

## 6. Following the path of art

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### Introduction

It is known that the idea of happiness is different for everyone. We would never have an unequivocal answer to the question, what is happiness and where it comes from. However, majority would agree that everybody seeks pleasure. Pleasure, happiness, joy, bliss, contentment all these words describe the experiences and states of mind we would like to have. What makes it possible for us to have such experiences or be in such state of mind? Leave aside the question of a universal definition of pleasure, but are we even aware about our own idea of happiness? How we get it and when? Have you ever thought about it? Perhaps, we have to give it a good thought if we want to be happy.

We attain pleasure in many ways, in many forms. It is always pleasing to relish tasty spicy snacks in the chill after a drizzle. Our happiness knows no bounds when Indian team wins the world-cup. It brings great joy to us when we meet an old friend after a long time. What a great fun it is to help a young lad in the neighbourhood to ride a bicycle. We help a person with special needs to cross the road and that is a special joy! It is a gratifying feeling when we see our parents happy with our success. In other words, our idea of happiness is related to our abilities and our qualities. Human ability to appreciate and create beauty

is a very special one. This does not mean that they are absent in other organisms. Weaver-bird builds a fine nest, spider knits an intricate web, birds chirp, insects crawl on sand to leave a pattern behind them, but are they capable of appreciating this as beauty? Can't say! We can, however, say at the moment that human consciousness is more evolved than other organisms and humans have 'awareness of awareness'. Thus, their perception of beauty might be different than other beings. It opens a whole new world of aesthetic and artistic experience to them. Humans can experience happiness beyond the satisfaction of basic needs, in the form of pleasure or joy.



A blossoming, delicate, fragrant flower, the colorful sky at the time of sunset, deep roar of the sea, sweet chirping of birds, thundering and lightening that illuminates darkness, storms that make treetops bend and touch the ground; we witness many such attractive forms of nature. We are delighted by these experiences, sometimes feel excited, sometimes astonished, sometimes speechless! We call these experiences as aesthetic experience. They include the experience of

both natural as well as man-made beauty.



### Let's watch!

Visit Museums/Art museums near by your area

Art and art related practices depict human love for beauty and their capacity to create too. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that studies aesthetic and artistic experience in depth.

Last year, we already had a brief introduction to this branch. It studies many questions and issues related to beauty, artistic creation and appreciation such as - what is beauty? What is the nature of aesthetic experience? What is the importance of art in human life? What is the nature of work of art? What are the elements of art process and the interrelationship among these elements? It also reflects upon concerns such as impact of art on society, relationship between art and ethics, evaluation criteria of art and the relationship between art and craft.

The concept of beauty and art have been a part of philosophical discourse since a long time. However, aesthetics as a branch of philosophy emerged only in 18<sup>th</sup> century. German philosopher Baumgarten used the term, 'Aesthetics' for the first time for such study. The word has its roots in Greek term Aesthanomai. Aesthanomai means sensory experience, whereas aesthetics means sensory experience and feelings, emotions created through it. Baumgarten defined aesthetics as a branch which studies aesthetic experience.

Immanuel Kant differentiated ethical experience and experience of sensory pleasures from aesthetic experience. This provided philosophical basis to aesthetics.



### Let's discover!

Find more information about Kant's views on aesthetics.

Later, beauty did not remain a central concept of this discourse. It turned more towards art and the questions related to art. Thus this branch is now known as 'philosophy of art'. In this chapter, let us get introduced to a few important concepts discussed in this branch.

## Aesthetic/Artistic Perspectives

Our relationship with the surrounding is manifold. We relate with it through many channels such as sensory experience, feelings and emotions, intellect, thoughts, reasoning, imagination, action, evaluation etc. Our relationship with the world is rooted in three different perspectives. Cognitive perspective highlights the nature of man as a knower. This knower wants to know about the origin of the universe, its nature and function. The knower is interested in knowing - how many types of things are there in the world? What are they made-up of? What kind of changes do they go through? Which laws/principles govern these changes, and suchmore. As we saw, science and philosophy originate from the same sense of wonder. Systems of understanding the world evolve. Development of technology enables us to us to create instruments that reveal the unknown aspects of the world. The knower uses these instruments as a neutral observer. There is no place for feelings and emotions, imagination, sensitivity and values in this exercise. When you conduct an experiment in the laboratory, your personal like-dislike, emotions, mental state have no value there. All that matters is the subject of experiment. Likewise, individual has no importance in the knowledge-centric perspective. The subject matter, that is objects and phenomena and interrelationships among them, are important.

Second perspective focuses on what is useful in life. We can call it the utilitarian or practical perspective. Organisms have a basic instinct to live and flourish and so do humans. Thus, we are constantly in search of what is

useful to us and what is not. It is not just a sense of wonder or quest of knowledge that inspires us to do so. It is a basic biological instinct. In the process of evolution and in socio-cultural development, this instinct is also linked with the development of science and technology. Technological efficiency increases manifold when it is coupled with scientific knowledge. Accordingly, comfort goods also increase. Knowledge-centric and utilitarian perspective complement each-other. Useful instruments enhance knowledge and enhanced knowledge develops our understanding of what is useful and what is not.

