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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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THE YOGA OF ART

by

Dr. Harsha V. Dehejia, M.D., M.R.C.P. (London), M.R.C.P.
(Glasgow), F.R.C.P. (C), F.C.C.P.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Religion

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

June 6, 1986

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ISBN 0-315-33402-9

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance of the thesis

"THE YOGA OF ART"

submitted by Dr. Harsha V. Dehejia, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C)

in partial fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chairman, Department of Religion

Carleton University

June 28, 1986

ABSTRACT

The Yoga of Art by Dr. Harsha Dehejia in four chapters, with a prologue and epilogue and with a glossary of Sanskrit words. Chapter One lays down the parameters of the inquiry, which is the inquiry of aesthetic experience in the classical Indian tradition. Art creation is not examined in any detail and the reasons for this are explained. Two art forms, namely aesthetic emotion or *rasa* and aesthetic form or *rūpa* are chosen. The problem of the relationship of art and *bhakti* are explained. Chapter Two examines the dynamics of *rasa* emphasising *dhvani* as the major artistic device. It is shown how *rasa* is a transcendent experience. Chapter three examines the dynamics of *rūpa*, emphasising its visual features, and demonstrates that it too is capable of leading the prepared aesthete to a higher experience. Chapter Four sets the aesthetic experience derived from *rasa* and *rūpa* in the framework of the epistemology of Kāśmīr Śaivism, and shows that this system of Indian thought is capable of providing a firm metaphysical undergirding to aesthetic experience, making art experience a yoga in its own right.

Dedicated to the
Spirit of India,
where the deeds of man
may speak of his quests,
but the spirit of man
is revealed through his music.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Any attempt to acknowledge the large number of individuals who have played a part in this undertaking is somewhat akin to tracing the roots of a tree and, like the roots - I am sure - many of them would not like to be publicly recognised. Yet it is my pleasure to take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge at least some of these. Prof. Nalini Devdas has, over the last ten years, been instrumental in blossoming and guiding my budding interest in Indian thought. Prof. V. Chari has patiently and painstakingly read and interpreted Sanskrit texts with me; without his invaluable help, this treasure would have remained unopened for me. Prof. V. Subramanian has given valuable suggestions throughout this project. Prof. K. Mishra of Banaras Hindu University, during his short visit to Ottawa, unfolded the nuances of Kashmir Saivism. Smt. Devangana Desai of Bombay gave me an engaging insight into Tantric art. Everyone in the Department of Religion has been very helpful, providing support that is especially needed by a part time student. My wife Sudha, and my two sons Vivek and Rajeev, have been constantly by my side, inspiring, helping, and encouraging me at all times.

Finally, in the spirit of the 'upside down tree' of the Bhagavadgita, I acknowledge the ultimate source of all roots.

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PROLOGUE

Art and religion, which are so basic to the Indian way of life, and particularly to the Hindu tradition, defy simple definition. The two terms remain without their exact Sanskrit equivalents. And in the understanding of this apparent anomaly perhaps lies the answer. For pithy definitions may sometimes foster complacency and discourage a serious inquiry, an ardent quest.

In its broadest sense, religion in the Indian tradition is understood to be realisation of ultimate Reality. However in its more limited and prevalent sense, religion implies ritual, incorporates the occult and the magical, and has room for attributes such as fetichism. Religious practice cannot divorce itself from the concept of divinity, insists on a moral outlook, allows considerations such as merit (*punya*) and grace (*prasāda*), and presupposes the twin concepts of *śraddha* understood as faith and commitment, and *śaraṇāgati* or surrender and taking refuge. This latter understanding of religion is closely intertwined with *bhakti* or devotion. In view of this may Hindus may perhaps consider it to be almost a sacrilege that one could by-pass religion as narrowly defined, in

our quest for a transcendent realisation. The Hindu tradition, in its vastness and catholicity, has room for all types of religious experience. In presenting art as a yoga it is exactly this other path, which by-passes the ritualistic variety of religion, that we are treading. In removing art from the framework of narrowly defined religion, we are not pitting art against religion, but merely ensuring that art will be appreciated and understood on its own merit and that aesthetics will be given its rightful place as a means of higher realisation.

