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# THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

BY

K. S. RAMASWAMY SASTRI



UNIVERSITY OF TRAVANCORE

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By

DEWAN BAHADUR  
K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI, B.A., B.L.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

SACHIVOTTAMA SIR C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., LL.D.

*Dewan of Travancore and Vice-Chancellor, University of Travancore*



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OF  
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BY  
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WITH A FOREWORD BY

SARASWATHI SRI C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR

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## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                                                  | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------|
| FOREWORD .. .. .                                         | vii  |
| PREFACE .. .. .                                          | ix   |
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .. .. .                            | xi   |
| I. The Nature of the Concept of the Beautiful ..         | 1    |
| II. The Concept of the Beautiful Through the Ages ..     | 10   |
| III. The Concept of the Beautiful in Oriental Thought .. | 32   |
| IV. The Indian Concept of the Beautiful .. ..            | 38   |
| V. The Evolution of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful  | 47   |
| VI. Aspects of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful ..    | 54   |
| VII. Indian Architecture .. .. .                         | 59   |
| VIII. Indian Sculpture .. .. .                           | 80   |
| IX. Indian Iconography .. .. .                           | 86   |
| X. Indian Painting .. .. .                               | 95   |
| XI. Indian Symbolism .. .. .                             | 109  |
| XII. Indian Music .. .. .                                | 112  |
| XIII. Indian Dance .. .. .                               | 122  |
| XIV. Indian Poetry .. .. .                               | 129  |
| XV. Indian Drama .. .. .                                 | 156  |
| XVI. The Future of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful:  |      |
| Conclusion. .. .. .                                      | 161  |
| Index of Authorities Quoted .. .. .                      | 165  |
| General Index .. .. .                                    | 166  |







## FOREWORD

Under the appropriate title of "The Indian Concept of the Beautiful," Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri has brought together a series of reasoned discussions on the nature and embodiment of that concept; and proceeding on the basis that "every work of art", in his own words "has individual and national as well as universal elements", he has outlined the evolution of the idea of beauty in art and followed adequately in the footsteps of Burke who was the author of "The Sublime and the Beautiful" as well as a great orator and statesman.

Asserting that art is the realiser and the revealer of beauty in its relative and absolute aspects, Mr. Ramaswami Sastri has dealt specially with those elements that characterise Indian art. Basing himself upon Ananda as the prime element of aesthetics as well as of spirituality and dealing with the profound inter-relations between the Hindu religious doctrine and Indian art, he has described the outer expression of that art in life, in dress, decoration and various forms of plastic and pictorial representation.

The book before us starts with Indian Architecture and Sculpture, both Hindu and Buddhist, and combats the doctrine that the "race of master builders is an extinct species". Special attention is paid to the indigenous architecture of Travancore exemplified respectively in Suchindrum and Trivandrum as well as in Vaikom, Ettumanoor and Ambalapuzha. He follows Havell in dealing with Sarcenic architecture and sustains the thesis that it is not an importation but a synthesis and development of Indian building tradition.

The chapters on Indian iconography are specially noteworthy for the analysis of the rules and canons underlying image-making through the ages. He canvasses the view that images were unknown at the time of the Vedas and his description of the place that Dhyanaslokas occupy in iconography is provocative of thought.

In his lecture on the Ajanta frescoes and the later Hindu and Muslim paintings, Mr. Sastri is rightly doubtful as to the place occupied by modern Indian painting in the development of the purely Indian spirit. He champions Raja Ravi Varma's art, although he is not oblivious of its limitations. Owing evidently to



want of space, the description and analysis of the Bengal and Andhra schools of painting are very brief and condensed. He may well devote a separate essay to the influence of Chinese and Japanese masters on "fin de siècle" Indian painting.

The portions devoted to Indian dancing, poetry and music, which do not eschew a reference to the recent controversies in the musical sphere, are very illuminating. Mr. Sastri concludes with a retrospect and a prospect of Indian poetry and Indian drama.

Throughout these lectures, which were originally delivered under the auspices of the Travancore University, the aim of Mr. Ramaswami Sastri has been to insist on the natural characteristic of Indian art or its Swabhava and on the importance of adherence to that nature, whatever contributions may be levied from the doctrines and practice, of other countries and epochs. In short compass, this volume exhibits varied erudition and manifests the literary and artistic tastes of one, who has, throughout his life, been a diligent and discerning student of philosophy and the fine arts. The book will afford much instruction and enlightenment to all lovers of artistic achievement in our country.

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYER

30-12-46



## PREFACE

James Fergusson says about India : "Its history is a mythic dream; its arts a quaint perplexity." Such an opinion, coming as it does from so distinguished and acute a student and critic of Indian Art, shows the need of a book like the present work which seeks to interpret and reveal the true inwardness and the real values of Indian Art. The subject is vast and the limitations of the author and of the work are many. But the aim is to essay a task which has been as yet imperfectly done and which is meant to be the precursor of bigger works by others. This book consists of the lectures delivered by the author under the auspices of the University of Travancore. I am sincerely grateful to Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, who is as eminent in the realm of the ideal as in the realm of the real, for his illuminating foreword to this work. I hope that my work will make the public realise that India is not only a shrine of spirituality but is also a home of beauty and romance.

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

*Madras*

14—1—1947







## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|                                                                                                     | Facing Page. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Travancore Wood Carving .. .. .                                                                     | 57           |
| Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple Tower .. .. .                                                            | 64           |
| The Five Pandava Rathas, Mahabalipuram .. .. .                                                      | 67           |
| Golden Lily Tank and Gopurams, Meenakshi Temple, Madura .. .. .                                     | 70           |
| Amaravathi Sculpture .. .. .                                                                        | 80           |
| Amaravathi Stupa Slab .. .. .                                                                       | 83           |
| Sri Nataraja .. .. .                                                                                | 86           |
| Dancing Krishna .. .. .                                                                             | 89           |
| Sri Dakshinamurthi Image .. .. .                                                                    | 90           |
| Painting from Tirunandikarai .. .. .                                                                | 95           |
| Dancing Apsaras .. .. .                                                                             | 122          |
| Dancing Apsaras .. .. .                                                                             | 124          |
| Figure of Dancing girl on pillar of Verandah, Sithannavasal rock-cut Temple Pudukotai State .. .. . | 127          |



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1   | General view of the site |
| 2   | Plan of the site         |
| 3   | Section of the site      |
| 4   | Plan of the site         |
| 5   | Section of the site      |
| 6   | Plan of the site         |
| 7   | Section of the site      |
| 8   | Plan of the site         |
| 9   | Section of the site      |
| 10  | Plan of the site         |
| 11  | Section of the site      |
| 12  | Plan of the site         |
| 13  | Section of the site      |
| 14  | Plan of the site         |
| 15  | Section of the site      |
| 16  | Plan of the site         |
| 17  | Section of the site      |
| 18  | Plan of the site         |
| 19  | Section of the site      |
| 20  | Plan of the site         |
| 21  | Section of the site      |
| 22  | Plan of the site         |
| 23  | Section of the site      |
| 24  | Plan of the site         |
| 25  | Section of the site      |
| 26  | Plan of the site         |
| 27  | Section of the site      |
| 28  | Plan of the site         |
| 29  | Section of the site      |
| 30  | Plan of the site         |
| 31  | Section of the site      |
| 32  | Plan of the site         |
| 33  | Section of the site      |
| 34  | Plan of the site         |
| 35  | Section of the site      |
| 36  | Plan of the site         |
| 37  | Section of the site      |
| 38  | Plan of the site         |
| 39  | Section of the site      |
| 40  | Plan of the site         |
| 41  | Section of the site      |
| 42  | Plan of the site         |
| 43  | Section of the site      |
| 44  | Plan of the site         |
| 45  | Section of the site      |
| 46  | Plan of the site         |
| 47  | Section of the site      |
| 48  | Plan of the site         |
| 49  | Section of the site      |
| 50  | Plan of the site         |
| 51  | Section of the site      |
| 52  | Plan of the site         |
| 53  | Section of the site      |
| 54  | Plan of the site         |
| 55  | Section of the site      |
| 56  | Plan of the site         |
| 57  | Section of the site      |
| 58  | Plan of the site         |
| 59  | Section of the site      |
| 60  | Plan of the site         |
| 61  | Section of the site      |
| 62  | Plan of the site         |
| 63  | Section of the site      |
| 64  | Plan of the site         |
| 65  | Section of the site      |
| 66  | Plan of the site         |
| 67  | Section of the site      |
| 68  | Plan of the site         |
| 69  | Section of the site      |
| 70  | Plan of the site         |
| 71  | Section of the site      |
| 72  | Plan of the site         |
| 73  | Section of the site      |
| 74  | Plan of the site         |
| 75  | Section of the site      |
| 76  | Plan of the site         |
| 77  | Section of the site      |
| 78  | Plan of the site         |
| 79  | Section of the site      |
| 80  | Plan of the site         |
| 81  | Section of the site      |
| 82  | Plan of the site         |
| 83  | Section of the site      |
| 84  | Plan of the site         |
| 85  | Section of the site      |
| 86  | Plan of the site         |
| 87  | Section of the site      |
| 88  | Plan of the site         |
| 89  | Section of the site      |
| 90  | Plan of the site         |
| 91  | Section of the site      |
| 92  | Plan of the site         |
| 93  | Section of the site      |
| 94  | Plan of the site         |
| 95  | Section of the site      |
| 96  | Plan of the site         |
| 97  | Section of the site      |
| 98  | Plan of the site         |
| 99  | Section of the site      |
| 100 | Plan of the site         |



## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF THE CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

There cannot be a fitter introduction to this fascinating subject than the beautiful introduction by Bharata to his world-famous Nāṭya Śāstra. Indra and other gods felt the burdensomeness of their cosmic functions and asked the Creator to create something which would be an embodiment of the soul of play and the soul of joy (Kreedaneeyaka). Thereupon Brahma distilled the essence of the Vedas and created the Nāṭya Veda (the scripture of Dance-Drama) by taking words from the Rig Veda, gestures from the Yajur Veda, music from the Sāma Veda, and Rasa from Atharva Veda. He told the gods that Dance-Drama would be the means by which, through the beautiful and charming expression of what was beautiful and charming in the world of matter and in the world of mind, joy and love and righteousness and self-control and heroism would be engendered in all beings, that it would delineate the totality of life, that it would convey a knowledge of life and superlife, that it would satisfy the impulse of play and the impulse of pleasure, that it would remove the disharmonies and agonies of life, and that it would take away the burden of work and toil from all beings and dower all with wonder and delight.

An even more apt and admirable idea is that expressed in a verse in the famous *Lalitā Stavarāja* which is a portion of the *Lalitā Upākhyāna* in the *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa*.

क्रोडा ते लोकरचना सखा ते चिन्मयश्शिवः ।

अहारस्ते सदानन्दोवासस्ते हृदयं सताम् ॥

(Thy sport is the creation of the worlds; Thy beloved companion is Siva who is Chit or Pure Noumenal Consciousness; Thy food is eternal and infinite Bliss; and Thy abode is the heart of the pure). *Lalitā* Devi is the Supreme Beauty cum Love cum Bliss aspect of the Absolute. She is called in the *Lalita Sahasranama* as



चित्कलाऽनन्दकलिकाप्रेमरूपप्रियंकरी ॥

कलानिधिः काव्यकला रसज्ञा रसशेवधिः ॥

Thus the spirit of divine Leela (sport) creates (rachayati) the wonderful universe which has not only vastness and sublimity but also glowing and charming radiances and tints and colours. The spirit of divine vision and consciousness broods over such wonderful and graceful and sublime creation. The spirit of divine immanence permeates and vivifies it. The spirit of divine love nourishes it. The spirit of divine grace watches over it with affectionate care. The spirit of divine joy enjoys its loveliness. The fulfilment of all this is in the light of God and in the light of the God-created universe lighting up the dark cave of the human heart in which but for such light there would not be either the love of joy or the joy of love. वासस्ते हृदये सता (Thy home is the heart of the pure). Once the light is lit and the seen beauty of the universe and the unseen beauty of God fill the heart and overflow, art is born. The artistic vision comes first and the human heart is thrilled in a manner which feels all artistic expression to be inadequate.

“The chords of the lute are entranced  
With the weight of the wonder of things !”

But soon afterwards the artistic vision yearns for the artistic voice, because vision, albeit it cannot be fully rendered by expression, feels a sense of futility and frustration without expression. It is out of such inner psychic travail that art is born. If therefore we desire to know the very soul of art, we must not be content with the aspect of art as the expression of the spirit of play or of sport and as the reliever from fatigue and futility and frustration. Art is undoubtedly the manifestation of the spirit of play. Its essence is a spontaneous activity. But it is also an expression of the spirit of love and the spirit of joy. Tagore points out in his *Sadhana* that man is not essentially a worker but a lover. It is no doubt true that the determinism that governs his physical life—his urges and urgencies of hunger and thirst—make him work and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But beauty is the food of the soul. When he beholds it, he feels freed from all physical compulsions. “Consider the lilies of the field ! They toil not neither do they spin; yet even Solomon in all His glory is not arrayed like one of these”. He feels his life to be full and rich only when he realises the supreme values of life, viz. Beauty and Goodness and Truth, and when he



risers to the plane of the experience and enjoyment and expression of the Beautiful.

The distinction of human life lies in its boundless love of truth and goodness and beauty. The life of animals and birds is bounded by the urges of food and sex and is not irradiated by any passion for beauty. To them even tints and plumes have only a sexual charm. But man's love of truth is for its own sake; his goodness is based on the moral law felt within; and his love of beauty is disinterested and passionate and spiritual. But for the invasions of desire due to the *gunas* of *Rajas* (unregulated activities) and *Tamas* (inertia), his *Sâthvic* (pure and rhythmic) nature will lead him forth into adventures of truth and goodness and beauty. Of these basic natural emotions of man, the most basic is the love of beauty. Man had art even before he had law or philosophy. Art is thus the free play of the soul through the unobstructive and transparent medium of the *Sâthvic* state of the mind which is full of vision and bliss. The love of beauty and its expression in creative art are thus a spontaneous expression of pure and essential human nature.

Once the hunger and thirst for the excellent unseen things, for the ideal values of truth and beauty and goodness—begin in the soul, that exquisite mixture of *ânanda* and agony will allow no rest to the soul. New visions of life present ever-varying ethereal pageants before our inner eyes. Such inner experience pours itself out in expression just as a blossomed flower pours itself out in fragrance. The light of such a vision is like the potent sunlight before which even the strong searchlight of science begins to pale and flicker and die out. To vary the simile, the agitated ocean of the mind swells and yearns under the pull of the full moon of Spiritual Beauty. External Beauty—in the vast or in the little, in the Himalaya or in the lotus flower—is felt to be a limited expression of an infinite inner beauty and bliss. The sky, the stars, the hills, the seas, the streams, the trees, the flowers, the eyes of women and the faces of the children—are they not the faint and feeble expressions of the infinite ineffable beauty of Sachchidananda? When such inner vision dawns on us and glorifies the reports and records of our outer vision, there arises in us a natural creative passion to express such beauty in fresh incarnations of loveliness. The senses report the external beauty; the heart is enraptured by it; the mind interprets it; and the soul irradiates it with its inner innate inalienable effulgence. The infinite and eternal values of infinite and eternal truth and goodness and beauty and bliss are the contribu-



tion of the soul. The ordinary mind's utilitarian outlook is transcended by and lost in a higher realisation.

Thus aesthetic activity is enkindled by beauty which is the expression of the bliss of the Absolute. When it begins to express itself, the lower activity of mere utilitarianism begins to pall upon us. It alone can elevate us to the highest height of our being. Spiritual joy is far above the joy of mere sense-satisfaction. The universe is not merely the storehouse of physical satisfactions but is also and in the main the treasure-chest of spiritual joys. The economic man is satisfied with currency notes but the æsthetic man yearns for the cosmic notes of the music of the spheres. The scientific mind probes and analyses and discovers but the aesthetic mind observes and contemplates and synthesises and creates. The appeal of the universe to the intellect is different from its appeal to imagination and emotion and intuition. The intellect reduces the apparent multiplicity of things into orderly unity by the concept of law but the aesthetic nature reduces the multiplicity to unity by the concept of love. An architect has in his mind the creative plan by which the multiplicity of stones becomes the unity of the Gopura (temple dome). Why should we treat Nature as if it were a hostile force to be combated and conquered? The aesthetic nature yearns to mingle with the universe in the embrace of love. Nay, it eventually becomes sublimated into the spiritual nature by seeking and finding the unseen eternal infinite love "whose smile kindles the universe". This latter attitude is called the mystic way. Each of us has within him the wonder lamp of Alladin by rubbing which he can see all the wonders of the world and create even greater marvels.

We must not become intellectual slaves to realism or idealism or classicism or romanticism. These are but passing fashions. Realism aims at fidelity to nature but even in realistic art there is the idealistic activity because the artist makes a selection out of a mass of relevant and irrelevant details and recombines only the relevant and significant details into an idealised portrait. Otherwise poetry will not be different from biography or history nor will a painting be other than a photograph nor will music be other than a mimicry of nature's sounds. This is why Aristotle lays down that poetry deals with the universal whereas history deals with the particular. Idealism in art aims at a purely imaginative creation of what might be or ought to be. Shakespeare says that the poet's imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. Keats says :



"Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone".

(Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn).

Wordsworth speaks of "the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration and the poet's dream". But the fact is that the ideal world is not disconnected from the real world but is only a sublimation of the real world. There is thus idealism in realism and also realism in idealism in the highest art. Similarly in classicism, we find the elements of restraint and order and economy of means and moderation in ends. It emphasises the importance of artistic traditions and conventions. It seeks the universal in experience and seeks patterns of elegant and flawless and restrained loveliness. It aims at clarity of idea and lucidity of expression. But unless there is a great imaginative passion, classicism becomes degraded into cold and lifeless and insipid art. Romanticism, on the other hand, rushes into expression under the stress of an overmastering imaginative passion. It seeks the strange, the unusual, the novel, the remote, and the abnormal, and prefers the luxury of freedom to the ascetic fare of flawless self-restraint. It delights in the mystical, the mysterious and the supernatural. It seeks to discard the artistic conventions and traditions and invent new artistic forms and patterns. But unless the artist is vigilant and self-controlled, romanticism may become mere eccentricity and extravagance and caprice and chaotic form or even formlessness. Here again the best artists leaven classicism by the best elements of romanticism, and leaven romanticism by the best elements of classicism. The right law of art, as of life, is neither slavery nor rebellion but self-controlled self-regulated freedom which vitalises convention by adventurousness and combines stability and spontaneity and fuses form and idea. Thus the artist, in the course of his fusion of impression and expression, realises beauty and revels in beauty and then reveals beauty and radiates beauty after vitalising his impressions of beauty by the irradiated beauty of his own soul.

Beauty has thus swayed the human heart for untold ages and is destined to have a perennial appeal. The finer faculties of man have expressed themselves in Science and Art and Religion. The faculty of knowledge in man expresses itself in Science; the faculty of love and joy expresses itself in Art; the faculty of Truth ex-



presses itself in Religion. His power of analysis blossoms as science; his power of synthesis blossoms as Art; and his power of intuition blossoms as Religion. Blake says well: "Knowledge of Ideal Beauty is not to be acquired. It is born with us."

The value of art will be realised and artistic experience will be attained and artistic expression will become an accomplished fact only when we rise above a merely materialistic attitude towards the world. Emerson has well described such a materialistic attitude as the 'culinary' use of the world as opposed to the 'divine' use of the world. In modern times the love of the utilities of life far outweighs the love of the beauties of life or the sublimities of life. That is why even the quickening of the world's life by the Great War of 1914 to 1918 did not lead to any great and signal achievement in literature and art.

The fact is that the mind of man is instinctively and irresistibly drawn to beauty as the food of the soul. The soul's hunger for beauty is even more urgent and imperative than the hunger of the physical body for food. Wordsworth says that "we live by admiration, hope and love." But though beauty is thus dear to the soul and is sought and prized, very few know its nature or essence. Art is not mere utility or adaptation to our physical needs. It is not mere rhythm or harmony or proportion or symmetry or balance or unity in diversity or colour and form and expression and brightness and grace. It is all these and much more. They form only its body and its vesture but its soul is elsewhere. I shall show in the succeeding pages how such essence has been found and expressed in India.

If the essence of beauty is thus inadequately known, the essence of art which is the outer expression of beauty is equally inadequately known. It has been said well: "The voluptuary has made an art of sin and the Puritan has made a sin of art. And between these two extremes stand arranged various grades of art which, like so many other things that appeal through the sensuous to the supersensuous, is indefinable." We have had raging controversies about realism and idealism, classicism and romanticism, to which I have referred above, as well as controversies about art for art's sake and art for God's sake. Tolstoi says well: "Truth will be known not by him who knows only what has been, is, and really happens, but by him who recognises what should be according to the will of God." The ethical ideals will certainly inspire artistic expression but the main aim of art is emotion and creative



imagination. A real work of art takes its stand on things as they are and adds to them "the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration and the poet's dream." It brings men nearer to nature and to one another and to God. Art and egoism can never go together. It is free and creative and joyful and confers freedom and creativeness and joyousness. It is not a mere source of pleasure. It enables man to realise and reveal God as Beauty. It is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" and "the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science." Its ambit is not the ambit of personal and selfish pleasure but the ambit of disinterested and unselfish delight in the beauty of Nature and the beauty of Art. The great artist Turner says: "When the great artist speaks, whether in words or music, he speaks of a world that is beyond time and space and beyond all ideas of good and evil, of to-day or yesterday, and he speaks of the world because it is the world in which he dwells. It is the very essence of his nature that his mind does not dwell, as the minds of ordinary men do, chiefly upon the pleasures of the body or the satisfaction of social prestige. We demand of a great artist neither tricks nor the vivid expression of our own passions but a profounder and wider consciousness than we possess ourselves. The values here are entirely spiritual." Well does Ruskin say that artists paint God for the world.

Art is thus the blossom of the human imagination. Every work of Art has individual and national and universal elements in it. The artist's individuality is in it; the national distinctiveness also is there; and it has also a universal appeal. Imagination is the subtle link between all the mental activities. R. G. Collingwood says well in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*: "Art is the primary and fundamental activity of the mind, the original soil out of which all other activities grow." It has been with man, like religion, from the most ancient times. Aesthetics and metaphysics are his ancient guardian angels whereas economics and politics are his recent guests. It is thus clear that Art is the imaginative enjoyment and expression of beauty. Collingwood says well: "Real beauty is neither 'objective' nor 'subjective' in any sense that excludes the other. It is an experience in which the mind finds itself in the object, the mind rising to the level of the object, and the object being, as it were, pre-adapted to evoke the fullest expression of the mind's powers. *The experience of beauty is an experience of utter union with the object; every barrier is broken down, and the*



beholder feels that his own soul is living in the object, and that the object is unfolding its life in his own heart."

Thus Nature is the Art of God; Art is the Nature of man; and both Nature and Art are the mirror of God. But is that the case to-day? If the essence of beauty is only inadequately known to-day, the essence of art is even more inadequately known. Tolstoi says that the ruination of art is due to "(1) the considerable remuneration of artists for their productions and the professionalism which this has produced among the artists; (2) art criticism and (3) schools of art." He says further: "A real work of art can only arise in the soul of an artist occasionally, just as a child is conceived by its mother. . . . Art is not a pleasure, a solace or an amusement; art is a great matter, an organ of human life. . . . The task for art to accomplish is to make the feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbour, now attained only by the best members of society, the customary feeling of all men. . . . The destiny of art in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that the well-being of man consists in being united together, and to set up, in place of the existing reign of force, that kingdom of God—that is, of love—which we all recognise to be the highest aim of human life."

Thus professionalism and wrong æsthetics and want of sympathy are the vital causes of our inability to enjoy and express beauty and of our low types of art to-day. Unless we have a true and noble Aesthetic, we shall never be able to realise beauty or to express it. It is necessary to have right Aesthetics for the greater glory of God and Man and for the salvaging of Beauty in modern life and for preventing the perversion of Art. This is the real justification for the present work. After a careful and comprehensive study of beauty and art and æsthetics here and elsewhere during the ages, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Indian Aesthetics holds the magical key to a new and pure and holy æsthetic experience by humanity at large and that the revelation of its vital affirmations will inaugurate a new era of artistic experience and enjoyment and expression all over the world.

Aesthetics is thus the philosophy of the beautiful. Aesthetic experience is the enjoyment of beauty. Aesthetic emotion is not passion but a pure and calm feeling of delight. Other appetites leave a sense of fatigue or surfeit or even disgust after their satisfaction. But in the satisfaction of our æsthetic appetite the ele-



ments of refinement and detachment and disinterestedness are present and the elements of craving and possessiveness and attachment are absent. Material satisfactions grow less by sharing them with others; but æsthetic, like spiritual satisfactions, grow by such sharing. In the latter the highest and most spiritual senses—sight and hearing—are in operation along with a poised mind. In short, æsthetics is the science of Art; Art is the expression of Beauty; and Beauty is the expression of Bliss.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL THROUGH THE AGES

It is not fitting or possible that I should trace here in detail the evolution of ideas in regard to the concept of the Beautiful from ancient times until to-day. I wish to refer to them only to give a proper setting and framework to my exposition of the Indian concept of the beautiful, so that the back-ground and the foreground of the scheme of perspective and the light and shade and the multi-tinted glories of the colour-scheme might enable me to bring out the beauties and the central heart-ideas of my picture of Indian Aesthetics.

I have already shown that beauty is as much a vital element in life as utility. Nay, it is much more vital and valuable and essential than the merely useful elements of life and subserves the highest purposes of life in a larger and nobler measure. Man never was or is or will be mere tongue or stomach. He is eye, ear, mind, heart and spirit in the main. He is not a mere slave of the physical needs of food and sex. His gospel is not a mere gospel of pro-creation but is in the main a gospel of creation and re-creation. This is the reason why man never had a primitive pre-artistic state at all. The earliest races known to history show the possession of an artistic temperament and have artistic achievements to their credit. No doubt the earliest art is mere imitation of nature. The decorative elements came later. And yet later came the desire for transcending nature and the power of such transcendence. The primitive man's earliest artistic achievements were probably the imitation of the songs of birds and the painting of animals in a rude and crude form. In spring and summer, when Nature is in her gayest and brightest mood, a responsive gaiety and brightness of mood would and did come to Man as well. But the artistic mood is not a mere mood of pleasurable imitation. Its essence is selectiveness, creativeness, aspiration. It has been said well: "Works of art must have a rule of life, and he who speaks of life understands by it harmony, order, the co-relation of all the parts into a single whole." The highest self-expression of the artistic spirit is there. Even in the sub-human kingdom, we find rudimentary and instinctive expressions of the beautiful, such as the song of a nightingale or of a *kokila* (cuckoo) or the movements of "an antelope in the



suspended impulse of its lightness." The movements of the fawn described in the opening scene of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* are in their way as lovely as the movements of *Sakuntala* herself. But the songs and movements in the sub-human kingdom have no element of spiritual passion or a sense of the Beautiful. It is in human art that we find the principles of order and proportion and symmetry and harmony animated by spiritual feeling and creative transcendence of nature, whereas in the sub-human kingdom we find only the elements of play-impulse and spontaneity. Darwin says in *The Descent of Man*: "Birds appear to be the most æsthetic of all animals and they have nearly the same taste for the beautiful as we have." In many nests built by the bower birds of Australia, we see the elements of utility and decoration but we cannot see therein the architectonic power and the symbolism and the aspirational element of human architecture. In the songs of some birds we see the free outpouring of pleasant notes but we cannot have therein the time-element and the elements of concordant harmony and graduated ascent and descent of notes and expression of æsthetic feeling and spiritual emotion. During the pairing season we find dances by birds but we do not see any attempt to express by the rhythms of dance, the rhythms of music and the rhythms of emotion by a sort of trinity in unity and unity in trinity. Sculpture and Painting and Literature are of course exclusively human achievements. The sub-human kingdom has a mere life of sensation and lives in the mere present from minute to minute. It is man and man alone that "looks before and after and pines for what is not." He rises to the heights of concepts and even abstract ideas and links and the past and the present and the future and fuses sensation and intellection and emotion and intuition together and brings earth into contact with heaven and touches the lotus feet of God.

The earliest works of art left by primitive man are the rude stone monoliths known as menhirs and cromlechs and dolmens. They were probably tombs rather than temples. Were they regarded as symbolical of the immortality and eternity of the soul? We do not know. Later on the temple is more in evidence than the tomb. The Egyptian temples were vast and wonderful. Nature dwarfed man in Egypt. The great rivers and the vast deserts made men realise their insignificance. The temples which were erected by man were on the same stupendous scale. The Sphinx is yet wonderful in its massiveness and its mystery. In ancient times the national religious festivals nurtured the artistic conscious-



ness, and such nurture evoked greater achievements of art and enhanced the beauty and glory of the festivals.

Among the Hebrews also there was a sense of the sublime and the beautiful. But Ethics appealed more to them than æsthetics or metaphysics. They had a horror of "graven images" and hence tabooed sculpture. But architecture and music flourished though they did not attain a high degree of perfection, and high levels of the literary art were reached in the Old and the New Testaments and in the Koran.

It was, however, in Greece that the highest level was reached in the west in art and æsthetics. Athens was "the mother of art and of eloquence." Shelley says well in *Hellas* :

"Her citizens, imperial spirits,  
Rule the present from the past,  
On all the world of men inherits  
Their seal is set".

Percy Gardner describes the eight lamps of Greek art as humanism, simplicity, balance and measure, naturalism, idealism, patience, joy, and fellowship. We see in Greek art the elements of ease and freedom and lightness and grace and rhythm and proportion and symmetry. Professor Knight says well : "The two great art-periods in European history have been that of Greece in the age of Pericles, and that of the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries". The Greeks had a nature finely and delicately responsive to the call of the Beautiful. The serene and sunny clime of Greece and the way in which the sea combined with the land to charm and fascinate were responsible along with the artistic endowments of the people for the remarkable efflorescence of art in Greece. The Greeks felt the unity of the True and the Beautiful and the Good. Their love of gymnastics and music and dance made them strong and supple. Lucian says that the dancer should be "nicely finished off at every point, fair of mien, full of grace and symmetry, nowhere wanting, never less than himself". Damon says : "The dance is a display at once of the care the dancers bestowed on their persons and also of good discipline". The Pyrrhic dance, well-known from its mention in Byron's famous poem, consisted of feigned attack and defence to the tune of songs or musical instruments. Such posture-dancing consisting of pose and gesture and facial expression had a great effect by way of stimulation on the fine arts of painting and



sculpture and led later on to the wonderful drama of Greece in the Athenian theatre where the Greeks saw

"Gorgeous tragedy  
In sceptered pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine".

Greek architecture also attained a wonderful development. Greek art had remarkable repose and dignity and perfection. The idealisation of Olympus was the religious counterpart of the artistic ideas of Greece. Form and idea are in perfect unison and harmony in the sculptured presentation of the pantheon of Greece. But the Greeks humanised their gods too much and did not dwell in the glory of the noumenon as much as amidst the beauty of phenomena.

Aesthetical theory had as remarkable a career in Greece as artistic achievement. Socrates taught that utility is the test of beauty and that whatever is suited to the intended end is fair and that "whatever is beautiful is for the same reason good, when suited to the purpose for which it was intended". But he did not love beauty for itself. The fact is that beauty is the essence of goodness and the charm on the face of virtue. In Plato we have a wonderful sensibility to beauty and a remarkable grasp of aesthetics. He taught that our love of beautiful things on the Earth was due to the search by our soul for absolute and archetypal loveliness. The form leads to the idea and the phenomenon to the noumenon. He says : "Beauty absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things ..... He learns to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards, going from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute Beauty, and at last knows what the essence of Beauty is. .... This is man's true home with his vision of absolute Beauty if we have in this life any home at all ..... If man has eyes to see the true beauty, he becomes the friend of God and immortal". (*Symposium*). Plato's vision is that of man ascending from the beauty of the universe to the universe of Infinite and Perfect and Eternal Beauty.

Aristotle did not accept the existence of an absolute Beauty above and beyond phenomena. He saw and taught that artistic



emotion is, unlike sense-desires, disinterested and pure and an end in itself. He says that Art is imitation of Nature and that the objects of imitation in Art are the Universal, not the particular. According to him order and symmetry are the essence of Beauty. Plotinus and other Neo-platonists carried Plato's ideas further and gave the world æsthetics of a very high order. They taught that we realise Eternal Beauty (*Logos*) by direct intuition and communion. Plotinus says: "Everyone must partake of the divine nature, before he can discern the divinely beautiful". (*Enneades*). He says also: "The explanation of delight in sensible beauty, so far as it can be explained, is that when the soul perceives something akin to its own nature, it feels joy in it".

Thus Greek art and æsthetic are of a very high order. But the mystic and symbolic and spiritual notes are but faintly heard in Greece. They would and could be heard only in moods of Yoga which were familiar only in India.

Rome gave nothing new to the world in regard to the concept of the Beautiful. Virgil says in his *Aeneid*: "Let others study Art; Rome has somewhat better in hand viz., Law and Dominion".

We have in Rome great poetry and sculpture and architecture but Roman art and æsthetics were the camp-followers of Greek art and æsthetics and were imitative rather than original.

I shall deal in the next chapter with the contributions of Christianity to art and æsthetics, because though Christianity conquered Europe, it is an oriental and Asiatic faith. In the Dark Ages there was no high art or æsthetics in Europe. St. Augustine defines beauty in terms of proportion and agreeable colour. After the Renaissance art and æsthetics came into Europe under the Greek banner. Italian painting soared to heights unknown before or since. There was an efflorescence of art all over Europe side by side with social betterment and political greatness.

In Germany Baumgarten (1714-1762) taught that Beauty is the Absolute visioned through the senses while Truth is the Absolute seen through reason and Goodness is the Absolute seen through the will. He was the first thinker to use the term "Aesthetics" and he described it as the contemplative enjoyment of beauty. He held that the highest aim of art is to copy Nature. According to Winckelmann (1717-1767) beauty is of three forms—beauty of form and beauty of idea, leading to beauty of expression. He says that Beauty is "like the best kind of water, drawn from a spring; the less taste it has, the more healthful it is, because free from



foreign admixture". Mendelssohn (1729-1786) says that art is the development of the beautiful, obscurely recognised by feeling, till it becomes the true and the good. Kant (1724-1804) shows that æsthetic pleasure is a disinterested pleasure and that the beautiful is not the good or the true or the useful but is a spiritual experience and that beauty is both individual and universal. He teaches that beauty is what pleases us without satisfying any practical interest and that the pleasure derived from beauty is the pleasure of contemplation and that when we realise the vast power in Nature our feeling of the sublime is profoundly stirred. His view that colour is inessential and that form alone is essential seems however to be an overstatement. Fichte (1762-1814) teaches that in nature we see the sum of our limitations while in art we see the sum of our free idealised activity. Beauty is an inner completeness and resides in the soul, and Art is the manifestation of the beautiful soul and should aim not at the education of the mind or the heart alone but of the whole man. Goethe says that "beauty is inexplicable" and that "the Beautiful is an elementary phenomenon, which is never incorporated, but whose reflex becomes visible in a thousand various revelations of creative genius, as various indeed as Nature herself". He says: "Art is called Art, simply because it is not Nature". According to Schiller (1759-1805) our love of beauty is due to the play-impulse (*spiel-trieb*). He says: "That only is play which completes man and evolves his double nature". Schlegel (1772-1829) says that Nature is inexhaustible and Art is illimitable, and that beauty exists in nature and in art and in love and that the truly beautiful is expressed by the union of nature and art and love. Lessing distinguishes between the values of architecture and sculpture and painting on the one hand which deal with objects which co-exist in space and the values of poetry and music which deal with what is successive in time. Humboldt says: "Man belongs to a better world than that of reality, viz., the realm of ideas". He says further: "He who would receive art into himself with all his senses, must place himself in the midst of them all; he must regard the work of the painter poetically, and that of the poet with the eye of a painter". Schelling (1775-1845) says that beauty is the perfection of the Infinite in the Finite and art is a hint of the Infinite in and through the Finite and bridges the gulf between the self and the not-self and leads us from the vestibule of knowledge into its shrine, and that the Absolute reveals itself to the artist in his creative moods. According to him art unites the subject and the object and is the mirror of the divine and is a law unto itself. Tieck regards Beauty as "a unique ray



out of the celestial brightness" and as becoming art when passing through the prism of the imagination. Adam Muller (1779-1829) says that a world in which all contradictions are harmonised is the highest beauty and that every work of art is a reproduction of this universal harmony and that the highest art is the art of life. Professor Solger (1780-1819) teaches that Beauty is an immediate revelation of God and that in the beauty of the body we see the light of the soul. Beauty is of the essence of pure Being, and we discern the same by an intuitive act of our entire nature. Professor Knight says: "In reference to Art, he affirms that it is all symbolical, ancient Art dealing for the most part with objective symbols, and modern art with subjective ones. As a revelation of the divine idea, he held that Beauty is on one side essence, and on the other, appearance, and the arts of poetry and music disclose the former more perfectly, those of painting, architecture, etc., realise the latter". According to him art is akin to creation. Krause (1781-1832) teaches that Beauty is an essential characteristic of the Infinite and Absolute and that Art is characterised by self-sufficiency and unity in variety and is the actualisation of the beauty existing in the free spirit of man and seeks to make life a beautiful home for the beautiful spirit.

The greatest name in German Aesthetics is, however, Hegel (1770-1831). According to him Beauty is the disclosure of Mind. Mind being a higher reality than Nature, the beauty of Art is superior to the beauty of Nature. Art thus gives to its representations the higher reality of Mind. Beauty is the shining of the Idea through Matter. The beauty of Nature is but a reflection of the beauty of the Soul. The True is the Idea and the Beautiful is the manifestation of the Idea. There is no beauty without proportion and appropriateness. Beauty is thus the Absolute realising itself in and through the relative. Art is not the imitation of Nature but is the transcendence of Nature. It is the palace of the soul on the basement of Nature. It stands on the actual and respires in the ideal. According to him Egyptian art was symbolic and suggested rather than expressed thought, and Grecian art was classical and suggested the perfection of the finite, whereas modern art is romantic and aims at transcendence of nature as contrasted with the anthropomorphism of Greece. In architecture the material is dominant. In sculpture it is less dominant. In it art represents life and takes a step towards the idea. In Painting colour is added to form. In Music and Poetry the romantic spirit has the freest expression. Music is the most subjective of the



arts and Poetry is the most universal and spiritual of the arts. The appeal of music is mainly to the emotions whereas poetry appeals more to thought than to emotion, though in it also emotion is a vital element.

Weisse (1801-1867) says that art is the introduction (*einbildung*) of the absolute spiritual reality of beauty into dead matter and that beauty reconciles the individual and the universal. According to Ruge (1802-1880) beauty is the Idea expressing itself. The same truth is taught also by Vischer (1807-1887). The artist should go to the core of Nature and see the Ideal. The beautiful is typical and yet individual. He teaches that the highest form of the Idea is personality and that therefore the highest art is that which has for its subject-matter the highest Personality. He tries to fuse the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of beauty and of art. The absolute Beauty is revealed in Nature and in the Mind, and we should rise from mirrored beauty to the source of beauty in the archetypal world. Each beautiful object has a hold connecting it with Absolute Beauty.

Some German æstheticians like Herbart (1776-1841) did not accept the Hegelian doctrine that Beauty is the manifestation of the Idea. The great philosopher Schopenhauer affirms that we do not *know* the Thing-In-Itself (*Ding-an-sich*) and that all that we *know* is the Presentation (*vorstellung*). But by the Will we can reach the *Ding-an-sich*. The essence of Matter is Force and the essence of Force is Will. The universal Will is the archetype. Individuals are beautiful to the extent to which they approximate to it. The artist realises it by intuition and becomes one with it. Then the petty individual self is annihilated and we realise a larger self in the beauty of the world. In Schopenhauer's æsthetical theory we see that he emphasises that possessive desire has no part in our intuition of the beautiful. The emotion of the beautiful is disinterested and pure, and artistic ecstasy results in the outstepping of the self. Schopenhauer goes so far as to say: "A work of genius is not a thing of utility. To be useless is its very patent of nobility. It exists for itself alone." Art in his eyes a delightful escape from the prison of life. It is liberation through contemplative vision from the fetters of the will to Live.

Hartmann tries to co-ordinate the Hegelian Idea and the Schopenhauerian Will just as he tries to co-ordinate the Platonic and the Aristotelian teachings. According to him art is not a mere imitation of Nature. "The discovery of the Beautiful and the



creation of the Beautiful by man proceed from unconscious processes", the results of which come within the range of consciousness and are apprehended as beautiful. According to him the *Ding-an-sich* is not beautiful but is transformed into beauty by the artist. He refers to what he calls *schein* (shine) which is neither in the objects or in the mind but is occasioned by objects in the mind. In every work of art as in every beautiful material object, there is something that we feel but do not know.

Lotze (1817-1881) says that what we call beautiful does not please us as individuals only but pleases the universal spirit in us. He refers to eastern vastness and Hebrew sublimity and Greek Beauty and Roman elegance and dignity. Schnasse (1798-1875) wrote a history of Art in seven volumes. He says that there is no perfect beauty in the world; that in nature, there is only an approach towards it; that art gives us what nature cannot give; and that in the energy of the free ego, conscious of a harmony which is not found in nature, beauty is realised and revealed. Helmholtz (1821-1894) deals with beauty in music. He says that the rules of Art are the result of the free effort of artists to shape forms of beauty and that they conform to law even when evolving new types. He says further that as in architecture we have the horizontal line of roof and later on the circular arch and later yet the pointed arch, so we have in music the simple melody of the ancients and the poly-tonic music of the middle ages and the rich harmony of the modern era. "Art creates, as imagination pictures, regularly without conscious law, designedly without conscious aim."

I have dealt at length with the German æstheticians because in the west it is Germany that has contributed most to the evolution of æsthetics. In France, however, we find more clarity of thought than in Germany. Amiel says: "The Germans gather fuel for the pile; it is the French who kindle it". Pere Andre teaches in his *Essai Sur Le Beau* (1741) that there are three kinds of beauty—divine beauty and natural beauty and artificial beauty. Batteux (1713-1780) says that art consists in imitating the beauty of nature, its aim being enjoyment. D'Alembert distinguishes between primary beauties which are so sublime and striking as to appeal to all and secondary beauties which appeal to the national taste. Voltaire points out how taste enables us to realise the "nuances" of a work of art. Diderot says that Art must go back to Nature, and that Art cannot, however, imitate Nature exactly because Nature is always changing, and that Art suggests more than it can express.



A. C. Quatremere de Quincey (1755-1849) holds that beauty is a tangible form of the true and the good. Just as moral and philosophic truths are universal despite the knowledge or ignorance of particular individuals or nations, even so æsthetic truths are universal. Unity in variety and order and harmony are of the essence of beauty. Comte is of opinion that the personification in the early polytheism was favourable to Art while the monotheistic conception of the world was at first unfavourable to it. Cousin (1792-1867) follows the German idealists. He says that beauty is unity in variety and variety in unity. Guizot says that sculpture deals with static states whereas painting can represent emotion and dynamic action. Jouffroy (1796-1842) was the pupil of Cousin. He pursues the psychological method. The beautiful is different from the agreeable or the useful. Our love for it is disinterested and reverential. According to him, beauty is "the expression of the Invisible by the natural signs which manifest it", and the visible world is the "garment we see it by". He thus teaches the realisation of the ideal and the idealisation of the real.

Leveque says that beauty is something invisible behind Nature. Ravaisson says that beauty is the ultimate aim and purpose of the world. He says: "The whole world is the work of an absolute beauty, which is only the cause of things by the love it puts into them". Taine seeks to explain art with reference to social and racial and geographical causes. The artist imitates but what he gives us is not a mere exact imitation. He selects, and he reveals only the essence. Theophile Thore (1897-1869) says that art is the human interpretation of Nature. Charles Blanc says that beauty is only in the mind of man, and that the artist who understands the beautiful is greater than Nature which only shows it. The artist purifies reality from all disfiguring accidents and sets the gold free from the alloy. The artist does not merely decorate life but realises the eternal and reveals it. Beauty in nature is liable to destruction. Art raises itself above time and death. The sublime in architecture should have greatness of dimension and simplicity of surface and continuity of line. Art in sculpture raises an individual truth to the height of a type, and the type itself to beauty. Painting expresses the conceptions of the soul through the realities of nature. Eugene Veron says in his *L'Esthetique* that art is "the manifestation of emotion". Aesthetic pleasure is disinterested. Art is creative. It is either decorative or expressive. Its secret is the individuality of the artist. Vallet emphasises the element of splendour. Art must interpret and transfigure Nature. The five



elements of beauty are variety, completeness, unity, proportion, and *eclat*, i.e., the essence of the thing. Guyau (1854-1888) says that art lifts man from his personal life into the universal life. Art is not opposed to science nor science to art. Astronomy can never kill the sense of mystery which is kindled by the skies. Art is intensive and expansive and makes all to feel alike. He says: "Life, morality, science, art, religion,—there is, as I believe, an absolute unity, between these things. Great and serious art is that which maintains and manifests this unity." Art is not life's parasite but is the very flower of life.

