastu nirmāna  
kṣamā prajñā tasyā viśeṣo,  
Rasāveśa - vaiśadya - saundarya  
kāvyānirmāna Kṣamatvam.

*Lochana*, p. 29.

such devotion and joy that even *śṛṅgāra* cannot match it.

Art can only fulfil itself when it represents God for the godly; otherwise it fails to justify itself. Good men should heed the poetic injunction given in *Vikramorvaśīya*;

Sadvastu puruṣa bahumānāt;

they should not merely admire metre and rhyme but also honour saintly souls and follow their example. Works of art bereft of morality or duty should be despised or discarded, *Kāvya-lāpamscha varjayet*.

The establishment of *dhvani* (suggestion) leads to the conclusion that all real art is an oblique reference to God as the repository of beauty and His activities.

Kālidāsa's famous *śloka* opening the *Raghuvamśa* gives in a nutshell the close connection between word and sound :

Vagarthāviva Saṃprktau  
vāgartha pratipattaye,  
jagataḥ pitarau vande  
pārvatī parameswarau.

*Raghuvamśa*, I-1

“The relationship between sound and sense is a holy one and is like that which exists between Pārvatī and Parameswara”.

The Sanskrit language consists of fifty-one *bījākṣaras* (seed letters). *Bīja* means seed. And the infinitesimal seed is capable of producing a tree. Thus the *bīja* by itself properly intoned or by a combination with other *bījās* is capable of giving results undreamt of before. According to Hindu occult science *dhvani* or *nāda* produced by the letters is an outer manifestation of *Paramātmān* (Supreme Being). By a judicious or by proper understanding of the results produced by these *bījās* a glimpse of the all-highest truth is possible. It is because truth and beauty are intertwined and intermixed, that so are *vāk* and *artha*. The understanding of one leads to the other. Hence the importance attached to *dhvani*—suggestive utterance (of words) and its role in art.

God is the objective of all Indian art. Take the example of iconography. All those who are devout or are interested in art know that in all the temples of India the vast majority of images relate to the depiction of facets of the godhead and God's deeds, His *līlā*. This is the sole aim of Indian sculpture. In painting it is the same. Ravi Varma, the celebrated painter, felt that painting was best when it depicted God, and His deeds. In the field of Indian music Saint Tyāgarāja, Dīkshitar and Purandaradāsarū, all sang of God and His glories and His glorious deeds.



Architecturally speaking the best of our temples reflect the glory of God and dance and drama are again chiefly to please the gods. So too the best of literary classics deal with *dharma*. The celebrated drama, *Prabodha Candrodaya* deals with Vedānta doctrines.

The whole principle of Indian aesthetics can be summed up in one sentence, the worship of beauty is primarily of interest as a worship of God, because beauty is nothing but God. Only secondarily is beauty an attribute of the things of the world. As the *Gita* says :

Yadyadvibhūtimatsatvam Śrīmadūrjitameva vā,  
Tattadevāvagaccha tvam mama Tejomśa sambhavam.

"Whatever is vast, good, auspicious, mighty,  
Understand thou that it exists as a spark of my splendour".

*Bhagavad Gita X-41.*

To realize all that is beautiful, all that is wonderful, all that is holy, all that constitutes the vital life as part of God, is to be beautiful, truthful and joyous as *Brahman* (*satyam, jñānam, anantam, ānandam Brahman*). May salutations be to that Brahman :

"Dikkālādyanavacchinnānantachinmātra mūrtaye,  
Svānubhūtyekamānāya namaḥ śāntāya Tejase.

*Bhartṛhari*

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