If religion in the Indian tradition defies definition, art remains equally elusive. The Indian tradition affords an exalted status to poetry as an art form, and in the expression of meaning, art has a close connection with language. In keeping with that tradition we propose to define the classical art of India as 'saṃskṛt', the dictionary definition of which is 'that which is made perfect'. As will be shown classical Indian art achieves perfection through the skill of the artist and inspires a similar quest for perfection in the aesthete. In opting for this definition, we wish to underscore not only artistic perfection, which is a hallmark of classical Indian art, but also the embodiment of an idea, a vision that is also a sine qua non of Indian art.

Yoga, etymologically defined as 'union' refers to the union of the individual with ultimate Reality and is a pan-Indian concept, and stays outside sectarian distinctions. In electing

to keep art out of the narrow concept of religion it is but natural that the inquiry be entitled the yoga of art, rather than the religion of art.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"Men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works Man the Eternal, the creator."
Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man.

In an unbroken tradition, from times pre-historic to the present, art has remained an integral part of Indian life, and has not only cut through social, religious and cultural barriers within the country, but has accompanied Indian trade and thought in their movement across the frontiers. The Indian tradition affords an exalted position to art and, significantly, holds both

the artist and the aesthete in equal esteem. Historically speaking, art and aesthetics in India interacted with social, political and cultural factors, and every age produced its own artists and aestheticians, who while carrying the tradition within them, reacted to situations that prevailed in their age. The turn of this century was an axial period in the history of art and aesthetics in India. It was a period when Indian artists and aestheticians were reacting to Western ideas and counter-reacting to Western interpretations of Indian art; it was a time of a modern Indian artistic renaissance when, after long years of colonialisation, Indians were rediscovering themselves; it was an era of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was one such modern aesthetician and it was he who brought into focus, "... the important part once played in Indian thought by the concept of Art as Yoga, a subject sufficient in itself for a whole volume."¹

Coomaraswamy was one of the first modern aestheticians, of the Indian sub-continent, to have used the phrase "yoga of art", and the present inquiry is an examination of that phrase. Art involves equally the artist and the aesthete and an examination of art must include both the creation and the appreciation of art. Yoga of art implies that art pertains equally to the artist and to the aesthete and that an examination of art must include both the creation and the appreciation of art. This inquiry addresses itself to exploring the concept of art as yoga and,

more importantly seeks to determine if the tradition of Indian aesthetics upholds the concept. The sense in which the term yoga would be applied to the appreciation of art will be explored in the concluding chapter. Here it suffices to note that Doornaraswamy, and aestheticians who follow him, use the phrase the 'yoga of art' in the sense of a method chosen with the aim of achieving a direct realisation of that which is considered to be ultimately Real, through the medium of an art object. The question then arises whether art, in its own right and without being subsumed under the traditional methods of *bhakti* and *jñāna*, can direct one towards what one accepts as ultimate Reality.

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ART IN THE INDIAN TRADITION.

It is important to lay out the scope and parameters of this inquiry and highlight the background upon which this inquiry is being undertaken. Any philosophic, as opposed to historic, inquiry about art cannot rest with merely psychological, social and anthropological considerations. Art is a statement of the philosophy of the age that produced it and remains an inspiration for the ages that followed. In this matter, Indian art is no exception. However, it is to be noted that neither Indian philosophy nor Indian art emphasise novelty. On the contrary, there is a constant return to certain foundational concepts that

were thought out early in the tradition and given voice in the Vedas and the Upanisads. For this reason, in interpreting the intention of the Indian artist one has to suspend archaeological presuppositions and art criticism as commonly understood, and penetrate the form to experience the spirit of art. Havell reminds us that, "if we apply Western analytical methods to the exegesis of Asiatic aesthesis we shall never form any just or complete conception of them, until we have learnt to discard all our Western academic prejudices and realised the paramount importance of Indian philosophy and religion among the great creative forces which moulded Asiatic art."² Accordingly, in this inquiry, Indian aesthetics will be approached within the context of the Indian philosophic tradition, and Indian art will be interpreted from this perspective.