Professor Knight, from whose valuable work on *The Philosophy of the Beautiful* much of the information in this chapter has been taken, gives us also the ideas of the Swiss writers on art. Topffer says that the Beautiful is the splendour of the True and is the absolute essence of God. God is beauty and the ideas of beauty in us are divine attributes there. Beauty in art is superior to beauty in nature and is independent of it. Pictel says that beauty is a manifestation of the divine idea. Nature *contains* it but does not possess it. It is to man that it appeals so that there may be a new world of ideal creation by man. Our love of the beautiful is impersonal and disinterested. He says: "Emanating as a pure ray from the supreme Intelligence, this idea reveals itself in Nature; thence reflected by Art, it shines under a thousand different forms in the heart of humanity." Amiel (1821-1881) says that "there is no repose except in the absolute, the infinite and the divine." He says: "Heroism, ecstasy, love, enthusiasm, wear a halo round the brow, for they are a setting free of the soul, which through them gains force to make its envelope transparent, and shine through upon all around it. Beauty is thus a phenomenon belonging to the spiritualisation of matter. It is a momentary transfiguration of the privileged object to remind us of the ideal....The ideal is, after all truer than the real; for the ideal is the eternal element in perishable things, it is their type, their sum, their *raison d'être*, and the most exact and the most condensed expression of them". Vinet (1797-1847) says that "at a certain depth the good and the beautiful are one". He says: "If poetry was the philosophy of early ages, philosophy is perhaps the poetry of our era; it is a new method of recovering liberty".

Italy is surely the home of modern art as Greece was of ancient art. Leonardo da Vinci expounds beauty of form and beauty of colour. He says: "That drawing is the best which best expresses that passion that animates the figure". Michael Angelo says that



"Beauty is the purgation of superfluities". Bellori (1616-1691) says that Nature never realises perfect beauty because of the imperfections of its material and that hence artists seek to realise the idea. "The idea, which we may call the goddess of Painting and of Sculpture, descends upon the marble and the canvas, and becomes the original of these arts". Art is higher than Nature. The artist paints men as they ought to be, and "advances Art above Nature itself". Raphael wrote to Castiglione about his *Galatea*: "To paint the fair, it is not necessary that I see many fair ones, but, because there is so great a scarcity of beautiful women, I am bound to make use of an idea which I have formed to myself of my own fancy". In the same manner, Guido Reni wrote thus in regard to his picture of Saint Michael: "Not being able to mount so high as to behold my Archangel I was forced to make an introspection of my own mind, and that idea of Beauty which I have formed in my own imagination". Pagano says that art consists in uniting the beauties dispersed in nature, and that beauty is goodness made visible and that goodness is inner beauty. Professor Knight points out that the chief philosophers of modern Italy are Rosmini, Gioberti, and Mamiani. Rosmini says that we discern beauty in the world of the real and then seek to transcend it in the realm of the ideal. Gioberti says that Being creates existences (*Ens creat existentias*). According to him the Sublime is merely the superior principle of Beauty. "The Sublime creates and contains the Beautiful". Mystery is necessary to Beauty and opens up an infinite perspective to the mind beyond the real world. Mamiani also points to the Absolute within the Relative. The greatest philosopher and æsthetician in modern Italy is Croce. He says that æsthetic enjoyment is feeling the universe *sub-specie intuitionis*, that art is independent both of science and of the useful and the moral," and that "the beauty of nature is the discovery of the human imagination". He teaches also that "art affirms itself as a manifestation of feeling and does not possess value save from its lyrical character and from the imprint of the artist's personality." Art is the spontaneous self-expression of the intuition of beauty which is unique and incommunicable.

English Aesthetics is not remarkable for range or depth or originality. In England the earliest writer to shed light on æsthetics is Bacon. He says: "That is the best part of Beauty which a picture cannot express; no, nor the first sight of the eye." There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion" (Essay on Beauty). As against the Aristotelian



theory of art as imitation of nature, Bacon says that in Art we have "the shows of things submitted to the desire of the mind" and that art pleases "by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than the things themselves afford". Dryden however says that "to imitate Nature well is the perfection of Art". Shaftesbury says, in his turn, that "whatever in Nature is beautiful is only a faint shadow of the First Beauty" and "Beauty and Good are one and the same". Francis Hutcheson (1694-1747) says that we recognise a Beauty in objects before we are aware of any advantage to be derived from them, and that there is a natural power of perception of beauty. Berkeley says that all minds have the ideas of order and harmony and proportion, and that beauty is that which pleases and that it consists "in a certain symmetry or proportion pleasing to the eye". Joseph Spence says that the essence of Beauty is in colour and form and expression and grace. Hogarth says that it is in fitness, variety, unity, simplicity, intricacy and quantity. Burke's essay on the *Sublime and the Beautiful* is valuable and profound work but does not contain the highest order of ideas on the subject. He says that the elements of beauty are smallness of size, smoothness of surface, and softness of colour. Hume affirms that the principles of taste are "uniform in human nature." The great artist Sir Joshua Reynolds says that we must select the central and beautiful elements. He says: "Perfect Beauty, in my opinion, must combine all the characters which are beautiful in the species". Coleridge says that beauty is harmony and results from a pre-established harmony between Nature and Man. "It exists pre-eminently where Life is super-added to Form, the freedom and movement of life in the confining form". The Beauty of an object does not depend on its use or fitness or proportion. In an oyster the ugly shell is useful to it and the pearl which is beautiful is due to disease. In the fine arts, the mental initiative must proceed from within and not from without. Dean Milman says that the fine arts, though initiative in their origin, "become purely ideal, and present us with forms closely adhering to their types in Nature, but wrought to supernatural grandeur or beauty", and there is in man an innate tendency towards the ideal. David Wilkie says that "art is only art when it adds mind to form". John Flaxman gives us the dictum that "Beauty is not merely an imaginary quality but a real essence may be inferred from the harmony of the universe". Hogarth states the elements of Beauty to be the fitness of parts in the general design, variety, uniformity, symmetry, intricacy and



magnitude. Hazlitt says that the real function of art is "not in making the eye a microscope, but in making it the interpreter and organ of all that can touch the soul", and that "beauty does not consist in a medium but in gradation and harmony". He says: "Beauty consists in a gradation of colours, or symmetry of form; sublimity arises from the source of power, and is aided by contrast. The ludicrous is the incoherent, arising from weakness. The ideal is not confined to creation but takes place in imitation. *Invention is only feigning according to nature*". He is a defender of the imitative theory of Art. He says, however: "We still want a Prometheus (in Art) to embody the inmost refinements of thought to the outward eye, *to lay bare the very soul of passion*. That picture is of comparatively little value, which can be *translated* into another language . . . . . for it is the excellence of every Art to give what can be given by no other in the same degree". Henry Howard says that the perfections of Art are "deviations from Nature" and that Art is "Nature rectified by her own permanent standard, and restored to her original perfection", and that proportion is the essence of beauty. According to Sir William Hamilton æsthetic emotion is disinterested. He distinguishes between Relative beauty which is a beautified utility and Absolute Beauty which pleases us directly. George Ramsay says that association cannot create but can only arouse our sense of beauty and that there is an original Cause or Source of Beauty in the world.

The views of Carlyle and Ruskin on the concept of the beautiful are very valuable. Carlyle teaches that it is through symbols that we pass from the visible to the invisible. He says: "In all true works of Art we discern Eternity looking through time, the Godlike rendered visible" . . . . . a hierarch, therefore, and pontiff of the world will we call him, the poet and inspired maker, who Prometheus-like can shape new symbols and bring new fire from heaven to fix it there", (Sartor Resartus). He says in *Latter Day Pamphlets*: "It is to the Fine Arts that the World's chosen souls do now chiefly take refuge, and attempt that 'worship of the Beautiful' may thus be possible for them". In *Shooting Niagara* he says: "All real Art is the disimprisoned soul of Fact". He says again: "The Fine Arts divorcing themselves from Truth are quite certain to fall mad, if they do not die". He says elsewhere: "Ever must the Fine Arts be, if not religion, yet indissolubly united to it, dependent on it, vitally blended with it as body is with soul". Ruskin shows the vitality interconnected character of art and ethics and social life. To him beauty is spiritual and typifies the



attributes of God. That Art is fundamentally beautiful is his gospel. But he has no clear philosophy of the Beautiful, though he makes us realise the unity of art and religion and morality. He says : "Life without industry is sin, and industry without art is brutality".

David Scott says that "beauty is by itself and ultimate" and that there is no difference of opinion as regards beauty "except in the degree of perception or in the grounds of decision". James Ferguson is of opinion that the beautiful is but an elaboration and refinement of the useful. George Butler says that in art "we look for something beyond the reproduction of the actual". J. A. Symonds says that Art is nature and something more, and that it is the "synthetic, intellectual, spirit-penetrated beauty to which the arts aspire." Professor Blackie and Professor Bain have each given an elaborate analysis of the æsthetic mood. W. B. Scott says that harmony and symmetry are of the essence of beauty, that "all architecture is the triumph of symmetry", and that it is "not reproduction or imitation of Nature; on the contrary, it overcomes the law of gravitation by constructive devices". He affirms the unity of the good and the beautiful and the true. The poet W. Barnes says that the beautiful in Nature is the result of God's creative will and that the beautiful in Art "is the result of the unmistaken working of Man in accordance with the beautiful in Nature", and that we must have "an eye to see Nature, a heart to feel Nature, and boldness to follow Nature." Miss Cobbe says that to the poet "creation itself is a divine drama of Prometheus unbound" and that "the poetry of Nature and the poetry of Art alike are God's revelations of the Beautiful". Professor Seeley says that "Art is one of the natural forms assumed by joy" and that it is play or sport. But the play impulse becomes art only when there is order and symmetry and unity. Delight is expressed by rhythm and proportion. Rhythm is regularity in Time; and Form is regularity in Space. Imitation and Rhythm are the passive and the active principles in Art. E. J. Poynter is a realist in art but he says that the artist must see the deeper truths of Nature and reproduce them in art. Bradley considers that the Absolute transcends the Beautiful while Bosanquet hold that the Absolute is immanent in the Beautiful. Lawrence Binyon says : "We too should make ourselves empty that the great soul of the universe may fill us with its breath".

We find that the scientific point of view is urged by Darwin and Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen. Darwin says that physical beauty is a factor in sexual selection and thereby in the propagation



of the species and that birds appreciate brilliant colours in their mates and ornament their nests, and that some animals have a higher sense of beauty than some men. He says also that music is a peculiar human faculty and has little or no connection with the stress of natural evolution. Herbert Spencer takes his stand on the doctrine of play or sport. But art is not mere relaxation from work but is intense imaginative activity. Spencer points out that man, unlike the animals, does not allow his energies to be absorbed by the hunt for food and sex. The eye and the ear are less life-serving than the tongue which is the organ of taste and have hence got an æsthetic character. The love of possession is unconnected with the æsthetic impulse. Freud takes his stand on psycho-analysis and regards art as the imaginative fulfilment of repressed sexual desire. But this attitude exalts sex which is only one aspect of life to the height of the supreme aspect of life. Grant Allen says that the æsthetically beautiful is that which affords the maximum of stimulation with the minimum of fatigue or waste. He says further that when gratification is connected with our own personality the pleasure is "too monopolist to reach the æsthetic level, but when it is unconnected in thought with our own personality, it becomes a subject of æsthetic enjoyment." He says that man's taste for bright colours was derived by him from his frugivorous ancestors. A. R. Wallace attacked this theory. But Grant Allen replied in his book on *The Colour Sense* that the highest works of art are only "the last link of a chain whose first link began with the insect's selection of bright hued blossoms". But on the whole the biological view of beauty and art is onesided and defective. It regards beauty merely as a factor conducive to the development of the species and as being related to the vital functions and the animal impulses. But beauty need not be co-existent with youth and health and has an origin and a value all its own.

John Todhunter says that the beautiful is the infinite loveliness which we realise by reason and by love, "knowing and feeling being necessary to each other." Form is static while rhythm is dynamic. What is beautiful is symmetrical form and harmonious rhythm. The seven colours of the spectrum are related to the seven notes of the musical scale. Beauty resides in order and proportion and is an expression of the Invisible. Beauty is joy and not mere pleasure. It is a disinterested pleasure, a sympathetic pleasure, a spiritual pleasure. It is "a rapture of love, like that of Endymion for his goddess, of a mortal for an immortal, who perpetually melts from his embrace". It is "the revelation of a more perfect order of things". Canon



Mozley says that Beauty in Nature is the visible disclosure of Reason. "The glory of Nature resides in the mind of Man"..... Nature is partly a veil and partly a revelation". Tyrwhitt points out that animals and birds are not affected by the glories of the skies and that the sense of beauty in man is "a spiritual supplement to the sense of sight". In nature structure discloses mind and design whereas form and colour reveal beauty. William Morris says that the function of art is "to make work happy and rest fruitful" and that the haste of modern life and its stress and strain are alien to art. "The monster who has destroyed Beauty is Commercial Profit". Miss Lucy Crane says that "art is a universal language intelligible to the whole world alike". Professor Ker points out that art is a revelation and vindication of freedom and cannot be explained by physiological factors which refer only to its conditions of self-expression. Pater says that all the arts tend "towards the principle or condition of music", wherein the distinction between matter and form is obliterated. He makes the sensuous element the dominant factor in æsthetics. E. S. Dallas says in his work on Poetics that art is the harmonious and unconscious activity of the soul. Professor Knight says that beauty is the union of the subject and the object, the drawing forth from nature of that which is cognate to man, and the recognition in oneself of what is common to all nature.

American æsthetics is not of a striking order of merit and is a comparatively obscure descendent of British Aesthetics. But Emerson and Santayana have given us valuable and fruitful æsthetic ideas. Emerson says that Nature "satisfies us by its loveliness" without any reference to its utility. Beauty is "a mark set upon virtue". "Truth and goodness and beauty are but different faces of the same All." "For beauty, truth and goodness are not obsolete, they spring eternal in the breast of man. And that eternal spirit whose triple face they are, moulds them for ever, for his mortal child, images to remind him of the Infinite and Fair". "From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing but the light is all". G. S. Morris says that art is not "the representation of something seen, but the representation of something which we would like to see, which is akin to our nature, towards which truest being strives." The truest art is the interpreter of true, real and essential being, and "our inner selves art at home, however unconsciously to ourselves, in an ideal realm of perfect being". Professor Dewey says that æsthetic feeling excludes the feeling of ownership as well



as utility and is characterised by harmony and creativeness. George Santayana says in his *Reason in Art*: "The artist, being a born lover of the good, a natural breeder of perfections, clings to his insight". Art is superimposed on Nature and is an addition to the animal impulse.

Even more than the noisy critics and æsthetic theorists, who often show more verbosity than insight, the artists and the poets have indicated the really vital nature and elements of æsthetic feeling and delight. I shall show presently how admirably the Indian artists and poets, even more than the great Indian æstheticians, have done the work. It is hardly possible in this brief book to set forth the various admirable expressions of the æsthetic mood and spirit by the western artists and poets. I can but give a few indications here. The Greek conception of the three Graces—Aglaia and Thalia and Euphrosyne who are the charming and beautiful attendants of Venus,—the concept of the Muses, and the Homeric description of the award of the queenship of loveliness by Paris as between Here and Pallas and Aphrodite are among the finest of the western concepts of the beautiful. The concept of Apollo "god of the golden bow and of the golden fire and of the golden hair and of the golden fire" and god of prophecy and song, and the stories of Amphion whose harp-music made the stones move of their own accord and build the city wall, and of Orpheus whose lyre won back Eurydice from Hades and of Memnon's statue which gave forth music when touched by the first rays of the sun, are other fine ideas. Probably the Greek ideas which are the finest and the richest in suggestion are contained in the stories of Cupid and Psyche and of Endymion and Cynthia—which suggest the mutual seekings of the human soul and of Eternal Love, and the self-dedicated search of the æsthetic spirit for the vision and experience of Perfect Beauty. It is these and similar rich æsthetic ideas and concepts that hold the world's imagination captive even to-day though ancient Greece and her culture have vanished for ever and are shadows more shadowy than the fabled souls ferried over by Charon into the under-world.

Among the modern painters who have given us a presentation of the nature of beauty and art, I may refer here to the great painters, E. Burne Jones and Turner. E. Burne Jones says: "Realism! Direct transcript from Nature? I suppose by the time the 'photographic artist' can give us all the colours as correctly as the shapes, people will begin to find out that the realism they



talk about is not art at all but science; interesting no doubt, as a scientific achievement, but nothing more.....Transcripts from Nature! What do I want with transcripts? I prefer her own signature; I don't want forgeries more or less skillful....It is the message, the 'burden' of a picture that makes its real value." He says further: "You see that it is these things of the soul that are real....the only real things in the universe". As stated above already, the supreme artist Turner says: "When the great artist speaks, whether in words or music, he speaks of a world that is beyond time and space and beyond all ideas of good and evil, of today or yesterday, and he speaks of the world because it is the world in which he dwells".....*We demand of a great artist neither tricks nor the vivid expression of our own passions but a profounder and wider consciousness than we possess ourselves. The values are entirely spiritual.*"

Among the modern poets, Dante says that the poet is "the scribe of Eternal Love". Shakespeare says that

"as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name".

He says also:

"O'er that art  
Which you says adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes".

Pope says that "all Nature is but Art unknown to thee". Young says: "The course of Nature is the art of God". Thomson says:

"But who can paint  
Like Nature? Can imagination boast,  
Amidst its gay creation hues like hers"?

Wordsworth says about the artistic and poetic mood:

"In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from *the living God*,  
*Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired*".



He teaches that artists add

“the gleam  
The light that never was on sea or land  
The consecration and the poet’s dream”.

Coleridge says : “Poetry is essentially ideal; it avoids and excludes all accidents”. He defines beauty as the plastic moulding of matter by the spirit into a symbol or shrine of the spirit.

Shelley describes the poet thus :

“Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses  
But feeds on the ærial kisses  
Of shapes that haunt thought’s wildernesses  
But from these *create* he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality.”

He describes Music as “revealing

A tone  
Of some world far from ours  
Where music and moonlight and feeling  
Are one”.

He says that “Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of Divinity in Man”. His *Prometheus Unbound* describes the married harmony of the Spirit of Man and the Spirit of Nature. His *Epipsychidion* attempts to describe the quintessential spirit of Beauty in quivering words. Keats, the most Greek of English poets, has sought to express in *Endymion* the passionate and absorbed quest for Beauty, and proclaims in *Hyperion* that “it is the eternal law

The first in beauty should be first in might”.

In his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* he teaches that

“Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know”.

Goethe says :

“Each age has sung of beauty—  
He who perceives it is from himself set free”.



Mathew Arnold says that poetry is a criticism of life and "that the grand power of poetry is its interpretative power" and that it must have natural magic as well as moral profundity.

Lowell says :

He gazed on all within him and without him,  
He watched the flowing of Time's steady tide,  
And shapes of glory floated all about him  
And whispered to him and he prophesied".

I have thus far tried to achieve the impossible task of compressing Homer in a nutshell. I have tried to compress twenty-five centuries of western æsthetics into as many pages. I have had to draw largely on Professor Knight's admirable work on *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, because though I have studied some of the leading æsthetical works from Plato to Croce, it is not possible to give the results of a first-hand study of all the works of all the æstheticians of the world. It is clear from the above review, brief and unsatisfactory as is, that man's æsthetical impulses have a two-fold urge. This is because on the one hand man is a denizen of the relative and phenomenal world with all its finiteness and limitations and its mingled fascinations of loveliness and repulsions of ugliness and its incessant and insistent and persistent alternations and successions of joy and grief and pleasure and pain, whereas on the other hand he is related by psychic ties to the over soul, the Absolute, the Infinite, the Eternally Beautiful, the Perfection of Grace and Love, the *Akhanda Sachchidânanda* (the Infinite Being and Consciousness and Bliss). Browning says well :

"On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven the perfect round".

Art is the fusion of sensuousness and spirituality and sees the world of sense transfigured in the light spiritual. Thus in the world citizenship of art we have both rights and privileges. Hence in some moods we love the imitation of nature and in other moods we love the creativeness which brings before our mind's eyes a fairer and finer realm of being. Nature reveals beauty but the evocation of feeling by it varies with the attitude of purity and disinterestedness and æsthetic fitness attained by us. The soul's prerogative of investiture of Nature with meaning and emotional appeal is, perhaps, next to the rapturous realisation of God the noblest and highest and sublimest of human realisations.



It has been well said

"On Earth there's nothing great but Man.  
In Man there's nothing great but Mind".

Relative Beauty in Nature and Absolute Beauty in God are both realities to which the mind of Man is attuned. Beauty resides not in mere order or symmetry or balance or proportion or rhythm or unity in variety. These are all the garments and the jewels and decorations of the Goddess. Her mind is in Unity and Imagination and Emotion. But her soul is elsewhere. I shall show presently how the æstheticians outside India have not been able to see the essential *soul* of the Goddess of Beauty. The central glory which flashes as light from world to world and vibrates as harmony in the spheres is re-born as the arts of space and the arts of time. Art is thus the realiser and the revealer of the soul of Beauty in its relative and absolute aspects.

"She comes like the hushed beauty of the night  
That looks too deep for laughter,  
Her eyes are a reverberation and a light  
From worlds before and after".



### CHAPTER III

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL IN ORIENTAL THOUGHT

After endeavouring to present the evolution of the concept of the beautiful in western thought, I proceed to deal with the general aspects of the concept as evolved in eastern thought, before I take up the Indian concept of the beautiful. I do not mean by this that love of beauty is a peculiarly western or eastern phenomenon. It is inborn in humanity, and no people have been without it. But the forms and formulæ of the concept vary in the west and in the east.

In Asiatic culture we find three unique elements—kinship with nature and a sense of the sanctity of life and a clear spiritual vision. Swami Vivekananda said in a memorable passage: "There is another type in Asia. . . . . In the midst of all these surroundings, the oriental love of the beautiful and the sublime took another turn. It looked inside, and not outside". This power of introspection is the most important characteristic of the oriental concept of the beautiful. By it man was able to turn his gaze inward and Godward, and have visions of a new consecration of life. It brings us, as described in Wordsworth's famous Ode,

"Obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things",

and

"High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised".

Its voice is the other voice as described in Tennyson's *The Two Voices*

"Who forged that other influence  
That heat of inward evidence,  
By which he doubts against the sense?



The type of Perfect in his mind  
 In Nature can he nowhere find.  
 He sows himself in every wind".

In this view it brings us again and again "a little flash, a mystic hint".

In fact the mystic feels the majesty and beauty and glory of the Soul even more than the majesty and glory and beauty of Nature. But mysticism is not mere piety. It does not rest in creed or dogma or ritual but moves into the sanctuary of emotion. It seeks grace by prayer but loves more the way of adoration to attain union with the Beloved. It is full of humility at one time and of self-exaltation at another time, according as it is in a state of separation from, or of union with, the object of its search and worship. It recognises and realises and reveals the immanence and the transcendence of God. At one and the same time it recognises and realises and reveals the identity of Man and God (*Tat Twam Asi*). To it Nature is the manifestation and the mirror of God. It thus rises to the fusion-point of Beauty and Love and Bliss. This mood is beautifully expressed by Plato and Plotinus. Plato says: "For he who hath thus far had intelligence of love, and hath beheld all fair things in order and aright, he drawing near to the end of things lovable shall behold a Being marvellously fair. . . . . Beauty only and alone and separate and eternal, which, albeit all other fair things partake thereof and grow and perish, itself without change or increase or diminution endures for everlasting". Plotinus says with equal truth: "Often times when I awake out of the slumber of the body and come to a realising sense of myself, and retiring from the world outside, give myself up to inward contemplation, I behold a wonderful beauty. I believe then that I verily belong to a higher and better world, and strive to develop within me a glorious life, and become one with the Godhead. And by this means I receive such an energy of life that I rise far above all other things, even the intelligible world. What then must he experience who now beholds the absolute beauty in and for itself in all its purity, without corporeal shape, freed from all bondage to time and space? And this therefore is the life of the gods and of divine and happy men, a liberation from all earthly concerns, a life unaccompanied with human pleasures, *and the flight of the alone to the Alone*". Thus the mystic's sense of the contact of the human spirit with the divine is an intense inner realisation. He ascends to this realisation by



transcending the life of sense-delights and of mental desires. This transcendence is not by destroying them but by refining and transmuting them. His renunciation and service are due to an outflow of love which itself is due to an outflow of Bliss.

I shall show this full glory of this consecrated introspection in India in the next chapter. But it is inherent in the Orient as a whole. There need be no wonder in our finding it in Buddhism which is the daughter of Hinduism. It is felt in the famous *Om mani padme hum* (I am the jewel in the lotus). We find it also in Zoroastrianism but not in abundance because it stresses more the moral aspect of the divine order than the beauty aspect and the love aspect and the bliss aspect of God and broke away from Hinduism before Hindu thought blossomed into its fairest flowers. We find it in Sufi poetry which is a fragrant flower of Islamic feeling. Jami sings in his poem *Yusuf-u-Zuleika* :

“His Beauty everywhere doth show itself  
And through the forms of earthly beauties shines  
Obscured as through a veil”.

He says again :

“Each speck of matter did he constitute  
A mirror, causing each one to reflect  
The Beauty of his visage”.

Hadland Davis thus sums up the Sufi thought : “Love God’s light in men and women and not the lanterns through which It shines, for human bodies must turn to dust; human memories, human desires fade away. But the love of All-Good, All-Beautiful remains, and when such is found in earthly life it is God finding himself in you, and you in Him. That is the supreme teaching of Sufism, the religion of Love”. We find the introspective note also in Christianity and especially in the Psalms and the Proverbs and the Song of Solomon and in Christ’s teaching and in the utterances of Christian mystics and saints.

“Thou visitest the earth and waterest it;  
thou greatly enrichest it with the  
river of God which is full of water.  
.... they shout for Joy, they also sing”. (Psalms)



"Then I was by Him, as one brought up  
with Him; and I was daily  
His delight, rejoicing always before Him". (Proverbs).

"His left under my head, and His  
right hand doth embrace me".

"My beloved is mine and I am His,  
He feedeth His flock among the lilies".

(The Song of Solomon).

The wonderful mystic note in Christ's teaching has not yet been well understood and loved in the west, though twenty centuries have passed since His blessed feet trod His beloved earth. I firmly believe that India will reveal Him in full to the world, though India will not regard Him as the *only* saviour or as the only son of God. To adopt the title of Stanley Jones's famous book, Christ is now the Christ of the Indian Road. It was Christ that took western thought and art beyond Egyptian outer vastness and Grecian outer loveliness into the sublimities and sanctities of inner life. Lord Lindsay says in his *Sketches of the History of the Christian Art*: "It is the depth, intensity, grandeur, and sweetness of the emotions at the command of the Christian artists as compared with those of the ancients". In ancient western art pain and sorrow were taboo. It was Christianity that taught man how to sublimate and sanctify pain. Oscar Wilde says: "Not width but intensity is the true aim of modern art". Christ further led the human spirit out of mere formalism and ritualism and and Pharisaism into God's open air and beautiful creation. Oscar Wilde points out in his *De Profundis* that "Christ's place indeed is with the poets". He says: "His miracles seem to me to be as exquisite as the coming of Spring and as natural. . . . If His place is not among the poets, he is the leader of all the lovers. . . . Indeed, that is the charm about Christ, when all is said he is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one thing, but by being brought into his presence, one becomes something. And everybody is predestined to his presence". He says about his own inner yearning: "The Mystical in Art, the Mystical in Life, the Mystical in Nature—that is what I am looking for. It is absolutely necessary for me to find it somewhere". It is the glory of Christ that he taught man that the Kingdom of God is within and that "blessed are the pure in spirit for they shall see God".



The introspective mood is found abundantly in Thomas á Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* but such abundance is really due to the Bible. It is the most famous devotional book in modern literature. Fontenelle calls it "the finest work that has proceeded from the pen of man, the Gospel being of divine origin". It begins with the blessed words of Christ that "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". Kempis says : Come then, believing soul, to work, and employ all thy diligence to prepare thy heart for thy Beloved. .... This One is enough, for He is all the world." He says again : "O thou overflowing spring of endless love ! How shall I worthily magnify Thee, how can I forget Thee?" He says again : "For Thou my God, art the best and most excellent being; in Thee alone is plenty and fulness, sweet refreshment, peaceful comfort, and ravishing delights, the perfection of Beauty and charming graces, true honour and adorable greatness. .... And I have found by long experience that all Thy other favours, nay, *all Nature*, is too short and narrow to satisfy my soul, whose *unbounded desires* exalt and stretch themselves far beyond all present enjoyments, and can be filled and rest contented with nothing less than Thee. .... O my beloved Lord, King of the Universe, knit me to Thee with the bands of an entire and holy affection. Let me at liberty from this clog of earth, and give me wings of ardent zeal and pure devotion, that I may soar aloft, and take my flight higher than heaven itself, and find my rest in Thee". He says again : "Unite me to Thyself with inviolable bonds of holy love; so shall my soul be satisfied; for *Thou alone canst answer all my longings, and the whole world without Thee is trifle, and emptiness and nothing.*" Similarly in St. Francis de Sales, Tauler, Madame Guyon, Saint Teresa, and other Christian mystics, we meet the same sense of ecstatic devotion to God.

I have dealt thus far with the mystical and introspective note in the Oriental concept of the Beautiful, because it is the most vital element in that concept. A symbol is not a cold formula or even a pictorial and imaginative condensed representation. It is electrical; it has magical power; it palpitates with a life divine. Holmes says in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* : "When a given symbol which represents a thought has lain for a length of time in the mind it becomes magnetic in its relations, it is traversed by strange forces which did not belong to it. The world, and consequently the idea it represents, is *polarised*". Such *polarised* sounds and words and ideas which are full of the divine



life are found in plenty in the Orient. European and American literature and art have to go to dead Greek symbols and ideas for presentation and representation. The Orient has a wealth of living symbols of its own. The Dhyani Buddha and the Cross and the Crescent are only the highest of the innumerable oriental symbols which are of the essence of the essence of the oriental concept of the Beautiful and which are intimate inner realisations and not mere formulæ or condensed statements.

Equally important is the wealth of the imagery. Nature was beautiful in Greece, and it is the imagery adopted by Greece that now pervades western literature. But in the Orient Nature is both beautiful and sublime. In Asia we have tropical splendours of vegetation and vivid pageants of the skies. The highest mountain range is here. There are broad life-giving rivers bearing the blessings of God to Man. There are also rolling and barren deserts and vast stretches of dense jungles and forests. We have not mere creeks and gulfs and bays but illimitable storm-tossed oceans full of terror and vastness beneath the calm canopy of heaven. Hence we find in the Bible and in the Koran, no less than in the *Veda* and the *Zend-A-vesta* and the Buddhist gospels as well as in oriental poetry and drama and art, a varied and vivid splendour of imagery.

Though there are also various other aspects which deserve attention, I would mention only one more aspect here. It is the living power and desire to express the essence of the beautiful in simple parables and stories. This power is hardly known in the west. In Greece it was practically non-existent, and for the same reason it is non-existent in its intellectual descendants Europe and America. The essential nature of the oriental concept of the beautiful which led to its exaltation of simplicity and humility and meekness and purity as the openers of the door of mystic and introspective vision and delight led also to the external means of revealing and communicating the concept by the simple and democratic agency of stories and parables. Europe and America are democrats in politics but aristocrats in art and religion. But the oriental peoples are full of the truest and most vital democracy in literature and art and religion. The use of parables and stories as means of broadcasting the fundamentals of the oriental concept of the Beautiful are found in the Upanishads and the Zoroastrian and Buddhist scriptures, in the Bible and in the Koran, and in the utterances of great saints like Sri Ramakrishna and of great poets like Tagore even to-day.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

I have thus far given the setting in which my brief exposition of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful will become easy of comprehension. In the later chapters, I shall deal with details and ramifications. Here I shall deal only with the mainspring and the general aspects of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful. Art and religion are in close union in India. Grunwedel says well: "The religious character so deeply rooted in the national life of the Indian races has also continued as the guiding principle in their art". The most vital element in the Indian Concept of the Beautiful is the truth taught and reiterated in the Bhagavad Gita and in the Upanishads that the core of being is Bliss (Ananda). In the Bhagavad Gita we are shown the full octave of this core of Bliss in life. How it pervades the universe of life and non-life is shown in Chapter VII. How it pervades Paradise is shown in Chapter VIII. How to realise it by Love is shown in Chapter IX. How the infinite white light of Divine Bliss is broken into the coloured splendours of its supreme manifestations is shown in Chapter X. Let us ever remember the fact that the Vibhūtis (manifestations) of God among mountains and rivers and trees are said to be our Himalaya, our Ganga, and our Aswaththa. Nay, other and higher Vibhūtis also belong to our beautiful and blessed land. Of all words He is Pranava. Among sages He is Bhrigu and Vyasa and Usanas. Among Vidyas He is Adhyatma Vidya. Among metres He is Gayatri. Among warriors He is Rama. We can rightly behold and realise and enjoy the multi-tinted glory of the universe only if He gives us the vision divine (divyachakshus) which he gave to Arjuna as described in Chapter XI of the Gita.

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।

दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥

(Chapter XI Verse 8).

The Gita is the essence of the Upanishads. Sri Shankara states the essence of both of them as Eternal Purity and Wisdom and Freedom. (Nityashuddha Buddha Mukta Swabhāva). The concept of Bliss is worked out in great detail in the Upanishads. In the



Taittiriya Upanishad it is stated that Brahman is Ānanda (Bliss,) and that all things live and move and have their being in Bliss. It is stated there that the experience of beautiful and enjoyable things is the head of the bliss-aspect of the soul and that the enjoyment of beautiful and enjoyable things is its right wing and that the expression of beautiful and enjoyable things is its left wing and that the element of bliss is its soul and that the Over-soul is its eternal basis and support. It is further stated there that the prismatic splendour of the joy of the artist is one of the high levels of bliss and is far higher than mere sense delights though it is far below the plane of the white light of spiritual bliss. Aesthetic experience has been well described as "a many-coloured episode in eternity".

Thus the concept of Ānanda is an æsthetic concept as well as a spiritual concept. In the same manner the concept of Rasa (the sweetness of Art) also is an æsthetic concept as well as a spiritual concept. In the Taittiriya Upanishad God is called Rasa (Rasō vai sah). He is the supreme delectable sweetness. The word *rasa* refers also to the physical aspect of taste, the æsthetic delight, and the science of alchemy. Thus the word Rasa is charged with the element of taste and the element of charm and the element of alchemy and the element of divinity. I have shown these truths in my work on *Indian Aesthetics* wherein I have given citations and illustrations from Sanskrit poems and works on Aesthetics and Art from Bharata to Appaya Dixita. In this work which is meant also and in the main for readers unacquainted with Sanskrit works and the intricacies of Indian æsthetical doctrine, I shall refer only to general features and ideas.

The æsthetic concept of *rasa* (æsthetic sweetness) and the cognate concept of *bhāva* (æsthetic emotion) will be dealt with by me in detail in a later chapter. I wish however to state here that India is unique in linking the spiritual concepts of Ānanda and Rasa with the æsthetic concepts of Ānanda and Rasa. I have already stated how all nature has three states of being: *Sattva* (equipoise), *rajas* (activity) and *tamas* (inertia). The soul has three bodies and five sheaths, viz., the gross body and the subtle body and the causal body, the first comprising the gross sheath of the physical body and the subtle sheath of energy and the second comprising the mental sheath and the intellectual sheath, and the last comprising the sheath of bliss. In art we find the pure sâttvic state full of disinterested æsthetic knowledge and



delight, and in it we function in the sheath of bliss (the *Anandamaya kosa*). When *rajas* and *tamas* intervene—and they intervene in all ordinary minds—the quality of the pleasure is lessened by the influx of desire and even that lessened pleasure is chased by pain. But in the truly artistic mind, we find a pure *sāttvic* content and hence there is a deep and disinterested delight.

The highest æsthetical doctrine in India has been coloured by Sri Sankaracharya's *Advaita philosophy*. The great æstheticians teach that in æsthetic *rasa*, as in spiritual *rasa*, the clamorous sense-delights are stilled and the bliss-element (*Ānandāmsa*) of the soul is liberated by the breaking down of its barriers (*Āvarna-bhanga*). In æsthetic *rasa*, the bliss of the soul is coloured by the emotional states of love (*rati*) etc., whereas in the spiritual *rasa*, it is pure and complete and infinite. This aspect is well brought out in Jagannatha Pandita's famous work *Rasagangādhara*. Thus the æsthetic delight is a reflected bliss (*Prathibimbānanda*). Viswanatha calls it in his *Sāhityadarpana* as the brother of the bliss of God-realisation (*Brāhmananda sahodarah*). Dhananjaya says in his *Dasarupaka* that it is born of the bliss of the soul (*ātmananda Samudbhava*). Manmata says: "Pleasure which is the crown and glory of all its purposes, which is produced by the enjoyment of *Rasa*, and which so fills the mind that for the time being one is aware of nothing else". सकलप्रयोजनमौलिभूतं समनन्तरमेव रसास्वादनसमुद्भूतं विगलितवेद्यान्तरमानन्दं The glorious manifestations (*Vibhuthis*) of God in the universe and the even more glorious realisations of God in our heart kindle our love and quell our desires and enable the bliss-element of the soul to rush impetuously into self-realisation and self-expression. Achyutarāya says in his *Sahitya Sara* that the bliss of the soul is reflected in such a calm emotional state just as the loveliness of a beautiful maiden is reflected in a pure and polished mirror. Ānandavardhana says in his famous *Dhvanyāloka* that familiar things have a new manifestation of glory in the light of *rasa* just as in the spring trees put on fresh and fair and fragrant flowers. In the enjoyment of the beautiful we find freedom, disinterested delight, perfect harmony and peace, and a setting free of the real nature of the soul owing to its vision of a glimpse of God. The Child-heart is as much needed to enter the Kingdom of Beauty as it is needed to enter the Kingdom of God. Egoism and desire must go before vision and delight can come in.



Thus our great aestheticians teach that the bliss of the soul shines as love in the plane of the mind and as beauty in nature and in art and in men and women in the plane of vision, and as melody in the plane of sound. Beauty is thus the self-expression of Bliss in the realm of the senses just as love is the self-expression of Bliss in the realm of the mind. Far from the concept of the beautiful being unknown to India, there are many words conveying it, such as *soundarya*, *ramaniyatâ* and *châruta*. A Sanskrit verse says that beauty is that which reveals new and charming aspects every instant. Who that has seen the ever-changing and ever-new, and ever-beautiful aspects of nature by sun-light and by moon-light and by star-light, and the charming waves of feeling reflected in a beautiful woman's face can demur to such a description of the essence of Beauty?

All beauty is in the fact but a glimpse of the Absolute and Infinite Beauty of God. Sri Madhusoodana Saraswathi describes Sri Krishna as *Soundarya sâra sarvasva* (the supreme treasure of quintessential beauty). As stated above, in the loveliness of Nature and in human loveliness we see but His glory broken into many-tinted prismatic radiance. In *yogic* realisations we see the forms of glory—surpassing nature's splendours and human beauty—assumed by God out of the abundance of His grace to show us the self-veiled higher splendours of the Infinite so that we may eventually reach and attain the Infinite Beauty and Bliss. Beauty is thus the perfection of the Noumenon expressing itself in terms of the phenomena. Music is the incarnation of the Nâda-Brahman. Architecture and sculpture and painting are incarnations of the Ineffable Beauty of the Light of Lights.

Thus beauty is one of the ultimate imperishable values of life. Infinite Beauty and Goodness and Truth are absolute values and belong to the supra-temporal and hence eternal plane of being. Dean Inge says in his *Outspoken Essays*: "There are no other absolute values besides Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. Happiness for example, is not another absolute value, but is attached to the possession of any of the three". This, according to Indian thought, is faulty logic and imperfect realisation of Truth. It is Infinite Bliss (Ananda) that is the ultimate absolute value. It is the same as Truth (Sat) and as Consciousness (Chit). In relation to the world of phenomena it is Beauty and Love and Goodness, and is also omnipotence and omniscience and omnipresence. It is the ultimate unity of the Spirit that India was unique in realising and



revealing to the world. The great and vital question is, whether consciousness or matter is the *prius* and the *matrix*. India affirms that consciousness and bliss from the *prius* and the *matrix* and form the ultimate absolute reality.

I have referred above to *Yoga*. I recur to it because the essence of the Indian æsthetic and spiritual experience is there. The modern man has but a half faith or an honest (?) doubt in regard to God. He is of course against God being endowed with human form. In this connection we may remember Mr. Gladstone's wise words uttered in March 1876: "Here lay the secret of the paramount excellence of the Greek, that his art was ever aiming at the ideal and the infinite. And the true cause of this remarkable direction of the artist's purpose was and is to be found unless I am much mistaken in the specific character of his religion. Humanising the god, he was constrained to divinise the man, to invest his form, the central type and form of Beauty, with the strength, the majesty, the beauty and the grace of the super-human. The effect was that he was always seeking something more than he had reached; like in this to the miser and to the saint, in both of whom the appetite grows with what it feeds upon". The Indian mind has carried out in all its implications its central concept which is analogous to the idea of Christ that man is made in the image of God. The soul and the Oversoul being in a state of identity according to one school of Indian thought or in a state of an inseparable relation of union according to other schools, it is no wonder that they are alike in grace and glory. The soul, however, in its embodied state has limitations of knowledge and power and wisdom and bliss. The Oversoul takes human forms because that is the means by which it draws the soul unto itself so that the soul may realise its divine nature. Such wondrous names and forms and functions of the Oversoul are realised in *Yogic* experience and form the basis of Indian iconography and image-worship against which iconoclastic thought and effort here and abroad have dashed in vain like waves beating on a jutting sky-pointing rock. The average man has sight, but the yogi has insight. The average man has the tuitions of nature, the yogi has the intuitions of God. The Greek mind, merely by the stress and power of imagination which as Wordsworth calls is only "reason in its most exalted mood", humanised God and divinised man. But the Indian mind, by its *yogic* realisations, born of power-imbued sounds and of tranquilisation of desire and of composure and concentration of mind resulting in illumination from a



superterrene source, revealed to the world the glory of the Infinite self-veiled in finite forms of dazzling beauty and dreaded power. In such æsthetic and spiritual concepts as Lakshmi and Saraswathi and Venugopala and Seshasayana and Nataraja, India has given to the world her visions of the God-filled heart,—visions of beauty and power and glory, finite yet infinite, visible yet supreme. The Greek vision of human beauty was an abstraction, being a combination of the best elements found in many forms. The Indian vision of human beauty was an inner realisation of the ever-true and immortal forms of the divine in exalted moods of yogic meditation where the subject and the object blend into something higher than both. Mohendra Nath Dutt, who is a brother of the great Swami Vivekananda, says in his *Dissertation on Painting*: “In representing an ideal the painter really represents his own spirit, his dual self, through the medium of exterior objects. In a profound state of identification the inner and outer layers of the spirit are separated; the external layer or the visible part of the spirit is identified with the object observed, and the constant or unchanging part remains the serene observer. The one is *Lila* (the play), the other *Nitya* (Eternity). We cannot see what is beyond, for it is *Avyaktam*, the inexpressible state”. Commenting on this passage, Romain Rolland says: “It is not astonishing that many great Indian artists, who have passed through this discipline, finally become saints”.

Another special feature of the Indian concept of the beautiful is the result of Indian psychology. Western psychology has not till this day clearly differentiated between the soul and the mind. Indian psychology alone has made such a clear differentiation. The mind is the organ of knowledge and pleasure and pain, and the soul is in its nature pure consciousness and bliss. The concept of pleasure (*sukha*) and of bliss (*ānanda*) are quite separate and desperate altogether. Pleasure is selfish and individual and phenomenal and relative but bliss is absolute and infinite. Pleasure is shot through with pain and is often preceded and followed by pain and is of the nature of agitation of mind but bliss is unalloyed and unlimited and is full of composure and peace. Tagore calls such a feeling of infinite bliss as *Sarvānubhūthi* or *visvabōdha* (realisation of the infinite). Our ancients called it as the *akhandā sachidananda sākshātkāra* (realisation of the infinite being and consciousness and bliss).