Both these perspectives classify objects and phenomena in nature in their own way. There are innumerable objects in the universe. Several phenomena occur in it. They are classified on the basis of the similarities among them. Knowledge-centric perspective tries to seek the connection between objects and phenomena and the laws that govern them. The laws are applied to every object and phenomena in its purview. Such typological representation is more important to knowledge-centric perspective than the actual existence of the object with all its peculiarity. Utilitarian perspective classifies objects on the basis of their utility i.e. the functions they perform. According to this perspective, objects are basically instruments. In order to make an object, first, its use is determined, then, it is decided how to make that object with what material and form etc. Multiple types of objects are made from the same basic substance.



### Let's do!

Prepare various objects from paper in Origami style and arrange an exhibition of these objects.

Many things are made from wood, but their patterns are different. A chair, a table, a bench classifying all these objects according to their usage is a utilitarian perspective,

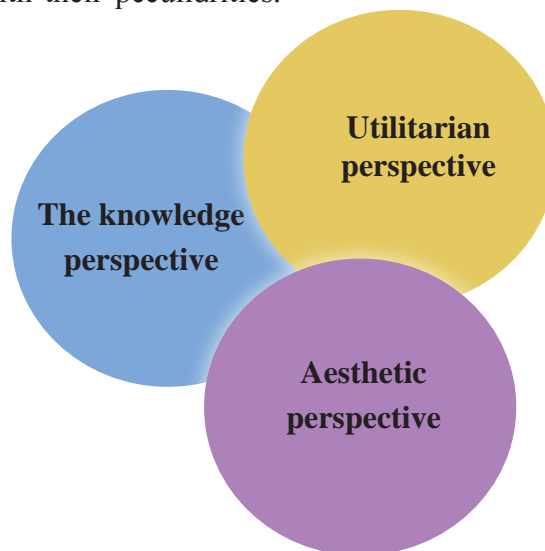
whereas identifying them as objects made from wood and thus, categorizing them separately from objects made up of plastic or metal is a knowledge-centric perspective.



### Let's do!

Take different moulds such as those used for making cakes, cookies etc. and use them on different types of materials such as wax or clay; for making various objects.

Yet another perspective that is different from the above-mentioned perspectives through which we not only experience objects but also the world is an aesthetic perspective. This perspective does not enquire into what the object (of experience) is made-up of, which laws govern it, what is its function, what is its use etc. Significance is given to the object of experience and the persons experiencing it. Object classification is immaterial for this perspective. This perspective makes it possible to experience nature and objects without having any specific purpose to begin with. It lets the sensations and images emerge in the mind in the way in which they actually emerge. What is significant in this experience, is the specific nature of the object that is experienced and of the person who is experiencing. Aesthetic perspective is interested in experiencing various forms/types of nature, particular objects, individual and social life with their peculiarities.



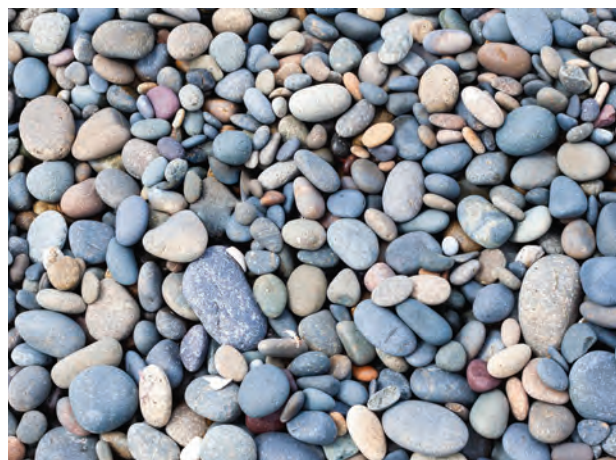


This perspective has a special significance in philosophy. We have studied metaphysics, epistemology and ethics as branches of philosophy. The qualities such as human sensitivity, imagination, creativity, emotionality and other such remain on the periphery in all these branches. Aesthetics studies these qualities and enriches our understanding of being human. It does not study the non-human aspect of existence merely for its bearing upon human existence but also reflects upon sheer experience of existence and its impact on individual's state of mind. Aesthetics presents a very different view of objects, people, relationships, phenomena that we experience. Thus, we are able to connect with pure existence of things, recognize their peculiarities, and value which are beyond human utilitarian perspective. Through this, we indirectly learn to acknowledge and appreciate the existence of the particular objects.