2. INTERPRETATION OF CREATIVE GENIUS.

The idea of poetic vision presented in the Rg Veda has deeply influenced the manner in which Indian aestheticians approach art creation. Following Sri Aurobindo, Jeannine Miller, in her studies of the Vedas, speaks of the difficulties of modern scholars in interpreting the creative inspiration of the Vedic poets, which is expressed in a flow of inter-connected symbols. She states that, "the highly civilised mind is incapable of probing beyond the physical and the rational...and can take in only two dimensions of existence."³ The Rg Veda itself has

said of the sage-poets, "Their lowest abodes are visible, they dwell in realms concealed beyond."⁴ In keeping with this idea the Indian artists have, "used their visionary gifts, their own method of observation to determine what lies beyond physical appearances."⁵ Indian art, along with aesthetics, is an attempt to reach that "*guhyesu vratesu*", "those hidden realms".⁶ Śrī Aurobindo writes that, "the whole basis of Indian artistic creation...is directly spiritual and intuitive...and its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine."⁷ Reminding us of the suprarational origin of art, Śrī Aurobindo says "The intellect is not the poet, the artist, the creator within us; creation comes by a suprarational influx of light and power which must work always...by vision and inspiration."⁸

An artist in India has been called *prajāpati* or creator, and the Indian aesthetic tradition has maintained with unwavering consistency that at a philosophic level of understanding creation in general and art creation in particular remains a mystery. Accordingly, the Indian aesthetic tradition has focussed on aesthetic appreciation, which is considered to be explicable to a large extent, rather than on the mystery of the artist's inspiration. The essence of creativity or artistic inspiration is termed *pratibhā*. Etymologically related to the root 'light', the word *pratibhā* signifies a burst of enlightenment. Abhinavagupta describes it as "an intuitive

capacity to produce novel objects". A text of Kashmir Saivism, the *Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vimarśinī*, equates *pratibhā* with Mahesvara himself. According to the Kashmir Saivites, Siva's primal act of creation is considered to be neither the fulfillment of a lack nor the outcome of a self-imposed purpose, but an utterly spontaneous act of unbroken delight, symbolised by his dance. The Kāśmīr Śaivite literature speaks of human creativity as a *spanda*, a spontaneous act born of bliss, re-enacting and representing "that essential nature of the Universal Consciousness which is responsible for its apparent change from the state of absolute unity."¹⁰ According to the tradition it is a *kriyā*, not a *karmā* or a volitional act. According to this tradition, both Siva's primal act of creation and the human artist's creative expression are *kriyā*, spontaneous activity that does not lead to bondage, and not *karmā* or volitional activity with consequences in the process of rebirth. This line of thought is first expressed in the creation hymn of the Rg Veda, which states that perhaps even "the Lord in Heaven" cannot explain the essence of creative *kriyā*, and ends with the cryptic line "He, truly, knows it, or maybe He does not know!"¹¹

The Vedas do offer some hints at the process of artistic creation. The one sustained symbol of artistic creation in the Vedas is the *ratha* or the chariot, since the chariot for the Vedic *ṛsis* was a "symbol of the means of communication and

communion"¹¹, implying that the function of art was primarily to communicate a vision. Another symbol of artistic creativity in the Vedas was the "suparnah"¹² or the golden bird, emphasising once again the flight of vision. Despite these and other hints about artistic creation, there is no doubt that the creative process is sacrosanct and no amount of probing will yield any useful or rationally meaningful answers. This reminds one about the passage in the Chāndogya Upanisad, "Verily, my dear, that finest essence which you do not perceive - verily, my dear, from that finest essence this great Nyagrodha tree arises."¹³ Dasgupta points out that the "aesthetic state is... in itself a wholly new state which no fruitful analysis of its causes and conditions can manifest to us."¹⁴ He goes on to say that, "how the conscious mind helps to create a definite picture of the shadowy subconscious image or emotion is very difficult to ascertain. Rabindranath said in one of his poems that he could not describe the nature of his mysterious working which was there all the time."¹⁵