A further element of new and original truth has been introduced into the Indian concept of the beautiful by the Indian



doctrin of Karma. Kalidasa says in verse 2 in the Fifth Act in *Sakuntala* that the reason why, on seeing beautiful objects and hearing harmonious sounds, even a happy man becomes full of longing and melancholy is that he remembers, without the experience rising to the surface of the waking consciousness, the companionships which he had in previous birth and which are rooted in his emotional nature. Our realisations of the beautiful and our powers of expression of beauty in art are carried from birth to birth, and the fitter we become to behold the Ineffable and Integrate Beauty the more vividly do we realise it in life and in Art. While Indian aestheticians were quite aware of the importance of rhythm, harmony, proportion, order, symmetry, balance, unity in variety, colour, form, brightness, and grace, they were acute and careful enough to affirm that the most vital elements are intensive vision (*yoga*), joy (*ânanda*), emotion (*rasa*), creativeness, suggestiveness and spirituality.

Thus art, according to the Indian theory and practice, should be idealistic and creative and suggestive and serene. The stories relating to the birth of the *Ramayana* and the *Bhâgawatha* are wonderfully sweet and suggestive both in themselves and in regard to the purpose of art. The story of the origin of the *Ramayana* shows that poesy was born out of pity when Valmiki chided a hunter whose cruel arrow pierced and killed a male bird leaving its mate fluttering in grief and agony. The story of the origin of the *Bhâgawatha* shows that even after all the ideals of the worldly life were described, Vyasa felt a void in his heart until he wrote a work devoted solely to the description of the Eternal Beauty and Bliss of God. Both in the *Ramayana* and the *Maha Bharatha* the poems do not stop with the vanquishment of the unrighteous and the victory of the righteous but move on towards the fulfilment of life by relation to the super-life. The goal is not the attainment of an earthly throne but the attainment of perfection. In *Sakuntala* the great poet Kalidasa suggests that art, like *Sakuntala*, is the child of earth and heaven, of *bhoga* (pleasure) and *tyaga* (renunciation). It is the son of *Sakuntala*—the soul reborn in Art—that is worthy of having the widest and highest earthly power.

The Indian concept of the beautiful did not merely shine in the realm of the ideal but pervaded real life as well. The Indian refinements of dress and decoration, and the delicate graces and sanctities and polished elegances of Indian erotics should be borne in mind. The graceful costumes of the Indians, and especially of



Indian women, are well-known and universally admired. Though the love of jewellery has been carried to excess, there is no doubt that the eye was well trained to realise the heightening of natural charm by appropriate decoration, though, as Kalidasa says in *Sakuntala*, it was well-known that anything will set off and heighten perfect loveliness. Vâtsyayana says in his *Kâmasutra* that a knowledge of sixty-four *kalas* or arts is necessary to a refined enjoyment of the joys of life.

In short the Indian concept of the beautiful turns on the twin poles of *ânanda* and *rasa*, and the very essence of beauty has nowhere been better expressed than in India. Indian art is the expression of the Indian concept of the beautiful. It is creative, suggestive, devotional, and serene. Sri Sankaracharya says again and again that a *kavi* is a *krânta darsi*, i.e., a person who sees far and wide and deep and knows and reveals the truth of things. Aesthetics have always been highly prized in India. It is described by two expressive words—*Alamkâra* and *sâhitya* (the decorator of life and the comrade of the soul). The Indian mind has always been able to link life and super-life, body and soul, earth and heaven, and has always belonged to the

“Type of the wise who soar but never roam,  
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

I have thus far dealt with some of the vital and central and general aspects of the Indian concept of the beautiful. I shall go into the details later on. I wish however to point out that in the Indian concept of the Beautiful there is much that is not found in western aesthetics and is of enduring value. Of course in the Greek aesthetics and in modern aesthetics there are elements which are of great value and which are not so prominently found in India. In the element of fidelity to nature, in mass effects, in the combination of anatomical correctness and artistic representation, and in romantic love and its artistic expression the west has explored new avenues of aesthetical expression. The Parthenon and the Gothic spire Apollo de Belvedere and Venus of Milo, the Madonna in the Sistine Chapel, the Symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven, the dramas of Shakespeare, etc. are achievements which fill us with a profound admiration. The concepts of Prometheus and of Endymion and Diana and of Cupid and Psyche, and the concepts of Christ and Madonna have a wonderful power of enrapturing and elevating our hearts. But at the same time it must be realised with equal force here and abroad that the wonder-



ful and vital central aesthetic ideas and concepts in India, the unparalleled architecture and sculpture of India, the yogic visions of gods and goddesses rendered into art-representations, the art-ideas cognate to the spiritual ideas contained in such concepts as Nataraja and Venugopala and Saraswathi and Lakshmi, the concepts about the origin of poesy and its destiny, the concepts which have led to that "linked sweetness long-drawn-out" which is known as Indian music have a complementary and surpassing value and are needed to-day in modern aesthetical life, which, with all its distorted evolution of art in the forms of its bizarre architecture and sculpture and its fantastic cubism and post-impressionism in painting and its crude realisms in literature and its amorphous cacophonics in jazz music, is breaking away from all sane standards and ideals in aesthetics and is hugging ugliness in its frenzied passion for loveliness.



## CHAPTER V

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

I have thus far dealt with some of the vital elements of the Indian concept of the beautiful. It is not widely known that the evolution of the Indian concept of the beautiful is itself a beautiful and vast concept. The history of such evolution extends over twenty centuries and cannot be compressed within the limits of a brief chapter. Further, new treasures are being unearthed and revealed from musty manuscripts found in unexpected places. The materials for a thorough and complete study of such history are yet incomplete. I have tried to sum up elsewhere my estimate of such evolution. I shall briefly show here only the general trend of the evolution of the concept of Beauty in India.

Some of the finest gems of the Indian concept of the beautiful are found in the Upanishads. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, spiritual bliss is compared to the bliss of human love. The vedic concepts of *ānanda* and *rasa* have, as shown above, profoundly influenced Indian aesthetical evolution. The Ushas hymns and the Savitar hymns, etc., in the Rig Veda, the songs of the Sāma Veda, the dialogues and stories scattered throughout the Vedas, and the ecstatic descriptions of the Oversoul in the *Upanishads* contain the basic poetic and artistic ideas which blossomed forth abundantly in later poetic and dramatic literature and pictorial and musical art. For instance the famous simile in the *Kaṭopanishad* about the body as the chariot and the senses as the horses and the mind as the reins and the intellect as the charioteer and the soul as the owner of the chariot is a figure of speech that has gone into the very heart of Indian literature.

The really vital sources of the vast science of Indian aesthetics are the three great epics—The *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* and the *Srimadbhāgavata*—and especially the *Ramayana*. Valmiki is the poet's poet, the aesthetician's aesthetician, the sage of the sages, and the saint of the saints. His similes and metaphors are among the most famous and picturesque in the world's literature. Even Kālidasa pays the highest homage to his genius. In Kālidasa's own works we have brief and illuminating references to arts and aesthetics. I have dealt in detail with them in my two volumes



on Kalidasa: *His Period and Personality and Poetry, and the Genius of Kalidasa*: He is a famous master of *upamâ* (simile). His poems and plays are replete with *alamkâra* (aesthetic ornamentation) and *guna* (aesthetic quality of style) and *rasa* (aesthetic emotion) and *dhvani* (aesthetic suggestiveness) and *auchitya* (aesthetic appropriateness) and *chamatkâra* (aesthetic originality). In his *Vikramorvasiya* he refers to the eight *rasas* adumbrated by the sage Bharata in his famous *Nāṭyashastra*.

The earliest and the best formal treatise on the concept of the beautiful is Bharata's *Nāṭyashâstra*. As Kalidasa refers to him, with great respect in his *Vikramorvasiya* as Bharata Muni, he must have been long anterior to Kalidasa. In my volumes on Kalidasa, I have shown that Kalidasa belongs to the first century B.C. It was Bharata that elaborated the theory of *rasa*. In a very famous verse he points out that *Rasa* (æsthetic sweetness) is the *sthâyibhava* (the dominating emotion) which is kindled by *vibhâvas*—which are divided into *Ālambana vibhâvas* (principal exciting and stimulating causes, being the human factors in emotion such as the lover or the beloved) and the *uddeepana vibhâvas* (the accessory stimulating causes such as the moon, etc.)—and which is manifested by the *anubhâvas* (external manifestations, such as coy and shy and sidelong glances, smiles, etc.) and which is intensified by *vyabhichâribhâvas* or *Sanchâri Vibhâvas* (ever-changing and ever-rising and ever-setting minor collateral feelings of pleasure and pain). This analysis is able and complete and comprehensive. I shall elaborate these ideas further in a later chapter. The prominent *rasas* (or moods of æsthetic emotion) are *srîngâra*, *hâsya*, *karuna*, *raudra*, *vira*, *bhayânaka*, *bhibatsa* and *adbhuta* (love, the comic, pathos, fury, heroism, terror, disgust, and the marvellous). The deities presiding over these *rasas* are said to be Vishnu, Pramatha, Yama, Rudra, Indra, Kâla, Mahakâla, and Brahma. These and other truths are described with a great wealth of detail by Bharata. Among later writers, Bhoja thinks that *srîngâra* (love) is the primary *rasa* and that the other *rasas* are derivative, whereas Viswanatha says in his *Sâhitya Darpana* that the *Adbhuta rasa* (the Marvellous) is the basic *rasa*. I shall deal with this topic also in extenso later on. I may mention also that later æstheticians added *Sânthi Rasa* (peace). Rudrata mentions a tenth *rasa* viz. *preyas* (friendship). Viswanatha mentions *Vâtsalya* (love for the young) as the tenth *rasa*. Thus *rasa* means a primary and basic and pervasive æsthetic emotion which kindles a feeling of disinterested delight. The theory and practise of art led in India to the increase of the number of *rasas* and the



amplification of the content and application of each *rasa*. *Sringāra* (love) became amplified into *bhakti* (love of God). *Vira* (heroism) was extended from mere *yuddhavira* (heroism in battle) to *dharma vira* and *dāna vira* and *dayā vira* (heroism of virtue and heroism of munificence and heroism of compassion). This *rasa* was amplified also in *satya vira* (heroism of truth), *vidyā vira* (heroism of knowledge), *tapo vira* (heroism of austerity), *yoga vira* (heroism of yoga), *kshamā vira* (heroism of forgiveness, etc.). Modern India is surging with patriotism and nationalism and is full of the cult of *ahimsa* and *satyāgraha*. It may add the heroism of patriotism (*Desabhakti vira*), the heroism of non-injury (*Ahimsā vira*), etc. Thus the evolution of Art and Aesthetics has kept pace with the evolution of India's mind and soul, and Indian Aesthetics has been a growing art.

I do not propose to enter into details in this work in regard to the historical sequence of the great Indian writers on Aesthetics, their chronology and succession, their works and their ideas. Such a work has been done elsewhere by me and will swell the size of this volume very much, if I go into it in detail here, especially as there are many debated points of chronology in regard to the writers and their works. I may however state in general way the great writers on Aesthetics in their historical order and their works, tracing only the evolution of aesthetical ideas with some elaboration.

Bhatti belongs to the fifth century A.D. The tenth canto of his *Bhatti kāvya* contains illustrations of thirty-eight *alankāras* or figures of speech. The next great figure is Bhāmaha who was the author of the famous work *Kāvyālamkāra* and who propounded the view that the vital elements in poetic beauty are the figures of speech (*alamkāra*). An equally great aesthetician is Dandin who was the author of *Kavyādarsa*. Udbhata belonged to the 8th century and was the author of *Alankārasāra sangraha*. Vāmana belonged to the same century. He is the author of *Kavyālamkāra sūtra vṛtti* and propounded the view that *Riti* (style) is the soul of poetry. Rudrata's *Kavyālamkāra* belongs to the 9th century A.D. Ānandavardhana who is one of the greatest of the world's aestheticians belonged to that century. His famous work *Dhvanyāloka* has an equally famous commentary called *Lochana* by Abhinavagupta. He showed that *dhvani* (suggestiveness) is the soul of art. Rajasekhara belonged to the 10th century and was the author of *Kāvya Mimamsa*. Dhananjaya's famous work on dramaturgy (*Dasarūpaka*) and Mukula Bhatta's *Abhidha*



*vritti* *Matruka* belong to the 10th century A.D. To the same century belongs the great work *Vakrokti Jivita* by Kuntaka who held that *vakrokti* (charming and figurative and unfamiliar description) is the essence of poesy. Mahima Bhatta's *Vyaktiviveka*, Bhoja's *Sarasvathi Kantabharana*, and Kshemendra's *Auchitya vichara charcha* and *Kavi Kantabharana* belong to the 11th century A.D. Kshemendra held that *auchitya* (appropriateness) is of the essence of *Rasa*. To the same century belonged Mammata who is one of the greatest of the aestheticians of the world and whose great work was *Kāvya Prakasa*. Ruyyaka, Hemachendra, and Vāgbhata are great aesthetical writers belonging to the 12th century. Amarachandra, Deveswara, Bhanudatta and Vidhyadhara belonged to the 13th century. To the same century belonged the famous works on aesthetics—Jayadeva's *Chandrāloka* and Visvanatha's *Sāhitya darpana*. Appaya Dixita's famous commentary *Kuvalayānanda* was written to elucidate Jayadeva's *Chandrāloka*. He belonged to the 16th century. He discussed nearly 124 figures of speech—which is the largest number discussed in any work on poetics. Vāgbhata's *Kavyānusāsana* and Vidyanatha's *Pratāparudriya* belong to the 14th century. The last great classical writer on Aesthetics is Jagannatha who wrote *Rasagangādhara* in the seventeenth century. Later writers are Govinda the author of *Kāvya Pradipa*, Singabhupala, who is the author of *Rasārṇava Sadhakara*, Rupa Goswami who is the author of *Nātaka Chandrika* and *Ujjvala Nilamani*, Kavi Karnapura who is the author of *Alamkara Kausthubha*, and others. Rajachudamani Dixita, the author of *Kāvya Darpana*, belonged to the 17th century A.D. The *Sāhitya Sāra* of Achyuta Raja belongs to the 18th century A.D. The names of nearly 900 works on Aesthetics are known but many of the works are not extant and available.

Thus the evolution of Sanskrit Aesthetics is a most remarkable chapter in the evolution of universal aesthetics and has had no peer or parallel anywhere else in the world. Aesthetics are known as *Alamkāra* and *Sāhitya*. I have shown how the *Rasa* school was the earliest to rise. Then came the emphasis on *Alamkāra* by the *alamkāra* school (consisting of Bhamaha and Dandi and Rudrata and Prateeharenduraja), the emphasis on *riti* (style) by the *riti* school of Vāmana, and the emphasis on *Vakrokti* by *Vakrokti* school of Kuntala. The gamut became complete. It was reserved for Ānanda Vardhana to complete the octave in his emphasis on *Rasa-Dhvani*. Suggestiveness of *rasa* was shown by him to be the soul of art.



The vernaculars of India have been dominated by Sanskrit even in the realm of aesthetics, as Sanskrit is the real thread of the garland of the living languages in India. In Tamil Nād aesthetics (ani) are elaborated in a work called *Dandi Alamkâram* which is based on the Sanskrit work of Dandi. We do not find in it any new fruitful idea as regards the soul of Art. The entire possibilities of aesthetic experience had been charted already in Sanskrit.

Just as Indian metaphysics and Indian life felt the pressure of inner evolution and outer impact, so also did Indian æsthetics feel the forces and give responses in adequate measure. Buddhism and Islam and Christianity brought their quotas of æsthetical ideas which were gladly accepted. The Dhyâni Buddha, the Stupas and the Viharas, Islamic architecture culminating in the Taj, the evolution of the North Indian music, the Gothic architecture of the churches, and other manifestations of æsthetical evolution have become integral portions of the Indian concept of the beautiful. English literature has had a great effect on the Indian vernacular literatures. The modern æsthetic movements in the west have had their repercussions here and will give us that hold on reality and that love of external nature which in the later centuries seem to have been becoming less and less in Indian literature and art. But all the same the ancient and fundamental elements of the Indian concept of the beautiful are powerful even to-day and shine out in the poetry and music of Tagore and in the paintings of the Bengal school and in the yet vital architecture and sculpture and iconography of South India and her wonderful and divine music as given to the world by Dixitar and Tyagaraja Swami and must be preserved and perfected for the happiness and glory of India and for the enrichment of universal thought.

I may refer in conclusion to what is as yet an obscure chapter in the chapter of universal art, viz., the influence exercised by Indian art outside India. I shall show in later chapters how in Java, in Bali, in Cambodia, and in Eastern Asia generally Indian art-concepts and art-motifs had a dominant influence. Even distant China and Japan felt the influence of Indian Art. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says : "The leading motifs of Chinese and Japanese building art of the pagoda and torii—are also of Indian origin." (The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon page 117). The Greek art certainly influenced Indian art to some extent in technique and in execution though not in regard to its vital art-ideas. It certainly influenced Gāndhāran art. But the debt which Europe



owes to Indian art is greater than India's debt to Greece in respect of art. Not only did Persia in the time of Darius import Indian artists to design and build and decorate his palace at Susa. Not only were Indian artists sent by the Pândyan king to Ceylon. Mr. Havell points out how when the Huns and Mongols overspread Asia and Europe they took Indian craftsmen abroad. He says: "Indian idealism during the greater part of this time was the dominant note in the art of Asia which was thus brought into Europe; and when we find a perfectly oriental atmosphere and strange echoes of Eastern symbolism in the mediaeval cathedrals of Europe and see their structural growth gradually blossoming with all the exuberance of Eastern imagery, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Gothic architecture and Gothic handicraft owe very much to the absorption by the *bauhütten* of Germany, and other Western craft-guilds, of Asiatic art and science, brought by the thousands of Asiatic craftsmen who entered Europe in the first millennium of the Christian era". He says further: "Byzantine art and Gothic art derived their inspiration from the same source—the impact of Asiatic thought upon the civilisation of the Roman Empire. The first shows the effect upon the art of the Greek and Latin races, the other its influence upon the Romanesque art of Teutonic and Celtic races. The spirit of Indian idealism breathes in the mosaics of St. Mark's at Venice, just as it shines in the mystic splendours of the Gothic cathedrals; through the delicate tracery of their jewelled windows, filled with the stories of saints and martyrs; in all their richly sculptured arches, fairy vaulting and soaring pinnacles and spires. The Italian Renaissance marks the reversion of Christian art to the pagan ideals of Greece, and the capture of art by the bookmen, leading to our present dilettantism and archæological views of art. When a new inspiration comes into European art it will come again from the East; but what irony there is in the present spectacle of the Christian nations of Europe, in the twentieth century, unconsciously using their influence to paganise the art of Asia!"

How does Indian Art stand to-day? In architecture we have arrived at the age of confusion of styles and crudeness of idea and execution. The Indian towns and cities of to-day take pride in having buildings constructed in the European style which is not calculated to bring into being comfort or loveliness. Mr. Havell says: "If art is the mirror of the age, it must always be humiliating to any artistic Englishman to contemplate our miserable make-believe Gothic and make-believe classic cathedrals, churches,



colleges, schools, offices of state, and historical monuments, and compare their banality, ugliness and squalor with the dignity, strength and greatness revealed in the splendid memorials of the Moghul Empire". The best architects and sculptors yet existing in India were not utilised in constructing the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta or the New Delhi buildings. It is not only architecture and sculpture that are in such a pitiable plight. Indian painting was in an equally bad plight and is only now, after Ravi Varma brought a new passion for Indian subjects and Rabindranath Tagore revived the ancient spiritual suggestiveness, holding out a promise of great days yet to come. Indian music has fortunately been preserved pure and undefiled even to this day, mainly owing to the birth of a succession of geniuses of the first order in recent times. But Indian poetry is in a very bad way indeed. The great traditions and the wonderful æsthetics of India have been forgotten. Sanskrit and the vernaculars are woefully neglected. The Indian universities of to-day do not foster Indian poetry or art. Mr. Havell says: "Indian art was born in the pilgrim's camp and nurtured by the highest spiritual ideals; it can never thrive in the sickly artificial atmosphere of the European drawing-room. We have driven it from the great cities of India, it has no part in our civic life, and its last refuge is now in the villages and towns remote from European influence. But this last refuge will always be its surest stronghold; when art in Europe gets back to the villages the real Renaissance will have begun. In the villages of India the true artistic spirit still survives, and, if we and educated Indians would know what true Indian art is, we must go there, where the heart of India beats, where the voices of her dead myriads still are heard, and learn a lesson that neither London nor Paris can teach". Emerson says that art does not come at the call of a legislature. But in India life as well as legislature must combine to call Art in a devout spirit and then surely Art will come and rekindle beauty and power in our motherland.



## CHAPTER VI

### ASPECTS OF THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL

I have thus far shown the essence and the evolution of the Indian concept of the beautiful. Before I proceed to take up the discussion of the fundamentals of the various fine arts in India and especially of Poetics which had the highest degree of elaboration in India, I shall describe the various aspects of the arts in India and the various directions in which our sense of the beautiful expressed itself in memorable and admirable ways. The Indian concept of the thirty-two *sāstras* (sciences) and the sixty-four *kalās* (arts) is an inclusive idea, the figure sixty-four being merely illustrative and not exhaustive, and shows to what a height of development India carried her evolution of the useful and decorative and fine arts by attaining equal excellence in the industrial arts and in the imaginative arts.

The various aspects of art are the useful or industrial arts, the decorative arts, and the fine arts. In industrial arts beauty is present but the primary consideration is utility. In decorative arts utility is present but the primary consideration is beauty. In the fine arts we have the worship of beauty for its own sake, and utility may be a bye-product. If we study the various industrial and decorative arts of India such as gold and silver and brass and copper and bellmetal work, carpets, woven stuff, wood work, inlaid work, enamelling, ivory work, jewellery, lacquer work, plates, pottery, etc., we find a fine sense of loveliness and a rare power of design and inventiveness and a remarkable deftness and delicacy of touch.

I shall take here only a few of these arts by way of illustration because it will require many volumes to deal with them fully and the main aim of this work is to deal with the Indian fine arts. In respect of woodwork, the Indians excelled in wooden domestic architecture, sculpture, image-making, etc. Travancore excels in this work. Roofing is often highly elaborated in structure and ornament with carved rafters and lovely pendants. It is however on pillars that the artists have lavished their skill. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says: "The capitals or brackets are shaped into pendant lotus and tasselled forms, often massed one above the other, and sometimes provided with lateral struts carved



as figures or horsemen or elephants. Similar forms are characteristic of doorways" (Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon, page 164). We find elaborately carved and panelled doors in Punjab, Rajputana, Gujarat, Mysore and Travancore. We find excellent carving in the balconies and window frames also. The art of perforated windows was developed as it was desired to have light and art without destroying privacy. The perforated designs are geometrical or floral or include animal figures. The Indians made also wooden bridges and excelled in the construction of wooden ships. They excelled also in the making of wooden chariots and cars. They did not make much domestic furniture as the people generally squatted on the floor. But cots and swings of wood were often made and used. The most remarkable examples of woodwork were, however, the musical instruments such as vina, tambura, drums, etc. Equally remarkable is the art of inlaying wood with brass and ivory.

Ivory work was equally ancient and excellent. *Mrichchakatika* refers a high ivory portal in the house of Vasantasena. Ivory pillars decorated with rows of images are referred to in the *Mahāvamsa*. Ivory puppets are stated in Vatsyayana's *Kāma Sutra* and in the Bhavabhūti's *Mālatimadhava*. The latter work also describes the cheeks of Kerala women as being fair like cut ivory. Travancore is the home *par excellence* of ivory art work even to-day. The Sinhalese ivory art is similar to the Travancore art. In the Tanjore palace there is a small car with ivory rails and overlaid with ivory plaques. The Tanjore artists decorate vina and tambura by running coloured lac into engraving work done on an ivory surface. In Vizagapatam and Mysore we see veneered ivory work and ivory-staining. In Rajputana and in Kandy ivory boxes, etc., are decorated with lines, circles and dots. Lac inlay is used to decorate shell and ivory bracelets and shell conches. Mysore has got ivory inlay art work and black lac inlay work. Ivory is used to decorate doors. Ivory bangles are made in Jodhpur. Ivory inlaid on wood is a Punjab art as well. The most beautiful examples of this work are the inlaid doors of the main entrance to the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

Even more remarkable is the Indian skill in polishing and piercing precious stones. The Indians excelled also in the making of beads of ruby, sapphire, crystal, etc. We find also painted unglazed and glazed earthenware. In South India we find especially in the groups of Pāṇḍava heroes huge earthenware figures of horses and elephants. The art of decorating wooden



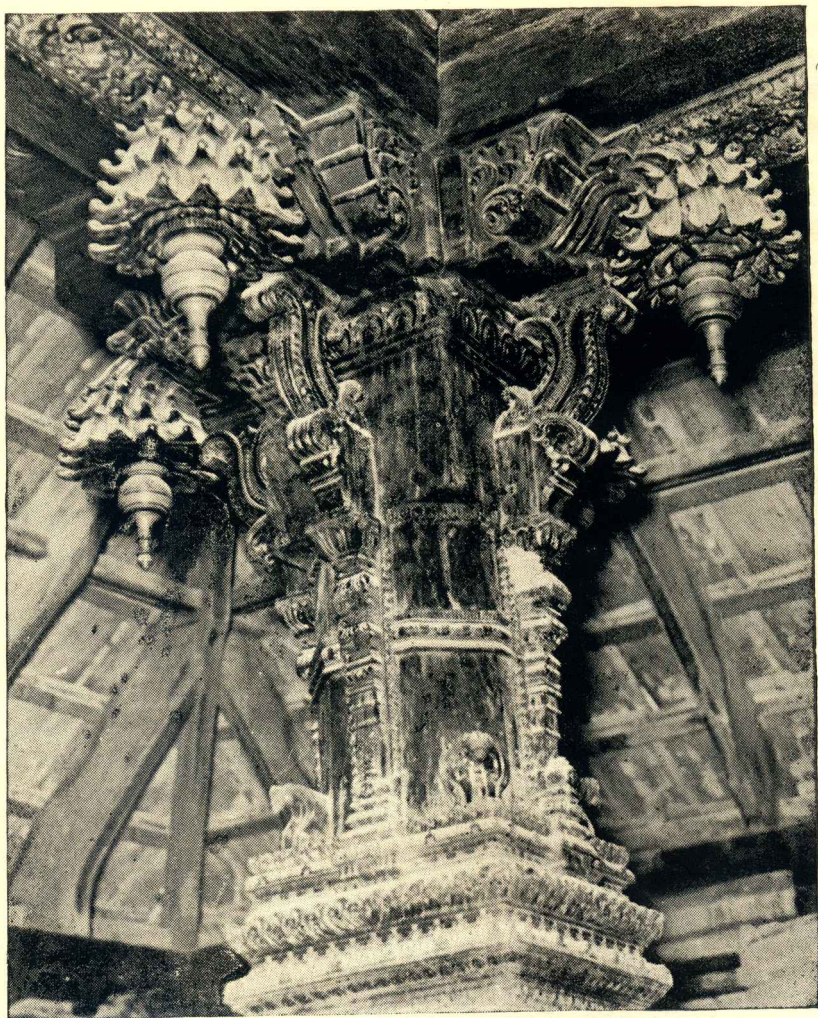
and other surfaces with *gesso* is also interesting. Artistic lac-work is found in coloured toys, etc. In Jaipur a coating of several layers of lac of diverse colours is laid on, thus enhancing the colour effect. In Ceylon coloured lac is drawn out by the finger-nail into long threads and applied to a warm surface, so as to create patterns of intricate loveliness. The artists in metal work also have achieved excellent results in India. The art of carving steel attained great excellence in Tanjore and in Rajputana. The art of encrusting, i.e., the art of inlay and overlay of one metal on another flourishes in Travancore and in Punjab. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says : "Gold or silver on steel, and silver or brass on copper, are the usual combinations." Bidri ware made of an alloy of zinc and lead and tin is another artistic type. Very beautiful copper and brass and bell-metal vessels and brass toys have been produced down to this day. Brass lamps of a very artistic workmanship are very common. Silver plates, jugs, trays, tumblers, bowls, etc., are equally common. Bronze, copper, brass, silver and gold images are made. The enamelling art also flourishes in India. Gold and silver jewellery also is often work of great artistic loveliness. Sir George Birdwood says that the Hindus "by their consummate skill through knowledge and appreciation of the conventional decoration of surface, contrive to give to the least possible weight of metal, and to gems, commercially absolutely valueless, the highest possible artistic value. '... This character of Indian jewellery is in remarkable contrast with modern European jewellery, in which the object of the jeweller seems to be to bestow the least amount of work on the greatest amount of metal. The Indian artistic technique, on the other hand, is to bestow the greatest quantity of work on the least quantity of surface'".

Quite as excellent work has been done in weaving, embroidery, etc. Cotton and silk and woollen fabrics are mentioned even in the Vedas. The cotton fabrics were woven so fine that the finest muslins were called by such poetic names as "running water" and "woven air" and "evening dew". In South India muslins and silks woven with gold thread are made for turbans and scarves. Excellent dyeing has been long known in India. Mr. Elphinstone says : "The brilliancy and permanency of many of their dyes are not yet equalled in Europe". We have had also dye-painting and cotton printing, the former flourishing in Masulipatam. Mention should also be made of Kashmir shawls and wonderful carpets manufactured by Indian workmen.









TRAVANCORE WOOD CARVING



This is hardly the occasion to go in detail into the history of the development of these arts but anyone who studies it will find that the arts and handicrafts of India have had a remarkable growth and evolution. The Indian eye is very sensitive to colour and design and the Indian finger is deft at giving expression to mental creations of loveliness. But unfortunately the Indian *intelligentsia*, despite their protestations of patriotism, have no real and practical love for the Indian arts and industries. The result is that one by one these great industrial and decorative arts of India are dying from lack of nourishment and encouragement. The Europeans are coming to realise that their tendency to overdressing needs to be curbed and that their dress lacks fine curves and flowing grace and is more sombre than gay. The dress reform movement is active there. Professor Ross calls the Indian saree as "one of the beautiful types of women's garbs" and hopes that "Indian women will never yield to the blandishments of western fashions". But the Indians—even women—go in more and more largely for the European styles of dress which are being outlived and modified or discarded there. The reactions of this suicidal policy on our sense of beauty and on our weavers and their ideals are better imagined than described. I have taken dress only as an illustration. The degradation and deterioration of taste that is proceeding apace in all directions is visible to all and is lamentable in the extreme.

But I am specially concerned here with the Indian fine arts and the fundamental æsthetic concepts underlying them. Even in the fine arts there is a hierarchy. They have been classified into representational arts like sculpture and painting and poetry and non-representational arts like music and architecture. They have been classified also as spatial arts like painting and sculpture and architecture and temporal arts like literature and music. In architecture and sculpture the medium is intractable and stubborn, and hence in them the conquests of soul over matter, though wonderful, are not complete. In painting the medium is line and colour and the instruments are the canvas and the brush. Hence it has a subtler medium and a wider range. In music form and idea are in a state of perfect identity. In it we have the most intangible and subtle medium, i.e., the medium of sound. Carlyle says well: "Music is a kind of inarticulate unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the infinite and lets us for moments gaze into that." It can bear the soul on its wings to the very throne of Grace. It can express, however incompletely, the inexpressible. But it is in poetry that we find the utmost expres-



siveness. It can be architectonic and statuesque and pictorial and musical and yet be more and be itself. Its power depends on its vision and expression of the Ideal. Its medium is words which are charged and electrified by contact with the hearts of generations of men and women who were dynamos of emotion. Walter Pater says that "painting, music and poetry, with their endless power of complexity, are the special arts of the romantic and modern ages".

Architecture and Sculpture and Painting are the arts of the eye. Music is the art of the ear. Poetry is the art of the mind. Out of the human senses, the most spiritual are the ear and the eye. The eye has a wider range than the ear. It is a larger window for looking at the multi-coloured and variegated and wonderful universe. Though the ear is a window nearer the *sanctum sanctorum* of the soul, the range of its outlook on the universe is less than that of the eye. The phenomena of sight kindle a wider range and variety of emotions, though the phenomena of hearing can bring into existence a subtler and higher order of feelings and realisations. In poetry the appeal is to the mind which is both the inner eye and the inner ear and is yet very much more. It has memory and anticipation and it can vision the Ideal and it revels in creativeness. To the joys of sight and sound, the poet adds the joys of the soul,

"The light that never was on sea or land  
The consecration and the poet's dream".

I shall deal in the coming chapters with the Indian fine arts as the manifestations of the Indian concept of the beautiful and especially with its manifestation in Indian Poetry and Drama. Each fine art has had a vast development and can be adequately dealt with only by an elaborate treatise. But even in a tiny work enough indications could be given to show how in every one of the fine arts in India we have a remarkable blossoming of the deepseated and fundamental æsthetical ideas of India. I may here refer to the evidence given by Robert Richards about the Indians before the British Commission in 1831: "Let it be recollected that in many branches of art their skill is absolutely unrivalled. Several of their fabrics, such as muslins, shawls, embroidered silks, handkerchiefs, etc., together with examples of workmanship in gold, silver and ivory have never yet been equalled by British architects. Their architecture, though peculiar, is of a superior order, and in the construction of great buildings, they have exerted powers of moving and elevating large masses, which are unknown to European architects".



## CHAPTER VII.

### INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* is even to-day one of the greatest books on the significance of the art of Architecture. He says: "Architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by men, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power and pleasure." He describes the Seven Lamps of Architecture as Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. It is not the test of utility that is of importance in a fine art. It is the test of Truth and Beauty that is the vital test in regard to it. Art is prepared to use the best and most precious things for producing pure and disinterested delight in man by using them for the service of God. Ruskin says well that "domestic luxury must be sacrificed to national magnificence." That has been the secret of the greatness of the Indian Art of Architecture. It is not that God wants a grand house to live in but it is that man finds his truest happiness only in dedicating his best work to God. Ruskin says well: "The Church has no need of any visible splendours; her power is independent of them; her purity is in some degree opposed to them. The simplicity of a pastoral sanctuary is lovelier than the majesty of an urban temple, and it may be more than questioned whether, to the people, such majesty has ever been the source of any increase of effective piety; *but to the builders it has been, and must ever be.* It is not the Church we want, but the sacrifice; not the emotion of admiration but the act of adoration; not the gift but the giving". It was the true spirit of intense and concentrated and combined devotion that was responsible for the vast extent and unparalleled richness of decoration which are characteristic of ancient Indian temples. Such faith and devotion are hardly seen to-day. As Ruskin says modern builders are capable of little and do not even do the little that they can. Where are there to-day the architectural achievements which he called "fair fronts of variegated mosaic", "those vaulted gates trellised with close leaves, those window-labyrinths of twisted tracery and starry light, those misty masses of multitudinous pinnacle and diademed tower?" He says well: "They have taken with them to the graves their powers, their honours and their errors; but they have left us their adoration",



To-day that spirit of adoration is dwindling and disappearing. Private edifices are cared for more than the house of God.

Every nation has its special styles of architecture. While learning elements of beauty and power from other styles attained by other nations, it must preserve its own innate power and loveliness, "all the borrowed elements being subordinated to its own primal unchanged life." It must aim also at perfect finish. Only then can it be what Ruskin calls a living architecture. He says well: "We have certain work to do for our bread, and that is to be done strenuously; other work to do for our delight, and that is to be done heartily; neither is to be done by halves and shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all".

Thus the element of adoration and the element of originality are of the essence of great architecture, and characterise Indian Architecture. The great Indian builders of the past were not, like the men of to-day, obsessed by their own petty conflicts and pleasures, but they, while they had their own share of the frailties of life, thought of the future and thought and worked greatly for its sake. Ruskin says well that "the earth is an entail, not a possession". But modern man neither realises this truth nor acts upon it. Ruskin says: "Every human action gains in honour, in grace, in all true magnificence, by its regard to things that are to come. It is the far sight, the quiet and confident patience, that, above all other attributes, separate man from man, and near him to his Maker; and there is no action nor art, whose majesty we may not measure by this test. Therefore when we build, let us think that we build for ever". It was this spirit which inspired Indian architecture in the past and led to its peerless achievements. Ruskin says well: "The greatest glory of a building is not in its stones nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condescension, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity".

It seems to me that of all the Seven Lamps of Architecture, the lamp that illumines Indian Architecture most is the Lamp of Obedience. Modern life neither understands nor values it because of its blind worship of so-called liberty. Ruskin deprecates what he calls as "that treacherous phantom which men call liberty". Obedience is not the negation of freedom but is the harmony of law and liberty. It is not the negation of originality but is the



harmony of originality and convention. Self-expression is not opposed to self-discipline. It is because of this great quality of Obedience that Indian architecture is so great and withal so Indian to its very core. Well does Ferguson say in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*: "By rising to this wider range we shall perceive that architecture is as many-sided as human nature itself, and learn how few feelings and how few aspirations of the human heart and brain there are that cannot be expressed by its means".

Architecture is the mother art. The other fine arts (sculpture, painting, music, dance and poetry) were born in it and live around it. From the earliest times architecture outgrew utilitarian limits and lived in the realm of the beautiful. Temples, palaces and tombs took on a grandiose aspect, and aimed at mass and stability and achieved grandeur of dimensions. Even in the ancient Cromlechs and Dolmens of imperishable stone, often sublime by sheer weight and size, we find a desire to lift art above the decree of the short duration of life. It is very likely that the central idea of immortality, which filled the mind of Egypt, inspired her architecture and sculpture as well and gave the world the Sphinx and the Pyramids. The Greeks threw their colonnades around the shrine with a remarkable and perfect sense of proportion. Within the porch of the Delphi national temple are found two mottoes comprising four words which show the essence of the Hellenic mind. They are: Know thyself, and in all things moderation. This quality of self-realisation by harmony and measure is the vital quality of Greek architecture and sculpture.

After the advent of Christianity, a new sense of the soul's adventurous quest filled the minds of men and found a suitable artistic expression in the Gothic spire. Great schools of sculpture and painting arose. The Renaissance, however, brought the Greek note in again. In Gothic architecture the spire and the arch brought new elements to the beauty of straight lines and pillared columns so characteristic of Greek art. The result was a vast and complex and superb style of architectural art. The Saracenic style combines columns and arches and domes in a way of its own. But its profusion of ornamentation excluded every sort of animal representation and depended for effect on its variety of lines and forms and colours. In modern Europe and America we do not see any clear or fine notes in the arts of architecture and sculpture. We have more massive edifices than were ever known to the ancient and mediæval world. American skyscrapers seem to take heaven by storm. There is an utter confusion of



standards and traditions and values and ideals in those arts in the west to-day.

In regard to Indian Art Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami classifies them into six schools, viz., (1) Early Buddhist (B.C. 300 to 50 A.D.) consisting of pillar edicts and stupas and railings and Mathura fragments and Amaravati and Bharhut stupas and Sanchi gates; (2) Kusan or Graeco-Buddhist Art (50 to 320 A.D.) consisting of Gandhara sculptures and early painting at Ajanta and in Orissa; (3) Gupta Art (320 to 600 A.D.) consisting of stupa, etc., at Sarnath and sculpture and painting at Ajanta and painting and secular architecture at Sigiriya in Ceylon; (4) Classic Indian (600 to 850 A.D.) consisting of the latest and best paintings at Ajanta and sculpture and architecture at Ellora and Elephanta and Mahabalipuram and Anuradhapura (Ceylon) and Borobudur (Java); (5) Mediaeval Art (9th to 18th centuries) in Rajputana, Travancore, Ceylon, etc., consisting of Tanjore sculpture and architecture (10th to 12th centuries), Halebid (12th and 13th centuries), Vijayanagar art (14th to 16th centuries), Madura (17th century), Mughal painting and architecture (16th to 18th centuries), Rajaputana painting and architecture (upto 19th century), (6) Modern Art.

In Indian architecture, as in architecture elsewhere in the world, the "wood age" preceded the "stone age," and religion was the builder of the building art. Travancore has attained special artistic achievements in constructions made of wood. The Rig Veda refers to iron towers and to "a house made of a hundred stones." Probably India began with cave shrines. She then passed on in course of time to the grand palaces and temples described in the epics of India. The Ramayana refers to Devatâ-yatanas (temples) and assembly halls (Sabhas) and palaces (Prâsadas). It refers also to Chaityas (relic shrines). The Mahabharata refers to a Jatugriha (a pavilion of lac). It refers also to a Sabha (Palace audience hall) built for the Pandavas by Maya who is the reputed author of a famous work on architecture (Silpa Sastra) and who is said to be the architect for the Danavas or Asuras and the father of Mandodari who was the Queen of Râvana.

It is not possible to refer here to the Sumerian architecture and the architectural and other remains found in Harappa in the Punjab and in Mohenjo-Daro in Sind. The recent researches in Indo-Sumerian antiquities show that the Sumerian culture was born in



the Indus valley. Marshall says that "there the possibility is clearly suggested of India proving ultimately to be the cradle of their civilisation, which in its turn lay at the root of Babylonian, Assyrian and the Western Asiatic culture generally".

Fergusson, whose works on architecture in general and on Indian architecture in particular, are famous and well-known, speaks about "the architectural magnificence of the Hindus" and refers to "the extraordinary elegance of detail and propriety of design which pervades all the architectural achievements of the Hindus". He says in his *history of Indian and Eastern Architecture, Volume II, pages 184-5*: "Like all people untrammelled by rules derived from incongruous objects, and gifted with a feeling for the beautiful, they adorn whatever they require, and convert every object, however utilitarian in its purposes, into an object of beauty. They long ago found out that it is not temples and palaces alone that are capable of such display, but that everything which man makes may become beautiful, provided the hand of taste be guided by sound judgment and that the architect never forgets what the object is and never conceals the constructive exigencies of the building itself. It is simply this inherent taste and love of beauty, which the Hindus seem always to have possessed, directed by unaffected honesty of purpose, which enables them to erect, even at the present day, buildings that will bear comparison with the best of those erected in Europe during the middle Ages."

Regarding Buddhist architecture, James Fergusson says: "India owes the introduction of the use of stone for architectural purposes, as she does that of Buddhism as a state religion, to the great Asoka". Buddhist architecture consists of *Stambhas* or *lats*, *Stupas* (relic mounds), *rails*, *Chaityas* (assembly halls) and *Viharas* (monasteries). The Asoka *Lats* or pillars bore inscriptions conveying Asoka's edicts to his subjects in regard to Buddhist Dharma and especially in regard to tenderness to animal life. Many *Stupas* have now ceased to exist. Fergusson says when speaking of the Amaravathi *Stupas* and rails and the sculpture therein: "The degree of perfection reached by the Art of Sculpture at Amaravathi may probably be considered as the culminating point attained by that art in India". He says about the rail at Barhut that it "is perhaps the most interesting monument—certainly in a historical point of view—known to exist in India." Equally interesting are the rails at Mathura and Sanchi and Amaravathi. The *Chaityas* correspond to the Christian churches. The oldest

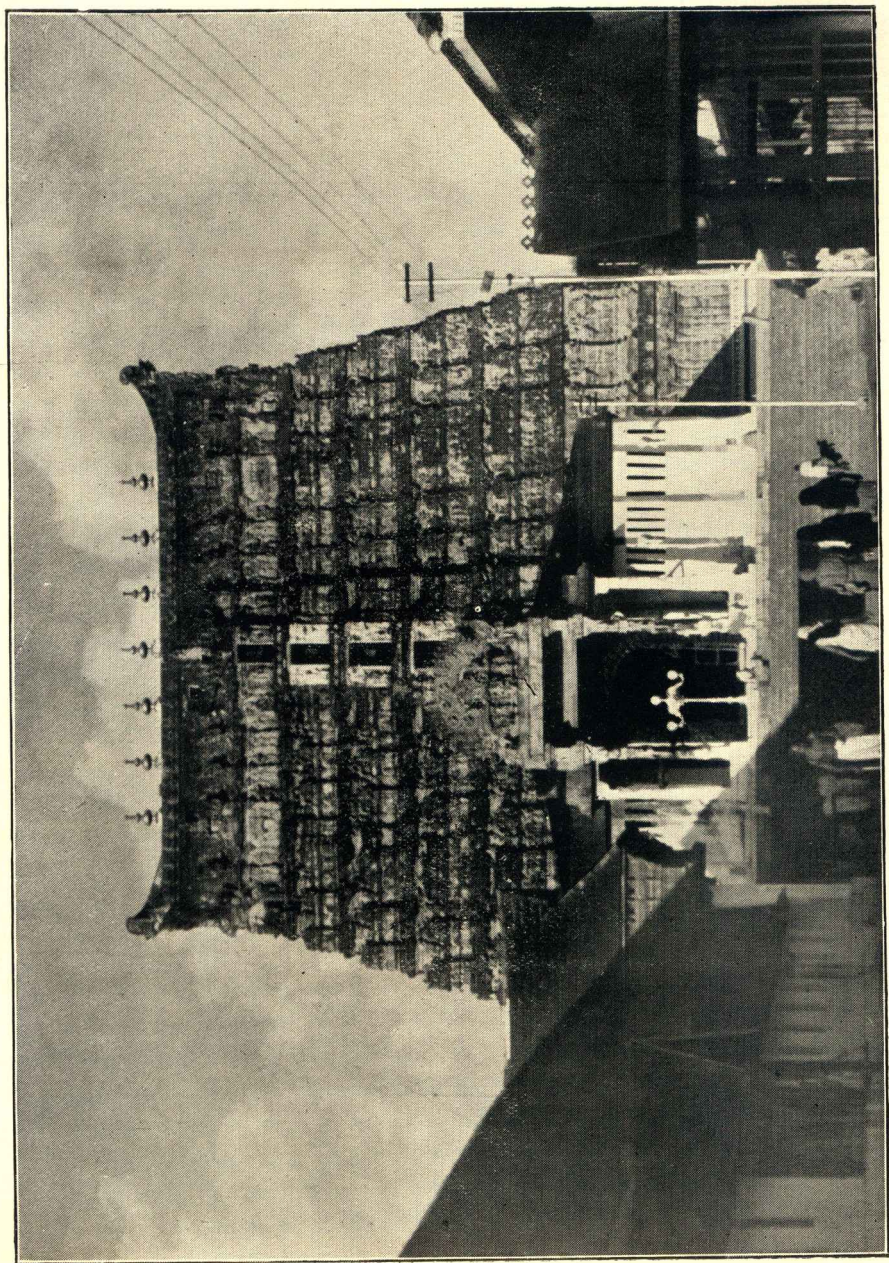


caves are in Bihar near Rajagriha (now Rajgir) which was the capital of Bengal at the time of the advent of Buddha. There are six or seven important Chaitya caves in the Bombay Presidency. They were all excavated before the Christian Era. The oldest of them is at Bhaja which is four miles south of the great Karle cave in the Bor Ghat. The Chiatya caves at Bedsa and Nasik and Ajanta and Junnar are wonderful but the best of all are at Karle and Elura and Kanheri. Buddhist *Vihâras* or *Sanghâramas* are monasteries. The best of them are found in Nasik and Ajanta. The latter have got the world-famed frescoes which represent the Buddhist stories "on a scale and with a distinctness found nowhere else in India". Fergusson says: "Caves Nos. 1 and 2 are among the most richly sculptured of the caves. The facade, indeed, of No. 1 is the most elaborate and beautiful of its class at Ajanta, and, with the corresponding caves at the opposite end, conveys a higher idea of the perfection to which decorative sculpture had attained at that age than anything else at Ajanta". Mention may also be made here of the Buddhist monuments at Anuradhapura and Polannaruva. As Fergusson says: "The Buddhist architecture, with its sculptures and paintings remain, and bear the indelible impress of the thoughts, the feelings and the aspirations of those who executed them".