In aesthetic perspective, non-human existence, nature does not remain an isolated existence. It becomes an integral part of human sensitivity, imagination and thought. Human sensitivity and creativity bring out novel aspects of nature and also inspire us to understand the manifested existence beyond what is generally known. Aesthetic perspective generates a possibility of experiencing nature not as a mere study object or a useful resource. It enables man to understand that things have their own existential value. In present times, when nature and humans are looked at as mere 'resource'; this awareness is of immense importance. It gives us a different view-point to look at ourselves, our society, living and non-living world beyond ego-centric or human centric understanding of things. The aesthetic experience of a common man and the artist's creation on an art object stem from this very view point. Let us understand this with the help of an example.

A walk in nature brings many different things to our notice. Imagine, a group of

friends is on a picnic and they find a pile of stones. What kinds of responses would it generate? 'Who laid these stones here?' Somebody may get curious. A geology student may recall what he has studied about rock, its type and its genealogy. Some may find the stones as an obstacle on the trail. Some may use the rock to sit on. Some may start thinking about what can be made with the stones. Some may spot a beautiful pattern in the rocks. A light and shadow play may interest a few. Glaze of rock particles may dazzle somebody. Its soft touch might be appealing to some. An artist may think of making a sculpture out of it.



When a sculptor works on a stone or an architect designs a structure or a monument, we realize the potential in stone, its ability to withstand extremities of seasons. We also experience how rock manifests itself in bright light, twilight, light percolating through clouds, darkening evening etc. Through the feelings expressed by the image/idol created by the sculptor, the material in inanimate stone as if acquires a living, dynamic and positive existence. This is how, existential value of nature, of every phenomenon in nature, of objects like stones are revealed through works of art. This awareness is an important aspect of culture.



Like stone, which is a natural object, we also take man-made objects such as a table for granted in our day to day life. An artist makes us aware of them too, through impressions and images related to these. Imagine, you are looking at a painting. A table is drawn on a canvas. There are few papers on the table and eye-glasses removed from the eyes.

This image might subtly stimulate your memory of your grandfather or your mother getting up from the table just after scribbling something. You may also recall your favorite author, a philosopher or even a leader. The images of table, papers and glasses will invoke memories and emotions.



**Let's do!**

In the class, some students will draw pictures and other students will speak about the images and feelings that the pictures give rise to in their minds.

### **Aesthetic Experience**

Aesthetic or artistic experience is an outcome of a developed sense of beauty in humans. This awareness makes it possible for

us to have aesthetic experience. Aesthetics or philosophy of art discusses the nature of aesthetic experience in which we enjoy nature or works of art. Sensory experience of a particular person is at the base of aesthetic experience. However, it is not confined to sensory experience. It affects our emotions, thoughts, imagination etc. The memories of these experiences linger in our mind. Sometimes it invokes old memories, unravels the relationship between these experiences. We tend to find out something new about ourselves, the society and the world we live in. You might have had such experience while watching a film or a play. We can actually feel how sensory experience, emotions, thoughts and imagination connect with one another with subtlety and tenderness. Aesthetic experience provides a magic touch to our daily monotonous and somewhat mechanical life.

The peculiarity of aesthetic experience is such that it is always pleasurable. However, this pleasure is quite different than the pleasure we otherwise get through sensory experience. This difference provides a key to know the peculiarities of aesthetic experience. The joy of observing a beautiful landscape, reading a poem that touches our heart, a deep satisfaction of watching a beautiful play...have you tried to understand the nature of these experiences? Can you compare it with the joy of eating your favorite food to the heart's content? Or with the joy of getting something as a gift that you dreamt of having or with the joy of winning a tournament? If not, do try. Let us try and understand how this comparison is possible with the help of following examples.



**Let's do!**

Arrange in a classroom, programmes of poem recitation, play reading and enjoy the experience.

Imagine, an orange colored, fresh, sweet smelling mango is placed in front of us. The

sight would make us feel happy. We would also feel like having it. Just a sight of mango would not be sufficient, we would be happy only if we get to eat it. In contrast to this, a sculpture or a painting would make us happy even with a sight. The ownership of the painting or the sculpture would not be the only condition to make us happy about it.



Works of art are preserved in art museums. Maharashtra has many rock cut caves and temples of artistic design with a rich collection of sculptures. They give us joy in the same way. The sight of breathtaking valleys from the mountain tops, deep forests, gushing streams give us pure joy. We are blown by sweet calls of birds.

#### Let's visit!

Collect information about ancient art, artifacts, monuments etc. If possible, visit old caves, temples, architectural structures.

These examples reveal that aesthetic experience is not dependent on individual's wants, desires, inspirations and expectations. German philosopher Immanuel Kant calls aesthetic experience as 'disinterested delight'. According to Kant, the joy that we find in aesthetic experience is not dependent on the practical, utilitarian or ethical value of a natural object or a work of art. Thus, this joy is disinterested, pure. The experience that brings such joy is called aesthetic experience.