There is yet another problem that one encounters in dealing with artists and the creative process. This problem especially pertains to the Indian tradition, where succeeding generations of artists, most of whom remain entirely unknown, tended to amplify and reinterpret earlier artistic forms rather than to create entirely novel forms. Artists can be divided broadly into three groups. The first generation artists, the *adishilpis*, or the

sage-artists, were the pristine artists, especially in the *śilpa* tradition, about whom we know nothing, for they are not only anonymous, but the *śāstras* are silent about their *pratibhā*. The second and subsequent generations of master artists worked within the tradition, recreating art forms from the prescriptions laid down in the *śāstras*. Thirdly, the craftsman, who often were artists in their own right, worked in guilds under the guidance of the master artist, functioning more as artisans than as artists, in creating the art object. All these three types of artists are working under different states of art creation, and very little of what can be said about the one would apply to the other. In the light of these constraints in interpreting artistic inspiration and art creation, this inquiry will follow the approach of the traditional Indian aestheticians and will focus its attention exclusively on art appreciation, as conducted by an aesthete, and not on art creation, realising of course that the artist is very often also an aesthete. Although the yoga of art, for the purpose of this inquiry, does not investigate the process of art creation in any detail, it is important to examine the creative process as this throws light on the aesthetic process.

Aesthetics, unlike other disciplines has been a great social unifier in the Indian context. Even though the Hindu tradition sets up the *nāgarika* or the urban elite as the aesthete par excellence, art appreciation has been able to cross religious,

social, racial, sectarian and caste barriers. Aesthetes do not set up any temporal or hierarchal distinctions, and therefore it is possible to speak of them as a group.

3. THE QUESTION OF MARGI AND DESI ART.

In art, as in other disciplines like linguistics, a distinction has been made very early in India between the classical and the folk, or the *mārgi* and the *desi*, with the implication that the classical is higher and *svargya* or heavenward leading, and that the folk is plebian and meant merely for *lokānurañjakam* or wordly entertainment. The exalted position given to Sanskrit is a good example of this division, while other languages like Prakrit have enjoyed a secondary position. Although there has been a cross-fertilisation between the two traditions over the centuries, the dichotomy and the hierarchical attitude between the two has remained, and it is only recently that an attempt is being made to understand folk art and to restore to it its lost glory. There are interesting and important anthropological questions that remain to be settled regarding the origin and development of folk art, questions beyond the scope of this purview. Most forms of folk art have no formal aesthetics as yet, and there are no *sāstras* of folk art, and therefore this type of art does not lend itself to a critical analysis and will not feature in this inquiry.

Mārgi has both a chronological and stylistic

connotation. Chronologically, *mārgi* refers to the classical period of Indian art which "begins with the official adoption of Buddhism by the emperor Asoka in the third century B.C. and ends with the invasion and occupation by Muslim powers."¹⁶

Stylistically *mārgi* art refers to the type of art that is prescribed in the *śāstras*. Occupying an intermediary position between the *mārgi* and the *deśī*, and not forming part of our inquiry, is Tāntric or ritual art. It is significant that although we shall be applying Tantric methods to our analysis of *mārgi* art, Tāntric art per se as exemplified by yantras will be excluded. This is so because as, Devangana Desai puts it, "The art of Tantra is religious in function and is not primarily meant for aesthetic appreciation."¹⁷ At no time, it must be remembered, has the division of art into these three categories remained in watertight compartments.