While speaking about Buddhist architecture, I may say a few words about Gândhâran architecture. I shall discuss Gândhâran sculpture in the next chapter and show that the view which says that it vitally influenced Indian sculpture is wrong. In Gândhâran monasteries, we find the traces of the Greek influences. Fergusson says that the Hellenic influence prevailed strongly in Gândhâra in the first few centuries after Christ. But the main stream of Hindu architecture flowed in its own way uninfluenced by Gândhâran motifs and methods and was not influenced for better or for worse by Greek artistic methods and ideals.

There are also Jaina caves and temples. There is an old Jaina temple at Lakkundi. Fergusson says: "The grouping together of their temples into what may be called "Cities of Temples" is a peculiarity which the Jains have practised to a greater extent than the followers of any other religion in India". There are nearly five hundred temples in the two summits of the Satrunjaya or Palitana Hill. "In 1889 the number of separate images counted was 6449 exclusive of smaller ones on slabs". None can eat or drink or sleep on the sacred hill. The chief temple is dedicated





SRI PADMANABHASWAMI TEMPLE TOWER (*Trancore*)







to Rishabhanatha who was the first of the twenty-four Jaina Tirthankaras. In the hill of Girnar, near Jonagadh, we have the Jain Temple dedicated to Neminatha. The two white marble Jain temples in Mount Abu are "unrivalled for minute delicacy of carving and beauty of detail." We see modern Jain temples at Sonagarh near Datia in Bundalkhand and at Mukhtagiri, near Gawilgarh, 13 miles north-east of Elichpur in Berar. In regard to South Indian Jaina architecture Fergusson says: "The first peculiarity that strikes one as distinguishing the Jaina architecture of the south from that of the north, is the division of the southern temples into two classes, called Bastis and Bettas. The former are temples in the usual acceptance of the word, as understood in the north, and, as there, always containing an image of one of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, which is the object there worshipped. The latter are unknown in the north and are courtyards usually on a hill or rising ground, open to the sky and containing images, not of a Tirthankara, but of Gomata or Gomateswara so-called, though he is not known to the Jains in the north"..... The statues of this Jaina Saint are among the most remarkable works of native art in the south of India". The image at Sravana Belagola is 58 feet high; that at Karkala in South Kanara, is 41 feet 5 inches in height; and that at Yenur in South Kanara is 35 feet high. The images belong to the Digambara sect of the Jains and are entirely naked. They have twigs or creeping plants round their arms and legs and have also got serpents at their feet. They symbolise the ideal ascetic "standing in meditation until the anthills arose at his feet and creeping plants grew round his limbs".

I must however point out that Fergusson is in error in treating Buddhist architecture and Jain architecture as being essentially different from each other or from what he is pleased to call Hindu architecture. All of them are branches from a parental stem and have too many common characteristics to justify the theory that they are divergent and separate styles of architecture. The craftsmanship (viz. the principle of construction) and even the symbolism and suggestiveness were essentially similar and even identical in all the styles. Mr. Havell says with truth and perception: "Buddhist art was at the same time and place also as Jain art and Hindu or Brahminical art. India has never known any style that can be called architectural but one and that is Indo-Aryan." He points out further that "the styles of Fergusson, whether they are labelled Buddhist, Jaina, or Hindu or Indo-Aryan, Chalukyan, or



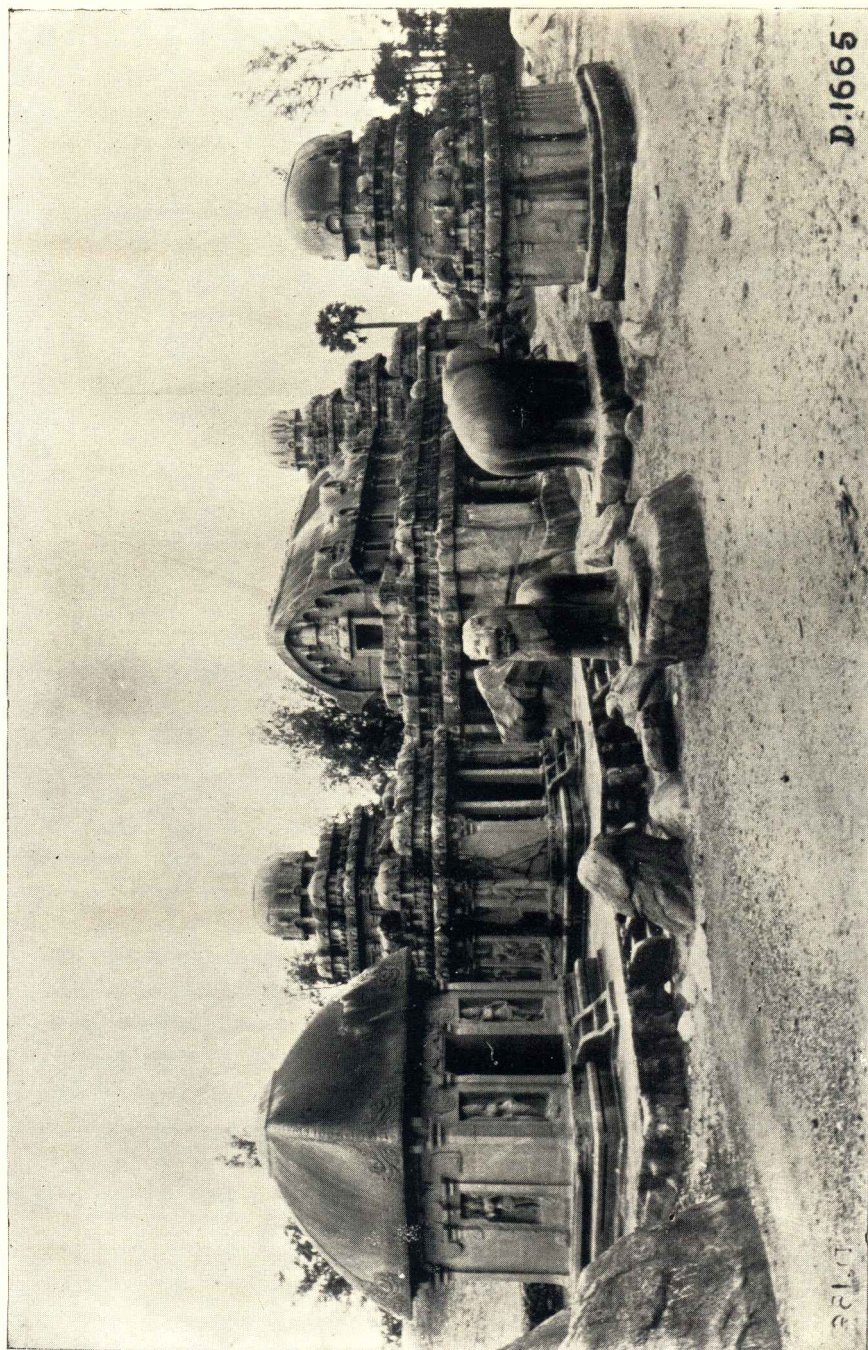
Dravidian, are classifications all more or less false as history and misleading as indications of derivation." He says : "Fergusson's great pioneer work was fatally biassed by the fundamental misconception that the history of Indian sculpture, which is the history of the Indian temple building, from the third century A.D. was 'written in decay' and by his total failure to read the symbolical language of Indian Art". Fergusson was further in error in treating Buddhist art as more ancient than Brahminical art instead of treating it as a derivation from the latter and in dating the history of Hindu temples from about the seventh century A.D. Mr. Havell himself has in his turn fallen into many wrong assumptions and patent errors. He imagines a cleavage between Aryans and Dravidians and between Kshatriyas and Brahmins and did not possess the key to the comprehension of Indian symbolism in art. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami also has fallen into a fatal error in assuming that the Indo-Aryans borrowed most of their architectural ideas from the Non-Aryan tribes. The fact is that though a great mass of materials has accumulated we are yet waiting for the arrival of the genius who will be able to master them and show in a natural and unbiassed manner the historic evolution of the arts of architecture and sculpture in India.

Hindu temples in North India are numerous and elegant but are small and have not got the massive architectural beauty of the Hindu temples in South India. It is preferable to use the terms North Indian style of Architecture and South Indian style of architecture as I do not believe that it is correct to speak of Aryans and Dravidians as separate ethnic stocks. Fergusson says that the Jains adopted the North Indian style of architecture. He says : "It still remains to be ascertained from what original form the curvilinear square tower could have arisen. There is nothing in Buddhist, or any other art, at all like it". The *Silpa Sastras* (or books on architecture) refer to three distinctive types of temples, viz., *Nâgara*, *Drâvida*, and *Vesara*. In the *Nagara* and *Dravida* types, there is a *sikhara* (tower) over *garbhagriha* or sanctum sanctorum, but the *Vesara* type has a barrel roof and is probably derived from the Buddhist rock-cut cave temples. The *Nâgara* type has a curvilinear *sikhara* ending with a *kalasa* and a spire. Fergusson calls it the Northern or Indian Aryan type. The North Indian style is seen best in Orissa, because in Benares which is the most sacred city in India no vestige of ancient Hindu temples exists owing to the destruction of temples and idols by Muslims. Fergusson says that the great temple at









D.1665

THE FIVE PANDAVA RATHAS (GENERAL VIEW), MAHABALIPURAM,  
CHINGLEPUT DISTRICT (Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



Bhuvaneswar and the temple at Kanatak and the temple of Jagannath at Puri are three of the landmarks in the North Indian style.

In Western India we find the meeting of the North Indian style and the South Indian style. The rock-cut temples at Badami and Ellora and Elephanta are very remarkable. They contain very beautiful sculptures of various Hindu deities. In regard to the temples in Central and Northern India Fergusson says: "There are certainly more than one hundred temples in Central and Northern India which are worthy of being described in detail, and if described and illustrated, would convey a wonderful impression of the fertility in invention of the Hindu mind and of the elegance with which it was capable of expressing itself. None of these temples can make the smallest pretension to rival the great southern examples in scale; they are all, indeed smaller even than the greater of Orissan temples; and while some of them surpass the Orissan temples in elegance of form, many rival them in the profuse elaboration of minute ornamental details".

In regard to North Indian civil architecture Fergusson says: "Another feature by which the northern style is most pleasingly distinguished from the southern, is the number and beauty of the palaces, which are found in all the capitals of the Native States, especially in Rajputana. These are seldom designed with much reference to architectural symmetry or effect, but are nevertheless always picturesque and generally most ornamental objects in the landscape where they are found. As a rule, they are situated on rocky eminences, jutting into or overhanging lakes or artificial pieces of water, which are always pleasing accompaniments to buildings of any sort in that climate; and the way in which they are fitted into the rocks, or seem to grow out of them, frequently leads to the most picturesque combinations".

In South India the science of architecture, like the science of Grammar and other signs and instruments of civilisation, is attributed to Agastya. The story about Agastya having been ordered by Lord Siva to go south when the north was overweighted by the assembled divinities on the occasion of the marriage of Siva and Parvathi shows the southward flow of cultural life in ancient India. I do not hold that this means that there was a separate northern Aryan India and a separate southern Dravidian India. If anything is definitely established by tradition and literature and anthropology and anthropometry and confirmed by history and



archæology and philology, it is the unity of the Indian people both in respect of racial origins and in respect of the present national life. Agastya's coming southwards just like Sri Ramanuja's influencing the thought of Ramananda and Chaitanya shows the forward flow of cultural currents southward and northward in India in the course of the centuries. I have shown this elsewhere with a wealth of detail and demonstration which is necessarily foreign to the scope of this work.

Thirty-two works are ascribed to the sage Agastya. In the Tamil work *Agastya Jnâna*, which is found in the Madras Government Oriental Library, it is said that Lord Siva ordered Agastya to reveal various sciences (sastras) to the Tamil world and that Agastya wrote a work on Alchemy in 100,000 verses, a work on Medicine in 200,000 verses, and a work on Brahma Vidya in 100,000 verses. A work on worship (Pujavidhi) is also attributed to him. His work *Sakalâdhikara* is a work on sculpture. Among the subjects treated in it are *Mânasangraha* (Measurements), *Sthala Pariksha* (choice of site), *Pratima lakshana* (images), *Darusamgraha* (the selection of wood), *Mritsangraha* (the selection of mud) and *Varnasamskara* (mixing of colours). There is another work on sculpture in South India called *Kasyapiya* which is found in the Government Oriental Library at Madras and in Saraswathi Mahal Library at Tanjore. To Maya, about whom I have referred already, is attributed the work called *Mayamata* or *Maya Silpa*. In the Ramayana (51st Sarga in the Kishkinda Kanda) there is a reference to Maya's architectural exploits. In the Brihat Samhita and in the Matsya Purana Nagnajit is referred to as an authority in architecture and iconography. The Sthapa'this of the Tanjore District refer also to a tradition about three renowned artists named Jaya and Parajaya and Vijaya but nothing is known about their works.

The South Indian Shrines are some of them Siva shrines and others Vishnu shrines. Many of them have been in existence from ancient times and have been added to from time to time by kings after kings until we have many peerless and stupendous temples in South India which easily carries off the palm in regard to universal architecture. The Ellora cave temples were cut and formed in the eighth century, while the rock-cut temples there, three of which are Saivite, came into existence in the 6th and 7th centuries.

The South Indian Style of architecture has two forms or aspects to which Fergusson has given the names Dravidian and



Chalukyan. It is unfortunate that he chose the former name which is connected by modern scholarship with a supposed Dravidian race whereas we have in South India not a separate race but only the Hindu people occupying the portion of India known as Deccan or Dravida. This is not the proper place to go into that question and I have done it elsewhere. The Dravidian style includes the Pandya, the Chola, the Pallava, the Vijayanagar and the Naick styles. The name Chalukyan is derived from a royal dynasty. Fergusson says that "it is only a conventional term, derived from the principal known dynasty ruling in that country, applied to a style occupying a borderland between the other two (i.e., the north Indian style and the Dravidian style)".

In the Dravidian style of temple-building, the principal portion is the *Vimāna* which is square in plan and surmounted by a pyramidal roof of one or more storeys containing *kalasas* (gold-plated prominences) at the top and in which is the *garbha griha* containing the *sanctum sanctorum*. We have in front of it the *ardhamantapam* and *Mahamantapam* which are porches leading to the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. We have also the towers (*gopurams*) over the entrance gates and various pillard halls used during various festivals. Every temple has got also a *prākara* or circumambulatory way and a tank.

Fergusson says: "It is this horizontal or bracket mode of construction that is the formative principle of the Dravidian or Southern style of Hindu architecture, every form and every ornament depending almost wholly upon it. In the north, however, another development of the same principle is found in the horizontal dome which is scarcely known in the south, but which has given a new character to the style". An early Nagara type of the temple and an early Dravida type of the temple occur side by side at Pattadakal known as Virupaksha, in the south of the Bombay Presidency.

The Pallava rock-cut temples at Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram and the temples at Ellora have been referred to above and are very remarkable. But even more remarkable are the structural temples at Vijayanagar, Vellore, Conjeevaram, Chidambaram, Kumbakonam, Tiruvarur, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Srirangam, Madura, Rameswaram, Tinnevely, Suchindram and Trivandrum. The typical Chola tower (*Vimāna*) is found in the Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore (\*1000 A.D.) and in the Gangaikonda Chola-puram temple built about 1025 A.D. Special mention should be

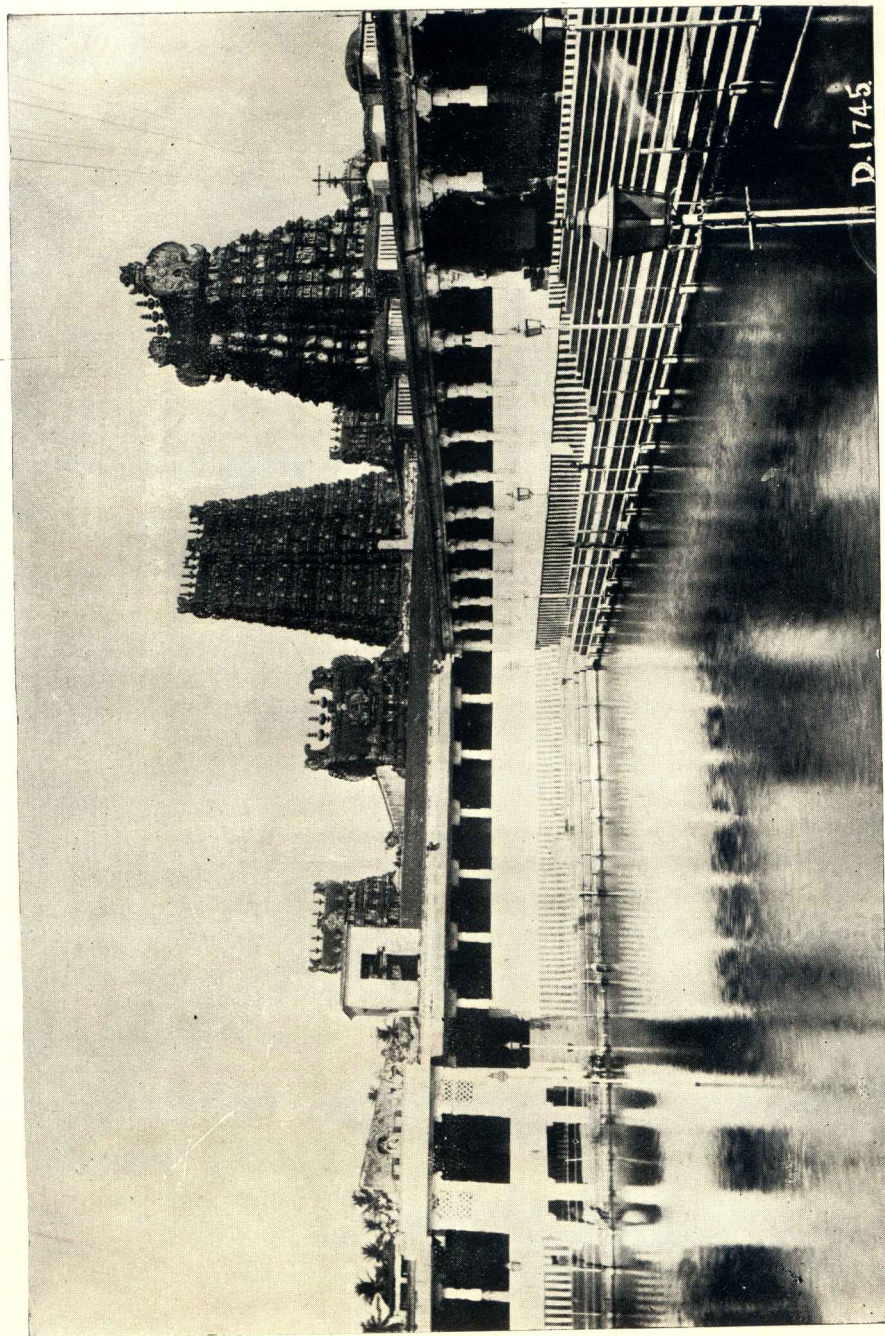


made of the Tadpatri temple which has got minute and beautiful ornamentation and of the Subramania shrine (in the Tanjore Temple) which is an exquisite piece of decorative architecture and about which Mr. O. C. Gangoly says that "for its minute decorative craftsmanship it has justly been compared to the work of goldsmiths in stone".

Quite as remarkable, in their own way, are the palace of Tirumal Nayak at Madura and the Tanjore Palace. But what is the present state of secular and sacred architecture in South India? Let Fergusson answer: "Sometimes, it must be confessed, the buildings are imposing from their mass, and picturesque from their variety of outline, but the details are always detestable; first from being bad copies of a style that was not understood or appreciated, but also, generally, from their being unsuited for the use to which they were applied. To these defects, it must be added, that the whole style is generally characterised by a vulgarity it is difficult to understand in a people who have generally shown themselves capable of so much refinement in former times. In some parts of the north of India matters have not sunk so low as in the Madras Presidency, but in the South native civil architecture as a fine art is quite extinct, and though sacred architecture still survives in a certain queer, quaint form of temple-building, it is so low a type that, as exemplified especially in the temples which Nattukottai Chettis are engaged in renovating or reconstructing, it would be no matter of regret if it, too, ceased to exist, and the curtain dropped over the graves of both, as they are arts that practically have become extinct".

I am of opinion that the above view of Fergusson is too severe and too pessimistic. It is not true that all the Nattukottai Chettis build temples without a sense of the beauty of the Indian styles of architecture. Nor is it true that the race of master-builders and great architects of the old type is an extinct species in India. I know that there are Nattukottai Chettis whose piety and zeal are equalled by their knowledge of architectural tradition, though of late Nattukottai Chettis have taken to building costly palaces for themselves in an odd and fantastic mixture of styles and are beginning to turn away from temple construction. I know also that there are yet living, able and learned *Sthapathis* who know well and can carry forward the great architectural traditions and performances of the past. At the same time they have to remember the wise warning that "of all destructive manias that of restoration is the frightfullest and foolishest".





GOLDEN LILY TANK AND GOPURAMS, MINAKSHI TEMPLE, MADURAI,  
MADURAI DISTRICT (Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)







What Fergusson calls the Chalukyan style of architecture is really a mixture of the North Indian (or Nāgara) style and the South Indian (or Dravida) style, with some special and distinctive and original graces of its own. Its birth-place is the Kanarese country including Mysore. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami points out that its chief traits are "the high and very richly carved plinth, the star-shaped ground plan, and low pyramidal roof". Mr. Gangoly says: "It is identified by some scholars as representing the *Vesara* class of the *Silpa Sastras*. The principal features of the style are the relatively low elevation and wide extension, star-shaped plan, and grouping multiple shrines, and its new forms of pillars. The tower has a distinctive character, in its pyramidal shape, almost circular in form, and as distinguished from the Dravidian towers, the storeys of the towers are not emphasized. The general effect is that of a ribbed cone, very minutely carved. Indeed this inclination to carve and decorate every surface of the temple is sometimes taken to tiresome extremes and injures the effect of the general design and the silhouette." Fergusson says: "The *Sikhara* and roof soon lost the distinctively southern storeyed form and became stepped, forming pyramids of different heights, with breaks corresponding to those of the walls, and with broad bands up the sides of the *Sikhara* answering to the larger face in the middle of each side of the shrine. Later, the plan often became star-shaped, the projecting angles lying in circles whose centres were in the middle of the shrine and *Mandap* respectively. .... A favourite arrangement in the later temples was the grouping of three shrines round a central *mantap* or hall. The pillars are markedly different from the Dravidian type; they are massive, often circular, richly carved and highly polished. They are usually in pairs or fours of the same pattern, the whole effect being singularly elegant". The Dharwar District is the cradle of the style. Temples belonging to the earlier phase of the style (10th and 11th centuries A.D.) are found in Ittagi and Kukkanur and Gadag and Lakkundi and Dambal and Kuruvatti. The style attained its highest achievements in Mysore under the Hoysala Dynasty. The chief temples there are those at Somnathpur, Belur and Halebeid. They show intricate and delicate and marvellous chiselling leading to minute and elaborate ornamentation of the surface. Fergusson refers to "the infinite beauty and variety of design" and says: "Some of these are carved with a minute elaboration of detail which can only be reproduced by photography, and may probably be considered as one of the most marvellous



exhibitions of human labour to be found even in the patient East”.

Strangely enough even such discerning students and critics of Indian Art as Mr. Fergusson and Mr. Gangoly have shown defective sympathy and comprehension. In regard to the sculptures of Vyâlis or monsters of the lion type trampling on an elephant or of warriors sitting aside rearing horses, etc., Fergusson says : “As works exhibiting difficulties overcome by patient labour, they are unrivalled, so far as I know, by anything found elsewhere. As works of art, they are the most barbarous, it may be said the most vulgar, to be found in India, and do more to shake one’s faith in the civilisation of the people who produced them than anything they did in any other department of art.” This only means that he did not understand the art-motifs which inspired such works. Mr. Gangoly says that the South Indian Temples “overawe one by a crude impressiveness rare in the temples of the north” and opines that they are “generally lacking in an unity of design,” and that they “make up in their magnificence and stupendous scale for their poverty of elegance and dignity”. This again shows an inability to realise the beauty of some of the architectural marvels of the world. It is the South Indian architecture that bears away the palm for grandioseness of conception and magnificence of execution.

Though thus far I have adopted, with some modifications, Fergusson’s nomenclature and treatment in regard to Indian architecture, I must deprecate any attempt by western *savants* and *connoisseurs* to introduce a novel kind of caste system into Indian Architectural art. Mr. Gangoly rightly urges : “Thus it is a misnomer to designate any type of Indian architecture as specifically Buddhistic, Jain or Brahminical. It is Indian Architecture for the time being in the service of one or other religion prevailing at a particular place or time.” The Vedic mounds developed into the Buddhist Chaityas and Stupas. The Nâgara and Dravida and Chalukyan styles are seen in Jain temples as well as in Siva and Vishnu Shrines. There is in Mannargudi in the Tanjore District a beautiful Jain temple which is exactly like any South Indian Hindu Temple. The Vesara style is seen in many Buddhist as well as some Hindu temples.

I may mention here a few noteworthy aspects in regard to Travancore temples. *Tantrasamuchchaya* is the authoritative work in regard to such temples. In addition to the famous Siva shrines



at Suchindram and Vaikom and Ettumanoor and the Vishnu shrines at Trivandrum and Tiruvettar and Varkalay and Ambalapuzha and Neyyattankara, a special mention should be made of the famous shrine of Devi at the extreme end of the Indian peninsula at Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari). A peculiarity of Malabar worship is the worship of Sâstha. The most famous of the Sâstha temples is that at Sabarimalai on the top of a steep hill in the Chenganur Taluq of Travancore. There are also temples of Brahma at Tiruvallam and Valia Chalai near Trivandrum and at Mitranandapuram within the Trivandrum Fort. The Travancore style of temple architecture is plainer than the style in the east coast of peninsular India and the structures are much smaller. The Kerala temples contain abundant carvings in wood and stone and some of them contain mural paintings. The temples have a square or circular form and a conical top, the whole roof having a copper covering with a gold or silver or copper gilt stupa. They have ample provision for light and air, and the worshippers worship standing outside the threshold. Each temple consists of (1) the *Srikoil* containing the *Garbha Griha* (the holy of the holies) wherein only the priest (*sântikaran*) can enter. (The *Garbha Griha* is raised a few feet above the surrounding level and its door is reached by a *sopana* or flight of steps). The idol is placed in the centre on a stone platform. (2) *Makhamantapam* or raised platform supported by pillars in front of the *Srikoil*; (3) *Nâlambalam* which consists of the corridors or pillared halls all round the *Srikoil* and the *Mantapam*; (4) *Balikalpura* in the outside portico where stands the altar-stone at which rice is offered; (5) *Dhwaja* or flag-staff; (6) *Gopuram* or towers containing the entrances to the temple grounds which are enclosed by high walls all round. In the bigger temples the *Nâlambalam* is surrounded by a similar structure. There is a narrow passage between them. It contains columns of iron or brass lamps (*vilakkumâdom*) which are lit on special occasions. Malabar being the land of elephants, the temples have also an *ânakottil* (a covered elephant shed) between the flag-staff and the *Gopuram*. The *Sivalimantapam* is the covered porch for the procession of the deity. A special feature in regard to the worship in Malabar temples is the *Naivedyam* or food offering to the deity. Besides the offering of boiled rice, there are also the offerings of *Pâyasams* (rice boiled in milk or cocoanut-milk with ghee and sugar or molasses added), of the *Tri-madhuram* (the three sweet things, viz., honey and sugar and plaintain fruits with the addition of a little ghee) and of the *appam* or sugared cakes fried in ghee and *malar* or fried rice.



Mr. Gangoly points out further that a peculiar characteristic of Indian architecture is "its innate inclination to transcend its structural form." He says well: "An Indian temple, be it Buddhist, Jaina, or Hindu, is a monument par excellence, rather than a mere utilitarian covering, or a shelter from heat and rain." The temple is invariably sublimated into an image in itself. The Buddhist Stupa itself looks like a Dhyâni Buddha and the Vimana of a Siva Temple itself looks like a Linga. Mr. Gangoly well describes this trait as "this sculpturesque treatment of the structural form." He says "The æsthetic beauty of Indian Architecture derives its quality from the expression of a plastic idea—the result of an image-making—an idolatrous instinct—rather than that of a purposeful structural design.".....*Indian Architecture is thus a monumental expression of metaphysical symbolism.*" Other equally wonderful traits of Indian architecture are its profusion of minute and elaborate ornamentation of the surface and the way in which architecture and sculpture form an inseparable unity in India. These traits can be brought out and illustrated with convincing aptitude only in a book separately devoted to such an aim but Indian sacred and even secular architecture in North India and especially in South India contains so many perfect illustrations of the above truth that it is not necessary to go into this matter in greater detail here.

When the Hindu Religions including Buddhism spread in Eastern Asia, Hindu Architecture also went there. Burma became Buddhist in faith at a very early period and borrowed also many of the Indian styles of architecture though with differences. The Europeans in Burma applied the term Pagoda indifferently to bell-shaped Stupas on a series of platforms and to square temples with a pyramidal roof crowned with the curvilinear Sikhara of the North Indian style. The Shwe Hmandun (Golden Great God) pagoda at Pegu and the Shwe-Dagon pagoda at Rangoon are remarkable structures. The square temples are as remarkable as the circular pagodas or chaityas. The vast temples at Angkorvat and Bayon and Beng Mealea in Cambodia—out of which the temple at Angkorvat alone is in a state of preservation—are even more remarkable. Fergusson says in regard to the Angkorvat temple that the only other temples wherein sculpture is used in the same profusion are those at Halebid in Mysore and at Boro Budur in Java. In the wonderful temple at Boro-Budur the Buddhist sculptures which line its galleries extend to a mile in length. These are in a perfect state of preservation



because the Javanese, even when they became converts to Islam, had no iconoclastic zeal. Two and a half miles from Boro-Budur is a small and beautiful temple called Chandi Mendut, the walls of which are decorated with bas-relief figures of Hindu deities. Twenty-four miles south-east of Boro-Budur is the vast and wonderful Hindu temple at Prambanam.

It is not possible to go in detail in this work into the art of farther India and Indonesia and Ceylon. It shows a fine spiritual temper kindled and kept aflame by Indian influence. Mr. J. F. Scheltama says well: "Java's ancient monuments are eloquent evidence of that innate consciousness of something beyond earthly existence which moves men to propitiate the principle of life by sacrifice in temples as gloriously divine as mortal hand can raise." In Java, even to-day, Sri Rama and the Pandavas are national heroes. The Boro-Budur temple is as yet a monument of a living culture. It has been well called by Mr. Havell as the Parthenon of Asia. Mr. J. F. Scheltama says well about the Boro-Budur temple in his work on *Monumental Java*: "Adorned with that priceless jewel of sanctity, the plain lifts its sensuous loveliness to heaven as the bride meets the caresses of her wedded spouse, trembling with love." Such wonderful Art will, even if it yields to the destructive power of Time, be an inspiration and a bliss for ever and ever. Ruskin says finely: "It is the crowning virtue of all great Art that, however little is left of it by the injuries of time, that little will be lovely".

I shall now proceed to describe briefly the evolution of Muslim architecture in India. The Indo-Saracenic architecture shows how the Saracenic architects adopted to a large extent the styles prevailing in the various localities. Fergusson refers to no less than thirteen important and distinctive styles of Indian Saracenic architecture. Minarets and mosques and tombs were constructed on a lavish scale, many of them built with the ruins of destroyed Hindu and Jain temples. The Hindu artisans contributed a lace-work of intricate and delicate carving. The Qutb Minar is a unique construction. Fergusson says: "It is probably not too much to assert that the Qutb Minar is the most beautiful example of its class known to exist anywhere."

The speciality of Saracenic architecture is thus described in his work on *Indian Architecture* by Mr. E. B. Havell: "All Arab design, whether in architecture, or in the forms of domestic utensils,



or in surface decoration, was distinguished by this feeling for pure outline and colour, rather than by a plastic treatment of surfaces or the massing of forms for contrast of light and shade in which the Hindu architectural genius especially asserted itself." He points out that even the pointed arch, which is one of the chief differentia of Saracenic architecture, was adopted from India, and that the Mihrab of Muhammadan mosques—the niche in the wall of the sanctuary—was a bequest from Buddhist architecture, and that the Muhammadan dome in India is only a simplified Hindu dome. He demonstrates the error of Fergusson's assumption that Saracenic architecture in India is an importation and proves that it is only a development of Indian building traditions. He says: "The oft-quoted phrase that 'the Pathans built like Titans and finished like goldsmiths' conveys an historical fallacy. The Pathans were fighting men, not builders. The building traditions they brought with them into India, called Pathan by Fergusson, were those which Mahmud of Ghazni and his descendents had borrowed from India." In fact Mahmud of Ghazni took Indian craftsmen to build the great mosque at Ghazni. Timur took them to build a mosque at Somarkand.

As Muslim sculpture is opposed to the representation of human or animal forms in art, Muslim artists specialised and excelled in perforated stone-work of the finest tracery. Fergusson says: "After a century's experience they produced forms which as architectural ornaments will, in their own class, stand comparison with any employed in any age or in any part of the world; and in doing this they invented a class of window-tracery in which they were also unrivalled." The mosques at Delhi, Agra, Bijapur, etc., are wonderful in beauty and finish. Fergusson calls the Mosque at Fatehpur-Sikri as "a romance in stone". The Muslim artists excelled also in the art of inlaying marble with precious stones. The Moti masjid at Agra and the Jami masjid at Delhi are wonderful. But the gem of all gems is of course the Taj Mahal.

I must refer also to the ancient Parsi temples and also to the White Jew synagogue at Cochin as factors contributing towards the enrichment and variety of Indian Architecture. Further, after the advent of the British power into India great and lofty churches belonging to the Protestant as well as to the Catholic faiths have been built. In fact the hospitality of India to the forms of architectural beauty has been an index and a measure of the hospitality of India towards the faiths and cultures of mankind. All the same



India has impressed her own sign-manual of calmness and composure and charm and unity and spirituality on indigenous as well as imported aspects of culture.

I must bring this chapter to a close lest it should swell to the size of a book by itself. In fact *Vāsthuvīdyā* (called the *Pāli* as *Vatta Vijja*) or *Silpa Sastra* is a well-known branch of Indian Art. The *Matsya Purana* refers to Vasishta, Viswakarma, Maya and fifteen others as founders of the *Vāstu Sastra*. Maya *Silpa Sastra*, *Kasyapiya*, *Manasara*, *Silparatna*, *Brihat Samhita*, *Viswakarmavata* *Sastra*, *Samarangana Sutradhara*, *Manasollasa*, *Sanat-kumara Vastu Sastra*, *Saraswatiya Silpa Sastra*, etc., are of great antiquity and value. *Mānasāra* refers to 32 expounders of the *Vastu Sastra*. It is said that there existed 32 *Mukhya Sastras* (Standard works) and 32 *Upa Sastras* (subordinate works). *Maya Mata* and *Silpa Ratna* have been ably edited and published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series. It is not possible to go in detail here into the details contained in them as well as into the directions contained in the *Samhitas* and *Tantras* and *Agamas* such as the *Kāmikāgama*, etc., and in *Vishnudharmottara* and in *Hemadri's Chaturvaragachintamani* and *Gopala Bhatta's Haribhakti Vilasā* and *Krishnananda Agama Vageesa's Tantrasara*, etc., about the construction of temples and images and in the various *Niti Sastras* and *Artha Sastras* and in the Tamil classics about the construction of temples. The various village plans such as *Nandyāvarta*, *Padmaka*, *Swastika*, *Dandaka*, *Sarvatobhadra*, *Prastara*, *Karmuka*, *Chaturmukha*, *Prakirnaka*, *Sampatkara*, *Paraka*, *Sripratishtita*, *Srivatsa*, *Kumbhaka*, *Vaidika*, etc., are of great interest as they show how the townplanning experts in ancient India knew how to lay out villages and towns. The *Silpa Sastras* mention also about the functions of *Stapathis* (architects proper), *Sutragrāhis* (measures), *Vardhakis* (Joiners) and *Takshakas* (Carpenters). They refer to *Māna* (longitudinal measurements), *Pramāna* (breadthwise measurements), *Unmāna* (measurements of heights), *Parimāna* (measurements of depths), *Upamāna* (measurements of slopes and curves), and *Lambamāna* (measurements of verticals). They describe *Vāsthū* or sites suitable for villages, buildings, etc. They refer to forty-five types of houses and palaces. They refer to *bhu-pariksha* or examination of sites and soils, preparing and levelling the ground, *Sankusthāpanam* (the fixing of a peg for determining the cardinal points), *pada vinyāsa* (the arrangement of plans), *grāma vinyāsa* (village and town planning), etc. They contain minute directions as to how to build bases and pedestals



and pillars and pavilions and entablature and roofing and towers (vimanas). It is not possible to go into further details here but it may well be said that the *Silpa Sastras* are a mine of valuable rules about town-planning and about secular and sacred architecture.

Mr. Havell says about ancient Indian Village life : "The village in ancient India represented a highly organised social community, far removed from the decadent modern type. The Aryan, jealous of his tribal honour and proud of his social privileges, was, as the name implies a born aristocrat; but his ideal of Government was essentially democratic." (A study of Indo-Aryan civilisation, page 4). The *Mānasara Silpa Sastra* says that for choosing the sight of a village we must examine its soil and position and that the best site is that which slopes towards the east so as to get the full benefit of the first rays of the morning sun. Mr. Havell says : "The easterly axis of the plan ensured that the principal streets were purified by the rays of the sun sweeping through them from morning till evening; while the inter-section of main streets by shorter ones running north and south provided a perfect circulation of air and the utmost benefit of the cool breezes. The two principal streets which formed the arms of the cosmic cross were broad avenues, probably planted with umbrageous trees." Here again Mr. Havell is in error in his reference to 'the cosmic cross' which is only the Hindu *Swastika*—a symbol which Hitler improperly annexed like other annexations by him.

Most of the Indian towns and cities grew round temples. They grew naturally and from within. Much importance was attached to tanks and gardens, and it was deemed to be a pious act to dig tanks and plant groves. The ideal of Indian town-planning was that of garden villages and garden cities. Houses were built with court-yards and pials and gardens so as to be suitable to a tropical climate, and so as to combine light and shade and coolness and ventilation. The pials were intended for the convenience of strangers and wayfarers. In Travancore and Cochin and Malabar and Canara every house is a garden house. In those portions of India the Nālukkattu type of house is a rectangular structure comprising a central courtyard. Mr. Havell says : "It will probably be a revelation to modern architects to know how scientifically the problems of town-planning are treated in those ancient Indian architectural treatises."



Modern architecture in India is an odd mixture of styles. It has no clear-cut style or definite expression or appeal. It is very largely imitative—imitative not of indigenous beautiful styles but of exotic ugly styles. The rich men of to-day do not give scope to the architectural traditions of the Indian architects. We must certainly have buildings suited to our new notions of comfort and convenience. But that need not involve any lapses from artistic taste. The old styles of architecture should be preserved and adapted to modern needs by combining strength and utility and beauty. In the words of Sir Henry Wotton: "Well building hath three conditions: Commodity, Firmness and Delight."

A country which has produced the Stupas at Sanchi and Sarnath, the cave architecture and sculpture of Ellora and Elephanta, the Mahabalipuram Rathas and Stone Temple, the wonderful temples at Conjeevaram and Kumbakonam and Tanjore and Trichinopoly and Srirangam and Madura and Rameswaram and Trivandrum and Suchindram and the Tirumal Naik's palace at Madura and the Jain temple at Mount Abu, and other peerless structures can well claim to lead the world in the art of architecture. As shown above, Indian architecture travelled beyond India. The architecture and sculpture at Boro Bodur and the temple at Angkor-Vat are among the architectural glories of the world. Well does Mr. O. C. Gangoly say: "The richly carved *mantapams* with their monolithic pillars and the facades of the temples broken into exquisitely carved niches invest Indian architecture with a new plastic quality and entwine architecture and sculpture into one indissoluble unity. The gift of India is indeed a rich and a valuable one to the architecture of the world." Such wonderful architecture was carried to new heights of achievements by our Muslim brethren who introduced Saracenic architecture with its wonderful dome, and the imperial love of Shah Jehan for his queen has given to the world what is at once the tomb of his beloved and the shrine of the Goddess of Beauty—that full moon in the firmament of universal architectural achievement—the unique and the wonderful Taj Mahal.



## CHAPTER VIII

### INDIAN SCULPTURE

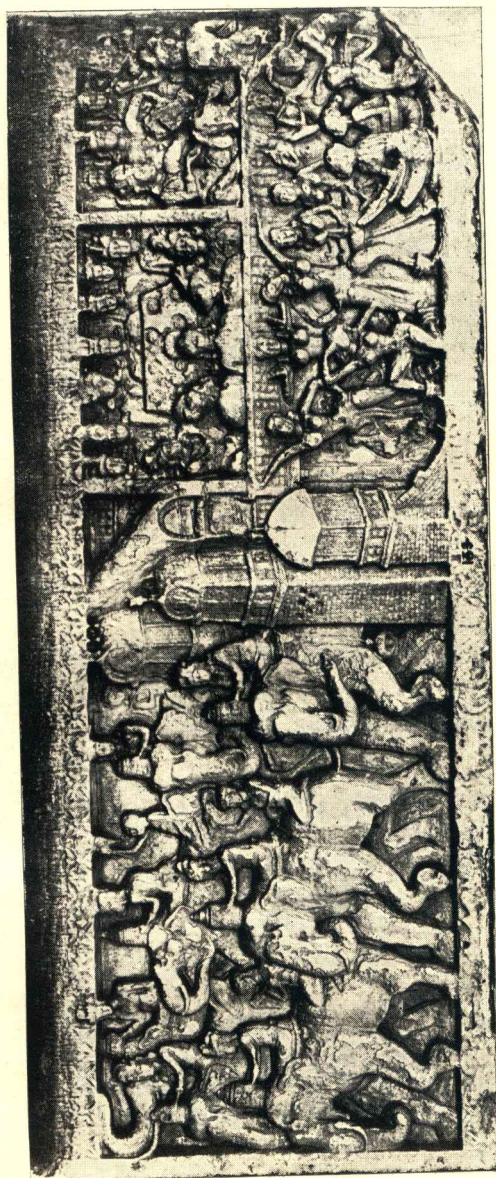
In sculpture art becomes more vocal than in architecture. It takes unto itself all the varieties of bird life and animal life and human life and brings out all the universal and representative and ideal aspects thereof. Nay, it aims at a higher achievement as well. It seeks to bring before our eyes the figured realities of the ideal world.