Are you wondering why we are not discussing beauty while talking about aesthetic experience although aesthetic experience is basically an experience of beauty? You are right. But it is not an easy task. Generally, when we like a particular person, an object, a scene, we may call it beautiful. But we do not use the word beauty every time to describe our feelings. In everyday life many a times, we say this is nice, this is good or I liked it very much. Adjectives also change with time and generation. Do you not say, awesome, epic, amazing as synonymous to beautiful many a times?



#### Let's do!

Make a presentation in the classroom on 'manifestation of art in day to day life', e.g. different forms, types of decoration including both traditional and new forms concerning it.

#### Does 'Beauty' really exist or appears?

Philosophy discusses many problems and issues related to the concept of beauty. When we use the adjective 'beautiful' for a particular object we believe that beauty lies in that object. Does this quality exist in the object like its other qualities as color, form, smell and weight? We would be able to 'show it' if the answer to this question was affirmative. We would not have engaging debates on whether a particular thing is beautiful or not. At least we would be able to resolve the issue in an objective way. Whether a particular thing is heavy or lightweight could be a matter of subjective experience, its weight, however, can be measured in an objective way. Beauty can not be judged in such objective and impersonal manner.





### Let's do!

Take some water in a glass and hold it in your hands. Tell others how you find the glass, heavy or light in weight. Hold it in the same position for ten more minutes.

Let others know when your hand starts aching. The glass even though it weighed just the same as it was in the beginning (objective reality) is first felt light weight and then heavy (subjective reality). Experience it yourself. This activity can be done in groups.

In the history of Western philosophy, in Greek and medieval era, beauty was believed to be an objective quality, that is, as a quality inherent in the object. They analyzed it on the basis of structure of an object. An object is made up of many elements. They give rise to different qualities of the object. If, these elements are structured in a proper manner, meaning, if there is harmony, balance, proportionality, symmetry and rhythm in them; the object would be called beautiful. Thus, these elements were identified as elements of beauty. Since, these elements were in the object, beauty was thought of as an objective characteristic.

David Hume, a well-known philosopher, challenged this view in modern era. Hume propounded that beauty does not lie in the object. It is not an objective element. It depends upon the person who experiences it. A statement that something is beautiful is not an objective statement. It is very much subjective. As the saying goes - 'Laila is beautiful only in eyes of Majnu'. It implies, that beauty lies in the eyes of beholder, not in the object. So the question arises, is beauty really there or does it appear? Some philosophers after Hume tried to argue that beauty is both subjective as well as objective.



### Let's talk!

Discuss 'whether beauty merely appears or is it really there?', try to present your opinions with the help of sound arguments.

The other questions related to the objectivity and subjectivity of beauty are, can we define beauty? Can we fix the criteria of beauty? You have learnt many definitions in Science and Mathematics. Definition explains the meaning of a term/concept with precision. A definition talks about the quality that is present in all the objects denoted by that term. For example, definition of a triangle – a triangle is a closed figure of three straight lines joining at three different points. This definition of triangle summarizes, essential quality of any given triangle and at the same time, it also highlights that a triangle is distinct from any other geometric figure. If all the things that we call beautiful essentially possess a particular property, we may be able to define beauty. Some philosophers have made such an effort. However, according to many philosophers and thinkers such a definition is not possible. If we agree that beauty is not an objective quality, it becomes impossible to define beauty, as definitions have to be objective. If the idea of beauty changes from person to person, one cannot come up with an objective definition of beauty.

It is clear that if aesthetic experience is a subjective term, there would never be criteria of beauty that are acceptable to all. You must have had such an experience, that your friends do not like the story that you liked immensely. A building or a structure that you did not like at all receives great appreciation by others. These examples indicate that it is very difficult to determine the criteria of beauty and to define it. The diversity in art forms makes the task of objective definition even more difficult.

Every art form has its own peculiarities, which are different than others. Beauty of a work of art can only be discussed within the framework of properties of a given art form. Can we have the common criteria to discuss the aesthetic worth of an abstract painting, a musical note, a novel and a movie?



### Let's write!

Do appreciation of a picture, a story, a movie and make a list of criteria on the basis of which appreciation is done.

Cultural history teaches us that the criteria for beauty change from time to time and from place to place. Fairness was regarded as a mark of beauty once. However, now we do not think so. There is beauty in every color. We now believe that folk art forms are aesthetically as valuable as classic art forms. There was a tradition in Sanskrit literature to end a play on a happy note. Many playwrights followed the same. However, playwrights like Bhasa and Bhavabhuti challenged this tradition. Aesthetically their plays are considered as equally valuable.

The other important aspect of beauty is that the things that we do not find beautiful in real life appear beautiful when we find them in works of art. We would not find a roadside garbage pile beautiful! However, its painting can be beautiful. We can evaluate such painting on the basis of aesthetic norms. Aesthetics discusses art, aesthetic experience related to work of art and in general the nature of artistic experience. Before we get into this discussion let us get acquainted with the nature of art and history of art.