4. FOCUS ON RASA AND RUPA.

Two art processes, rather than specific art forms, have been chosen for this study, namely *rasa* or aesthetic emotion and *rupa* or aesthetic form, for we are interested in studying aesthetic principles rather than art objects, in understanding the vocabulary and grammar of art rather than a particular artistic composition. In presenting the dynamics of these two art processes, it will be demonstrated that the Indian artist uses artistic forms and techniques to embody an idea, a vision.

As the Dāsarūpa states, "The work of art can only nourish the spectator, he can only have delight in it, when he is not cut off from its meaning."¹⁰ An art object, for an aesthetician, is not only a source of beauty, but also, at the same time, an invitation to explore the reason for that beauty. Aesthetics should not only involve studying artistic forms, but more importantly present a method of arriving at the artistic meaning. Coomaraswamy has suggested that "we ought to abandon the term aesthetic in its present application and return to rhetoric", the latter understood as "the art of giving effectiveness to truth."¹¹

Rasa has remained the cornerstone of Indian art and provides not only a chronological continuity to art in the *margi* tradition, but more importantly, establishes the link between different art forms. The term *rāsa* has many nuances of meaning which can be summed up as "aesthetic emotion" or "aesthetic flavour". *Rasa* is essentially a dynamic process, which is initiated by the contact between the prepared aesthete and the emotive situation presented by the art object, and which is brought to fulfillment in the mind of the aesthete. An understanding of *rāsa* is pivotal to Indian aesthetics and there is general acceptance of *rāsa* as the most important component of traditional Indian art. Niharrañjan Ray points out that "when *rāsa* came to be regarded as the most important determinant of the artistic ultimate...a higher conception of art

seems to have emerged and art expression appears to have come to be invested with a deeper meaning."²⁰ The dominance of *rasa* or aesthetic emotion pertaining to the art object over *vāstu* or the external form of the art object, and over *alankāra* or creative imagination in the embellishment of the art object points to a recognition by the Indian aestheticians of the inward and personal aspect of art. This dominance of *rasa* made sure that art had to be inwardly experienced and not merely appreciated at a sensory level, for "the aesthetic mode is an experience of the whole man and not a part of him"²¹ The exalted status of *rasa* also ensured and underlined the importance of transcending superficial mental states in an aesthetic experience, a point that will be explored in the following chapters. Pandit states that *rasa* "became in Indian aesthetics and art-theory the most comprehensive principle signifying the art-process in all its phases, the creative, the created and the appreciative," and she goes on to say that "*rasa* as a quality of the art object and of aesthetic consciousness could synthesise both aspects [namely emotional and intellectual, sensual and spiritual, practical and contemplative] and offer a point of reconciliation."²²

The value of *kāma* or the search for emotional fulfillment in the Indian arrangement of *puruṣārthas* or the goals of life is well acknowledged. Pandit reminds us that "emotions alone provide the material for a subjective re-living

which transcends the objective order."²³ "When *rasa* is taken to be the essence of the art-work, it is perceived like a quality, as preciousness is in diamonds...but it is that totality of effect which arises from the object as a whole."²⁴

Rasa, from very early in the Indian tradition, has been able to provide the bridge between the subjective and the objective aspects of aesthetic experience. This is so because *rasa* as "aesthetic flavour" comprehends both the arousal and development of an 'aesthetic emotion in the mind of the aesthete, as well as the objective components of the art object, which arouse and sustain that emotion. Following the central importance given to *rasa* in Indian aesthetics, in this inquiry, the question of art as yoga is approached from the dynamics of aesthetic emotion.

Rasa can be studied from many different perspectives, not all of which are important to us in this inquiry. In particular, the question of the number of *rasa* has been strenuously argued by aestheticians for centuries. The question whether *śānta rasa* or *bhakti rasa* is the ultimate *rasa* has engaged the minds of aestheticians. Our interest lies essentially in the dynamics of *rasa* and our purpose is to determine whether or not *rasa* can lead the *rasika*, the one who experiences the *rasa*, to a higher realisation, independently, and without becoming related to the traditional practices of *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. Accordingly, the argument regarding the number of *rasas* although of

passing interest will not occupy our primary attention.