In all countries the power that quickened all the arts came from the national festivals in ancient days. By such festivals the individual was carried out of the narrow circle of his ordinary life of toil and trouble. Mr. G. B. Brown says: "It (the festival) called the artist, so to say, into being, gave him breath and nurture, surrounded him with exquisite forms and glowing colours, and with everything that could quicken the activity of eye and hand."

In Greece the festal dance was a spur to the attainment of a high level of excellence by many arts. The Greek dances were diverse and beautiful. The Greeks set much store by the comeliness of the human body and added strength and suppleness to comeliness and grace by means of gymnastic exercises. The poised poses of the dance gave new suggestions to the sculptor's imagination. I shall deal in a later chapter with dance as a fine art in India. In Greece the influence of the dance on Sculpture was very great. The modern sculptor's imagination feels clipped if professional models are not before his eyes. Mr. Brown says about the Greek sculptor: "The artist would hardly need professional models, when the beautiful highly-trained human form both of man and woman, not in rest only but also in motion, was so freely displayed before his eyes. The close connection between the pose and movement of the living form and its crystallisation in marble or bronze was noticed by the ancients, and Athenaeus remarks that there were "relics and traces of the ancient dancing in some statues made by statuarys of old, on which account men at that time paid more attention to moving their limbs with graceful gestures."

In Greek sculpture we find perfection of form and remarkable repose and dignity. The Olympian Pantheon gave the artists fine





AMARAVATHI SCULPTURE (Madras Government Museum)







yet varied, typical yet individual, aspects of the beautiful to express in marble in an artistic manner. It has been said well : "Each form was *individual* in its force and freshness and look of reality but *general* in that, as we now know, it was not a mere portrait or character study from Nature, but the presentment of a typical personage of the Hellenic world." The figures were thus individualised though typical, and show how the Greeks combined clarity of thought, fine sense of form, simplicity and grace of presentation, and vision of the ideal world. Phidias and Praxiteles are among the world's greatest sculptors. After Christianity came, the story of Christ's nativity and crucifixion and ascension gave the added grace of poignant passion to the perfect poise of Greek sculpture. Italy attained in her medieval sculpture heights which were even grander than the heights won by Greece. Much of its finest work centred round the Madonna and her Child. The greatest figure in Italian sculpture was Michael Angelo. Modern sculpture is more varied and has brought political and patriotic concepts into art but has not got the firm yet fine achievement of Greek sculpture and Italian sculpture.

If we view the graces and excellences of Indian sculpture in such a setting of the achievements of universal sculpture, we can understand and appreciate and admire it aright and not otherwise. It did not like Saracenic art taboo living forms as fit subjects of art. Nor did it content itself with mere natural forms as modern art does to-day. Greek art occupied a high altitude because of its power of presentation of the *typical* and *essential* graces and attributes of things. Indian sculptural art did this and more. The divine figures in Greek art are only perfect men. In Indian art we find a successful effort towards vision and expression super-human beauty and glory. The Greek artist brought God near to man. The Indian artist took man near to God.

But it is just this extra quality that art critics of the west do not understand at all. Ruskin, great art-critic as he is, shows his lack of comprehension and his defective sympathy when he tries to appraise the art-motifs of India. He says : "The love of subtle design seems universal in the race, and is developed in every implement that they shape and every building that they raise." But here is his bill of indictment : "It is quite true that the art of India is delicate and refined. But it has one curious character distinguishing it from all other art of equal merit in design—it *never represents a natural fact*. It either forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour and flow-



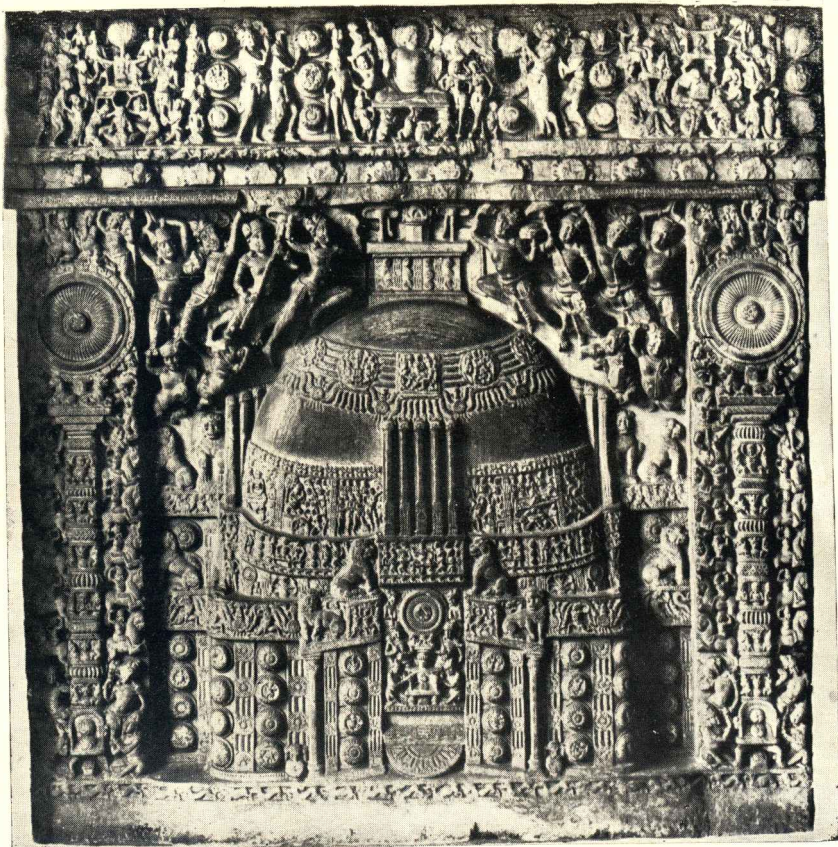
ings of line; or, if it represents any living creature, it represents the creature under *some distorted and monstrous form*. To all the facts and forms of nature it wilfully and resolutely opposes itself; it will not draw a man but an eight-armed monster; it will not draw a flower, but only a spiral or a zig-zag." This criticism is ardently based on defective comprehension and sympathy in regard to the aims and achievements of Indian sculpture. Similar views were expressed by Dr. Anderson and Professor Westmacott. It is difficult to understand why an art-critic who is not offended by the concepts of a satyr and a centaur should feel angry with the art-concepts of India. Let Oscar Wilde answer: "The whole history of these (decorative) arts in Europe is the record of the struggle between orientalism, with its frank rejection of imitation, its love of artistic convention, its dislike to the actual representation of any object in nature—and our own imitative spirit. Whenever the former has been paramount, we have had beautiful and imaginative work in which the visible things of life are transmuted into artistic conventions, and the things that life has not are invented and fashioned for her delight. But wherever we have returned to Life and Nature, our work has always become vulgar, common and uninteresting. Modern tapestry with its faithful and laborious realism has no beauty whatever. The pictorial glass of Germany is absolutely detestable. We are beginning to weave possible carpets in England, but only because we have *returned to the method and spirit of the East*. The aim of the Indian artist is not to depict an athlete but a divinity." The great sculptor Rodin says: "It is the adoration of the unknown force which maintains the universal laws and which preserves the types of all beings; it is the surmise of all that in nature which does not fall within the domain of sense—of all that immense realm of things which neither the eyes of our body nor even those of our spirit can see."

I have referred to these views only to show that very few know as yet the art-motifs of India. Even in India there is a dense mass of ignorance about them. The fact is that Indian sculpture has been true to the vision of *yoga* and has always paid homage to the Vedas and has hence been a divine as well as human art. It does not matter whether foreign critics admire or decry the many-headed and many-armed gods and goddesses enshrined in Indian sculpture. We know the meaning and value of such concepts and symbols and of the *mudrās* (finger-poses) and weapons and ornaments of the objects of our worship. I shall refer to these later on in some detail.









AMARAVATHI STUPA SLAB (*Madras Government Museum*)



On the other hand Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami goes too far when he says : "Possibly no Hindu artist of the old schools ever drew from nature at all. His store of memory pictures, his powers of visualisation and his imagination were for his purpose finer means, for he desired to suggest the Idea behind sensuous appearance; not to give the detail of the seeming reality, that was in truth but *māya*, illusion." The fact is that the Hindu artist is at home both in the natural and in the supernatural. He excels in revealing the generic and representative aspects of various created forms in natural and animal and human life. His aim is not photographic accuracy and the lower realism. But it is the expression of the dominant mood or passion (*rasa*). Even when the artist depicts the lion or the horse, he seeks to bring out the soul of the lion or of the horse and not to give as a mere imitation of the animal as if he is illustrating a work on natural history. He cared for essential truth and not for mere imitative realism. But his special delight is in realising the revelations of *yoga* or vision of God and giving them complete adequacy of artistic representation. Dr. Coomaraswami says well : "It is for the artist to portray the ideal world of true reality, the world of imagination, and not the phenomenal world perceived by the senses. . . . . India is wont to suggest the eternal and inexpressibly infinities in terms of sensuous beauty. . . . . In this religious art it must not be forgotten that life is not to be represented for its own sake, but for the sake of the Divine expressed in and through it." In the Buddhistic concepts Dhyani Buddha, Prajñāpāramita, Avalokiteswara, etc., and even more, in the Hindu concepts of Muralidhara, Seshasayana, Nataraja, Neelakanta, Dakshinamoorthi, Gangadhara, Laxmi, Saraswathi, Rajarajeswari, etc., we find the *ne plus ultra* of artistic idea and achievement. Some of the finest Indian sculptures are found in Indian temples and especially in the famous temples at Chidambaram and Madura and Rameswaram and in the unknown temples at Dadikombu near Dindigul and at Krishnapuram in the Tinnevely District. The sculptures at Ellora and Elephanta and Mahabalipuram are universally famous and admired. The Indian artists were inspired more by a passion for creative self-expression than by a passion for personal fame and we do not know the names of these great geniuses at all.

The aim of art everywhere is not to merely imitate nature but to interpret and express the significance of things. But in the west to-day nature is regarded as something to be conquered by Science and to be imitated by Art. But to the Indian mind nature is something to be loved as a kindred power. It strives to see the



unseen in the seen and the infinite in the finite. The Greek artist arrived at his idealisation of the human form by selecting what appeared to be the most lovely and admirable traits in many forms. He visioned the type as a combination of the best of the seen things. But the Indian artist believes that the highest type of beauty is not a selection and re-combination of the best in human or natural forms but is the beauty of the divine as visioned in *yoga*. The form of the God may not be in accord with our knowledge of human anatomy but it is the accord with the *yogic* realisation. The highest artists of India knew human anatomy well enough but they went further than a mere superficial fidelity to human anatomy. Mr. E. B. Havell says well: "Indian art is essentially idealistic, mystic, symbolic, transcendental. The artist is both priest and poet." This truth may not be to the liking of the modern artist who is helpless without his studio and his professional models but it is a great truth all the same. The ideal man in India is the *yogi* and not the soldier. The *yogi* has as much courage as the soldier but it is the dauntless and indomitable courage and the spirit that knows and feels and says that the body is but the temporary and imperfect vehicle of the spirit.

These lofty ideals inspired as deeply Buddhism which revolted against Hinduism as it had inspired pre-Buddhist Hinduism and was to inspire post-Buddhist Hinduism. Mahayana Buddhism was based on the model of pre-Hirayana Hinduism. The Dhyâni Buddha, Bodhisattwa, Avalokiteswara, Maitreya, Tara, Manjusri, Prajnaparamita (the shakti of the Âdi Buddha), etc., form a wonderful galaxy of Buddhist art-concepts. Each is full of ideal spiritual beauty and superhuman calm. When the treatises on art say that a figure is lion-waisted, they mean that the perfect *yogi*, given to moderation and rhythmic breathing and meditation, will have a broad chest and a narrow abdomen. The fact that some may prefer a broad abdomen will not take away the value of the *yoga* ideal. The *yogi*'s body is a supple and strong and spiritualised body and not a body merely emaciated by starvation. The sculptures at Bharhut and Sanchi and Amaravati show a wonderful level of attainment in art. Even more wonderful is the sculpture at Boro Budur in Java, which Mr. Havell describes as "the most magnificent monument of Buddhist art in the whole of Asia."

Some of the western savants say that it was the sculptors of Gandhara that created Indian sculpture. This is a thoroughly mistaken view. The Indian sculptors had made images of the



Hindu deities long before the Gandharan sculptors, who were inferior craftsmen, came east from Greece. Mr. E. B. Havell, to whom modern Indian art owes so much by way of interpretation as well as inspiration, says:—"The Gandharan school is not an example of Hellenestic influence upon Indian art, but the reverse; it shows Graeco-Roman art being gradually Indianised". He refers also to "the insincerity and want of spirituality typical of nearly all the art of Gandhara".

The highest Indian sculpture is to be found in post-Buddhist sculpture in India which tried to embody the Puranic concepts of Divinity. As stated already the West finds it difficult to appreciate many-headed or many-handed Gods. It is rather strange that eyes which are not shocked by nimbus or wings (which no human being has had or has or will have) should be shocked by many heads or hands. Here again the explanation should be sought in yogic realisation. If we have the necessary view-point, the significance of such art-concepts will become clear. Ruskin says well:—"The arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated but on dispositions which require to be created."

The living power of such reborn Hinduism was manifested not only in India but also in trans-India. In Java the Prambanam sculptures depict the Ramayana story. The temple sculpture in Angkor vat in Combodia is even more remarkable. The outer wall on each side is two-third of a mile in length. The walls of the temple are decorated by sculptures illustrating the two immortal epics of India—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.



## CHAPTER IX

### INDIAN ICONOGRAPHY

Allied to Indian sculpture but yet separate from it is Indian Iconography. It is another declining art which is allied to sculpture and which deserves to be kept alive if the integrity of Indian culture is to be preserved and conserved and carried to the loftiest heights of achievement hereafter. Though Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao and Mr. O. C. Gangoly and Mr. H. Krishna Sastri and Mr. B. C. Bhattacharya and Mr. J. N. Banerjea have done much preliminary spade work in the matter of revealing its specialities and graces, much more work yet remains to be done. They have not had the advantage of studying in a synthetic way Indian literature and Indian art-traditions in the light of the inadequately known secrets of Indian symbolism to which I am making a brief reference in a later chapter.

Sukra Niti and Rupâvaliya and the Puranas and the Saiva and Vaishnava and Sakthi Agamas and Mayamata and Mânasara and Silparatna and Jeernodhara Dasaka and Visvakarmasastra and Sritatwanidhi and Vishnu Dharmottara and Rupa Mandana and Chapter 57 of Brihat Samhita and other works give us minute details about making images in gold and silver and bronze and panchaloha (a mixture of five metals, the predominant metal being copper). It is stated in Sukra Niti: "Let the builder establish images in temples by meditation on the deities who are the objects of his devotion; for the successful achievement of this *Dhyâna yoga* (yoga of contemplation) the elements and characteristics of the image are described in books to be dwelt upon in detail. In no other way, not even by the direct and immediate vision of an actual object, is it possible to be so absorbed in contemplation as thus in the making of images." Sukra Niti says also that divine images, even if they are not beautiful, bring auspiciousness, whereas human images, though beautiful, have no such effect,

अपि श्रेयस्करं नृणां देवविबमलक्षणम् ।

सलक्षणं मर्त्यविबं नहि श्रेयस्करं सदा ॥

Agni Purana directs in Chapter 43 that the sculptor or image-maker should purify himself during the night before his work and





SRI NATARAJA (*Travancore*)







pray, thus: "O God, Teach me in dreams how to execute the work which I have in my thoughts." I learn that even now the artist fasts and prays during the night prior to his forming the eyes of the divinity in the image or in sculpture or painting. The Indian mind knew how from a contemplation of the divine and perfect and beautiful and eternal forms of God we can rise to the realisation of the name-transcending, form-transcending and blissful Absolute. In recent times Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Row's *Elements of Hindu Iconography* and O. C. Gangoly's *South Indian Bronzes* and other works help us to understand the magnificence and value of Indian Iconography. Mr. Gangoly has, however, uttered a cheap gibe (deserved no doubt to some extent but not coming within any grace from North India which has been quite as philistine and denationalised as South India) when he says: "Unfortunately the modern educated South Indian to whom one looks forward to a complete and scholarly survey of the artistic treasures of their country still continues to cultivate a philistine indifference to the masterpieces of their ancestors." Much certainly yet remains to be done. Sir John Woodroffe has sounded the right note when he deprecates the putting apart of the North Indian and the South Indian schools and styles of sculpture and says that they are "related to one another by that idealism of form and conception which undoubtedly constitute India's chief contribution to the Art of the World." He says further: "Indian sculpture is not a freak of Asiatic barbarism, but is a worthy representative of a school of æsthetic performance as logical, articulate and highly developed as those of any country in Europe, ancient or modern." We are all to blame for our philistine neglect of Indian Sculpture and Iconography. Meantime the master-builders (Sthapathis) and sculptors and image-makers are fast disappearing from modern India which is ignorant and sceptical and whose artistic taste has been either left undeveloped or has been vitiated to a degree. Here again we await an Indian of genius who will save Indian sculpture and iconography for India and for the world. The modern educated Indian is so proud of the little smattering of second-rate and second-hand western scientific knowledge and his power of handling the English tongue that he regards himself as superior to the Indian craftsman. Mr. E. B. Havell rightly says: "Even at the present day the Indian craftsman, deeply learned in his silpa-sastras, learned in folklore and in national epic literature, is, though excluded from Indian Universities—or rather on that account—far more highly cultured, intellectually and spiritually, than the average Indian Graduate. . . . The Founder of Christianity



was Himself a craftsman, and in those noblest monuments of the Christian Faith, the Gothic cathedrals of mediæval Europe—we can see that the splendid craftsmen of the Middle Ages preached and practised a religion, like their Master, pure and undefiled before God, while a self-indulgent and contentious priesthood wrangled over its dogmas.”

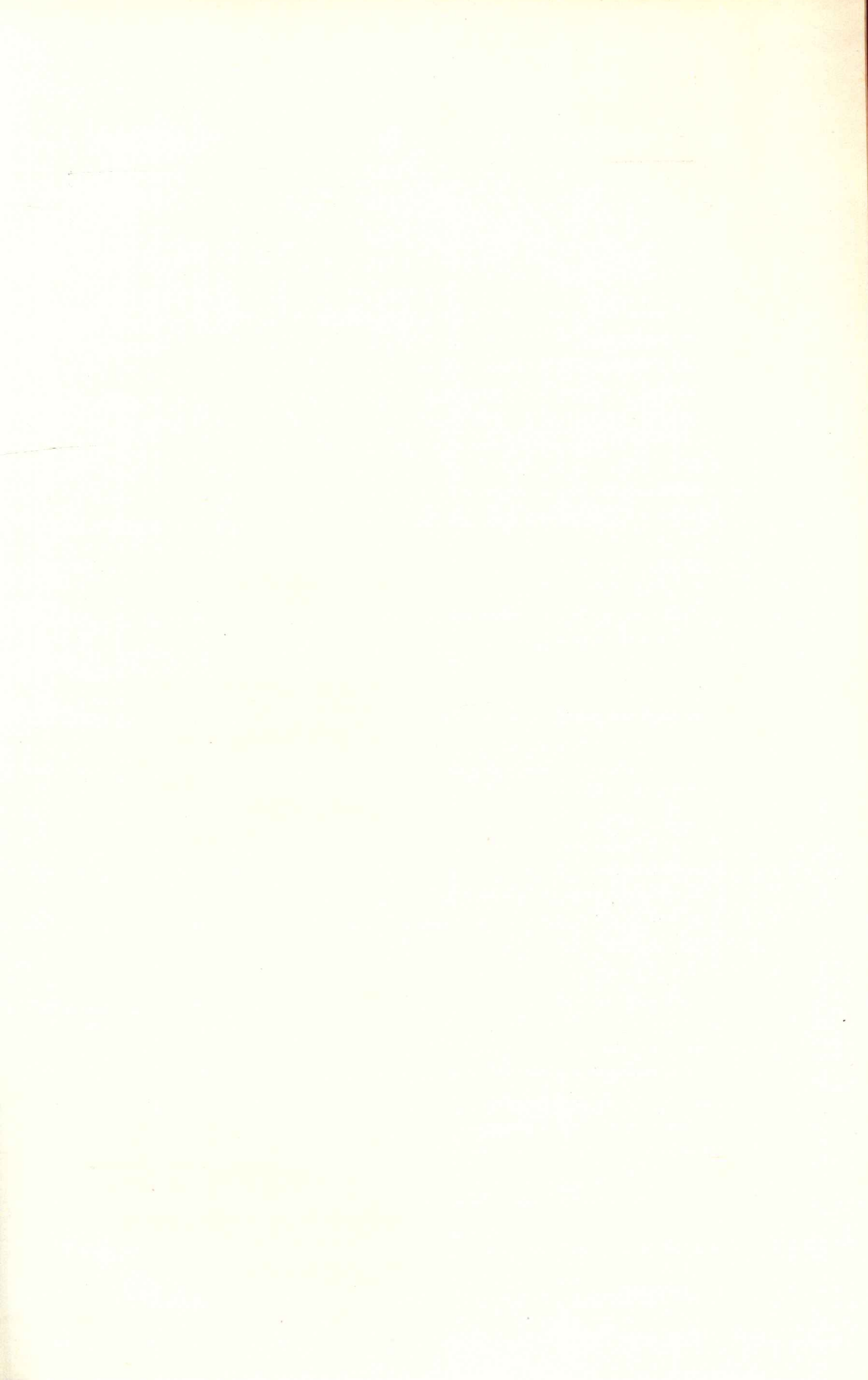
It is generally assumed that image worship was unknown in the time of the Vedas. But even the Rig Veda describes minutely the forms (rupas) of the Gods and the Goddesses. The Sanskrit words corresponding to the Greek word *eikon* (image) are *vigraha*, *bera*, *archâ*, *bimba*, *sandrsâ*, *pratikriti*, *pratima*, etc. I have referred elsewhere to the Rig Vedic hymns showing that images were known in that age, though Maxmuller and others deny this fact. The gods are described as *Nripesas* (having the form of man). In R. V. IV, 24, 10 the poet asks: “Who will buy this Indra of mine for ten cows?” The Shadvimsa Brâhmana refers to *Devatâyatana* and *daivapratima*. The Upanishads describe the various Divinities and their *Mantras* and *Gâyâtris*. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata refer to temples (*chaityas* and *âyatanas*) and images and artisans. The Ramayana says that after Sita disappeared, Sri Rama had a golden image of Sita made (Uttara Kanda, Chapter XXV). The Grihya Sutras refer to *devagraha*, *Devâgara*, *devâyatana*, etc. The philosophy of image-worship is stated thus in the Râma Tâpaniya Upanishad. (the making of images of God who is pure formless consciousness is for the spiritual welfare of the worshippers).

चिन्मयस्याद्वितीयस्य निष्कलस्याशरोरिणः ।

उपासकानां कार्यार्थं ब्रह्मणोरूपकल्पना ॥

Though in the Rig Veda, the number of hymns to Indra and Agni and Surya and Varuna is large and the number of hymns to Vishnu and Siva is small, this is no ground for supposing that the now widely prevalent Siva and Vishnu cults are a later development or accretion in Hinduism. The seeking of the grace of the *Lokapalas* or cosmic divinities was naturally earlier and more frequent than the invocation of the supreme causal power. The Pâsupatha rite is referred to in the ancient Atharva Siras Upanishad. In the Kena Upanishad Siva's being Brahman or the causal divinity is announced by Uma who is Brahma Vidyâ. Some scholars imagine and declare a conflict between the Vedas and the









DANCING KRISHNA, FRONT VIEW, BELUR  
(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



Agamas. The latter are only a supplement to the former, despite certain sectarian passages here and there about the rival merits of both. The great Srikanta Acharya says: *Na Vayam Veda Sivāgamayoh bhedam pasyamah* (We see no difference between the Vedas and the Sivagamas), Nor do I think that there is any real warrant for saying that Siva was non-Aryan and Rudra was Aryan and that the former concept was unified with the latter. Even in the Rig Veda Rudra is described by the epithet Siva. The Atharva Veda describes him as Bhava, Mahadeva, Isana, Rudra, and Pasupathi.

The Buddhist images of Dhyāni Buddha were the result of a great art-motif and mark an epoch in the history of Indian Art. The Supreme calmness and repose of the figure is one of the marvels of vision and has gone deep into the world's art—consciousness, like the figure of Christ on the cross. But Buddhist sculpture and iconography are confined to an expression of the body in repose. *Pratimāmānalakshana* is a work regarding Buddhist iconography. As shown above in the later Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism other gods and goddesses were brought in such as Amitabha, Avalokiteswara, Manjusri, Tārā, etc. In Jain art we have Tirthamkaras as well as gods but the former are superior to the latter. The Jain images have long hanging arms, the Srivatsa mark, calmness, youthfulness and nudity.

आजानुलंबबाहुः श्रीवत्सांकः प्रशान्तमूर्तिश्च ।

दिग्वासास्तरुणो रूपवांश्च कार्योऽर्हतां देवः ॥

(Varahamihira's Brihat Samhita).

The Hindu icons or images were made in India by expert artists who used to meditate on the *Dhyāna Sloka* (verse descriptive of the particular image) and act in complete obedience to the rules embodied in books and the traditions handed down in their guilds as regards the making of the figures in stone or wood or metal. In Hindu iconography we see dynamic as well as static elements. Images may have a standing (*sthānaka*) or sitting (*āsana*) or reclining (*sayana*) postures. Though the prevailing view of modern scholarship is that Saivism is very old in South India whereas Vaishnavism is a later immigrant from the north, there is no doubt that Vishnavism also is very old in the South. The oldest Alvars are even older than the oldest Saiva Samaya Ācharyās. In the ancient Tamil Classics there is reference



to the worship of Vishnu who is described as *Māyon*. The *Silappadhikaram* (XIV, 7 to 10) refers to the images of Krishna and Balarama. Krishna among the cowherds is a favourite subject of description in ancient Tamil poetry. As already pointed out by me, equally unacceptable is the view which finds an imaginary separateness between an imaginary Aryan Rudra and an imaginary Dravidian Siva. The holy Panchâkshara on which the Saiva Sidhanti prides himself is the very heart of the *Sata Rudriyam* of the Veda. The Saiva Sidhanta is a very ancient system. But its technical terms are almost all Sanskrit terms. Siva images are not the special and private monopoly of South India. The holiest of all the Indian Siva Temples is at Benares. Further, Patanjali refers to images of Siva and Skanda. The invocation to Siva in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* and other plays and in Sudraka's *Mrichchakatika* shows that the worship of Siva existed in North India even in the first century B.C.

The view that the Lingam in Siva temples is only a phallic symbol is another of the heresies of modern scholarship. Saivism is one of the most austere cults in India and preaches the value of the ascetic life and it is absurd to connect it with phallic worship. *Linga* means a symbol. In the Puranas it is said that Siva appeared as a pillar of fire before Vishnu and Brahma. In works on Saiva Siddhanta it is said to be an illustration of the combination of the form-aspect of God-head and the formless aspect of God-head. Mr. E. B. Havell derives the Linga from the *Chaitya* or *Stupa*. Swami Vivekananda used to say that it represents the holy fire on the *Vedi* or altar. It must also be remembered that some Lingas called Mukha Lingas have a human face or faces carved on them representing one or all of the five aspects of Siva. Though the Linga is the central image in Siva temples, the shrines contain also the form-aspects of Siva as the five-faced Sadasiva, Somâ Skanda (Siva with Uma and Skanda), Chandrasekhara (Siva with the crescent moon on his matted hair), Dakshinamoorthy, Nataraja, Gangâdhara, Ardhanareeswara, Bhairava, Virabhadra, etc. Very elaborate and intricate rules are laid down in the Agamas about making of Lingas. Equally elaborate are the rules laid down therein about the making of the Siva Images having the above-said forms. Such divine forms are not mere idealised human forms but are eternal forms visioned in yoga. In regard to both Lingas and images Mr. E. B. Havell says well : "There are good grounds for believing that the present Saivite emblem, when it took the place of anthropomorphic images, had no connection





SRI DAKSHINAMOORTHY IMAGE  
(*Madras Government Museum*)







whatever with phallic worship. While the Greeks made the perfect human body the highest ideal for an artist, there has always been in Indian thought a deep-rooted objection to an anthropomorphic representation of the Divine." We find in Siva shrines other images also. We find the images of the Devi and Vinayaka and Subramaniya and Chandeswara and Nandi. We find also the images of Samayâcharyas in a group. We find the images of the Sixty-three Saints, the group being known as *Arupathimoovar*. We find also many beautiful female figures bearing ever-burning lamps. They are called *Deepâla Nayakis*.

Equally remarkable are the Vaishnava images in South Indian Temples. The images of Vishnu and Lakshmi, of Rama and Sita and Lakshmana and Hanuman, of Krishna and of Narasimha, abound all over the South India. In the Vishnu temples we find also images of the Alvars. Later on were introduced the images of the Acharyas, viz., Sri Ramanuja, Sri Desika, Sri Manavala Mahamuni, and others.

Before the present unfortunate cleavage between the Saiva and Vaishnava cults became definite and deep, there was no such mutual dislike and divorce. In many Siva temples there used to be shrines for Vishnu. In the holy Chidambaram temple Nataraja's shrine and Govindaraja's shrine are close by, and a devotee can at one and the same time see both the Gods. Near the fingers of the right hand of God Padmanabha in the holy temple at Trivandrum is a small Lingam. The sordid history of the recent quarrels and litigations in regard to the Siva and Vishnu shrines in Chidambaram and elsewhere is a miserable episode in the history of the evolution of religious sects in modern India. In the Mahabharata the unity of Siva and Vishnu is proclaimed by Arjuna in the *Vana Parva* and by Sri Krishna in the *Santi Parva*. It is stated also by Markandeya in *Hari Vamsa*. The Sankara-Nârâyana Murthi which is half Siva and half Vishnu shows their unity and inseparability. More than all, the Rudra Hridaya Upanishad affirms their oneness with unmistakable clearness. Siva and Vishnu are only as different as Rama and Krishna.

Elaborate rules are laid down in the Silpa Sastras about iconometry (measurements of images) and about the materials with which images are to be made. Images could be made of wood, clay, stone, metal, etc. Travancore artists have excelled in wooden images. In metal images in temples, copper and brass and white



lead are used, copper largely predominating. In household worship silver and even gold images are often used. An image is at first modelled in wax. It is then coated with soft clay. The wax model is then melted away. Into the hollow so caused the molten amalgam is poured. After the metal has cooled, the clay covering is removed. Then the artist gives the image the necessary fineness of finished workmanship. Hollow images should not be cast for purposes of worship. There are definite rules in regard to the height of the images to be used for domestic worship and for public worship in temples. The artists know by heart the mnemonic verses needed for such image-making. It is absurd to condemn the verses as curbing originality. In making images of Gods we cannot let our petty and puny imagination act as it likes ignoring the intuitions of the sages in *Yoga*. There is ample legitimate scope for the imagination of the artist in saturating his mind with the beauty of the Divine forms and giving the images as much grace and expressiveness as possible. There is ample scope also for revealing the artist's constructive skill and technical genius. Mr. Gangoly says well: "The rules and canons are only limitations for the mediocre and the incapacitate and not to the real artist to whom the fixed convention of a particular theme is never a barrier to his artistic expression..... The ancient Greek artists had also their canons and systems of proportions but the beauty of the great schools of Greek sculpture was no more due to these formulas than the artistic excellence of these South Indian bronzes was due to the systems laid down in the *Silpa Sastras*." Indeed there is as much room for legitimate *Manodharma* (imaginative presentation) in Indian Sculpture as in Indian Music where the ascending and descending notes of each *raga* are fixed but there is infinite scope for musical improvisation. The makers of images should follow the rules laid down in the *Sastras*. What is beautiful according to the *Sastras* is really beautiful; nought else.

शस्त्रमानेन यो रम्यः सरम्यो नान्य एव हि । A supreme master of image-making is very rare.

I shall deal in a later chapter with Indian symbolism. But I may mention here a few of the teachings in the *Silpa Sastras* about image-making and about the significance of *hastās* and *mudrās* (hand-poses and finger-poses). It is laid down that the image has to be eight times the length of the face (*ashtatāla*) in the case of Gods and seven times such length in the case of Goddesses, though in some works it is said that the *tālas* could be 5, 7, 8, 9 or 10. The length of the face is the unit and is called *tāla*. A special aspect of beauty is brought out by the poses of the arms and



especially of the fingers. It is said that there are Vaidika, Tantrika and Laukika mudras and that there are 64 Mudras in art and 108 mudras in Tantrik worship. The *abhayahasta* offers protection from all fears and the *varadahasta* offers all blessed boons. Such mudras have nothing to do with purely human posturing but are descriptive and expressive of divine moods of grace. In the Jnâna mudra the tips of the middle finger and of the thumb are joined together and held near the heart, with the palm of the hand turned towards the heart. The *Vyâkhyana* mudra or *Chinmudra* of Dakshinamoorthi symbolises and expresses the identity of the individual soul and the universal soul. The Dhyâna or Samâdhi mudra in which the palm of the right hand is placed in that of the left hand and both are laid on the crossed legs of the image in a sitting posture expresses yogic contemplation and self-absorption.

Other specialities of images are the *Kirita* or the diadem, *kundala* or the ear-ornaments, the *hâras* or necklaces, the *katisutra* or *Mekhalâ* or *Kânci* (girdle or belt), bangles and anklets. In the case of Siva, we find *jatâ makuta* (matted hair tied up as a crown) in the place of kirita. There are also *Siraschakra* (nimbus) and *Prabha*. A small bell called *Viraghanta* (bell of heroism) is tied round the right calf muscle. It is found in Siva and Vishnu images. I found it in the wonderful image of Sri Rama at Tillai-vilâgam in the Tanjore District. We must bear in mind also the lotuses (*padmas*) on which the divine feet rest. In the case of images of goddesses there are different modes of dressing the hair such as *kuntala*, *dhammilla*, *alakachudaka*, etc.

The wonderful Indian icon-making helped to perfect also a number of subsidiary industries. Every image has its *prabhâ* (halo of glory). Every temple has got also its *Tiruvasi*, i.e., an arrangement of small brass lamps fixed to a frame. When they are lit they present a beautiful and radiant appearance. Every *garbhagriha* has got its set of hanging lamps. Every temple has got its rathas (cars) and its *Vâhanams* (animal and bird images as seats for the deities) which are used during the divine processions.

The Indian skill in image-making extended to wood, ivory, bone, etc. Sometimes, though rarely, images in wood or living ivory (*Jivadanta*, i.e., ivory chipped from living elephants) are used to make images for worship but such use is very rare. Images made in ivory are not generally used for worship. But even to-day such images which are



made in Travancore and Vizagapatam and other places have remarkable polish and beauty and command admiring buyers in India and elsewhere. The expertness of the Indian artist in image-making is, in fact, one of our rare cultural possessions and no achievement of greatness in any modern direction can compensate for its loss which seems to be imminent and inevitable if our knowledge and love of Indian Art dwindle as they are doing to-day.







PAINTING FROM TIRUNANDIKARAI (Travancore)



COPIED FROM AN OLD PERSIAN PAINTING IN THE CAVE TEMPLE AT TIRUNANDIKARAI

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## CHAPTER X

### INDIAN PAINTING

Painting as a fine art has been the delight of the world from very ancient times. Its appeal is to the eye which is the finest and subtlest of the senses of man. "Things seen are mightier than things heard". Colour and perspective are its vital elements. Colour leads to vividness and variety and glow and glory. Perspective creates the illusion of the wonders of space. *Chiaroscuro* means the arrangement of light and shadow, whereas colour is the arrangement of colours other than black and white. It is by *chiaroscuro* and perspective that the painter indicates various planes. The architect and the sculptor have no power over light and shadow and the wonderful gamut of colours but the painter has and exercises such divine power. He adds delicacies of touch and tone and suggestion and significance to delicacies of tint and perspective.

The instinct of picture-making is natural to man. Even the cave-man used to decorate the interior sides of the cave with figures of trees and animals. It is said of an African boy from a wild bush tribe that, when he saw a ship for the first time, he set to work and drew a picture of it with his stick in the sand. Later on the religious festivals, with their dance and song, led not only to sculpture but to painting as well. In Greece the Olympian Pantheon inspired the twin arts of sculpture and painting with equal power by giving highly individualised yet general and universal types of perfection. But greater heights of splendid achievement were attained by Greek sculpture than by Greek painting.

The fact is that the art of painting is a subtler art than architecture and sculpture and takes a much longer time to reach perfection. Among its mysteries are the indication of solidity and distance on a flat and near surface, and the power of representation of many—nay, innumerable—objects on a limited space of panel or canvas. The painter can deal with a single object or with the whole face of nature. At a moment's notice he can recreate the sky or the sea or a mountain or a forest or a stream or a cataract. If the architect wishes to build a superb building he must pile stone upon stone, but the painter can create the impression of a



vaster and loftier edifice—nay, many edifices—before our eyes by a few strokes of the brush. While a sculptor toils and travails to give a solid shape, the painter can easily cause the illusion of solidity and give us as great delight. It has been well said by Mr. G. B. Brown : “Nay more, painting can conjure up before us not only the single sublime or beautiful object but all the scenes and spaces of nature that stretch away into illimitable distance, and can depict not only the form of objects but also their colour and variety of surface, tint, and tone.” At the same time we must remember that in their own special provinces architecture and sculpture can produce a more vivid and intense impression than painting can. But the painter’s joy and the painter’s power and privilege lie in his discerning and presenting the magical play of colours and the wonderful varieties of surface effect. His work is not a mere conjurer’s trick or sleight of hand but a divine creativeness. His glory is not in giving us the *facts* of nature but in representing her essential and *significant appearances* and their impressions on his mind. He is not concerned with nature as it is but with nature as interpreted by the painter’s eye which knows that the beauty of the world is not so much in definite contours as in the play of tints and tones. Mr. Brown says well again : “In such work the subtle transitions, the play of tone, and tone and colour combined, over the face of Nature, the mystery and enhancement of beauty in which her aspect is veiled, are all reproduced again for us upon the canvas, and the sharp lines and mapped-out appearance of ordinary painting give place to a suggestion of forms which is after all their truest delineation”. Go too near a great painting and you are repelled. Be at the proper focal distance and a new and wonderful and permanent creation—intangible yet real—shines upon your delighted vision.

“She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!”

Only a finely endowed and finely trained eye and hand can give us a representation of the subtle play of beauty on the face of Nature. Early painting excelled in line and form but did not excel in variety, in giving the illusion of solidity and distance, and in subtle coloration. It was Italy that rose to supreme heights in universal painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci and Titian and Tintoretto are among the greatest masters of painting in the world. Christianity contributed by the passionate story of Christ’s life an element of spiritual glory and aspiration unknown before in the west.



Florence surpassed Athens in the pictorial art. The mediaeval painters excelled in vast and grandiose scenic paintings. They were absorbed in their work and delighted and gloried in it. Their cycle of fresco paintings is one of the noblest and most wonderful and glorious intellectual possessions of the world. By linear perspective and foreshortening and by subtle distribution of light and shadow and by glorious sweep of coloration, painting was lifted from its ancient level to its modern level. Northern Europe added the charm of mingled light and shadow to the charm of superabundant light as represented by Southern Europe. Rembrandt brought out new aspects of Nature's suggestiveness under the half-hiding and half-revealing play of light and shade. The art of painting got added to it new resources and capabilities such as a new use of chiaroscuro and of aerial perspective leading to broader effects and subtler suggestiveness of tone. In modern painting Turner and Corot and Correggio and Velasquez and Rembrandt and John Phillip and Millais and Burne—Jones and Claude Lorrain and others have added new conquests and triumphs to the painter's art. Rembrandt is the father of modern landscape painting. He saw and loved the face of Nature and made others love it for its own sake. Thus the art has been broadened and heightened in the west since its first triumphs in Greece.

In modern times painting has taken considerable strides forward. The artists have realised that the artists' vision is its own proof and justification and that the real value of a painting is in the artists' contribution of a new and unifying and creative and illuminative idea. Kandinsky says: "Good drawing is drawing that cannot be altered without destruction of its inner spiritual value, quite irrelevant of its correctness as anatomy, botany, or any other science. There is no question of violation of natural forms, but only of the need of the artist of such form. The artist is not only justified in using but it is his duty to use only those forms which fulfil his own need". Thus Western art has now moved away from mere photographic accuracy in regard to nature and mere anatomical accuracy in regard to the human figure. Burne—Jones used to say that pictures should come from within the artists' head. What is of value in art has been recognised to be not the reproduction of the mere appearance of things but the expression of the enkindled emotion. As Professor Santayana says: "art is the remodelling of nature by aesthetic reason". Art is not a transcription or an imitation but a revelation and a sublimation. Though Post-impressionism and Expressionism and Futurism and Cubism have often gone too far away from a sane



self-rootedness in reality and have become a kind of Bolshevism in Art, they imply a wholesome departure from the former crude realism.

But Western departures from realism tended to become freakish because the west had no hold on *Yoga*. The Indian mind was enabled by its hold on yoga to realise real ideal figures and not mere fanciful ideal figures. Its power of imbibing the atmosphere of the spiritual world enabled it to idealise the real and realise the ideal. The Indian canons of image-making require the artist to depend on his inner vision and not on external types in the physical world. In fact the things of the spirit need a spiritual discernment. This is why the cheap criticism that Indian art lacks anatomical accuracy has no real validity or value. Shukracharya says: "The hands and feet should be without veins. The bones of the wrist and ankle should not be shown".

Indian Painting achieved brilliant results in the past but its achievements are not comparable to the wonderful achievements of Italian painting or to Indian achievements in architecture and sculpture and music and poetry and drama. This may have been due to the fact that canvas and colours are less durable than stone or metal especially in a tropical climate or to the successive waves of conquest and vandalism that deluged India for many centuries. It is not possible to trace here the history of Indian painting from the earliest times. The *Râmâyana* refers to painted halls. The story of Usha and Chitrlekha describes the art of painting as the quickener of love. The Sanskrit dramas like *Mrichakatika* and *Sakuntala* and *Malavikâgnimitra* and *Uttararama charitra* describe picture halls in palaces. In *Sakuntala* the king is described as an expert artist. His friend describes his painting of Sakuntala in beautiful words which show Kalidasa's mastery of the painter's art as well: "The delineation of the feeling (*Bhâvânupravesa*) is brought out by the sweet grouping of lovely objects. My sight seems to stumble at the apparent elevations and depressions". Kalidasa pays as the highest compliment to Sakuntala's loveliness that it seemed as if she had been painted by the Creator and then the painting had been endowed with life, or as if she had been formed by Him as a mental creation out of the sum total of all the scattered loveliness of the universe. In the Buddhist drama *Nâgananda*, Prince Jimutavahana draws a portrait of Princess Malayavati. The Pali Buddhist work *Vinaya Pitaka* which relates to the third or the fourth century B.C. refers to the picture halls



in the pleasure-palaces of King Pasenada. Such mural pictures were the forerunners of the wonderful painted cave temples of Ajanta.

In Vâtsyāyana's *Kāma Sūtras* we have a reference to the six limbs (*shadāṅgā*) of painting.

रूपभेदः प्रमाणानि भावलावण्ययोजना ।

सादृश्यं वर्णिकाभेद इति चित्रं षडङ्गकम् ॥

What is generally described as the six limbs are *rupabheda* which refers to the study of distinctive forms, *pramāṇam* which means correct perspective and measure and structure and symmetry and includes anatomy and proportion and foreshortening, *bhāva* which is the expression of feeling through form, *lāvanya yojana* which is the addition of grace and beauty and brightness of artistic presentation, *sādrisya* which is perfect fidelity and truth to the natural and the supernatural as realised in moods of joy which are enkindled by the sight and enjoyment of beauty, and *vārṇika-bhanga* which is perfect technique in the use of the brush and perfect mastery over the implements and materials used in painting. This excellent analysis of the art was adopted in China which refers to "the six canons" which are first mentioned by Hsieh Ho in the sixth century A.D. to be the spiritual rhythm and movement of life, the use of the brush in structural drawing, representation of form in accordance with nature, colouring appropriate to objects, composition and postures, and copying and imitation of classical models. The ancient Indian work *Chitra Lakshana* also dealt with religious paintings in great detail. In the Tamil country there was an *Ovianool* belonging to the Sangam period and dealing with the art of painting.