### The nature of art

While thinking about art, it is essential to think about the work of art, the artist who creates it and the recipient who enjoys it. Its important to note here that art is essentially

man-made. An artist has the ability to create the things that may not be found in real world. Art is thus an expression or manifestation of human creativity. The same quality also makes it possible to make other goods, instruments and objects. If we look at human history we'll find that initially these two types of creations went hand in hand. Just as humans have been knowers and doers, they also have been artists and receivers since ancient times. Researchers have found evidences of human craftsmanship and art making right from stone-age.

Remember the painting from Bhimbetka that we saw last year? We call it a painting, a work of art, but we do not call the tools found in the same era as artwork. It implies that in order to be called as a work of art it is essential but not sufficient for an object to be manmade. It also takes certain other qualities. It is evident that a rainbow is not a work of art because it is not manmade. But we can not call a bow that is used in hunting a piece of art just because it is manmade. Suppose a bow is made with flowers and petals. It could be then qualified as a work of art because it is not only man made but it has no real practical use. It is made only to please the artist and for those who appreciate. We have talked about such pleasure when we discussed aesthetic experience. The point to be additionally noted here is that every art experience need not only limit itself to the experience of beauty.

Philosophy of art discusses different forms of art, commonly referred to as fine arts. Fine arts include every art form such as literature, music, dance, drama, painting, sculpting etc.



### Let's do!

Collect the information about Folk art in your area and arrange an exhibition of the same in your class.

Where appreciation is the main motive behind creativity and not the utility of things, such art forms are called as 'fine arts'. Humans



make various objects. Many of them are useful and artistically appealing at the same time. We buy cloths, vehicles, cell phones. We not only see the utility aspect in them, we see their aesthetic appeal too. However, their utility is their primary value.




As against this, we appreciate a poem, a song, instrumental music, painting etc. which basically have artistic value. They may also have utilitarian value but their primary value is artistic. We may use a beautiful vase as a paperweight. Vase may be useful in this respect, but, its primary value is its aesthetic worth. There is also an exception such as the art called architecture. For example, a building is designed taken into account its use. Even then famous monuments like Tajmahal, Vatican Church, Kailas – the rock cut temple of Ellora are considered as great works of art.

Our artistic inspirations are rooted in our manifold experience of nature. Early humans were not only capable of receiving various sensations as form, color, smell, sound, texture etc. but with the help of reason they could also understand underlying patterns in various natural phenomena. It also shaped their emotional association with nature. Nature provides means to survive, nature can also abolish life. Nature can be attractive as well as scary. It can be astounding as well as bewildering. Man's relationship with nature has a contrast character of dialogue and conflict. The artistic creations of early humans depict the forms of nature as they understood them and the feelings they give rise to. Art has also been an effort of making sense of universe,

various phenomena and processes in the universe.

Human sensitivity, reason, emotionality and imagination resulted in the rise of civilizations. We have seen it last year that in the initial stages of cultural development humans responded to the surrounding nature in many different ways as myth, philosophy, religion, art and science. Artistic expression was coupled with creativity. Art flourished with development of culture. Along with nature, society, and societal patterns and events also became a subject matter of art. For a long time artistic creation was associated with religion. This association of art with life, nature, religion and morality continued almost till 18<sup>th</sup> century. Rapid growth of science and technology affected every field of life, art too was not an exception to it. Art became more independent. Criteria for artistic evaluation no longer came from religion and ethics. Art determined its own criteria. Art revealed itself in many forms as realistic, symbolic, entertaining etc. Technology started playing a major role in artistic creation.



**Let's search!**

Collect information about realistic, symbolic and recreational art.

Earlier, there wasn't a major distinction between art and craft. The gap between the two increased later on. Utility has a prime importance in craft. Handcrafts are used mainly for decoration. Creativity has limited scope in craftsmanship. Patterns are repeatedly used. Patterns are beautiful, attractive but it is not an independent creation of an artist. That is why Mehendi or Rangoli are called as craft. It takes skill to draw the pattern in exactly same manner from printed format but it doesn't take much of creativity. It takes both creativity and skill though to create a new pattern. In reality, art also needs some kind of craftsmanship and crafting too is incomplete without artistic touch.

## Artistic processes and forms of art

As we saw earlier, the artist, the work of art and the receiver are the main components of art. The process of art involves the process of creation, the actual presentation of work of art and its receiving. Creation of art is a complex process taking place in the inner world of an artist. Many elements are functional there. Psychology and neuro science studies these processes; but so far we can not say much about what exactly happens here and how. Generally speaking, everyone is blessed with an eye for appreciation. A work of art is an external manifestation of an internal process. Artist uses mediums like color, lines, forms, sound, words, facial expressions and movement for presentation. This is how the work of art becomes available for appreciation. Appreciation is the spontaneous response to the work of art. It matures with time. Some also go ahead and become art analysts, reviewers, critiques. You must have read such analysis,

reviews or critique in the newspapers.



### Let's talk!

Discuss Harry Potter as a novel and a movie with reference to different media.