The Buddhistic period of India was the golden age of Indian painting. The whole of eastern Asia felt the cultural influence of India not only by the spread of Buddhism but also by the spread of Indian art. Even when the language of the Buddhistic scriptures was unknown, the silent influence of Indian art was all-pervasive in Asia. Artistic priests from India went to China and Japan and Ceylon and spread the art-motifs of the wonderful Ajanta frescoes there. The most remarkable examples of Buddhistic painting in India are of course the Ajanta frescoes. But the paintings at Bagh and at Sigiriya in Ceylon also are remarkable. Fresco-painting is painting on a prepared surface of lime spread on a wall of wood or brick or stone. The painting is on a section of a wall which is kept



moist so that the colours might mingle chemically with the surface. Hiuen Tshang says that the convent of Serika was famous for its mural paintings. The great ancient Indian universities at Takshasila and Nālanda and Sridhanya Kataka had courses of training in religious painting and sculpture. They were the real sources of the wonderful Ajanta frescoes which came into existence from the second century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. Vincent Smith's views about the western inspiration of the Ajanta paintings have been thoroughly exploded by Mr. E. B. Havell in his *Indian Sculpture and Painting*. Mr. Havell observes: "The Buddhist monastic schools of Northern India, from which the art of Ajanta was derived, were sufficiently cosmopolitan in character to account for all the foreign details which are found in those paintings, but their title to be considered Indian is just as valid as that of the schools of Athens to be called Greek, those of Italy to be called Italian, and perhaps stronger than that of the schools of Oxford to be called English.....Even assuming that Graeco-Roman painters and sculptors may have sometimes been the technical teachers in Indian schools, they can no more claim on that account to have inspired Indian art than Shakespeare's schoolmistress can be said to have inspired the tragedies of Macbeth and King Lear .....Indian art was inspired by Indian nature, Indian philosophy and religious teaching, and no one, I imagine, would go so far as to say that all these were imported from the west. The little Greek, or Graeco-Roman, art that came into India went there in the ordinary way of commercial and political intercourse, not as part of any intellectual or religious propaganda. It was assimilated by Indian art in much the same way as a great deal of oriental art became incorporated in Italian art, from the time of the building of St. Marks at Venice down to the palmy days of the Renaissance; but we do not say that Italian art was inspired by the East".... *India truly inspired the art of the rest of Asia, but neither at Ajanta nor anywhere else in India can the influence of Western art be called an inspiration.* To form a just estimate of any national art we must consider not what that art has borrowed, but what it has given to the world. Viewed in this light Indian art must be placed among the greatest of the great schools, either in Europe or in Asia".

About the Ajanta frescoes Mr. Griffiths says: "The artists who painted them were giants in execution. Even on the vertical sides of the walls some of the lines which were drawn with one sweep of the brush struck me as being very wonderful; but when I saw long, delicate curves drawn without faltering, with equal precision,



upon the horizontal surface of a ceiling, where the difficulty of execution is increased a thousandfold, it appeared to me nothing less than miraculous". We do not yet know what was the secret of the process which has ensured to those paintings the durability "denied to more recent attempts in Europe, executed with all the aids of modern chemical science" (Havell). Mr. Griffiths says that Ajanta art influenced Chinese painting.

After the complete triumph of Hinduism over Buddhism, the arts of architecture and sculpture had a wonderful impetus but the heights attained in the Buddhist age in painting were not preserved. But the art of mural painting in temples continued to flourish, and the Hindu princes gave patronage to artists by having their palaces adorned with mural paintings as well as oil-paintings and paintings in water colours. But a noteworthy height of attachment was not attained.

During the Moghul period a new school of painting arose and flourished but it was an exotic school derived originally from Persia. The Indian artist however soon adapted and Indianised that school of painting. Its best triumphs were not in religious painting but in portraiture and secular painting. It was a child of the Moghul Court and was remote from the vital faith of the people. The Muhammadan religion proscribed the representations of animate nature in art, with the result that sculpture and painting could not flourish. Mr. Havell points out the Persian school of painting which influenced the Moghul painting was itself due to "the Chinese schools which, again, owed their inspiration originally to the art of India".

The artists of the Moghul Court painted portraits of historical and contemporary life in wall frescoes as well as in miniature paintings. They scrupulously refrained from representing human beings or God in mosques. The fresco paintings of the Moghul period do not exist. What we have got are miniature pictures painted on fine Indian or Chinese paper. The Moghul school flourished best during the reign of Jehangir, though it was Akbar that gave it a great impetus during his reign. Akbar is recorded in the *Ain-i-Akbari* to have observed: "It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God, for a painter, in sketching anything that has life, and in devising the limbs one after another, must come to feel that he cannot bestow personality upon his work, and is thus forced to thank God, the Giver of Life, and will thus increase his knowledge." Abul Fazl says: "More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art,



whilst the number of those who approach perfection, or those who are middling is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus: their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them". Akbar encouraged and even commanded the practice of direct study from nature.

Mr. Havell points out that the miniatures of the Moghul school fall into four classes viz., finished outline drawings and sketches, mostly portraits; studies of birds and animals, both in outline and in colour, and often made direct from nature; painted portraits; and historical pictures. He says: "Indian art cannot, however, show any separate school of landscape painting such as is found in China and Japan; but landscape back-grounds to figure-subjects are frequently used with a complete understanding of the true function of the fine art". Landscape-painting is not mere colour-photography. Emerson says: "In landscapes the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of Nature, he should omit, and give us only the spirit and the splendour". Mr. Havell says: "Night and effects of artificial light seem to have a special attraction for the Indian painter, and these are often handled with magnificent breath and fine feeling". He says about Indian impressionism: "His impressionism is not merely a blurred vision of natural appearances, as it often is in modern European art. To see with the mind, not merely with the eye; to bring out an essential quality, not the common appearance of things; to give the movement and character in a figure, not only the bone and muscle, to reveal some precious quality or effect in a landscape, not merely physiographical or botanical facts; and above all, to identify himself with the inner consciousness of the Nature he portrays, and to make manifest the one harmonious law which governs Nature in all her moods, these are the thoughts which he always keeps uppermost in his mind as soon as he knows how to use his tools with tolerable facility. It is considered of the most vital importance to train the faculty of mind-seeing from the earliest youth, when impressions are strong and vivid, instead of leaving this development to the end of the academic career, as we usually do in Europe". Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says in his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*: "Thus Mughal painting reflects an interest that is exclusively in persons and events and essentially an art of portraiture and chronicle....Mughal painting is academic, dramatic, objective, and eclectic; Rajput painting is essentially an aristocratic folk art, appealing to all classes alike, static, lyrical, and inconceivable apart from the life it reflects".



The Rajput school of painting was remarkable and was of ancient lineage and was a child of the soil. It falls into two groups (1) the *Rajasthâni* which flourished in Rajputana and (2) the *Pahâri* or mountain school which flourished in the Panjâb hill States especially Kangra, Chamba and Punch. Its most remarkable manifestation was in the Kangra school. Most of the work of the Rajput school was miniature painting. Sri Krishna is the central figure in much of the Rajput painting. It deals also with types of womanhood, epic themes, and representation of *râgas* and *râginis*. Mr. Percy Brown says well: "Broadly the Moghul art may be defined as aristocratic and genuinely realistic, while the Rajput painting, although similar in all its technical aspects, is democratic, and in the main, mystic. The latter art reveals all the religious fervour of the Ajanta frescoes, but, in place of the passiveness of the Buddhist religion, it is founded on the restless energy of the Hindu pantheon. This is its fundamental idea, but it also embraces every aspect of Indian national life, and delves deeply into the fascinating folklore of the country".

In South India we had in mediaeval times the Tanjore school and the Mysore and Travancore schools of painting. The Tanjore school excelled in painting in ivory and wood and also in oil-painting. Even to-day the Tanjore artists excel in what is called *Rek-work* i.e., thin gold-leaf work embellishing paintings. Their Rama Pattabhisheka paintings are prized all over South India. The Mysore artists also excelled in ivory painting. The Travancore mural paintings are of high excellence. In the Chitrâlâya at Trivandrum, which owes much to the shaping genius of Dr. Cousins, we see how under the new inspiration and dispensation of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, Travancorean art is becoming intensely national and yet universal in its appeal.

I may here pause to say a few words about the general art-concepts and art-ideals in India before I describe the present state of Indian art and the desirable future of Indian art. Mr. Havell has described well the creative and religious aspects of Indian art and says in his *Indian Sculpture and Painting*: "Just as in Indian music there are no complicated harmonies, but a subtle flow of pure intensive melody, so in painting, too, the Indian artist eschews strong shadows and broken colours, producing an effect of light and atmosphere by the perfect rhythm of his colour-music". Mr. Percy Brown says in his work on *Indian Painting* in the *Heritage of India* series: "As the painting of the West is an art of Mass, so that of



the East is an art of *Line*. The Western artist conceives his composition in contiguous planes of light and shade and colour. He affirms his effect by 'play of surface', by the blending of one form into another, so that decision gives place to suggestion. In occidental painting there is an absence of definite circumscribing lines, any demarcation being felt rather than seen. On the other hand, the beauty of Oriental painting lies in the interpretation of form by means of a clear-cut definition, regular and decided; in other words, the Eastern painter expresses form through a convention—the convention of pure line—and in the manipulation and the quality of this line the Oriental artist is supreme. Western painting, like western music, is communal; it is produced with the intention of giving pleasure to a number of people gathered together. Indian painting, with the important exception of the Buddhist frescoes, is individual—miniature painting that can only be enjoyed by one or two persons at a time. In its music, in its religious ritual, India is largely individualistic". This is a clever piece of writing and is true in a measure, but it errs by overstatement and by inability to see the essence of the arts of India. Indian Music can and does appeal to many just as Indian religious ritual does and can appeal to many. Some critics criticise us for too much individuality and others criticise us for too little individuality! The difference between Indian and western music lies elsewhere as I shall indicate hereafter. Indian painting is largely, but not exclusively, an art of "line". No painter—eastern or western—can omit to conceive his artistic composition except as "contiguous planes of light and shade and colour" or can give up the aid of "play of surface and the blending of one form into another" and the infinite charm and power and variety of suggestiveness. All these traits are found in Indian paintings as in paintings elsewhere. No doubt in Indian painting there are clear-cut and settled conventions. That is the only means of standardising art and settling the scaffolding with the aid of which the dream-palaces of artistic geniuses can be most securely and adequately built. It is no doubt true that the mediocre artists stop with the scaffolding and that conventions are not to them a means of expression and a high platform for soaring achievement. But the conventions prevent the fantastic erudities and confusions which pass for originality in the west. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says well: "Convention may be defined as the manner of artistic presentation, while tradition stands for a historic continuity in the use of such conventional methods of expression. . . . . Tradition is a wonderful expressive language that enables the artist working



through it to speak directly to the heart without the necessity for explanation. It is a mother tongue, every phrase of it rich with the countless shades of meaning read into it by the simple and the great that have made and used it in the past."

Modern Indian painting is full of promise but has not as yet grounded itself well in the fundamentals of Indian art and æsthetics. In 1848 was born the famous Raja Ravi Varma at Kilmanore in Travancore. He was fortunate in having been brought up amidst thoroughly Indian cultural surroundings. It was in 1876 that he exhibited his first picture of Sakuntala writing to Dushyanta. It appealed at once to the popular imagination. Its perspective was not first-rate and it did not show much skill in economy of details. But it was a bold and original attempt to vivify the national life by a pictorial presentation of the heroic age of India. His *Sita's ordeal* took up a great subject and treated it well. But its sense of back-ground is poor. Sita and Rama and the Earth-Goddess are painted well but otherwise the picture was not a great performance. He was good at painting bright and colourful scenes but did not succeed well in revealing dark or sombre effects. Later on he painted many great incidents in our immortal epics. In the ninties of the last century when I was a student of the Maharaja's College in Trivandrum, I had the privileges of witnessing an exhibition of his great paintings which were meant to be sent to Baroda. They were to me my first initiation into the wonderland of the Indian concepts of beauty and holiness.

I am perfectly aware of the limitations of Raja Ravi Varma's art. But what are they in the presence of his unique and wonderful excellences? It is now the fashion to make much of them and ignore his remarkable excellences. One critic has dared to speak of him as "the preposterous Ravi Varma." Dr. Coomaraswami calls him as "this painter who broke through traditions and gave them (the public) realistic and sentimental pictures of familiar subjects." He urges that Ravi Varma's goddesses are too human and pretty. He says in severe terms: "He is the landmark of a great opportunity, not perhaps wholly missed, but ill availed of; melodramatic conceptions, want of imagination, want of restraint, anecdotal aims and a lack of Indian feeling in the treatment of sacred and epic subjects are his faults. His art is not truly national—he merely plays with the local colour. Ravi Varma's pictures, in a word, are not national art; they are such as any European student could paint, after only a superficial study of Indian life and literature." E. B. Havell also is severe in his



remarks on Ravi Varma's art. But all these criticisms are largely wide of the mark. Even to-day the significance of the art-concepts and the art-motifs of ancient and mediaeval Indian painting are not fully known. Nor have the modern Indian painters attained the minute accuracy of landscape painting and the fine sense of perspective which are the great traits of western painting. Ravi Varma did not fully bring out the symbolic suggestiveness of the highest Indian Art. Nor did he excel in nature painting. But he had an unerring eye for beauty, a vivid sense of the poetry of situation and sentiment, and the serenity and reposefulness of the Indian Art at its best and highest. He had a keen eye for bright colours and gorgeous effects and his rich sensuousness of vision is traceable in every one of his pictures. He made his paintings fine symphonies of colour and of curve. There is no wonder in this gifted son of Travancore rising to such a supreme height of artistic achievement, because Travancore is an epitome of the loveliness of India just as India is an epitome of the loveliness of the world and contains every aspect of the glows and the glories of the universe. Above all, he, at a time when the tide of Indian nationalism was rising unseen and unfelt by even the best of India's sons, rode on its crest and inspired the imagination of the people of India by his pictorial revelation of the heroic age of India. The immortal epics of India and the peerless beauty of India and her children will live for ever on the canvas because of the genius of Raja Ravi Varma.

Another notable achievement of modern Indian painting is that of the Bengal school of painters headed by Abanindranath Tagore and consisting also of his brother Gogonendranath Tagore, Mukul Chunder Dey, Saradacharan Ukil, Charu Chandra Ray, Samarendranath Gupta, Mahadev Mandal, Durgasankar Bhattacharya, Nanda Lal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Asit Kumar Haldar and others. Their great achievement is their realisation and reintroduction of the ancient Indian mystic and symbolic and spiritual notes in art. They see and show that the meeting-point of outer beauty and inner beauty in mystical feeling is a finer thing than mere prettiness or mere faithfulness to fact. Every true and fine vision of nature includes an element of abstraction and an element of inner vision as well. The concepts of value and significance are added by the mind. The artistic concept of a natural object is realised by an artistic selection out of sense-impressions and mental impressions, the result being no doubt a likeness, but a likeness which is charged with a new meaning and reveals a new



realm of values. As I have stated elsewhere : "This added element of delicate emotional significance is the chief charm of art. The process of abstraction and universalisation, along with the power of creative vision and emotional suggestion, deflect the course of mere photographic representation of nature. The inner rhythmic life is somehow suggested and brought out. We seem to see the pulse-beat of things. Form-values, colour-values, sound-values, and idea-values are all used as being co-operant to a fore-ordained heavenly self-realisation of the soul. . . . . In a photograph we have a thing as it seems; in a work of art we have it as it is. In actual life a galloping horse is a mere rush of feet. A cinema-show may picture it for us. But the artist somehow distils the elements of power and strength and speed and universalises them, and in a mood of creative glamour he shows the horse in sculpture or painting or poetry, wherein though the horse does not and cannot run, we realise 'its neck in thunder clothed and long-resounding pace'. It is the artist alone who knows the elements of condensation and selection and universalisation and creative vision and emotional value and significance which result in such a miracle. He makes and gives us a new synthesis which is a real creation, similar and faithful to nature and yet apart from and above nature."

Thus the Bengal school has done a great work, viz., realising and revealing the essence and the form of Indian painting. It is full of idealism and vision and expresses the deeper things of life. Art should exalt and refine us and lead to the merger of our petty life in a higher life. This is done by the Bengal school. It looks not so much *at* nature but *through* nature to what nature half reveals and half conceals—the soul within. It shrinks from emphasis and tawdry colour and delights in subtle overtones and undertones of tint. It is full of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." It is neither realist nor impressionist in its methods and ideals but combines the excellences of both with idealistic vision.

I must at the same time point out that Dr. Coomaraswami and Mr. E. B. Havell and others have showered too much rose water on the school and its paintings. The paintings no doubt excel in combined artistic reticence and revelation. But they are a little too much under the influence of Chinese and Japanese painting. Such influence is seen in the way in which the eyes are painted. The Bengali artists have not yet carefully studied the ancient ideals and methods and *motifs* of art. Especially regrettable are their paintings of Sri Krishna. They have not realised the Indian con-



ception of the beauty of the masculine figure—broad of chest and lion-waisted and tall and full of strength and power. Nor have they well realised the elements of feminine grace and sweetness and attractiveness as described in Indian literature and art. Especially in the delineation of gods and goddesses they must reverentially study the revelations of yogic vision.

What I have stated above applies equally to the Andhra school of art which was begun by that talented artist who was cut off in the prime of his youth—Damera Rama Rao. I had the privilege of seeing his art-gallery. It is full of promise but much of the work was unfinished and showed rather the prentice hand which was on its way to mastery. I may also refer here to M. S. Sarma of Madras, who, despite the galling neglect of his generation, devoted his life to the painting of the memorable past life of India and of the kaleidoscopic present life of India.

In short we have to enrich and deepen and broaden our art by the study of western advance in technique and of western excellence in landscape painting but we should not give up the most vital aspects of the highest Indian art—its idealism, its suggestiveness and its spiritual passion and appeal. Indian nationalism and Indian renaissance would be poor things indeed if Indian youth are not fired by such artistic ideals. India must be adequately voiced and expressed in the realm of the ideal before she can come into her own in the realm of the real.

We can now easily realise the phenomenal and foolish error underlying such criticisms of Indian art as the following found in Percy Gardner's *Greek Art*: "But for ancient Greece, the art of Europe would to-day be on much the same level as the *fantastic and degraded art of India*. And but for the continued influence of Greek art, that of Europe would continually be in danger of drifting into chaotic extravagance." I entirely realise that India must guard her vision from extravagance and grotesqueness and ugliness by the severe, though sweet, discipline of beauty. But European art can save itself from mere imitation and realism only by a reverent study and appreciation of the creative artistic vision of India trained and disciplined by *Yoga*, for who like India can add to art

"The light never was on sea or land  
The consecration and the artist's dream?"



## CHAPTER XI

### INDIAN SYMBOLISM

The significance of Indian symbols (Prateekas) is an obscure branch of study to-day. Their meaning and value are scattered throughout Indian Literature in the course of many centuries, and hence it is an almost stupendous task to gather them together and to assess and express their significance and their evolution. It is hardly possible to compress them into a brief chapter in this work and hence I shall merely try to give a few suggestive and indicative ideas about Indian symbolism. Dr. Coomaraswami has said well: "Indian art is always a language employing symbols, valid only by tradition and convention". Symbols are the visible shrines of the artistic ideas. They spring like flowers and fruits from the tree of the race-consciousness. The racial intuition is actualised into concrete expression in the racial symbols.

Mr. Havell points out that in Indian religious paintings the white colour belongs to Siva and the Himalayas and symbolises purity and bliss and water, that red is the colour of Brahma and the sun, that blue is the colour of Vishnu and the sky, that yellow is the colour of the ascetic's robe, that green represents the nature, and that black represents space. Though there is a certain element of truth in this view, I am of opinion that he has not studied the sources and has given us merely guesses at truth. We have yet to dive into the ocean of Indian art-ideas and bring up the symbology of Indian painting. By way of illustration I may point out that in regard to the lotus symbol the Maha Nirvana Tantra says that the root is Brahman and the stalk is Māya and the flower is the world. The symbolism of the cosmic Aswaththa tree as described in Chapter XV of the Bhagawad Gita is also well-known.

Though images are found in coins and inscriptions and seals and even in copper-plate-grants, I shall confine myself here to the symbolism of worshipped images. Worship can be offered also to divine objects like Tulasi, Bilwa, Aswaththa, Salagrama, Bānalinga, Yantra, etc. But I shall discuss here only images with human form. In the fifth chapter of Sri Vedanta Desika's famous work *Rahasyatraya sâra*, we have a clear indication of the significance of divine weapons and ornaments. Superficial observers of Indian concepts of divine forms are apt to forget or ignore the vital fact that there is a deep spiritual significance in every element of each



concept of the Divine in India. The *Jiwa tattwa* (individual soul) is the Kaustubha on the Lord's breast and the Moola Prakriti is the Srivatsa (mole) therein. The Mahattatwa is His mace (gada). Jnana and Ajnana are His sword and sheath; the *tâmasa ahamkara* is His Sarnga bow while the *Sâttwika ahamkara* is His Sankha (conch); the mind is His discus (chakra); the indriyas (senses) are His arrows; and the subtle elements and the gross elements form His Vaijayanthi garland. The Veda is Garuda. In the Bhâgawatha we find it stated in the story of Dhruva that the *conch* is *Veda*. Similarly we find it said in the *Lalita Sahasranâma* (the thousand names of Pârvaṭi) that her *pâsa* (noose) is *Râga* (attachment) and that Her *ankusa* (goad) is *krodha* (anger) and that Mind is Her bow and that the five subtle elements are Her arrows. A similar symbology obtains in regard to Siva's weapons and ornaments. In fact each divine form is visualised in such a way that all the fundamental universal categories are imagined and described as being the Divinity's weapons and ornaments, so that the devotee can at a single glance and in a single act of meditation receive into his mind the divine totality of things.

The symbolism of Nataraja is one of the grandest in the world. A famous Tamil passage says: "Our Lord is the dancer, who, like the heat which is latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in turn." His dance symbolises His five-fold cosmic activity which consists of creation, preservation, destruction, illusion and liberation. Verse 36 of Unmei Vilakam says: "Creation proceeds from the Drum (which symbolises Nâda or sound); protection is granted by the hand (which symbolises the giving of refuge); the fire causes destruction; and the lifted foot gives liberation." In the *Chidambaram Mummani Kovai* it is said: "O, Lord, Thy hand holding the holy drum has created heaven and earth and other worlds and countless souls. Thy lifted hand protects the living and the non-living created by you. All the worlds are destroyed by thy hand bearing the fire. Thy sacred foot placed in the ground gives rest to the soul entangled in *Karma*. Thy lifted foot gives eternal bliss." Tirumoolar says in his famous Tirumantram that Siva's dance is everywhere because Siva is omnipresent and that it can be visioned and enjoyed in every heart. The burning ground where Siva dances in delight symbolises the pure heart whence sin and passion and desire have been burnt away.

Another idea hidden away in the dance concept is the conception of the universe as the result of the Leela or play of the Lord.



The Lord has no object of His aim to serve by means of creation. He launches creation on its course to give embodiment to the bound souls so that these might serve Him with love and attain the bliss of liberation. His Lila is His Dayâ (Grace) as well.

In respect of the Nataraja image the Unmei Vilakam says that the arch above the image symbolises *Omkara* (the mystic causal sound). The *Tiru Arulpayan*, however, says that it represents the dance of *Prakriti* or Nature inside which is the dance of *Jnana* or *Siva*. Thus *Siva* dances the dance of life and later dances the dance of death and again dances the dance of life. He is the Supreme Truth and Beauty and Goodness—*Sachidananda* who gives to the devotees the eternal bliss of liberation.

In the concept of *Dakshinamoorthi*, we find an equally lofty idea. He is the teacher of art, yoga and *brahma vidya*. He faces the south and if any soul hastening southward to the realms of the God of Death (*Yama*) pauses and prays, He gives to it the dower of *Vidya* and *Mukti* (knowledge and liberation). He sits on a tiger skin under a banyan tree. His right foot rests on a demon and his left foot is placed on his right thigh. Out of his four arms, the front right hand has the *Chinmudra* symbolising the oneness of the individual soul and the universal soul, the front left hand confers *abhaya* (freedom from fear) or holds a book, the back right hand has a rosary, and the back left hand has *agni* (fire). His head has got *Jatâmakuta* (Crown of matted hair) adorned by the crescent moon and the Ganges. His complexion is of pure and dazzling whiteness. His breast has a garland of *rudrâksha* beads. His face is calm and full of bliss. He is the Teacher of the Universe and keeps down the demon of ignorance. His rosary represents all the categories of the universe and the book in one of his hands represents *Brahmavidya* (the science of the soul). His lotus seat is the *Omkara*.

We have to add to the above symbolism the later symbolism of the *Dhyâni Buddha* who represents the attainment of supreme peace, and of the Crescent, and of the Cross. *Buddha* is represented also by the *Bodhi* tree, by the *vajrâsana*, by the stupa, and by footprints and by other symbols. Indian culture has become all the richer by the confluence of so many and such diverse currents of symbolic thought and emotion, and the effects of such enrichment will be seen in the great literature and art which will be born in India hereafter after she achieves political freedom and social unity in an ample measure.



## CHAPTER XII

### INDIAN MUSIC

Indian Music shares with Indian Poetry the glory of being one of the finest of the Indian fine arts and stands unique among the musical achievements of the world. So far as the west is concerned, the only country which has achieved great things in music is Germany. Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Mendelssohn, and Schubert are names to conjure with. Germany was as great in music as Greece was great in architecture and sculpture and Italy was great in painting. It is not maintaining such supremacy now. But India's music has been the essence of her life and is as vital and great to-day as it was in ancient India.

Miss Anne O. Wilson says: "The people of India are an essentially musical race....The Indian has the most subtle ear for tune and an acuteness of musical hearing". The history of Indian religion and art attests this truth from the most ancient times to this day. The *Rikprāthisakhya* refers to the three octaves and the seven notes. The *Sāma Veda* whose essence is chanted music is stated by Sri Krishna to be Himself among the Vedas. The *Gandharva Veda* (the science of music) is described as an upaveda (accessary scripture) along with *Vāstu Veda* (the science of architecture). Saraswathi is described as being enthroned on a pure white lotus and as playing on the *vina* and having a book and a rosary—thus revealing the innate and intimate union of science and art and religion when these are in their pure and unfalsified forms. The sage Nārada is described in the *Bhāgawatha* as one whose song to the accompaniment of his *vina* intensifies his devotion and whose devotion intensifies his song. Sri Krishna plays on the flute. The *Ramayana* is said to have been sung by Kusa and Lava and is being chanted down to this day. Rāvana is described in it as a wonderful chanter of the *Sama Veda* and as having propitiated God Siva by such chanting. The *Mahābhāratha* refers to the seven *svaras* (notes) and the *Gandhāra Grāma*. Kalidasa refers to musical accomplishments very often in his works and especially in *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Though there are some differences between the Hindustāni or northern school of Indian music and the Karnātic or southern school, both are based on the fundamental principles of music as laid down in the great works on music such as *Sangitaratnakara*, *Rāgamanjari*, *Rāga Tarangini*,



*Chaturdandiprakasika*, *Râga Vibodha*, *Sangita Darpana*, *Sangita Parijata*, *Sangita Saramrita* and *Sangita Râga Kalpadruma*. The *Chaturdandiprakasika* of Venkatamakhi who lived about three hundred years ago fixed the now prevailing classification of tunes (*ragas*) into *melakarthas* (major melody types) and *janyâ rāgams* (minor and derivative melody-types). The Tamils attained a high musical proficiency and an original development of music as is clear from the classic work of Ilangovalikal. (*Silappadikāram*). The *Paripādāl* refers to seven *pālais* (musical modes). The *yāzh* was the most famous of the Tamil musical instrument and seems to have been different from the *Vina* though similar to it. It was of four varieties, i.e. *Periyāzh* having 21 strings, *Makarayāzh* having 17 strings, *Sakatayāzh* having 16 strings, and *Sengottu yāzh* having 7 strings. The *Silappadigaram* refers to drum and flute and *vina* besides the *yāzh* and contains some of the oldest Tamil songs. It states the seven notes of octave and a number of *rāgas* (tunes). The names given in it to the notes and the tunes (*kolli*, *kurinji*, *takkesi*, etc.) are not those now in current use and are mostly Tamil words. The Tamil lexicon called *Divākaram* refers to two kinds of tunes viz., those containing all the seven notes (*Pan*) and those containing less (*Tiran*). It refers to twenty-two *srutis* (*mātrās*). It describes 29 *Pans* by name. Some of the *Pans* are now sung when singing the *Tevārams* (Tamil devotional hymns), though they are now known by other names which are now in current use. The Tamil folk-song types such as *Chindus*, *kummis* and *temmangus* also are very attractive. In Travancore some peculiar names of tunes such as *indisa*, *indalam*, *pādi*, *puranira* are found. In the *Sopana* style of singing which is peculiar to Kerala we find a slow and majestic mode of music which is fitted for the sentiment of Devotion.

The Indian musical instruments are of a varied character. In the *Vedas* we find references to such instruments of percussion as *dundhubhi* and *ādambara* and *bhoomidundhubhi* and *vanaspathi* and *āghati*, stringed instruments like *karkari* and *vāna* (a lute of hundred strings), and wind instruments like *tunava* and *nādi*. The *Rig Veda* refers to *Mridanga*, *Vina*, *Vamsi*, *Damaru*, etc. The *Yajur Veda* refers to flutes and conches and drums. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* refer to *bheri*, *dundubhi*, *mridanga*, *pataha*, *ghata*, *panava*, *dindima*, *sankha*, *ānaka*, *gomukha*, etc. In *Bharata's Natya Sastra* chapters 28 to 37 are devoted to a systematic exposition of music. It refers to stringed instruments (*Tata*) drums and other instruments of percussion (*avanadha*), cymbals



(*ghana*), and wind instruments (*sūshira*). The generic name is *Ātodya*. The work gives a detailed exposition of *svaras*, *srutis*, *grāmas*, *murchanas* and *jātis*. It says that song (*gita*) and instrumental music (*vādyā*), and dance (*nāṭya*) must whirl around like a lighted torch (*alāṭha chakra*). The combination of the three is called *Sangeetha*. Bharata states what sounds are appropriate to the various *rasas*. He shrewdly remarks that the voice of women is sweeter and more divine than that of man and that women should take to vocal music and men to instrumental music. The most popular and prevalent musical instruments are *Tambura*, *Vina*, *Sitar*, *Sārangi*, *Violin*, *Flute*, *Nādaswaram*, *Jalatarangam*, *Tabala*, *Mridangam* and *Ghatam*.

Thus for nearly thirty centuries past the subtle secrets of sweet sound have been successfully explored in India. Besides the graceful and intricate tunes revealed by artists, we have also many popular jigs and folksongs full of quick movement and winsome melody. The great musical poem *Gita Govinda* by Jayadeva who belonged to the twelfth century A.D. is one of the musical marvels of the world and is deservedly famous and popular throughout the length and breadth of India. It is attuned to dance as well. In fact the poet-musician described himself as the king who guides the dancing steps of his beloved wife *Padmāvatī*. He used to sing and she used to dance by way of accompaniment to his wonderful songs. The songs are descriptive of the longing and separation and reunion of *Rādhā* and *Krishna*.

The Northern or Hindustani school of Indian music was largely influenced by Persian Islamic music. It is said that the great musician *Amir Khusru* introduced a combination of the Persian and Indian tunes as well as the *Sitar* as being a musical instrument suited for such music. The Hindustani *tāla* (tune-measure) also differs from the Karnatic *tāla*. It is in the Madras Presidency and especially in the Tamil districts that we find the purest varieties of Indian music.

The Bhakti movement gave to music all over India a wonderful impetus and forward urge. The great song-composers of North India were *Gopal Naik*, *Vidyapati*, *Chandidas*, *Chaitanya*, *Haridas Swami*, *Tan Sen* who was one of the greatest musicians of India, *Ramdas*, *Kabir*, *Mirabhāi*, *Pundarika Vittal* and others. In *Maharashtra* we had *Tukaram* and other saints whose *abhangas* and *ovis* are full of charm and grace. The Canarese *Dāsarpadams* of *Purandara Das* and others are equally moving and sweet. In



South India the standardisation of music was done specially by Venkatamakhi whose work *Chaturdandiprakasika* is deservedly famous and well-known. As stated above it arranges the rāgas or tunes into seventy-two primary tunes or janaka ragas, (*mela-kartas*, i.e. creators of melody) with a large number of derivative tunes (*janya rāgas*) attached to and grouped under each primary tune. Tanjore has always been a great centre of South Indian music. Tyagaraja or Tyagayyar, one of the greatest musical geniuses of the world, was born in 1759 in Tiruvarur which is near Tanjore. He gave to the South Indian musical compositions a newer sweetness and a wider range. His *kritis*, as they are called, have remarkable originality and were inspired by a pure and fervent devotion to God. A *kriti* should have four vital elements—devotion (*bhakthi*), sweet notes (*swara*), rhythm (*laya*), and emotion (*bhāva*). He standardised the use of *Pallavi* and *anupallavi* and *charanam*—the three sections of each *kriti*—by which the dominant idea and emotion of the song are worked out by a subtle evolution of the appropriate tune. They correspond to the North Indian *astāī*, *antara*, *sanchāri*, and *ābhog*. It was he that first introduced what is known as *sangatis*, i.e., variations of melody which are sweet in themselves and which bring out the very heart-beats of the tune. He was such a perfect musical artist that he knew how to bring out the locked-up sweetness of each tune in all its variety and realised at the same time when it would be fitting to bring such variations to a harmonious close without allowing them to pall upon us by too much prolixity or subtlety or intricacy. He achieved an even greater wonder of musical glorification of Sri Rama than Jayadeva did for Sri Krishna. The latter specially expressed the Nāyaka-Nāyaki aspect of devotion, the vital concept being that of the Oversoul as the Bridegroom and the human soul as the Bride, the high priest being Devotion. The former specially expressed the *Dāsyabhakti* aspect, the vital concept being that the soul is the servant of God. His royal contemporary Maharaja Swati Tirunal who sat on the throne of Travancore was not only a musician among princes but also a prince among musicians. He composed songs of supreme melodic charm in many languages and on many themes and not only Travancore but the whole of South India resounds with his symphonies. Muthuswami Dixitar and Syama Sastri also were the great Tyagaraja's contemporaries and were musicians of wonderful genius. Muthuswami Dixitar invented a system of Indian notation using the different vowel syllables to indicate the lengths and graces of each note. The great Mahavaidyanatha Iyer of Tiruvadi died



only a few decades ago. His purity of life and his piety and his divine voice and power of voice production and his thorough mastery of Carnatic music and his original compositions brought great fame to him and great joy to his hearers. Patnam Subramania Iyer also was a great figure. Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer and Govindasami Pillai of violin fame, Sarabha Sastri who was blind of both eyes but played divinely on the flute and lifted the flute to a premier position in recent times, Seshanna of Mysore who was an expert veena player, Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar and Pushpavanam Iyer among vocalists,—not to mention the great living singers of to-day—and many expert performers on *mridangam* and *ghatam*, and others have carried South India to lofty heights so that to-day South India leads in music to a degree unknown before. The usual parts of a South Indian musical performance are *varnas*, *rāga-ālāpanas*, *pallavi*, *keertanas* or *kritis*, *chittaswaras*, *jāvalis*, *tillānas*, etc. Pandit Vishnu Digambar of Bombay also has done notable work. He established the Gandharva Mahā Vidyālaya in Lahore and then in Bombay, and the Madras Presidency gratefully remembers his tour in it some years ago spreading devotion to music and to Sri Rama wherever he went. Rabindranath Tagore's patriotic songs and religious songs are also among the most wonderful achievements of the modern Indian musical art. Quite recently Music Academy and the Indian Fine Arts Society and the Adyar Kalākshetra have been started in Madras. The institutions devoted to music and dance recently started at Trivandrum (Sri Swati Tirunal Academy of Music and Sri Chitrodaya Nartakalayam) are equally praiseworthy.

It is not possible in this brief work to go more fully into the historical evolution of Indian music. A far more important and interesting task is the inner evolution of music in India. The Greeks themselves attributed the greater part of their music to India (See Strabo, X, III). It is said that their music was probably akin to South Indian music. Their music resembled Indian music to a large extent in the realisation of the relation of music to emotional states and of the connection of musical education and betterment of public morals and national life. They realised also that in music we get freed from the tyranny of the intellect which is no doubt all-important as the guide of the soul and which, however, like fire, is a good servant but a bad master. They knew also the curative and therapeutic power of music. They knew as much the ethical as the æsthetical appeal of music. But they did not know as much as the Hindus did about the spiritual value of music.



It is undoubted that songs preceded instrumental music. They were a natural expression of the joys and griefs of mankind when these reached a certain state of intensity and incandescence. In course of time the musical scale was realised and revealed. The human voice could go up and down step by step or by leaps and bounds. The units of sound were classified into *vādi* (sonant) and *samvādi* (consonant) and *visvamvādi* (dissonant) and *anuvādi* (assonant). A famous Sanskrit verse says that *Sruthi* is the mother and *Laya* is the father of music. (*sruthir mātā layah pita*). South Indian music divides the octave into twenty-two equal intervals while the ancient Greek musical scale divided the octave into twenty-four intervals. The ancient name for a musical mode was *mōorchana*. Kalidasa refers to it in his *Mālavikāgnimitra*. It is said that there are presiding gods and goddesses in respect of each tune. Tunes are divided into *rāgas* (male tunes) and *rāginis* (female tunes). Each *rāga* divinity is minutely described in regard to his form and function and power. It is also said that each tune has its appropriate time and season of expression. Each *rāga* is a melody-mould and has its ascending and descending notes and its *jiva swara* (life-note).

Quite a lively controversy went on in South India recently as to whether it is right to associate certain tunes with certain emotions and to insist that those tunes should not be used to express other emotions. The fact is that there is a subtle connection between sound and emotion and that this cannot be worked out by a mere functioning of the intellect. Collin's famous poem on *The Passions* brings out this truth in a most remarkable way. One school of learned men denies this altogether and says that a *rāga* can be used for manifesting any emotion or any group of emotions while another school would rigorously confine one tune to one emotion alone, e.g., *mukhāri* to express grief and sorrow and so on. This difficulty is created by ourselves because we do not sufficiently know the real and vital inter-connections of sound and emotion and of *Rāga* and *Rasa*. Let us take a connected topic, viz., which poetic metre is suited for the expression of a particular emotion. Kālidasa has used the *viyogini* metre for expressing Rati's overwhelming grief and agony. It expresses well the prolonged sounds of grief varied by frequent catches of the voice and quick sobs which are due to the breakdown of the voice under the excessive stress of emotion. He uses the *mandākrāntha* metre to express the moods of longing and reverie and melancholy which abound in *Meghasandesa*. At the same time an even greater



master of poetry and emotion like Valmiki has used the *anushtup* metre to express every variety of emotion. But by the subtle use of liquids and gutturals and sibilants, etc., and by the appropriate use of short and long syllables and by the subtle aromas of meanings connected with words and by other means he produces the affects appropriate to the various emotions. It would of course be better and more suitable to find out which metre by its distribution of long and short sounds and caesura (*yati*) has the setting of sound appropriate to a particular pure emotion. It is only the supreme poets and musicians of genius that can lead us into these rarefied heights without our getting stupefied and out of breath.

There are other considerations as well. *Tāla* or time-measure is a factor in emotion. If you change the *tāla* or time measure and the *Kāla* (the unit of quick movement or medium movement or or slow movement), we find that there are deflecting forces which, like boulders in front of a stream, lead the stream of dominant emotion into devious ways. Thus anger expresses itself in quick movement and pathos in slow movement and love in medium movement. Further, the different *sanchārās* of each *rāga* and the diversities of rhythms and stresses and graces (*gamakas*) in respect of each note have got their own powers of deflection. Nay, the *rāgās* themselves have, despite codification, shown a tendency to undergo slight variations. Further, though the fundamental *rasas* or emotions are nine in number—I have shown how even the total number of *rasas* grew and can have further expansion—the total number of *Melakartas* is seventy-two while in respect of the *janya* (derivative) *rāgās*, we can only say that their name is legion. If one emotion can have only one *rāga*, what about the remaining *rāgās*, which will have to remain in a state of eternal spinsterhood? Again, emotion is rarely felt in its pure and isolated state. Even sorrow and love are complex emotional states. Congruent emotions flow into each other. As the poet says “pity melts the mind to love.” Further, in a musical composition, as in life, we find many subsidiary emotions controlled by a dominant emotion. The same *rāgā* tune is used to express them. It is quite open to the musical genius to make the subsidiary emotion of one song the dominant emotion of another song and the dominant emotion of the former song the subsidiary emotion of the latter song, while using the same *raga* or *tune*.

Thus the subject is a complex and difficult subject in which *ex cathedra* pronouncements by half-qualified artists or critics do



not lead us anywhere in particular. The proper course is to study the great and inspired treatise—writers like Bharata and the great and inspired musical geniuses like Tyagaraja and find out to what particular group of congruent emotions a particular tune can be most appropriately applied, when a particular *tāla* and a particular *kāla* can be adopted and when a particular type of *rāga sanchara* can be assumed as the basic mould of melody. It is of course not right to divorce tonal values from emotional values. We have to find out the points of fusion between expressive beauty of sounds and expressive beauty of sentiments and bring out of the married bliss of melody and emotion, the delight of wonder and the wonder of delight.

Let us not forget that it is from *Lakshyās* (musical compositions) that *lakshanas* (rules of musical composition) have come and that these in their turn guide and develop future musical compositions. Such musical compositions are folk-songs or songs by gifted and trained musicians. The folk-songs could be worked up by geniuses into new and wonderful tunes and pieces. Nay, geniuses could give us new revelations of sweetness in old tunes and in new tunes as well.

As this is not a treatise on Indian Music alone, I have to deny myself the pleasure of dealing with very many important aspects of music in India. It is a commonplace of musical criticism that the Indian music delights in melody while western music delights in harmony. It is not that Indian music does not know harmony or that western music does not know melody. But the interest and emphasis differ. Indian music is horizontal and delights in successive notes while western music is vertical and delights in simultaneous notes. The Indian musician is absorbed in the *gamakas* (grace notes), *rāga-ālāpana* (musical improvisation of tunes), and *tāla* (time measures). The life of a *rāga* tune depends on its *jīvaswaram* (dominating life-note) and its *moorchana* (framework of melody) and its *sanchāras* (characteristic note combinations). The *rāga-ālāpana* gives the widest scope for exhibiting his *manô-dharma* (the sound evolutions and involutions that spring like waves in the ocean of his mind). To my mind this aspect is the life and soul of Indian harmony. No expertness in harmony can come near such divine creativeness. The grace notes give that divine excess by which the human aspect gets sublimated into the divine aspect. The Indians are not content with tones and semitones but delight in quartertones and in the tenfold *gamakas* or graces which are full



of fascinating charm. Mr. H. A. Popley says with fine perception: "The strange and fascinating graces or *gamakās* have a great deal to do with the haunting beauty of Indian music." About the so-called melancholy of Indian music, Mrs. Mann says: "I am often told that all Indian music is melancholy. How can I convey to you that spirit which is sad yet without pain? That is the delicious melancholy of Indian music. Can a lover be joyful away from his beloved? Can a musician sing joyfully, really joyfully, whilst he wanders on this earth? Would it not be sorrow if he forgot his exile? Is not the remembrance of the face of the beloved more dear, though fraught with the pain of separation?" Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says equally well: "Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation, and it is passionate without loss of serenity."

This is the reason why the harmonium is unsuited to Indian music and why it hurts the delicacy and purity and grace and beauty of Indian music. The idea of equal intervals in an octave of notes is unsuited to Indian music. It may happen that some great genius may add a great harmonic career to Indian music and a great melodic career to western music without sacrificing the present specialities and achievements. But till then it is not wise to lose the achieved excellence by dilution and hybridisation in India or in Europe. Tagore says well: "The world by day is like European music, a flowing concourse of vast harmony, composed of concord and discord, and many disconnected fragments. And the night world is our Indian music—one pure, deep, and tender *rāgini* ..... Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of every day human joys and sorrows, and takes us to that lonely region of the soul which lies beyond the phenomenal universe, while European music leads us a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy."

In the same way North Indian music and Karnātic music have their distinctive glories and graces which should not be mixed up and diluted and spoiled. The *drupad* is sung in slow tune and without much of ornamentation but the *khyal* is light and quick and full of ornaments and graces. The *drupad* demands the use of three octaves, and an old saying is to the effect that only a man who has got the strength of five buffaloes should sing *drupad*. The voice production in North India is wonderful, whereas in South India, especially after Tyāgayyar, *sangathis* and *gamakas* have attained a wonderful development. The North Indian *Tumri* and



*Tappa* and *ghazal* also are very attractive. In recent years national songs have added a new glory to Indian music and the greatest of them is Bankum Babu's *Bande Mātaram*. But the most wonderful and Indian of all are the Kirtan songs of North India and the Bhajana songs of South India as they combine in the best way music and devotion.

Thus after all the sweetest element in Indian music is its devotional element. Tyâgaraja who is more familiarly known as Tyagayyar, has given many wonderful songs on the nature and value of music and says that it is *Nâdopâsana* (worship of the divine as manifested in soul) and that it can give the bliss of beatitude. His songs *Nada sudhârasa*, *Mokshamugalada*, *Swararâga*, *Râgasudharasa*, *Sobhillu*, etc., tell us that we can rise to the realisation of *Omkara Nâda* and the *dasa nâdas* (ten divine sounds) culminating in the *Vinâ Nâda* (the sound of the vina) and *Venu Nâda* (the sound of the flute). Mrs. Mann says about the Indian singer that he "seems to concentrate upon his very inmost self in the exercise of his art. His eyes close often in prayerful ecstasy." Indian music, however it may evolve hereafter in the direction of harmony, should never forget its basis of melody and its mood of prayerful ecstasy. God gave to us one of the greatest musicians and saints of the world in Tyâgaraja, and if we follow his lead, we shall be true to India and Indian music and attain the real goal of music—the bliss of beatitude.



## CHAPTER XIII

### INDIAN DANCE

It is not realised adequately here or abroad that dance has been a flourishing fine art in India. But though modern life has neither the leisure nor the perception needed to understand and appreciate Indian dancing, the latter is really one of the finest flowers on the stem of Indian Art. Dance in India is not mere activity of the human limbs resulting from high animal spirits or love of rhythmic movement. It is not mere refined and graceful gesture or "the passionate posturing born of a passing mood." It is the embodied soul's attempt to express, not only through the mind or the senses alone (as in the case of the other arts) but through the mind and the senses and the body acting together, its nature and its visions. It uses the hand and the voice and the mind for expressing its passions and its desires. The whole body becomes so expressive that "one might almost say the body thought." The modern dislike of the art being in the hands of dancing girls has been extended to the art itself. But as a matter of fact it is the art that has undergone a kind of vicarious punishment, because the dancing girls are very much in evidence, only dancing being almost dead.

As stated already by me, the dance was the inspirer of sculpture and drama in Greece. G. Baldwin Brown says well: "To regard the dance as a form of art may seem strange to the civilised western reader who understands by the term little more than a social function gone through at stated times without much interest or effort after variety. In the sense in which the term applies to the performances of the Greeks, the dance is a mode of artistic expression that is both free and varied and beautiful. The dance indeed as a form of art lacks permanence, but when it is reduced to a system it can be repeated at will in the same outward show. In all but permanence it is like sculpture, the presentation of the beautiful human form in gestures and position of the most graceful and expressive kind. Beauty was secured in the old Greek dances first through the actual physical comeliness of the performer, and next through the smoothness and rhythm of his controlled and calculated movements." Lucian says of a perfect dancer that he must be "nicely finished off at every point, fair of mien, full of grace and symmetry, nowhere wanting, never less than





DANCING APSARAS (*Madras University*)







himself." It is said that the youthful Sophocles danced naked, lyre in hand, at the head of the triumphal choir after the victory of Salamis. There were in every part of Greece professional female dancers of wonderful physical grace and suppleness. Such perfection of dancing had its influence on Greek sculpture and painting. The Greek posture-dance inspired the arts of sculpture and painting to a large extent. Lucian says that "the spectator of a dance should understand a mute and hear one that does not speak." The dance inspired also the drama wherein

"Gorgeous tragedy

In sceptered pall came sweeping by,

Presenting Thebes, or Pelop's line

Or the tale of Troy divine."

In modern dance we find many new and intricate physical rhythms but we miss the dominating art-motifs of Greek or Indian dance. Greek artists like Madame Pavlova and others have tried to lift dancing to the level of a fine art. But jazz music and dance and other innovations, while giving to dancing the charms of novelty and strangeness of fascination, have not helped at all in the direction of the evolution of dance as a fine art. "The difference between dance and acrobatics lies not so much in technique as in a state of mind". (Arnold Haskell).

In the Rig Veda, Ushas (Dawn) is described as clad in gay garments like a dancer. The dances of Siva, Kali, Krishna, Ganesa, and the Apsarases are described in Indian religious literature. The story of Arjuna as Brihannala in the court of the King of Virāta shows how dancing was prized by cultured persons. In Kalidasa's *Malavikāgnimitra* we see the poet's mastery of the theory and technique of dancing. The great Tamil classic *Silappadikāram* refers to twenty four kinds of *abhinayam* (gesture). Hundred and eight kinds of dances are sculptured on either side of a *gopura* (tower) in God Nataraja's temple at Chidambaram. Ragini Devei, the well-known American exponent of the Indian Art of Dancing, says that she created her dances after a close study of Indian sculpture and that footwork and body movement and gesture and song should go together.

In India we get the key-ideas in regard to the fine art of Indian dancing in Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra*. That great work has yet been imperfectly and carelessly studied, though it is a wonderful mine of artistic ideas. It has been said therein that *Sangeeta*



consists of *Gita* (vocal music) and *Vādyā* (instrumental music) and *Nritya* (dancing). Another verse says that the voice should bring out the music and the feet should beat time while the eyes and the hands should bring out the very soul of the dominant emotion. Bharata's work describes the construction of the dancing hall (*rangamantapa*) and the worship of the deities there. It then describes elaborately the nature of *Tāndava* (a form of dance). The story is that Siva asked his attendant Tandu to teach the vigorous masculine type of dance (*Tāndava*) to Bharata and asked Parvati to teach the graceful feminine type of dance (*Losya*) to him. *Nritya* is the pantomimic representation of feeling (*bhava*)

अन्यद्वावाश्रयं नृत्यं नृत्तं ताललयाश्रयम् ॥ (Dhananjaya's *Dasarupaka*). *Nritya* consists of movements of the body with gestures and is regulated by *tāla* (musical time-interval). As stated above, dancing is divided into *Tāndava* (vigorous dancing) and *Lāsya* (gentle and graceful dancing). Kalidasa says in his *Mālavikāgnimitra* that God Siva and Goddess Parvathi are the presiding deities of *Tāndava* and *Lasya* respectively. It is said that Siva and Parvathi taught twenty varieties of *Mārga* or *Nritya* dancing and sixteen varieties of *Desi* or *nritta* Dancing. It has been stated also that the appropriate modes of dancing in relation to *śringāra* (love), *vīra* (heroism) and *hāsya* (the comic) are *churita*, *laghunritya* and *vikata*. In Bharata's work there is an elaborate description of the *rasas* (aesthetic emotions). The seventh chapter where the expression of feeling is described reveals wonderful subtlety and insight and is of the greatest value. The eighth and ninth chapters deal with *abhinaya* or gesture. The later chapters deal with dancing. Bharata refers to the 108 modes of dance referred to already. Kalidasa describes in *Malavikāgnimitra* an ideal dancer as having "large lustrous eyes, moon-like face, arms gently sloping from the shoulders, firm and prominent breasts, soft smooth sides, narrow waist, full and beautiful lips, and finely curving toes." He says also of that dancer—*Mālavika*—that she interpreted the emotion by gestures.

Quite recently Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami published the *Abhinaya Darpana* (the Mirror of Gesture) of Nandikeswara. It is only when we compare it and Bharata's *Nāṭya Sastra* with such works as Charles Aubert's *The Art of Pantomime* and Florence Lutz's *The Technique of Pantomime* and books on western dancing that we can realise the fertility of artistic ideas in the Indian concept of dancing. One hundred and twenty-seven emotions are depicted in Florence Lutz's book in respect of the physical attitudes express-





DANCING APSARAS (*Madras University*)







ing them. But the great works on Indian dance show how to get into the very soul of the *rasa* and then bring out the essence of the emotion by posture and gesture and the silent eloquence of the human form. As in Indian music, so in Indian dancing, there is a sinuous transition from one subsidiary emotion to another subsidiary emotion under the controlling and dominant emotion (*bhâva*) which is the dynamic aspect of the *rasa* sought to be expressed. There is not much in artificial tabulations. The dancer must be attuned to the emotion and then express the surge of the emotion. In the Western dances we have rhythmic movements to the accompaniment of music but they have no theme and no *bhâva* and *rasa* (æsthetic emotion and sweetness).

Dr. Coomaraswami says in his introduction to *Abhinaya Darpana* "Indian acting or dancing—the same word *Nâtya* covers both ideas—is thus a deliberate art. Nothing is left to chance. The actor no more yields to the impulse of the moment in gesture than in the spoken word.....Excellent acting wears the air of perfect spontaneity, but that is the art which conceals art..... Indian acting is a poetic art, an interpretation of life, while modern European acting, apart any question of the words, is prose or imitation." In *Abhinaya Darpana* we find a detailed description of *mudras* (finger-poses). Nandikeswara to whom the work is attributed says: "The song should be expressed by the voice; its meaning must be shown by the hands; the mood (*bhava*) should be shown by the eyes; and rhythm (*tâla*) must be marked by the feet. For wherever the hand moves, the glances follow; where the glances go, the mind follows; where the mind goes, the mood goes; where the mood goes, there is the flavour (*rasa*).” The work refers to nine movements of the head, eight glances, six movements of the eyebrows and twelve movements of the hands.

In Bharata's *Natyasastra* another truth in respect of the art of dance is much emphasised. *Abhinaya* has four aspects, viz., *Sâttwika*, *Vâchika*, *Ângika* and *Ahârya*. *Sâttwika* refers to physical changes under the stress of emotion, e.g., change of colour, perspiration, etc. *Vâchika* refers to verbal cadences bringing out the pervasive emotion. *Ângika* refers to the language of the eyes, the facial indications, and the language of gesture. *Ahârya* refers to the make-up and costume. All these aspects result in the perfect expression of the emotions and enkindle *rasas* in the audience. Agni Purana and Vishnudharmottara treat of *abhinaya*. Mr. R. K. Poduval refers to a great work on Dance-Drama (*Bâlarâma-bharatam*) by King Bâlarâma Kulasekhara Vanchi Bhoopala of



Travancore. In it we have a description of the *angas* and *upāngas* and *pratyangas* in Natya (dance). The *angas* include the movements of the head, hands, breasts sides of the body, hips and feet; the *upāngas* those of the eyes, eyebrows, nose, cheeks, chin and lips; and the *pratyangas* those of the neck, arm, abdomen, loins, thighs and shanks. The Indian works on Dance refer to the *mudras* as falling into two groups, i.e., single hand and combined hands (*asamyuta* and *samyuta*). The abovesaid work refers to 40 *asamyuta* *mudras* and 27 *samyuta* *mudras*. The *Vishnu Dharmottara* refers to 22 *asamyuta* *mudras* and 13 *samyuta* *mudras*.

It is hardly possible in this brief work to go in more detail into this fascinating subject. In a country which gave the supreme concept of Natarāja the divine dancer, the equally beautiful concept of Kaliya Mardana (Sri Krishna dancing on the head of the serpent Kaliya), and the wonderful descriptions of Sri Krishna's Rāsa dance in the Bhāgawatha, it is a melancholy thing that there should be any need for a plea for the fine art of dancing. The history of dancing as a fine art has yet to be written and the essential artistic principles of Indian dancing have yet to be revealed. The art was given a new charm and a new development in Moghul courts and in later times. Quite recently Rabindranath Tagore has composed some beautiful music for dancing and has realised the value of dancing as an independent form of artistic expression. Till a few years ago there were great and wonderful dancers in India. It was however fast becoming an intricate jumble of meaningless jumps and hops and twirlings of fingers. But its real beauty deserves to be understood and perfected, because the sweetest delineation of Rāsa can be found only in dances where the eyes and the tongue and the hands of man—nay, the whole personality of man—becomes the instrument of emotional expression.

The Kerala Kathakali dance is of great beauty. But it is not well understood in North India. Mr. Projesh Banerji says in his recent book *Dance of India*: "Kathakali is a degenerate specimen of the once glorious art of Kerala in Deccan" (page 186). *Kathakali* seeks to express a wide range of emotions through gestures (*mudras*) and movements of eyes and eyebrows and cheeks and lips. The Raja of Kottarakara (1575-1650 A.D.) gave it a great impetus. It consists of Ramanāttam and Krishnanāttam relating to the stories of Rama and Krishna. These became more popular than the ancient forms of *Chākiarkoothu* and *Kudiāttom*. *Thullal*, *Mohiniāttom*, etc., also may be referred to here. A *Thullal* is a









FIGURE OF DANCING GIRL, ON PILLAR OF VERANDAH, SITHANNAVASAL ROCK-CUT JAIN TEMPLE,  
SITHANNAVASAL, PUDUKOTTAI STATE (Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



dance to the accompaniment of song and pantomime. There are three distinct forms of Thullal, viz., *ottam*, *seethankan* and *parayan*. The former two are of a vigorous type while the third is suited to pathetic themes. The great master of *Thullal* is Kunjan Nambiar. It is said that 9 movements of the head, 6 movements of the eyebrows, 11 movements of the eyes, and 4 movements of the neck are used by the Kathakali artists. The wearing of masks and the use of paints and costumes are other peculiarities. The Kathakali artist communicates the mood and the spirit of the story by the eloquence of his facial movements and bodily movements and hand-gestures. There are also scenic stage-settings. The Kathakali is an open air art.

The Bharata Natyam of the Tamil Districts is of the *Lasya* variety whereas the Kathakali is more or less of the *Tāndava* variety. It has developed a remarkable technique, which like that of the Kathakali, has been perfected in the course of centuries especially in the Tanjore District. It consists of *alarippu*, *jathiswaram*, *Varnam*, *padam*, etc. It excels in movements of head and neck and eyebrows and eyes. Its special excellence is in the graceful footwork and in the interpretation of the sentiment of the song by *abhinaya* (gesture).

Other living forms of the Indian art of dance are the Telugu Kuchipoodi dance in which there is a graceful dance-representation of the story of Krishna, the Manipuri dance which excels in swift footwork and exhibits episodes in the life of Radha and Krishna, the Orissa Chow dance which is danced with masks on, many varieties of folk dances, etc.

It is a happy augury that of late the art of dance, which had fallen on evil times and on evil tongues is coming into its own. At a time when many forces threatened to overwhelm it, new forces have overwhelmed those forces and have lifted the art into a high place in the popular favour. Rabindranath Tagore has introduced dances into his plays. The dances interpret songs and the dancers wear charming costumes. They do not care much for *Mudras* or *Talas*. Srimati Rukmani Devi has given it a lovely cultural setting and a supreme spiritual appeal. Sreeman Gopinath and Sreemati Thangamani of Trivandrum have introduced not only new colour effects and costume effects to enhance its charm and appeal but have added new graces and new art values to it. Uday Sankar and Menaka and Ragini Devi and others have taken its meaning and message to many lands all over the world.



Uday Shankar's Indian Culture Centre at Almora is a world-famous institution. But after all is seen and said in regard to dance, it is felt by all lovers of the art of dance that the Bharata Natya of South India is supreme in the expression of all the emotions of the human heart. I have tried to express its appeal in the following poem of mine :—

"Whom dost thou see? What moves thy lips?

What passions, yearnings, joys are thine?

Why tremble thy fair finger tips?

Why do thy eyes thus gloom and shine?

The gems that clasp thy quivering throat

Seem human in their sympathy.

With answering light, like note for note,

They own a kindred ecstasy.

Thine anklets sweet more vocal are—

Those tell-tale traitors round thy feet—

Disclose thy passion's peace and war,

Its raptures deep so bitter-sweet.

Oh! Call not this mere pantomime

Or mere dissembled ecstasy.

The lyric soul of Rhythmic Time

Awhile incarnate is in thee."



## CHAPTER XIV

### INDIAN POETRY

The subject of Indian Poetry is so vast and voluminous that an adequate description of its cultural bases and manifestations will require a separate volume and cannot be compressed into a brief chapter. I must hence retain that privilege for exercise on a future occasion. I can and shall, however, indicate here the vital and essential principles and aspects of Indian poetry, though, for the delineation of the graces and glories of the best poetry in the Sanskrit and the vernaculars of India an ampler canvas is undeniably indispensable.

All over the world the finest aroma of the human soul has been expressed in poetry. Poetry is the joy of rhythmic speech about the meaning and value and joy of life. Poetry is the queen of the arts. It can be and is in its best manifestations, architectonic and statuesque and pictorial and melodious and rhythmical and combines the graces of architecture and sculpture and painting and music and dancing. It is all these and something more. Its channel of expression is words which are dynamos of emotion. Its power of expression and suggestion is manifold, nay, infinite.

The poet is a seer. He sees far and high and deep and feels and reveals the mystery of things. His revelatory power is due to his sincerity and insight. Goethe says: "The Beautiful is higher than the Good; the Beautiful includes in it the Good." This is a bit of exaggeration. Each of the three aspects of divinity—the Beautiful and the Good and the True—is so attractive that when you fix your attention on any one of them it seems to be supreme. It is the poet's privilege to reveal the beauty-aspect hinting at the same time the aspects of goodness and of truth. That is the real characteristic and distinction of the highest poetry.

The two western countries which are supreme in poetry are Greece and England. The countries which produced Homer and Shakespeare are entitled to the reverential homage of humanity for all time. Nowhere else has the purpose of poetry been better or more loftily and adequately expressed than by Plato. He says in his *Republic*: "Excellence of thought and of harmony and of form and of rhythm is connected with excellence of character....



.....We must look for artists who are able out of the goodness of their own natures to trace the nature of beauty and perfection, so that our young men, like persons who live in a healthy place, may be perpetually influenced for good. Every impression which they receive through eye or ear will come from embodiments of beauty, and this atmosphere, like the health-giving breeze which flows from bracing regions, will imperceptibly lead them from their earliest childhood into association and harmony with the spirit of Truth and into love for the Spirit." Aristotle says with equal truth and perception: "Poetry has a wider truth and a higher aim than history; for poetry deals rather with the universal, history with the particular." Thus Plato makes us realise the unity of poetry and morality and spirituality, and Aristotle makes us realise that poetry aims at presenting the universal elements of life and the infinite possibilities, even more than the infinite actualities, of human nature.

I do not mean to undervalue the great poetry of other nations. France which gave the world Corneille and Racine and Moliere and Hugo, Germany which produced Goethe and Schiller, Italy which gave us Dante who was, what he described the poet to be, the scribe of "Divine Love", and other countries have given rare gifts of poesy to the world. Modern criticism of poetic ideals has been equally valuable and has given new wings to the realisation of the poetic view of the world. Lessing, Victor Cousin, Addison, Carlyle, Emerson, Mathew Arnold, Ruskin, Morris, Saint-Beuve and others have done very fine work in this direction and shown how the raw material of reality is worked into the finished creations of art. Poetry is thus the human soul's realisation and revelation of the beauty without and the beauty within. We must never forget that the soul, though we can for psychological purpose differentiate imagination and emotion and knowledge and vision, is a unitary principle and functions as a whole. Addison says well: "We divide the soul and several powers and faculties, but there is no such division in the soul itself, since it is the whole soul that remembers, understands, wills, or imagines." The soul loves Nature and yet looks beyond it. The poet brings us

"The Light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration and the poet's dream."

He can make all the flowers of all the seasons bloom together. He lets us into the secret of things and gives a glimpse of the wonders which lie unseen about us and within us. He appeals to what



Mathew Arnold calls our "imaginative reason". Ruskin says well: "He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of greatest ideas."

This review of universal poetry and criticism of poetry, fascinating as the subject is, must be closed. The forms of poetry—epic, narrative, dramatic, elegiac, lyric, etc.—differ, and their special manifestations in particular times and climes differ as well. But in every high and noble poetry the same accent of the soul is heard. As Victor Cousin says: "A word in itself, above all a word chosen and transfigured into poetry, is the most energetic and the most universal of symbols. Equipped with this talisman of its own creation, poetry reflects all the images of the world of the senses, like sculpture and painting; reflects feeling like painting and music, rendering it in all its variations—variations which music cannot reach, and that come in a rapid succession which painting cannot follow, while it remains as sharply turned and as full of repose as sculpture; nor is that all; it expresses what is inaccessible to all other arts, I mean thought, thought which has no colour, thought which allows no sound to escape, which is revealed in no play of feature, thought in its loftiest flight, in its most refined abstraction."

Tested by such noble and lofty tests, Indian poesy is found to be among the loftiest and noblest poesies in the world. The Vedic poetry, the later epic poetry, the yet later classical poetry of Kalidasa and other poets, and the still later devotional poetry of Sri Sankaracharya and others form an unparalleled contribution to the world's poesy. A country which has given to the world the Upanishads and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata with the Bhagawad Gita as its crown and the Bhâgawata may well claim to lead the world in poetry. When we add to such peerless poetry the great poetry which was later on written in the vernaculars, we can well realise the supremacy of India in poetry.

It is not possible to describe in a chapter the magnificence of Indian poetry which would require many volumes for adequate description. The Vedas—and especially the Rig Veda—contain not only the oldest extant literature of humanity but also some of the sublimest and most charming poetry of the world. The poems to ushas (dawn), the sun (sanitar or surya), the fire (agni), the sky (aditi), etc., show vision and rapture in a remarkable combination. The vedic seers arrived at their realisation of the divine unity of all things by a peerless power of intuition and then gave



it a poetic expression which thrills us by its combined profundity and grace. Their realisation that all that is is born in Bliss (Ananda) and rests in Bliss and is finally absorbed in Bliss is the very zenith of all human realisation. Towards the close of the *Isavasya Upanishad*, we see how the poet-saint feels that even the sun's superb splendour hides a greater glory and how he visualises that glory by the grace of the Sun-God and finds that the spiritual Light shining there and enkindling the sun is the same as the Spiritual Light in his own heart. The budding poetry of the Vedas found its full blossoming in the immortal epics of India. In the *Ramayana* we find powers of characterisation and descriptions of nature and human emotions hardly equalled by any other poetry in the world. Rama and Sita are ideals yet real figures whom the poet Valmiki's imagination has depicted in deathless words which have inspired countless lives in India during many centuries. The *Mahabharata* is not only an epitome of the higher thought of India in all the fields of knowledge but contains sublime poetry inclusive of that peerless and priceless gem of poetic and philosophic literature—the *Bhagawad Gita*. Tagore says well that these two epics contain the "eternal history of India." Though the puranas aim at presenting morality and philosophy for the guidance of man, yet they often exhibit very high poetic achievement. They include that perfect jewel of the world's devotional literature, *Srimad Bhagawata*—in which poetic emotion is sublimated into spiritual ecstasy again and again. Later yet we have two great poetic developments in the realms of *Kāvya* (Narrative Poetry) and *Nataka* (Drama). In both these realms *Kalidasa* is supreme and is one of the world-figures in literature. In his handling of the Rama story in his *Raghuvamsha* he shows consummate artistic tact and skill and he has produced therein a brief but charming *Ramayana* of his own without putting himself in competition with the older and greater poet. In *Kumara Sambhava* he has depicted his highest concepts of Indian love and heroism—love based on devotion and discipline (*tapas*) and heroism based on the passion for world-welfare. His *Megha Sondesa* is a unique artistic creation and inspired innumerable similar later works. His dramas also are universal in their appeal and contain perfect poetry. Of all his dramatic creations *Sakuntala* is supreme and deservedly got unbounded praise from the great poet and dramatist of the nineteenth century—the German poet Goethe. *Bhāravi*, *Magha*, *Sriharsa* and others also gave great poems to the world. Equally famous are the Sanskrit dramatists *Bhāsa*, *Sudraka*, *Bhavabhuti* and others. I shall dis-



cuss Indian Drama in some detail in the next chapter. Indian didactic poetry also attained world-famous heights in Panchatantra, Bhartrihari's Satakas, etc. Indian devotional poetry attained supreme levels of achievement in the hands of Sri Sankaracharya and others. In *Bana's Kadambari* ornate Sanskrit prose reached a peerless magnificence of utterance. But yet in the lighter vein of writing Sanskrit literature was deficient. Great humorous works were unknown. These have to be created hereafter after imbibing the spirit of the immortal humorous works in the English and French languages. In the realm of drama, tragedies and prose social dramas of the new intellectual type were unknown. The current idea that a tragical close in a play is opposed to the genius of Indian literature has some truth in it, but we must not make a fetish of it. Bhasa's *Uru Bhanga* was a pure tragedy. There is a charm in the surpassing of tragedy by a restoration of life and law and love by divine interposition and there is another kind of charm in the purgation of our lower nature through suffering and through tenderness..

We see an equally remarkable poetic efflorescence in all the Indian vernaculars as well. Among these the palm has to be assigned to the Tamil language which has a very ancient and very great literature. The ancient *Sangam* epics are of a high order and among them *Silappadikaram* stands out in unique preeminence. The *Tirukural* is among the world's great classics and shows the supremacy of the Tamil genius in didactic poetry. The *Thevaram* and *Tirūvachakam* and *Tiruvoimozhi* and *Tiruppugazh* and *Tiruvārūtpā* form a devotional literature unparalleled in the world's literature and even in Sanskrit literature. The sighs and sobs and agonies of the human spirit in its moods of unsatisfied longings for union with God are expressed in a manner which is unique and soul-uplifting and soul-satisfying. Kamban's *Ramayana*, though modelled on Valmiki's immortal epic, is original in its handling of the theme and shows that the poet is a supreme master of the poetic art. In recent times Subramania Bharati has given to the Tamil world patriotic poems of the highest order and also other new literary forms full of admirable artistry.

Equally remarkable is the poetic achievement in the other Indian languages which, in mediæval and modern India, have been raised to the rank of great cultural languages by the genius of a succession of remarkable poets. In Nannaya's *Mahabhārata* and specially in Pothanna's *Bhāgawata* the Telugu language enters the ranks of the great languages which have created world-literature.



The works of Ezhuthachchan and the recent poetic work of Mahakavi Vallathol and Mahakavi Ulloor Parameswara Iyer show the vitality of the Malayalam language. The poems and songs of Purandara Das and others and the new efflorescence of modern Kannada literature in Mysore show the vitality of the Kanarese language. The Marathi language become a marvel of cultural achievement in the poems and songs of Jnāneswar and Ekanath and Tukaram and Samarth Ramadas and shows a virile vitality to-day. Hindi has risen to great heights in the poems and songs of Mirabai and has given to the world Tulasidas' *Ramacharitamansa* which, though inspired by Valmiki's epic poem, is an original poem of great merit and has been the solace and inspiration of hundreds of millions in each generation for many centuries. The Sikh *Granth* blossomed in the north-west of India and the great Bengali poetry of Vidyapati and Chandidas and others blossomed in the north-east of India. In recent times Bengali has raised her language to international renown and to her has been vouchsafed in this century the supreme poetic accomplishment of Rabindranath Tagore.

A mention may also be made here of English poetry by Indians, though it will never equal poetry in the Indian languages in point of poetic merit or as a source of national inspiration. The poetry of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu is of enduring beauty. The new feelings of patriotism and unity surging in passionate waves through the Indian hearts to-day, as also the feelings of futility and frustration due to unattained freedom, find expression in these poems.

The most remarkable fact about such poetic efflorescence in India is that the political downfall in India had no depressing effect on India's soul and did not bring about her poetical downfall as has happened elsewhere in the world. The Indian mind and heart has always shown a remarkable power of resistance and resilience which has led to the irrepressible vitality of the Indian people. The damage wrought by centuries has been repaired again and again in decades. While other civilisations have disappeared, the Indian civilisation alone is "full of youthful vigour." This is due to the divine vision which the Indian heart beheld in its radiant past and to which it has been loyal down to this day.

Wonderful as is Indian poetry, equally wonderful is Indian poetics. I have already given a reference to the works on Indian æsthetics extending over two thousand years. If I were to try to



give even a brief summary of the profound and subtle and valuable ideas contained in them I would require a big volume for indicating the procession of ideas in a suitable way. I have tried to do that work, though in a perfect way, in another volume. Without a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, such an attempt would be hardly intelligible. I shall therefore show here what are the vital and basic ideas which are explained in Indian Poetics and exemplified in Indian Poetry.

The Indian Aestheticians say that the two ambrosial fruits on the poisonous tree of worldly life consist of the enjoyment of poesy and of the company of godly persons. They state also that in the illimitable cosmos of poetry the creator is the poet himself and that the world takes colour from his soul and is manifested in the light of the splendour of his soul.

अपरे काव्यसंसारे कविरेव प्रजापतिः ।  
यथाऽस्मै रोचते विश्वं तथैवेतत् प्रवर्तते ॥

(In the limitless creation of poesy, the poet is the creator. As it pleases him so does the world manifest itself.) Mammata, who is one of the greatest æstheticians of the world, says in a deservedly famous and well-known verse in his *Kāvya-prakasa* : "The poet's speech creates a world which is not fettered by the laws of Destiny, which is of the very essence of joy, which is of self-existent and not dependent on anything else, and which is made beautiful by the nine *rasas*."

नियतिकृतनियमरहितां हृदैकमयीमनन्यपरतन्त्राम् ।  
नवरसरुचिरां निर्मितिमादधती भारती कवेर्जयति ॥

He says also that the muse of poetry should give immediate and direct and supreme delight (*sadyah paranirvrithi*). Another ancient and famous idea which is elaborated by him is to the effect that while the Veda commands us like a sovereign (*prabhu sammita*) and the epic and ethical literature of the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* counsel us like a friend (*Suhrit sammita*), poetry charms and enraptures us into perfection with the irresistible graceful ways of a beloved wife who can by a word, a look, nay, by a gesture, lead us in the ways of beauty and goodness and truth. (*Kantā sammitā*) To use a western analogy the vedas and the *Puranas* and the *Kāvya*s are the Autocrat and the Professor and the Poet at the Breakfast Table.



I have already referred to the æsthetical concepts of *Ānanda* (Bliss) and *Rasa* (æsthetic sweetness) and *Bhāva* (æsthetic emotion). Without a complete comprehension of these ideas, there could be no great poetic achievement. In addition to them the Indian æstheticians lay down that three elements are required for the making of a great poet viz., *prathibhā* (creative imagination) and *vyuthpathi* (study and culture) and *abhyāsa* (practice of the art of poetry). If in addition to all these the poet is a devotee and wins the grace of God, he is able to give the world that intellectual and emotional and spiritual uplift by which man is lifted up to the highest levels of bliss divine.

The various schools of æsthetics in India may be briefly called the *Rasa* school, the *Ālamkara* school, the *Riti* school, the *Vakrokti* school, and the *Dhvani* school. The *rasa* school of Bharata analyses the *rasa* concept with great acuteness and thoroughness. It says that *rasa* is the æsthetic mood which is kindled by the dominant emotion (*sthāyi bhāva*) and which is heightened and intensified by the principal exciting and stimulating causes (*ālabhana vibhāvas*) and the secondary and accessory stimulating causes (*uddipana vibhāvas*) and by the external manifestations such as smiles and sideling glances, etc. (*anubhāvas*) and by the eight *sāthvikabhāvas* (prominent involuntary physical effects), viz. stupefaction or स्तम्भ, loss of consciousness or प्रलय, horripilation or रोमांच, sweating or स्वेद, loss of brightness or वैवर्ण्य, tremor or वेद्यु, tears or अश्रु and change of tone or वैस्वर्य, and the 33 *Vybhicharibhāvas* or *samcharibhāvas* (the ever-changing and ever-rising and ever-setting minor collateral feelings of pleasure and pain, such as fear, jealousy, shyness, impatience, etc.). The *Ālabhana vibhāvas* are the human factors and determinants in emotion (such as the beloved) whereas the *uddipana vibhāvas* are the environmental factors and stimulants in emotion (such as the full moon, etc.). *Rasa* is kindled by the *vibhāvas* and manifested by the *anubhāvas* or accessory stimulants and intensified by the *vybhicharibhāvas* or occasional and fleeting moods. Thus *rasa* is an æsthetic mood kindled in the reader or the seer or the hearer by his sharing in the depicted feelings because of the universal elements present in such delineation. But for such common bases of emotion, there is perfect truth in Hamlet's query,

"What is Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?"



Such disinterested absorption in an æsthetic mood enables the innate bliss of the soul to manifest itself. The *Sthâyibhavas* are said to be eight in number, viz. *rati*, *hāsa*, *soka*, *krodha*, *utsāha*, *bhaya*, *jugupsa* and *vismaya* (love, the comic, pathos, fury, heroism, terror, disgust and wonder) They correspond to the eight rasas : *Sringara*, *hasya*, *karmā*, *randra*, *vira*, *bhayanaka*, *bheebhatsa* and *adbhuta*.

The Rasa concept was elaborated in Bharata's *Natya Sastra* which is the earliest systematic Indian treatise on Aesthetics but its seed is found in India's earliest great poem—Valmiki's *Ramayana*. He says in it that the poem is full of the various rasas—*sringara*, *karunya*, *hasya*, *veera*, *bhayānaka*, *rowdra*, etc. (*Bāla-kanda*, IV, 9). But the basic rasa in the poem is the *Karunā* Rasa (pathos). The poet himself says : *Sokah slokatvām āgatah* (Pity has become Poesy) (*Bālakanda*, II 40). Anandavardhana bases his theory that Rasa is the soul of Poesy on the poetic achievement of Valmiki and Vyāsa (*Third Udyota of Dhvanyāloka*).

A question which is often discussed by the Indian æstheticians is as to the exact nature of the origin of the enjoyment of the Rasa (*Rasāsvada*). In Bharata's famous Rasa Sutra "Rasa is revealed by the union of *Vibhāva* and *Anubhāva* and *Vyabhicharibhava*"

(विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगाद्रसनिष्पत्तिः)

His aim is to show that the dominant emotion (*sthayibhava*) is stimulated and revealed by *Vibhavas* and *Anubhāvas* and *Vyabhicharibhavas*, and it in its turn stimulates and kindles the kindred Rasa.

विभावैरनुभावैश्च सात्त्विकैर्व्यभिचारिभिः ।

आनीयमानः स्वाद्यत्वं स्थायीभावोरसः स्मृतः ॥

He says that Rasa is so called because it is enjoyable (आस्वाद्य).  
अत्राह रस इति कः पदार्थः—उच्यते—आस्वाद्यत्वात् । The *sthāyi bhāva* is the flower while Rasa is the fruit. The first feeling of love is not *sringāra*. When it is fed and intensified by *vibhavas* and *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicharibhavas* and becomes the ruling passion and dominant emotion and pervades and fills the mind it becomes the *sthayibhava* of *Rathi* (रति) which reveals the exquisite and exclusive enjoyment (Rasa) of *sringāra*. Rasa is the king whose attendants are the *vibhavas* and *anubhavas* and *vybhicharibhavas*. The *vibhāvas* are the causes and the *anubhavas* are the concurrent



manifestations and the vybhicharibhavas are the feeders of the ruling emotion. विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिपरिवृतः स्थायीभावो रसनामालभतेनरेन्द्रवत्॥ Enjoyment (अस्वाद) is the essence of Rasa. It is the reader of the poem or the spectator of the dance or the drama that has such enjoyment of Rasa. He is called *sahridaya*, i.e., the man of sympathy whose entrance into the feelings of the personages in the poem or the drama kindles in him a dominant emotion which ripens into Rasa. In the Krishna Karnāmrita there is a beautiful stanza which says that when Yasoda told the story of Sita's abduction by Ravana the boy Sri Krishna cried out "Lakshmana! Bring, bring my bow". A similar story is told about Kulasekhara Alwar, the great Travancore king and devotee. Thus the feeling enkindled in the hero or the heroine lights a kindred *rasa* in the poet or the dramatist or the actor and this flame lights up a similar flame of *rasa* in the hearer or the reader. Bharata gives us a telling illustration from the realm of the lower pleasures of the palate. Just as cooked rice is made by sauces of salt, sugar, etc., a means of joy and vigour, even so the Sahridaya enjoys the poem or the drama and in the process becomes full of the joy of Rasa and the vigour of moral and spiritual life. Thus Bharata's view is that the Vāsanas or latent impressions of emotion in the human mind are enkindled by vibhāvas, etc., and become bright as sthāyibhavas and rasas. The characters in the poem or the drama experience the full sway of the ruling emotion but the poet and the dramatist and the actor have a similar but not identical emotion kindled by the emotions of the characters. It is this imaginative emotion that becomes a Rasa and kindles a similar emotion in the reader or the hearer or the spectator who experiences a similar Rasa.

Mammata has shown how Bharata's acute analysis of Bhāva and Rasa become the starting point of four types of later æsthetical speculations. Lollata interpreted Bharata's Rasa Sutra according to the Mimamsa doctrines; Sankuka did so according to the Nyāya school of thought; Bhatta Nāyaka did so according to the Sāṅkaya doctrines; and Abhinavagupta interpreted it according to the Ālankarika doctrines. Lollata held that Rasa is *generated* as the effect from the vibhavas, etc., which form the cause. The Vibhāva generates the feeling e.g., Sakuntala generates the feeling of love in Dushyanta, and Dushyanta generates the feeling of love in Sakuntala. The Anubhavas manifest the feeling and in the very process of manifestation fan the feeling into flame and make more potent the generated feeling. The vyabhicharibhavas add fuel to the fire and intensify the flame of emotion (bhāva) till the



emotion is in a state of white heat and overspreads the entire mind and becomes a ruling and dominant passion (*sthayibhava*) which develops into *Rasa*. The poet and the actor enter into the feelings of the characters and represent the emotions. Lollata thinks that the spectator is under the mistaken impression that the actor or the actress is the hero or the heroine. This is bringing in the metaphysical theory of *Adhyāsa* (superimposition) with a vengeance. No spectator ever mistakes the actor for the hero. Nor is it true that the actor merely simulates the hero's passion. No actor is worth his salt if he does not feel the emotion, though he may not and cannot feel it in the same degree and with the same intensity. Lollata is further wrong in thinking that the spectator merely enjoys the actor's simulated passion just as he is wrong in thinking that the actor merely simulates the hero's passion. The fact is that the actor's detachment combined with feeling etherealises the feeling and makes it æsthetic and that the spectator's greater detachment combined with feeling etherealises the feeling further and completely converts it into the æsthetic *rasa*. The element of feeling must be in all—i.e., the hero and the actor and the spectator. Otherwise there is no possibility of the evolution of real *rasa*. It is the element of detachment that brings in the transmuting touch. It transforms the *agony* of the original character owing to sorrow into the æsthetic *rasa* of pathos. The spectator's tears, like the tears of the hero in agony, cause an exquisite thrill of pleasure. Aristotle's famous view that tragedy purgates the heart through pity and terror and that these emotions, though painful in the actual world, give a pure and chastened pleasure in the ideal world of poetry and drama may well be remembered in this context.

Thus Bharata shows a masterly grip over the nature of *Rasa* while in Lollata we find that the entry of the logician and the metaphysician into æsthetics brings in elements of confusion. Bharata's word *Nishpathi* signifies enkindled and manifested and intensified and revealed. Lollata takes it to mean *Utpathi* (generation) and has not made a success of his analysis of *Rasa*. Bharata is not concerned with the direct emotions of the characters but with the kindred indirect *æsthetic* emotions kindled in the artist and the spectator. If Lollata has erred in his analysis of *Rasa*, the next great æsthetician Sankuka errs in another way. He sets his *Rasānumiti* theory (that *Rasa* is inferred) as against Lollata's *Rasotpatti* theory (that *Rasa* is generated). In him also the logician and the metaphysician overpower the pure æstheti-



cian. Lollata would say that the spectator imposes the character or the actor by way of *adhyāsa* and regards the actor as Dushyanta or Rama. Sankuka combats this view and says that there can be no *adhyāsa* because the spectator never arrives at the later correct knowledge that the actor is not Rama or Dushyanta. His view is that the spectator infers the emotion of the character from the simulated emotion of the actor as exhibited by *vibhāvas*, etc., and is filled with delight as at the sight of a painted horse (*chitra-turaga*). But is it right to equate *Nishpatti* with *Anusmriti* (inference)? The view that the spectator equates the actor with the character by *inference* is as incorrect as Lollata's view that the spectator superimposes the character on the actor. It cannot be said that the real feeling is in the character and a simulated feeling is in the actor and that the enjoyment or *rasa* is in the spectator. As stated above by me the feeling is common to all though in different degrees while the elements of detachment and disinterestedness convert emotion to *rasa*. This is why the emotions of pathos and horror which cause grief or fear in the character create pleasure in the spectator by softening the grief and the fear. The spectator feels a little of the grief or the fear but not so much of it as will cause the evaporation of joy (*Rasa*). This magic is achieved by imagination in the actor and the spectator. When the original emotion of the original character is refracted by the double prism of imagination and detachment, the delectable coloured ray of *Rasa* is the result. Bharata's word *anukarana* (imaginative apprehension and representation) is a magical word whose significance has been missed by later aestheticians. The result of the interpretation of the original emotion by the artist and the actor and the audience is *Rasa*. All of them idealise and universalise the original emotion with the help of imagination and detachment.

Bhattanayaka takes a line of his own and propounds his theory of *Rasabhukti* (Enjoyment of *Rasa*). He says that the poet or the dramatist or the actor helps the spectator to arrive at a *universalisation* of the emotion experienced by the *individual*. Thus Sakuntala becomes a symbol of all love-lorn maidens. The poet or dramatist gives a universalised and idealised picture of the emotion. By this power it is possible to share in the emotion of the original character in whose individual and incommunicable experience no other can have a part. The universal aspect of the emotion is then enjoyed by the reader or the spectator owing to the preponderance in him of *Sattwa Guna* which activates sympathy and detachment. Such enjoyment is an impersonal enjoyment. In



spiritual experience the detachment is complete and the object of attention is unitive, viz., the glory of God. But in æsthetic experience the detachment is but partial and the object of attention is the diversity of the world. It is the predominance of *Sattwa guna* and the combination of impersonality and detachment with sympathy which makes the tragic in art a source of pleasure though the tragedies of life would be only a source of unhappiness to the hero himself. The reader or the spectator enjoys the pathetic scene with a calmness and steadiness of mind which the hero cannot enjoy. His sympathy leads him to an imaginative comprehension of the pathetic situation while his detachment enables him to distil happiness out of unhappiness. Further, the poet's use of style (*Riti* and *Vritti*) and *figures of speech* (*alamkārās*) appropriate to the particular emotions enhances the emotional effect. Soft sounds are appropriate in the case of *sringara* (love) and *karuna* (pathos) and *Santi* (dispassion.) Harsh sounds fit in with *Veera* (heroism), *raudra* (the terrific), etc. Thus Bhattanayaka's æsthetic theory is very valuable and interesting. But his basic assumptions are secured easily by the Dhvani theory and hence it is that the Rasa-Dhwani theory now finally holds the field in Indian Aesthetics. Vyanjanâ Vrithi or Dhvani is a power resident in human speech and by it the emotion depicted in words is given wings so to say and soars from the particular to the universal and charms and calms the hearer's or the spectator's mind into the sâttwic mood wherein joy and radiance shine forth without interruption. As the Bhagawad Gita says well :

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।

सुखसंगेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसंगेन चानघ ॥

(Chapter XIV, Verse 6)

Further, Bhattanayaka was so intent on the universalisation of emotion that he failed to realise that the reader or the spectator has a similar emotion (though in a softened and impersonal form) kindled in himself and his enjoyment is thus bound up with such emotion enkindled in his soul.

It was reserved for Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta to assimilate the best elements in the above views and to bring out the full force of Bharata's remarkable and original æsthetic theory by introducing the concepts of Vyanjana and Dhvani (suggestion) and propounding their theory of *Rasābhivyakti* (Rasa and its manifestation). The main human emotions are native to all—the



characters and the poets and dramatists and the actors and the readers and spectators. The poet's or dramatist's artistic imagination universalises the particular emotion of the character and enjoys the emotions and kindles similar emotions in the reader or the spectator, and these emotions become *rasas*. Thus the potential and latent emotions which reside in all human beings were experienced by the depicted characters and then idealised and universalised and charmingly and appropriately represented by the artists in a mood of imagination and sympathy and detachment. The emotions attain the rank of *rasas* in the poem or the drama. The actor goes through a similar process and makes the latent emotion patent. The spectator or reader goes through a similar process and has his latent emotion kindled and experiences *Rasa*. Even among the spectators or readers there are different *adhikâris* for different *rasas*. An old man can enjoy the Sān̄thi *Rasa* better than a young man; but the latter can enjoy the Sringāra *Rasa* better than the former. The final fulfilment of *Rasa* is therefore in the enlightened and appreciative critic (*sahridaya*).

आपस्तोषाद्विदुषां न साधु मन्ये प्रयोगविज्ञानम् ।

(I do not think artistic expression to be excellent till it pleases the discerning audience) — (Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*).