An artist experiences different forms of nature, society and life with its peculiarities. He tries to face and understand the life and the world with all its multiplicity, diversity and peculiarity. He is in search of the essence of the experience. An artist experiences the nature of reality that remains untouched by scientific or utilitarian perspective. This experience is not confined only to beauty. Artistic awareness encompasses all the aspects of life, be it good - evil or even - ugly. Art becomes one's medium of expression of the meaning of these experiences. Thus artistic experience is never about just beauty. When art became an autonomous field it revealed the complexity of artistic experience and the

## Some western thoughts related to art

Philosophers, right from Greek period till now seem to have engaged themselves deeply in discussions on art and beauty. What makes art possible? What is the motivation behind creativity? What is the nature of the work of art? What are the peculiarities of artistic creation? Philosophers and artists have tried to tackle questions like these.

Plato considered art to be imitation. Imitation as you know is a copy. Plato thought the work of art is an imitation of objects and happenings in nature. It is also an imitation of people and episodes in human life. Plato argued that, natural world is an imitation of the world of forms and man-made world is an imitation of natural world. Thus artistic creation is an imitation of imitation. If you want to know the true nature of the world, art is insignificant. In plays or epics, Gods almost mirror human

nature. Like humans, gods too envy and fight with each other. Such depiction would hardly create a respectable image of Gods in human minds. To nurture appropriate religious mindset, the image of god needs to be established as greater and superior. Humans will be inspired to act righteously out of respect and fear of god. Because of this ethical point of view Plato does not find the value of art appreciable. He thought that art should have no place in the education that a philosopher king would receive to make an ideal state.

Art was always discussed with reference to truth, knowledge and morality in Greek and even in medieval period. Effects and consequences of art remained the primary concerns while discussing the importance and value of works of art. After Renaissance; politics, economy and other fields became free from the clutches of religion. Art and ethics were not far behind in this process.

Artist and work of art became central to the process of art. The thought that art is an external manifestation of inner core of an artist started surfacing. This view is also known as expressionism. Croce's thought of art as intuition and Tolstoy's theory of art as communicative medium were the offshoots of the same perspective.

Croce thought art is not a rational act. It is the response of an artist to the world around him. Artistic response is often composed of abstract dynamic images. Art is pure. An artist uses different media to express this response. This, in a way, hampers the pure nature of art. Expression augments art with the help of craft and skill. Receiver can experience pure form of emotions through art. It is an enriching experience for the receiver. For Croce external manifestation of art is like

a bridge that connects artist and the recipient.

According to Tolstoy, beauty is not a central concept in the process of art. A work of art can be beautiful but beauty is not an ultimate objective of art. Art is important because art connects minds. Art appeals to the emotional world of humans. It brings people together through emotions. True work of art stands independent of space and time. It has a universal appeal. According to Tolstoy creation and appreciation have great importance in human life. Art is a distinctive aspect of social life. Excellent art work depicts, and should depict, values and struggles in human life and ways to deal with them. A work of art should have an appeal for every commoner. Thus Tolstoy describes art as a fundamental, universal act that communicates human feelings and ethical values.

need to evolve the criteria for the independent evaluation of art. Eventually, artistic analysis replaced aesthetic analysis and the branch of philosophy that was earlier called aesthetics is now recognized as philosophy of art.

In the beginning, creativity manifested itself through the creation of different tools, wares, implements. Initially these objects were quite rugged and rough. Later they started becoming more attractive, neat and well-made. Our ancestors used materials available in nature such as clay, stone, twigs, bones etc. to make these objects. In the course of time utility did not remain the sole motivation behind the creation. The concern with the attractiveness of objects, buildings etc. also started manifesting itself. They also made use of materials like stone, shell, ivory to make ornaments of different sizes and shapes. The walls of caves, houses, religious places were adorned with paintings and drawings. Man started making images of things found in nature.

The medium of art determines the classification of fine arts. The art forms that

create works which are primarily visual i.e. those which are enjoyed on the basis of visual sensations, are called as visual arts. Painting, sculpture, architecture are visual arts. Music, be it vocal or instrumental, uses sound as primary medium. We receive the sound. Thus music is sound or audio art. Word is a medium for literature. Words can be read as well as heard. Literature is not technically audio or visual. Words are not just signs on paper or just abstract sounds. They carry meaning. Words are symbols of meaning. Thus literature is also called as symbolic art. Some art forms use mix-media. For example, dance, drama, films are audio-visual forms of art.







### Let's do!

Create a mind map of performing arts on the basis of different art forms, their sub forms or categories with the help of examples.

The medium of art also has a particular relationship with space and time. Notes and rhythm in music relate with time. Music is called as temporal art. Painting connects with space. Human bodies become primary medium in dance, drama, films etc. They have a frame of reference in space as stage backdrop etc. It also has a reference of time as a story unfolds in time. It connects past, present and future. Literature also assumes space-time framework. These art forms are called as spatio- temporal art.