Thus Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta expound Bharata's idea accurately and express the very essence of æsthetic delight. When Kalidasa describes in the opening scene in *Sakuntala* the deer running for its life pursued by the Dushyanta's chariot, neither the poet nor the actor nor the spectator feels the fear of the deer but all of them imaginatively apprehend the emotion of fear and experience the pleasure of the *rasa* of fear. The power of suggestion contained in the words of the poet and the gestures of the actor create in the mind of the spectator parallel *Vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicharibāvas* which manifest the *rasa* latent in him. But everything depends on the poet's sense of appropriateness (*auchitya*) and his imagination and sympathy and detachment. Then only the spectator's mind is simultaneously calmed and charmed, and out of the calm ocean of *sattwa guna* arise the *apsarasas* (heavenly damsels) of the *Rasas*. This is why then sorrow, fear, disgust, etc., becomes sources of æsthetic pleasure. Love in separation (*Vipralambha sringara*) is thus able to cause a more rapturous *rasa* than even love in union (*sambhoga-sringara*). A pathetic scene which may have caused sorrow to the



primary character evolves a feeling of combined pity and sympathy and pleasure which shines as Karunâ Rasa in the reader or the spectator and fills his heart and thrills his entire personality. As Bharata says :

योऽर्थो हृदयसंवादी तस्य भावो रसोद्भवः ।

शरीरं व्याप्यते तेन शुष्कं काष्ठमिवाम्बुना ॥

Thus Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta express the heart of Bharata best and reveal the very soul of Rasa. The secret of rasa is in the rousing and revealing of the emotion of the reader or the spectator by the artist's impersonal and sympathetic and detached delineation of the hero's or the heroine's emotion. The artist's method is the method of appropriate speech whose power of suggestion evokes the spectator's dormant emotion and makes it shine as a *rasa*.

After the doctrine of Rasa-Dhwani thus took root in India, later aestheticians perfected it. Rasas are not generated or inferred but are made manifest and patent. The cause of Rasa is not something alien to the spectator but something which makes patent what is latent in him. Among the later Rasa theorists Mammata and Viswanatha and Jagannatha are pre-eminent. Mammata emphasises creativeness and joy and rasa as being of the essence of poesy. Viswanatha says in his Sahityadarpana that *rasa* is the soul of poesy. वाक्यं रसरसके काव्यं He calls the æsthetic delight the brother of the spiritual *ānanda* (*Brahmānanda sahodarah*). Jagannatha describes the setting free of the joy of the *rasa* as a process of the breaking of the hindrances of the expression of the joy of the soul (*āvaranabhanga*). Of course æsthetic *ānanda* is the white light of *Ātmananda* broken into the coloured lights of the *rasas* by the prism of imagination and sympathy and detachment, while spiritual *ānanda* is the integrated and infinite and eternal and supreme and transcendental *Rasa*.

The essence of the highest æsthetical theory in India is thus in the concept of Rasa-Dhwani. We are now in a position to realise the unity of the highest æsthetical doctrine and the highest spiritual doctrine in India and to understand how the Indian æsthetical doctrine is founded on basic human nature and is far ahead of western æsthetical doctrine in breadth as well as in depth. The main human emotions are the common possession of all humanity.



They are in the shape of subtle and latent *vâsanâs* (impressions and tendencies) which had been acquired in the course of experiences in innumerable births. In the case of the characters whose emotions are realised and expressed by the artist, the emotions are enkindled by *Vibhâvas* and quickened by *Anubhâvas* and fed by *Vyabhicharibhâvas* till they become *Sthâyibhâvas*. But so long as the emotions do not pass through the minds of the artist and the author and the actor and the audience there is no manifestation of the æsthetical *rasa*. The emotion of the primary character is too personal and particular to be a *rasa*. The artist idealises and impersonalises and universalises the emotion while maintaining its directness and intensity. He does so because of his imagination and his sympathy and his detachment. The universal element in the emotion becomes manifest. His speech is not the mere verbatim words of the character but is bathed in the colours of his imagination. His style and his figures of speech give his words a significance which makes the universal appeal of his delineation of the emotion more charming and universal. In him the emotion attains the rank of *rasa*. He feels the emotion of the original character by his power of sympathy which evokes emotionally felt *vibhâvas* and *anubhâvas* and *vyabhicharibhâvas*; his power of imagination impersonalises and universalises the emotion; his power of art uses style and figures of speech to intensify the emotion; and his detachment calms and tranquillises the mind and brings about the upsurge of the *sattwaguna* wherein the emotion ripens into *Rasa*. Such an emotion is in Wordsworth's language "emotion recollected in tranquillity". In the case of the poem a similar process happens in the reader or the hearer. A kindred emotion is kindled by his sympathy which enkindles emotionally felt *vibhâvas* and *anubhâvas* and *vyabhicharibhâvas* and is universalised and is manifested as *rasa*. In the case of the drama an intermediate factor, viz., the actor intervenes. In his case a similar process takes place. The added aids of scenery and costume bring in a visual verisimilitude which intensifies the process in the spectator.

Thus the prism of sympathy and imagination and detachment is the magician which breaks up the white light of the emotion of the original character into the soft multi-tinted radiance of æsthetic *rasa*. Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti point out that even in the case of the original character when he views his emotion in retrospect there is an element of detachment and pleasure even in the contemplation of the outlived agonies. Kalidasa says that Rama and



Sita, when they say the painted scenes describing their misfortunes in the Dandaka forest, had a thrill of pleasure.

प्राप्तानि दुःखान्यपि दण्डकेषु संचिन्त्यमानानि सुखान्यभूवन् ॥

(Raghuvamsa, XIV, 25)

This idea was worked out by Bhavabhuti in Act I of his Uttararamacharita. What time can do in the case of the original character himself, the poet's art and the emotion of the *Sahridaya* (enlightened reader or spectator) can do even more efficiently and create æsthetical rasa. In their case the transmuting power of imagination and sympathy and detachment brings about such a remarkable result.

In regard to the Rasa theory three other aspects deserve mention. Though Bharata mentions only eight rasas, the number was finally raised to nine by including *Sānta Rasa*, though this was done after many battles royal among the æstheticians. Here again the artists forced the hand of the æstheticians. Some æstheticians contended that *Sama* (tranquility) which is the *sthayibhāva* of *sānti Rasa* is quietism which means not emotion but subsidence of emotion and passion. But human experience shows dispassion as a soul-filling and soul-elevating experience. Very possibly Bharata did not enumerate it as he was mainly concerned with the *rasas* in dramas (*Nātyarasas*). Further, he mentions *nirveda* after the eight *sthayibhavas* and as the first of the *vyibharibhavas*. Nay, he expressly says:

न यत्र दुःखं न सुखं न द्वेषो नापि मत्सरः ।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु स शान्तः प्रथितो रसः ॥

After all, does it matter very much that Bharata does not specify the *Sānta rasa* as one of the *Nātya Rasas*? The passion for Moksha is the highest passion of the soul. It is the portrayal of *Sānta Rasa* that evokes and enkindles that supreme and divine passion. *Sama* or *Nirveda* (dispassion) born of *Tattwagnāna* (knowledge of the supreme Truth) is the *sthayibhava* of the *Sānta rasa*. *Nāga-nanda* shows how in the hands of a great playwright the *Sāntarasa* could become a supreme *Nātyarasa*. I have already shown how in the epics of Valmiki and Vyasa all the *rasas* flow into the ocean of *Sānta rasa*; Nay, Vyasa expressly says :

यच्च कामसुखं लोके यच्च दिव्यं महत्सुखम् ।

तृष्णाक्षयसमुत्थस्य नार्हतः षोडशीं कलाम् ॥



(The joy of love and the joy of heaven are not even a fraction of the joy of the elimination of desire).

Thus the *Sānta Rasa* established itself as the ninth *rasa*. The attempt to add other *rasas* (*prayas* or friendship, *vātsalya* or parental affection, etc.) did not succeed. But *Bhakti* got elevated in course of time as a *Rasa*. *Rup Goswami* calls the *Ujjwala Rasa* (the shining *Rasa*). Its *Alambara Vibhāva* is God; its *uddipana vibhavas* are His *Vibhūties*; its *anubhavas* are supreme joy, etc. It is different from *Sānti* as *Prema* is a different category from *Vairagya*.

Thus the *Rasa* concept was a growing and expanding concept in India. Another aspect is the discussion of the question of what is the basic or supreme *Rasa*? *Bhoja* says that the supreme *rasa* is *sringara* because its soul is bliss.

शृङ्गारवीर करुणाद्भुतहास्यरौद्र  
बीभत्सवत्सलभयानक शान्तिनाम्नः ।  
आम्नासिषुर्दृशरसानपरे वयन्तु  
शृङ्गारमेव रसनादसमामनामः ॥

(*Sringaraprakasa*).

He says also that all the other *rasas* are connected with and subordinate to *sringara*. *Bhavabhūti* called *Karuna Rasa* as the basic and supreme *rasa*, because the heart is melted soonest and most completely by it.

एकोरसः करुण एव निमित्तभेदः  
द्विजः पृथक् पृथगिव श्रयते विवर्तान् ॥

(*Uttararamacharita*, II, 47)

*Valmiki* seems to support such a view when he says : शोकः । श्लोकत्वमागतः (pity because poesy). *Viswanatha* assigns to *adbhuta rasa* the rank of the basic and supreme *rasa* as it expands the mind most in the joy of wonder (ह्लादात्मकत्वतः) He says that it was also his great great-grandfather *Narayana's* view.

रसे सारश्चमत्कारस्सर्वत्राप्यनुभूयते ।  
तच्चमत्कारसारत्वे सर्वत्राप्यद्भुतोरसः ॥



But these views are more queer than true. Each rasa is supreme and soul-filling. If any rasa can be said to be supreme, it is the Bhakti Rasa.

The supremacy of the Bhakti Rasa is due to the fact that it is the emotion that appeals to all minds and to youth as well as age and to men as well as to women at all times and in all climes. It includes and transcends all the other emotions. Coleridge says about love :

“All thoughts, all passions, all delights  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are ministers of love  
And feed his sacred flame.”

This truth is even more true in regard to divine love than in regard to human love. Bhakti not only thrills every fibre of our being. It has a permanence which no human love can ever have. Human love pins its love to the human body which, whatever be the budding and blossoming and burgeoning of beauty in youth, must inevitably undergo decay and dissolution and death.

“Here where palsy shakes a few last sad grey hairs,  
Where you grows pale and spectre thin and dies,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Nor new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.”  
(Keats).

But that inevitability has no application to the divine splendour which knows no waxing or waning and which kindles in us a deathless love which is the inner radium which shines for ever and ever. Valmiki in his immortal *Ramayana* describes the divine radiance in two wonderful verses :

रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टिचित्तापहारिणम् ।

रूपसंहननं लक्ष्मीं सौकुमार्यं सुवेषताम् ।

ददृशुर्विस्मिताकारा रामस्य वनवासिनः ॥

(Him who lures our eyes and hearts by his Beauty and Grace)  
(The forest-dwelling saints saw with charmed and enraptured and wonder-stricken hearts Sri Rama's handsome physical features and winsome grace and softness and attractiveness).



In Bhakti the element of joy is uncloying and ever-new and ever-growing not only because of the infinite ever-new freshness and sweetness and charm of the divine beauty (तदेव रम्यं रुचिरं नव नवं तदेव शश्वन्मनसोमहोत्सवम्) in the language of the Bhāgawata but also because the elements of graciousness and grace in the object of Bhakti are as wonderful and permanent as the element of gracefulness. In human love there is the possibility—nay, certainty—of satiety. There is the possibility of a change of the intensity of love as between the lover and the beloved. In fact a famous verse pictures vividly this melancholy element in a romantic reality. It says:

“At first our frames were in loving and inseparable union and we had an absolute unity of being. Then you become the lover and I the beloved. Now you are the husband and I am the wife. This is the result of my unassailable vitality which prolongs my hapless life.”

पुराभूदस्माकं प्रथममविभिन्नो तनुरियं

ततोनु त्वं प्रेयान् वयमपि हताशाः प्रियतमाः ।

इदानीं नाथस्त्वं वयमपि कलत्रं किमपरं

हतानां प्राणानां कुलिशकठिनानां फलमिदम् ॥

Nay, even in the best human love the element of selfishness is not totally absent. Nor is the lower element of sexual appetite eliminated from the pure psychic longing. All these drawbacks are absent from Godward love.

This is not all. The *Adbhuta Rasa*,—the joy of wonder—is one which fills the human heart and overflows in a mood of marvel and a mood of supplication. But after all the marvels of the created universe and the marvels of the human spirit are nowhere in comparison with the marvels of God. The sublimest heights of the *adbhutarasa* in the entire literature of the world are reached in the *Vibhuti* and *Viswarupa adhyayas* (Chapter X and XI) of the *Bhagawad Gita*.

Equally remarkable is the inclusion and transcendence of the *Karunā Rasa* in the *Bhakti Rasa* and the *Vātsalya Rasa*. The most unselfish and passionate tenderness and compassion of the most best and noblest and most altruistic of human beings pales into insignificance before the tenderness of Sri Rama towards Ahalya and Guha and Sabari and Sugriva and Vibheeshana and Jatayu, and the tenderness of



Sri Krishna towards the cowherds and Kuchela and the tenderness of Jesus towards the erring children of the Heavenly Father.

In the same way Vira rasa (the joy of heroism) is kindled and is included and transcended in the Bhakti Rasa. The heroics of the ordinary human being in the presence of the need "to ride abroad redressing human wrongs" pale before the heroic mood and speech and action of the soldier of God. Arjuna whose devotion ripened into supreme and unquestionable heroism and who cried out (I have crossed all doubts and become steadfast and shall do Thy bidding) stands on a higher level of heroism than the Arjuna of the epic. The main stream of Bhakti Rasa is worked out in the Bhâgawata.

This idea of all these Rasas flowing like tributaries into the main stream of Bhakti Rasa is worked out in the Bhâgawata. It says:

"The Gopis attained Krishna through the way of love; Kamsa through the gate of fear; Sisupala through the gate of hate; Vrishnis through the gate of kinship; You through the gate of comradeship; and we through the gate of devotion."

गोप्यः कामात् भयात् कंसोद्वेष्टाच्चैद्यादयो नृपाः ।

संवन्धाद्ब्रूष्णयो यूयं सख्याद्भक्त्या वयं विभो ॥

Another well-known verse says :

"To the gladiators Krishna was the thunderbolt; to men he was perfect manhood; to women he was Cupid incarnate; to the cowherds he was their kith and kin; to the bad kings he was the chastiser; to the parents he was the child; to Kamsa he was Death; to the ignorant he was the Virat or apparent universe; to the yogis he was the Supreme Reality; and to the Vrishnis he was the visible deity."

मल्लानामशनिर्नृणां नरवरः स्त्रीणां सरोमूर्तिमान्

गोपानां खजनोऽसतां क्षितिभुजां शास्ता स्वपित्रोः शिशुः ।

मृत्युर्भोजपतेर्विराडविदुषां तत्त्वं परं योगिनाम् ।

वृष्णिनां परदेवतेति विदितो रंगं गतः केशवः ॥

Sridhara says in his commentary on the above :

रौद्रोद्भुतश्च शृङ्गारो हास्यो वीरो दया तथा ।

भयानकश्च बीभत्सः शान्तस्स प्रेमभक्तिकः ॥



(He was thus all the rasas—Raudra, adbhuta, singâra, hâsyâ, karuna, bhayânaka, Bheebhatsa, sânta and bhakti).

Of all the rasas the *Sântha rasa* is the best feeder of the Bhakti rasa. The *Santhi rasa* is included and transcended in the Bhakti rasa. The peace that comes out of satiety or out of a sense of the impotence of the senses or out of a sense of the evanescence of pleasure is but a shadow of the divine peace that passeth all understanding. Nay, in the gamut of devotion rising from Santhi Bhakti through Dâsyâ Bhakti and Sakhya Bhakti and Vatsalya Bhakti up to Mâdhurya Prema Bhakti, the highest note includes and transcends all the lower notes.

In a similar fashion all the rasas are included and sublimated and transcended in the Mâdhurya Prema Bhakti Rasa. It seems to me that the supremest levels of such Rasa were attained by the Gopis of Brindavana. The poet Saint Sri Sukacharya says:

“The sweet voices of the Gopis who sang the glory of Sri Krishna reached the very vault of heaven.”

उद्गायतीनामरविन्दलोचनं व्रजांगनानां दिवमस्पृशत् ध्वनिः ।

I show presently below how the Gopika Geetha is the highest scripture of such Rasa. Nay, in the Bhâgawata there is a reference to the Ānanda Rasa of which such Madhurya Prema Bhakti Rasa is the sweetest manifestation. Sri Sukacharya says:

“Therefore one should hear and praise Govinda’s glory which is beautiful with the Ānanda Rasa. Only such a person attains the goal and crown and consummation of life.”

तस्माद्भोविन्दमाहात्म्यमानन्दरससुन्दरम् ।

शृणुयात्कीर्तयेन्नित्यं स कृतार्थो न संशयः ॥

In the Gopi episode in the Bhagawata there is a perfect delineation of the sublimation of the Sringâra Rasa into the Bhakti Rasa and of the supremacy of the latter Rasa. There has been much misunderstanding in regard to that episode and the great poet-saint Vyasa’s handling of it. The episode has been admirably and admirably described by Vyasa, the perfect poet-philosopher, and belauded by his perfect and saintly son Sri Suka Deva. So far as the Ālambana Vibhava was concerned, the object of the human love of the Gopis was Incarnate God, The Uddipana Vibhavas



like the full moon, etc., fed the human love passing into the divine love in a manner which would not happen in the case of an all-too-human love. The Gopika Geetha shows that Sri Krishna vanished from the midst of the Gopis to stimulate their mood of devotion and contemplation.

प्रशमाय प्रसादाय तत्रैवांतरधीयत ॥

(For the sake of dowering them with dispassion and grace He disappeared from there itself.)

The poet says that the agony of separation from Him burnt away their sins and that the infinite bliss of meditation on Him overbore the petty joys which were the fruits of their virtues.

दुस्सहप्रेष्ठविरहतीव्रतापधुताशुभाः ।

ध्यानप्राप्ताच्युताश्लेषनिर्वृत्या क्षीणमङ्गलाः ॥

The Anubhāvas and sthayibhavas and sancharibhavas also became sublimated in a similar way.

तन्मनस्कास्तदालापास्तद्विचेष्टास्तदात्मकाः ।

तद्गुणानेव गायन्त्योनात्मागाराणि सस्मरुः ॥

In the Gopika Geetha (the Gopi Song) which is the brightest gem in the world's literature of love and devotion, love is sublimated into devotion and devotion is sweetened by love. We find the illiterate Gopis rooted in the consciousness of Divinity. They say:

"You are not merely the darling of the Gopis; You are the divine witness of all souls."

न खलु गोपिकानन्दनोभवानखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्महृक् ।

The song refers again and again to Him as the Lord of Laxmi—a recollection which would not assert itself if there were only a physical infatuation and a sexual urge.

करसरोरुहं कान्तकामदं शिरसि धेहि नः श्रीकरग्रहम् ।

प्रणतकामदं पद्मजार्चितं धरणिमण्डनं ध्येयमापदि ।

चरणपङ्कजं शन्तमञ्चते रमण नः स्तनेष्वर्पयाधिहन् ।

बृहदुरः श्रियो धाम वीक्ष्य ते मुहुरतिस्पृहा मुह्यते मनः ॥



These verses pray the Lord to place His feet on their breasts and thus quell all passions and sublimate all desires. One of the verses describe His feet as placed on Kaliya's hood—thus suggesting that they can conquer evil and that the human heart is like a serpent's head. His feet are described also as the jewels of the earth and adorable in times of misfortune. (वरणिमंडनं ध्येयमापदि) His form is a source of auspiciousness (विश्वमंगलं) and His acts of grace are sweet subjects of meditation (ध्यानमंगलं) The Rāsa dance is thus the sublimation of Sringara Rasa into Bhakti Rasa.

I have thus far elaborated the theories of the Rasa school as it is by far the most important aspect of the schools of Indian Poetics and Aesthetics. I have discussed in some detail the Sanskrit authorities dealing with the concept of Rasa in my work on Indian Aesthetics (published by Sri Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam), and refrain from doing so here, because this work is meant for persons who are not in touch with such sources. Proceeding now to detail with the other aspects of Indian Rhetoric, the alamkāra school of Bhamaha and Dandin and others, while not ignoring Rasa, emphasises *Alamkāra*. Alamkāra is decorativeness of speech. Its main form is rhetoric and figures of speech. Indian rhetoric clearly analyses the power and significance of human speech. There is a vital difference between the expressed sense (*vāchyārtha*) and the figurative sense (*lakshyārtha*). The purpose of *lakshana* (secondary and figurative sense) is *vyangya* (suggestiveness). The rhetoricians divide the *alamkāras* into *śabdālamkaras* (relating to words) and *arthalamkaras* (relating to sense) and *ubhayagatha* (relating to both). The double meanings brought out by such graces are often remarkably attractive. The subtle Indian mind went on discovering and revealing new *alamkāras* (figures and graces of speech) till the number went far beyond one hundred figures of speech. Out of them simile (*upamā*) and metaphor (*roopaka*) and poetic fancy (*utpreksha*) occupy the highest place. It is well said that

उत्प्रेक्षा हरति स्वान्तमचिरोढा वयुरिव ।

(fancy charms the heart like a new-wed bride.) In this respect Indian æsthetics is as subtle as Indian metaphysics. All the realisations of the similarities and affinities of things, all fine and heightened modes of description and utterance, and all possible felicities of speech have been explored by the Indian æstheticians and poets.



At the same time attention was bestowed also on striking and simple natural descriptions of things as they are (*svabhāvokti*).

The *Riti* school of Vamana emphasises the importance of style. All varieties of charmingly simple and charmingly ornate styles are referred to in the works on rhetoric. The *ritis* are the *Vai-darbhi*, *Pāñchāli*, *gaudi*, *avantika*, *lāti*, and *māgadhi* styles. The *vakrokti* school of Kuntala emphasises the importance of charming indirect expression. This means the same idea as Browning expresses in his well-known verse: "Art may tell a truth obliquely." Kuntala goes so far as to refuse to recognise *svabhāvokthi* (natural description) as poetry at all. He however administered a needed corrective to the *rasa* school and the *dhvani* school which attached too much importance to emotion and suggestiveness and minimised the value of charming and decorative utterance.

As shown above, the school which found most favour in India and holds the field to-day is the *dhvani* school. It takes up the essential truths of the *rasa* school and may hence be more appropriately called the *rasa-dhvani* school. Its protagonist Ānandavardhana is one of the greatest rhetoricians and aestheticians of the world. His work *Dhvanyāloka* and its commentary *Lochana* are of very great beauty and value. He gives a proper place to *alamkāras* and *gunas* (graces and qualities of style) and a high place to *rasas* but affirms that the most vital element in poetry is suggestiveness (*vyangya* or *dhvani*). *Rasadhvani* (emotional suggestiveness) is thus the soul of poesy and is far more important than *vasthudhvani* (suggesting a fact), or *alamkara-dhvani* (imaginative suggestion). When reality and imagination and emotion are in a state of fusion the highest artistic effect is attained, but the ultimate and vital element is *Rasadhvani*. The Indian rhetoricians give a considerable place also to a very important topic, viz., *gunas* and *doshas* (merits and defects of style). They compare *gunas* to the mental qualities of a man like courage, heroism, etc., and *alamkāras* to beauty of dress and decoration. Thus *gunas* are much more important than *alamkaras*. They are described as a beautiful combination of words, clarity, an equable level of style, sweet simplicity, mellifluousness, splendour of utterance, stateliness of sound, interlikeness of words, interweaving of liquid sounds, sweet and subtle expression, description of animation in animate objects, brevity, dignity, etc. The Indian rhetoricians classified with equal care the *doshas* (defects) such as breach



of grammar, user of unusual or inharmonious words, repetition, slang, obscene words, circumlocution, dubiety or roughness or lack of charm in expression, lapses from appropriateness, etc.

I must desist from going into further details here. Bhoja sums up all these aspects in a well-known verse wherein he says that the poet, composing poems free from faults and full of good qualities and decorated with figures of speech and endowed with *rasa* as soul, attains fame and delight. As I have observed elsewhere: "If I may venture to suggest a principle of co-ordination of views on these vital points of æsthetics, I may say that *rasa* is the soul of the Goddess of Art; *vyangya* or *dhvani* is her life; *gunas* are her mental qualities; *sabdārtha* (word and sense) is her body; *arthālamkaras* (felicities of sentiment) are her natural ornaments just as brilliance of complexion, beauty of tresses, beauty of forehead and eyes, dimpled chin, rose-red bloom of lips, lissom figure, and charm of gait are natural graces to womanhood; and *sabdālamkaras* (verbal felicities) are her beauty of dress and decoration. Any attempt to exalt any one of the elements at the expense or to the exclusion of others cannot but stultify itself. The above analysis is but a many-sided and multiple presentation of a unity, as the personality of the goddess of poesy is a divine unity in a divine variety."

We find all the abovesaid aspects present in a preeminent degree in Valmiki and Vyasa and Suka and Kalidasa who are the high water-mark of Indian poetic achievement. However much we may learn in respect of directness of expression and description of nature from the west and however much we may assimilate the poetic ideas of other nations who are great in poetic achievement and however much we may appreciate and assimilate the finer teachings of western æsthetics, we cannot afford to let go our hold upon the essentials of Indian æsthetics and Indian poesy, because these are the natural efflorescence of the Indian nature (*svabhāva*). They must be our guides and teachers in regard to our future efforts and achievements. It is Rabindranth Tagore's loyalty to them that has been the cause of the universal homage paid to him to-day and of his being rightly regarded as one of the finest incarnations of the Indian genius. Except in him, modern fiction and drama and poetry have been largely imitative of the west and unreal and unsatisfactory in every way. No Indian, if he has the great and legitimate ambition of leading the world again in the literary art, can afford to neglect or ignore the finest aspects of



Indian Aesthetics and Indian poesy, because they are wonderful things of beauty and form :

“An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.”

Well does the Indian poet say :

कनकं कामिनीं वापि कोविदः कोद्य कामयेत् ।  
अलंकाव्यरसास्वादैरानन्दैकरसस्यमे ॥

(which wise man will feel the lure of wealth or woman, when,  
finding the full sweetness of joy, he can enjoy the bliss of Poesy?)



## CHAPTER XV

### INDIAN DRAMA

Shelley says in his famous "Defence of Poetry": "The connection of poetry and social good is more observable in the drama than in any other form, and it is indisputable that the highest perfection of human society has ever corresponded with the highest dramatic excellence, and that the corruption or extinction of the drama in a nation where it has once flourished marks a corruption of manners and an extinction of the energies which sustain the soul of social life; for the end of social corruption is to destroy all sensibility to pleasure." Judged by this test, the two western countries which have achieved signal greatness in the drama of life as well as in the life of drama are Greece and England. But an even higher acme of excellence was reached in India, though Shakespeare, the supreme dramatist and universal genius, reached a range and an amplitude all his own and unrivalled elsewhere in the world.

The greatness of Indian drama was not appreciated and acknowledged till Goethe's encomium of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* placed it above cavil and neglect. Goethe's famous encomium, hackneyed as it has become by too frequent quotation, may well be cited here as it expresses well the unique excellences of Indian drama in general.

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of  
its decline  
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted  
and fed?,  
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name  
combine?

I name thee, O *Sakuntala*! and all at once is said."  
The Indian drama brings before us the whole of life—its spring-tide glow and its summer glory and its autumn mellowness and its winter bleakness—and at the same time links earth to heaven and man to God. The Indian drama is nearer in spirit to the modern romantic drama than to the classical drama. The Grecian ideal was balance and harmony; the romantic ideal is soaring individualism which seeks to blend the Finite and the Infinite. A severe



and self-restrained simplicity characterised the Greek art; romantic art revels in a various and rich profusion of adornment. To the Hellenic mind Nature was but a theatre of life; to the Romantic spirit it is a presence, a power, nay, the living garment of God. Hellenic art keeps the realms of tragedy and comedy apart; Romantic art intermingles them even as they are intermingled and interwoven in actual life. Greek dramatic art emphasized the unities; Romantic art is careless about the unities of time and place and cares only about the unity of action. In all these respects Indian dramatic art has many and intimate points of kinship with the romantic drama of modern Europe.

Certain very important traits however distinguish Indian drama from Greek drama as well as from modern drama. The doctrine of Karma is one of the greatest truths given out by India to the world and enables the dramatist to show the play of cause and effect and the subtle interlinkedness of life. The doctrine of an overruling but gracious and loving Providence enables the dramatist to link up the natural and supernatural and to irradiate human life by the life divine. This combination of Karma and Grace has enabled the Indian dramatist to achieve far higher effects than the Greek idea of Nemesis or the modern idea of defect of will or evolutionary taint or social malformation. Further, Nature enters more largely into the Indian drama than into Greek or modern drama. In the *Sakuntala* the inner and mystic kinship between Nature and human nature is brought out in a manner unknown and unseen elsewhere in the world. Equally important is the romantic and tender and passionate but pure and lofty and noble treatment of love in Indian drama. What Tagore says of Kalidasa is not only beautiful in itself but applies to Indian drama in general. He says: "This ancient poet of India refuses to acknowledge passion as the supreme glory of love. Truly in *Sakuntala* there is one Paradise Lost and another Paradise Regained."

The drama has been popular in India from the earliest time. St. Chrysostom said: "All dramatic arts come from the devil; laughter and gaiety come not from God but the devil." That was not the Indian idea. Music and drama constituted an *Upaveda* (supplementary veda) in India. It is said that Brahma gave to Bharata Rishi the Nāṭya Sastra (the Dramatic Art) as a treasure got by him during meditation.

Further, side by side with the regular stage, there were the puppet plays and village dramas and *koothus* and Malabar *Katha-*



*kalis*. Piechel says that "the vidushaka is the original of the buffoon who appears in the plays of mediæval Europe." In the Tamil country there are no ancient dramas extant but it is said that there was a Tamil work called *Jayantham* which dealt with dramaturgy. In the Tamil classic *Silappadikaram* there is a story about the origin of the drama on the earth. It connects dance and drama with Jayanta, the son of Indra, and with the heavenly nymph Urvasi. In every stage and dancing hall a gold-encased bamboo stick decked with precious stones used to be set up as representing Jayanta. The *Tolkâppian* refers to *Nataka vazhakku* (dancing). There were two kinds of dancing—viz. *Vallikoothu* in honour of God Subramania's consort Valli and *Kazhanilaikoothu* which was a dance in honour of a hero successful in battle. Ritual dance was a regular feature of temple worship. Dances in honour of God Krishna and God Subramania and God Siva and Goddess Durga are referred to in *Silappadikaram* and other classic works. In Travancore we find a remarkable development in the realm of indigenous drama. The ancient *Yâtrakali* combined heroic and comic elements with song and dance but there was no continuous story in it. Then came the stage of *Kudiyattam* in which a special class of actors called *chakyars* expressed the emotions by look and facial expression and gesture. The later Krishnan âttam and Râman âttam (Kathakali) combined gesture and facial expression with song and dance. The themes were taken from India's immortal epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata).

The Indian drama went abroad into Eastern Asia and influenced the development of the drama there to a very great extent. In Burma and Siam and Cambodia, the Rama and Buddha plays popularised Hindu ideals and developed artistic taste. The Rama cycle penetrated into the Malay Archipelago and China as well. The history of Indian drama in Greater India and elsewhere is a fascinating chapter yet to be written.

The Indian æstheticians differentiate between *Nâtya*, *Rupa*, and *Rupaka*, i.e., representation of emotions, presentation of individual situations, and a regular drama. The ten forms of drama (*rupaka*) are *Nataka*, *Prakarana*, *Bhana*, *Prahasana*, *Dima*, *Vyâyoga*, *Samavakâra*, *Veethi*, *Anka* and *Îhâmriya*. These are elaborately described in Dhananjaya's *Dasarupaka*, Viswanatha's *Sahityadarpana*, and Vidynatha's *Prataparudriya*. The *Nataka* is the norm of which the other forms are the variants. It opens with a *Nandi sloka* or benedictory stanza. Then follows a prologue (*prasthâvana*) descriptive of the author and his work and contain-



ing some sweet songs and some indication of the character about to enter. The hero should be *Dhirōdātta* (heroic and noble and famous personage). There should be a prevailing *rasa*, —generally love (*śringāra*) or heroism (*vira*)—in the play, the other *rasas* being contributory to the main *rasa*. A *Nātaka* should ordinarily contain five acts. Battle, coarse love-making, kissing, etc., should not be exhibited on the stage. The play should close with a prayer (*bharatavākya*). Among the other *rupakas* may be specially mentioned *Prakarana* and *Prahasana*. In *Prakarana* the plot should be a fiction based on real life. *Prahasana* is a farce. There are also *uparupakas* or subsidiary dramatic forms. Every play should have *vastu* (plot), *Neta* (hero), and *rasa* (sentiment). The rhetoricians clearly define also the stages by which the plot should be carried on from its commencement to its conclusion (*kārya*).

The classical drama of India reached its acme of perfection in Kalidasa. In my two volumes on Kalidasa I have shown how he is next to Shakespeare, the greatest figure in the realm of universal drama and even overtops Shakespeare in some respects. Bhasa's plays and Bhavabhūti's plays and Sudraka's *Mrichakatika* are other great dramatic works. Many ancient Indian plays have been lost. But such as remain are such as to excite our wonder and admiration.

Later on the closet drama written by senior pandits for junior pandits became stiff and wooden and convention-ridden beyond measure. The popular drama has been a mere piece of transcript from real life or a stilted and unreal representation of a Puranic story. It has been a hotch-potch and a medley in which song covers a multitude of artistic sins. The modern amateur stage is yet in leading strings. It has not yet made up its mind as to whether it should look to the past of India or to the present or to Europe and America for inspiration and guidance. It has however done good work in setting up a higher model before the popular stage and in helping to raise the latter from the gutter of immorality. The drama of mingled prose and song is an artistic solecism, but it is one of the legacies of the popular stage. The amateur, while bettering the popular stage in some respects, has caught the infection of being music-ridden—a widely prevalent epidemic on the popular stage—though its music is far less charming than that in the popular stage. In this welter and confusion of methods and ideals, Tagore's fine work, though limited in range and though poetic rather than dramatic in essence, has helped to show India a way out of the confusion of to-day in dramatic art.



We have, in short, to make the new drama the mirror of the soul of India. It must be loyal to the fundamental concepts of Indian æsthetics and dramaturgy. At the same time we must learn from the west the art of writing great tragedies and romantic plays and social dramas. It may be that

"Shakespeare's magic could not copies be;  
Within that circle none dared walk but he."

But a nation which has produced Kalidasa, a nation which has produced such subtle and lofty æsthetics, a nation which is alive to-day and full of a new renaissance—must evolve the great Indian drama of the future which in Kalidasa's words will be a sweet and sacred sacrificial feast to the eyes, and which will at the same time, in Shakespeare's words, "hold as it were, the mirror up to nature, show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FUTURE OF THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE BEAUTIFUL: CONCLUSION:

Though I have dealt only in a very brief way with the important and interesting aspects of the Indian concept of the beautiful, I must bring this work to a close, leaving a greater elaboration and a full historical presentation, and a complete picture of the future of Indian Arts and Aesthetics to a suitable future occasion. We can never understand the full significance and value of the Indian concept of the beautiful, unless we see it in its proper setting of the Indian concepts of the useful and the good and the true. Utility and Beauty are married powers and no one could or should divorce them. Equally related are they to Morality and Reality. He who does not know the interrelatedness of Utility and Beauty and Morality and Reality does not know the heart of the Indian concept of the beautiful.

Sister Nivedita, in one of her lofty and inspired utterances which are full of intuition and vision, said: "There is no voice like that of art to reach the people. A song, a picture, these are the fiery cross that reaches all the tribes, and makes them one. And art *will* be reborn, for she has found a new subject—India. . . . . Not only to utter India to the world, but also, to voice India to herself,—this is the mission of art, divine mother of the ideal, when it descends to clothe itself in forms of realism. At each step, then, the conquest must be two-fold. On this side something to be added to the world's knowledge, and on that, an utterance to be given for the first time, for India to herself. This is the battle that opens before the present generation." The only statement herein which, I think, needs revision is the remark that Art did not utter India to herself. The concept of India as a unit, as a personality, nay, as a goddess, was well known to ancient India. The mother-land was applauded as being superior to heaven. The holy spots of India, her holy rivers and mountains, her holy scriptures, her holy traditions and memories, her holy hopes and dreams, and her holy doctrines and divinities were all visualised as a grand and sacred unity.

Such is the two-fold mission of the Indian concept of the beautiful. It must fully express India to herself and must also



express India adequately to the whole world. The Indian Renaissance is a unique phenomenon. It is not like the Renaissance in Europe. There the great life-movement of the Renaissance represented only a *poetic* and *artistic* interest in the symbols and presentations of a high but vanished culture. It was only an attempt to cover up the present poverty of artistic symbols and intuitions by a wholesale adoption of the same from a dead civilisation. But in the Indian renaissance to-day we have a *living and vital and spiritual* interest in our symbols and traditions and intuitions and visions. The new spirit has been well described by Sir John Woodroffe as "*Bhârata Shakti*". The intensive culture of India has momentum if not velocity and has enormous reserve power which is the source of her immortal vitality. Civilisation after civilisation has come on the stage of the world's life and played its part and gone for ever. But she, the mother of them all, is strong with the strength of youth and fair with her maiden charm. I have already referred to what Prof. Radhakumad Mukherjee calls the Fundamental Unity of India. The outer unity of India as expressed in her geographical features, and her history is a composite beauty and is remarkable by itself. But the composite inner unity of India as revealed in her arts and faiths is even more remarkable still.

Let us not therefore forget this central fact of the Indian swabhâva. The Indian worker and the Indian woman have preserved it, though the upper classes whom Swami Vivekananda once described as being "physically and morally dead" have been faithless to their trust in a growing measure and have not kept their loins girded and their lamps trimmed. The past of India is not a dead past. Dr. J. H. Cousins says well: "India of to-day is the India of the centuries. She has never moved far from herself. .... Her past is her present." Nay, it is her future as well. He says with equal insight: "It is this weight of *antique modernity* that is the secret of India's recuperative and assimilative power; it is this also that makes for ever impossible the only possible condition that could rob her of all the constituents of national life save the legislative—the total destruction of her distinctive literature and art. Whatever impact the West may make upon the East, there is nothing more certain than that those impacts will sooner or later find themselves oriented." Even in politics India is asserting to-day her innate swabhâva (nature). Satyâgraha is an original and remarkable Indian idea in politics. She is standing up for a federal constitution; she is asserting her right to freedom;



and she is against the imperial idea and demanding her right to complete independence with an option to enter into a partnership in a commonwealth including herself and England as the result of a voluntary co-operation in the interests of mutual betterment and of the peace and well-being of the world. But India's central shrine is her art and religion. The fundamental unity of India is really based on the fundamental unity of her inner cultural life.

The world's need of Indian æsthetics and metaphysics has been and is and will for ever be persistent and great, as India is the mother of the arts and religions of the world. We have therefore to preserve our arts and faiths and understand and perfect them not only for the sake of India and of ourselves but for the sake of the world at large. The detractors of the Indian concept of the beautiful have spoken ill of it out of sheer ignorance. Ignorance is the progenitor of dislike and hate and is the cause of all the malicious utterances in the world by persons about individuals and nations and cultures and civilisations.

Thus the Indian concept of the beautiful has to be thoroughly national and yet completely universal. It must be national in its symbols and traditions and *motifs* and expressions. It must adequately reveal and express the national genius and the national temperament in the search for and the revelation of the graces and sanctities of the inner life. We must explore new ways in every art as shown by me in the previous chapters. But such a new energy of expression must be a thrust from within and in accordance with our symbols and traditions and our essential national genius. Indian art should colour and decorate and embroider and beautify and sanctify Indian life and thought in their essence. It should assimilate the finest assimilable art ideas elsewhere in the world and at the same time uplift and influence universal art. We have for some time past been a debtor nation. We must become a creditor nation once again. We must reassume our ancient and accepted role and lead the world once more. We have to preserve Indian Art from being crushed between the upper and the nether millstones of too much asceticism and too much materialism. By preserving Indian idealism untainted and pure, we can achieve this consummation and enrich life in India and beyond India. But all this cannot be adequately accomplished unless for each art there is an Academy which will preserve and improve the achieved standards and ideals and technique and unless there is also a



federated Academy of all the arts to bring about mutual comprehension and a realisation of the basic ideals of Indian Art.

Thus wonderful as was the past of Indian Aesthetics and wonderful as is its present, its future is to be more wonderful yet. Art is, in Burke's noble words, the "unbought grace of life." It is the innate refinement of the soul. G. B. Shaw in his *Back to Methusaleh* : "Art is the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures. You use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul." It is thus the unique privilege of Indian artists and æstheticians to make and hold the magical mirror wherein Goddess India will behold the immortal and ever-youthful beauty of her face and form and figure and will be glad, and will bestow her benediction on us and on all. The artist moves from experience to expression, and such expression when communicated to the men and women of trained taste leads to the evocation of artistic experience. In such interactions of experience and expression is born the life divine within the human life. Then and then alone will the Goddess of Art, with her attendant angels of Imagination and Vision, smile upon her ardent and eager worshippers. Shelley says well: "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world.....The great secret of morals is Love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own." Thus the concept of the beautiful should lead to the cult of the beautiful, and the cult of the beautiful should lead to the culture of the beautiful, and the culture of the beautiful should lead to the creation of the beautiful. Thus and thus alone will the iron of human sorrows and the silver of human pleasures be turned into the pure gold of the bliss of artistic experience and emotion and enjoyment and expression by the alchemic touch of the Indian Concept of the Beautiful.



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 Wilde's (Oscar) DeProfundis.



## GENERAL INDEX

- Aesthetics 8.  
 Aesthetics and Artists 27, 28.  
 Aesthetics in America 26.  
 Aesthetics in England 21 to 26.  
 Aesthetics in France 18 to 20.  
 Aesthetics in Germany 14 to 18.  
 Aesthetics in Greece 12, 13, 14.  
 Aesthetics in Italy 20, 21.  
 Aesthetics in Rome 14.  
 Aesthetics and Poets 28 to 31.  
 Aesthetics—in Orient 32 to 37.  
 Aesthetics and Mysticism 32, 33, 34.  
 Aesthetics — Indian Concepts of  
     Ananda and Rasa 38 to 46.  
 Aesthetics in India—History of. 47 to  
     53.  
 Aesthetics—Indian Arts. 54 to 58.  
 Aesthetics (Indian)—Future of 161 to  
     164.  
 Architecture—Lamps of 59, 60  
 Architecture—evolution 61.  
 Architecture (Indian)—Periods 62.  
 Architecture (Indian)—Buddhist 63,  
     64.  
 Architecture (Indian)—Jain 64, 65.  
 Architecture—North Indian 66.  
 Architecture—West Indian 67.  
 Architecture—South Indian 67 to 72.  
 Architecture—Travancore 72, 73.  
 Architecture in Greater India 74, 75.  
 Architecture—Indo-Saracenic 75, 76.  
 Architecture in Modern India 79.  
 Art—Enemies of 8.  
 Art—Realism and Romanticism 4.  
  
 Beauty—Concept 1 to 9.  
  
 Dance in Greece 122, 123.  
 Dance, Modern 123.  
 Dance—Nritya and Nritta 124.  
 Dance and Rasa 125.  
 Dance—European and Indian 125.  
 Dance—Abhinaya—Four Aspects 125.  
 Dance—Abhinaya and Mudras 126.  
 Dance—Kathakali 126.  
 Dance—Bharata Natyam 127.  
 Dance—Kuchipoodi 127.  
 Dance—Manipuri 127.  
 Drama—Indian 155 to 160.  
  
 Iconography in India 86 to 94.  
  
 Music in Ancient India 112.  
 Musical Instruments—Types 113.  
 Music—Tamil Nad 113.  
 Music—Travancore 113.  
 Music—Hindustani 114.  
 Music and Bhakti Movement 114, 115,  
     116.  
 Music—Ragas and Raginis 117.  
 Music—Rāga and Rasa 117, 118  
 Music—Tāla and Kāla 118.  
 Music—Lakshya and Lakshana 119.  
 Music—Rāga improvisation 119.  
 Music—Melody and Harmony 119, 120.  
 Music and Harmonium 120.  
 Music—North Indian and Karnatic  
     120, 121.  
 Music—National Songs 121.  
 Music and Devotion 121.  
  
 Painting 95.  
 Painting—Italian 96.  
 Painting, Landscape 97.  
 Painting, six limbs (shadanga) 99.  
 Painting—Buddhist Period 99, 100.  
 Painting—Moghul School of 101, 102.  
 Painting—Rajput School 103.  
 Painting—Tanjore School 103.  
 Painting—Mysore School 103.  
 Painting—Ravi Varma's Genius 105,  
     106.  
 Painting—Travancore School 103.  
 Painting—Bengal School 106, 107, 108.  
 Painting—Andhra School 108.  
  
 Poetry—What is 129, 130.  
 Poetry—Vedic 131, 132.  
 Poetry—Epic 131, 132.  
 Poetry—Classical 132.  
 Poetry in the Vernaculars 133, 134.  
 Poetry in English 134.  
 Poetics—Schools of 136 to 144, 152 to  
     154.  
 Poetics—Rasas 144 to 154.  
  
 Ruskin and Indian Art 81.  
  
 Sculpture and Greek Dance 80, 81.  
 Sculpture in India 84, 85.  
 Sculpture in Greater India 85.  
 Symbolism—Indian 109 to 111.  
  
 Yoga 98.