### Let's talk!

Discuss a work of art or a performance/creation that you have liked, in the class.

## Objectives of art

Why art! The question has been discussed since time immemorial. Plato and Aristotle thought that art imitates nature or social life. According to this opinion art is an inferior copy of the real or natural. This imitation can be gross, macro and superficial as well as abstract, micro and capturing the essence. This opinion was held true even in middle ages. The post-renaissance thinkers believed that, art is an expression of the inner emotional core of an artist. Thinkers like Collingwood and Croce supported this opinion. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, Leo Tolstoy, a well-known Russian author and thinker stated that communication is the objective of art. According to him, art creates a global society through the communication of emotions, sensitivity and values.

## Perspectives of art in Indian (Sanskrit) Tradition

Sanskrit literature has a rich tradition of discourses related to beauty and art. The tradition begins with Natyashastra, a text from 1<sup>st</sup> century CE written by Bharatmuni. The text elaborates upon play writing and performing with utmost details. Bharata has propounded a theory of Rasa and Bhava with reference to dramatics and appreciation. Rasa is an important and fundamental theory in Indian aesthetics. Bhamaha, in 6<sup>th</sup> century, put forth some important views on aesthetics that were applicable to literature in general other than drama. Bhamaha used the term 'Alankara' with reference to aesthetics in literature. Alankar literally means ornaments that augment the beauty of

literature. Bhamaha and Dandi both were the proponents of 'Alankarshastra'. Wamana adopted 'Riti' as an essential aesthetic element in literature and suggested that content and form both are equally important. He highlighted the thought that beauty of poetry lies not only in the content but also in its form. Anandvardhana is known for his theory of 'Dhwani'. It is the suggested meaning, as against the straight delivery of the message, that makes literature an art. Poet Magha uses the word 'Ramaniya' for beauty. The word implies novelty and entertainment. This is an essential element of art according to him.

Aesthetic thought in Sanskrit has a rich background of Sanskrit literature. Indian aesthetics also discusses the purpose or objectives of art. Bharata says, the objective

of art is two fold. First, it generates awareness about what is right and what is wrong and second, it entertains. Art generates awareness about what is right in an entertaining manner.

Bharata's Rasa theory proposes that, when actors convey the text and when both acting as well as the conveyed words are grand and appropriate, the whole experience culminates into 'Rasa', literally, juice. Receiver experiences 'rasa'. 'Rasa' is to be relished/enjoyed. Many art theorists took 'rasa' theory ahead after Bharata. Bharata proposed eight 'rasas' as - 'Shringar', 'Karuna', 'Hasya', 'Veer', 'Bhayanaka',

'Raudra', 'Bibhatsa' and 'Adbhut'. Abhinavgupta added ninth rasa as 'Shant' to this list.

Indian aesthetics also discusses a concept called 'rasa vighna' or the obstacles in artistic experience. Indian aesthetic tradition is rich with texts that systematically studies music, sculpture, architecture and other art forms. It is also proposed that all the art forms are inherently interconnected. (Do you remember the dialogue in Vishnudharmottarapurana that you studied last year? It was about the interconnectedness in various arts).

Artist tries to go beyond the superficial details of an experience and gets its essence or pattern. She thinks not only about the real actual experience, but also thinks about the possibilities of having experiences at the thought level. This is how art is a blend of fact and imagination, actualities and possibilities.

Art is an extremely important aspect of any society as it goes beyond mere fact finding, which is an objective of science, and putting knowledge to material use. Human potentials are expressed in various aspects of culture. Art grows alongwith the growth of culture. Social, political, economic conditions also affect art. Art is a component of culture that is connected simultaneously with both, tradition and changing times. It keeps the tradition alive as well as makes it dynamic and relevant for the present times.

It is extremely important for healthy society to have art that analyses and criticizes social conditions. Art also plays a pivotal role in shaping the emotional world of people. It sharpens and deepens individual awareness about oneself and the surrounding world. Art that enriches our experiential world, that makes us peep into ourselves, brings us joy, critically

analyses reality in the light of possible alternatives is extremely important for the holistic development of an individual and the society. Philosophy of art makes us aware about the nature of art, its functions and its relationship with religion and science. This awareness will guide us through our artistic journey to lead a good life.

### **The Scientific perspective**

We have seen it in the lesson named 'What is cause' that the discussion of art mainly belongs to subjective and intersubjective category. Science studies objective reality. If that is the case, is it not a contradiction to talk about scientific thought related to art?

The reality is such that, even though many concepts in art do not come into the category of objective reality, there is a firm reason to say that art and artistic tendencies of humans are an outcome of evolutionary processes that shaped humans. A look at other animals will tell us that decorating is not confined only to humans. Birds build well-woven nests. It can be called as a biological instinct. However, some birds go beyond just weaving and decorate their

house. The male bower bird builds a gorgeous nest and decorates it with clusters of flowers, leaves, eggshells and other such things. How could a female not get attracted to such a 'beautiful' creation?

Apes, which are closer relatives of human species, also show a tendency to self decorate. It has been noted that chimpanzee female tried to adorn herself with ribbon and lace just like human female. Its very difficult to know what these animals must be thinking when they show such behavior, but its indeed a striking similarity.

Now let us look at our own species. What can be said about the objectivity in our likes and dislikes? Everyone's choice of favorite painting would be different, right? But have you ever observed what kind of paintings hospitals and clinics often display? You'll find out that majority of the times they are the paintings or photographs of beautiful landscapes or babies. Why this choice? Picasso's paintings may not have an appeal for everyone. Some would just shrug their shoulders and say, 'I don't understand much about it!' However, everybody 'understands', likes a painting that has natural scenery in it especially with a waterbody in it. Not only do they understand it, such views brings instant feeling of goodness with them. We may not feel the sensation vividly everytime but our brain notices it for sure. We now know this as a fact as our brain can now be connected with computer that enables us to see the inside of brain and the processes that are taking place in it. Hospitals and clinics have long been hanging nature paintings on their walls. They knew the truth even before brains were connected to screen. This is nothing but accurate observation of human nature.

Why is it so that natural landscapes and children's faces have so much appeal to nearly all the people in the world? The answer lies in our evolutionary past. It was vitally important for our ancestors to have abundance of water and food around them. The sight of waterbody,



gentle landscape, abundant vegetation must be pleasing them. The same is true about the paintings/photos of children. In the process of evolution only those could survive who were well taken care of by their parents. Thus it is understandable why the sight of children is appealing to most people. This is not without exceptions. There might be a few who get really very upset by the sight of a beautiful scenery. It's a trivial thought though. This triviality itself indicates a norm of human nature.

Science cannot stop at building a hypothesis alone. It needs an objective standing. It has to have a possibility of experimentation and verifiability. It should be able to explain every phenomenon that comes under its purview. There is very little in the category of scientific laws or principles that we have so far known regarding art. Not every artistic experience can be explained the way we understand our love for natural landscapes and thus our liking for paintings or photos of landscapes. We have very little information on how our sensory experiences and our neurotic responses were shaped by evolution. Amongst all the senses, human eye sight is perhaps the most studied one. Thus science can throw light on many things related to seeing. It is still a matter of an on-going research.

The summarise, we may say that before we label artistic experience as entirely subjective or intersubjective, we must note that there is a possibility of finding some objective truth in it. Science has made us aware of such a possibility.



### Let's talk!

**An interesting observation:** Majority of the people like the music they have heard in their formative age. The music that we have heard in childhood through radio, television, CD player or the music that we have heard in person has a deep impact on us. What happens when we as adults, get to listen to music of entirely new type? Does it attract us because of its novelty? Do we feel like listening to it again and again? Or do we find it simply not tolerable? Share your experience with others. Listen to their experience. Is there any similarity in your experiences?

### Let's speak!

Conduct a seminar in your college on the subject 'Movies and us'. How does movie affect society? If yes, in what way does it affect? These points are important.

**Natyashastra** - नाट्यशास्त्र

**Rasa** - रस

**Bhava** - भाव

**Alankar** - अलंकार

**Alankarshastra** - अलंकारशास्त्र

**Riti** - रीति

**Dhwani** - ध्वनी

**Ramaniya** - रमणीय

**Shringar** - शृंगार

**Karun** - करुण

**Hasya** - हास्य

**Veer** - वीर

**Bhayanaka** - भयानक

**Raudra** - रौद्र

**Bibhatsa** - बीभत्स

**Adbhut** - अद्भुत

**Shant** - शांत

**Vighna** - विघ्न

## EXERCISES

**Q.1** Fill in the blanks choosing the correct option from the bracket.

- (1) ..... experiences include natural and man made elements.  
(Aesthetic, imaginary, divine)
- (2) In Indian Aesthetics Bharatha's idea of ..... is fundamental and important.  
(Rasa-bhava, Bhava-bhavana, Rasa-bhavana)
- (3) In Greek and Medieval period beauty was considered as ..... quality of an object.  
(subjective, objective, inter-subjective)

**Q.2** Write the answers in 20-25 words.

- (1) Give two examples of aesthetic perspective.
- (2) What are the characteristics of aesthetic experience?
- (3) Give any four words that are used for 'beautiful'.
- (4) What is work of Art?
- (5) State important elements of process of Art.

**Q.3** Write a short note on the following.

- (1) Plato's theory of Art as imitation
- (2) Types of Art
- (3) Indian views on Art

**Q.4** Discuss in detail the nature of Art.

**Q.5** Explain various Western theories of Art.

**Q.6** Write a dialogue on the following.

Write a dialogue between an Artist and Appreciator considering whether the Aesthetic value is objective or not.

### Activity

Interview an Artist from your locality. Try and understand how his emotional world and life experiences are enriched through Art.

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