If *rasa* or aesthetic emotion has provided the cornerstone of Indian art and art theories, *rūpa* or aesthetic form is the very idiom of Indian plastic art. For this inquiry it is of cardinal importance to note that, in the *mārgi* tradition, only an art form that conforms to the prescriptions laid down in the *sastras* and which is a visual symbol of the cosmic *Puruṣa* can be called a *rūpa*. The term *rūpa*, in this inquiry, has been used in its wider sense of form as understood in the *mārgi* tradition. A certain bias, within the tradition, in favour of *śilpa* or sculpture in bas relief, as opposed to *chitra* or painting, must be admitted. It should be pointed out that *nṛtya* or dance and *śilpa* have a close connection and what can be said about *śilpa* applies in general to *nṛtya*. However, as Barrett and Gray point out the "history of Indian ... painting is too fragmentary."²⁰ Ancient Indian painting was predominantly of the form of wall painting, and most of it was in caves and cave temples and was meant mainly for the monks. Although art historians have spoken of its antiquity in India, and illustration of sacred texts was an ancient Buddhist and later Jain practice, painting in the Indian visual art tradition has not enjoyed an exalted status. Traditional plastic art in India was mainly public art, and *śilpa* rather than *chitra* was the perfect artistic expression for this purpose. It was not until the Mughals

patronised painting as a court art, that painting became part of a more popular movement, a movement that was later to be embraced by the artists of the Punjab hills and Rajasthan who developed miniature paintings in the Hindu tradition.

Śilpa or sculpture in the Indian context is synonymous with sacred imagery and this provides an interesting contrast with *rasa*. While *rasa* as an aesthetic principle stands above the division of art into sacred and secular and thereby pertains to both, *rūpa* parts company with the secular and stays exclusively within the sacred. However, the approach taken in this inquiry is that though *rūpa* is defined as a symbol of the cosmic *Puruṣa*, it can be viewed as an art object, which is to be enjoyed solely for its aesthetic qualities, and not as a focus of ritual practices. It will be shown that *rūpa* can lead to a higher experience on the basis of its aesthetic qualities alone. The case for art as a yoga is even stronger if it can be shown that *rūpa*, purely on aesthetic grounds, outside of religious ritual, can lead the prepared aesthete to a higher experience. For, in the ultimate analysis, while *rūpa* is a plastic form of deep aesthetic value, what is more important to aestheticians is the idea or the vision that the *rūpa* embodies and the way in which it does it. As Kramrisch points out the cardinal feature of the Indian *rūpa* which is essentially architectonic, is "transubstantiation ... made visible by the transformation of the plastic means."²⁴

According to Rabindranath Tagore *rūpa*, as a symbol of the Infinite, moves from the formless to form and carries the mind of the aesthete to the formless again:

Incense craves to dissolve itself into fragrance and fragrance wants to remain enveloped in incense. Melody seems to find itself articulated in rhythm and rhythm wants to get back to melody. Idea craves to be embodied in form and form seems to release itself in idea. The limitless seeks its intimate association with the limited, and the limited craves to lose itself in the limitless. I know not whose logic it is in creation and destruction, that there is an unceasing intercourse after freedom and freedom is always looking for a nest in bondage.²⁷

A complete inquiry into Indian aesthetics should ideally include *nada* or the aesthetics of sound, *tāla* or the aesthetics of rhythm, and *vāstu* or aesthetics of architecture, which are artistic expressions of great importance in the total spectrum of the Indian art experience. Within the scope of this inquiry it will not be possible to examine this total spectrum of classical Indian art. However, an important feature of Indian art is that there is a thread of continuity not only in a chronological sense, but from one art form to another. And therefore, the principles of *rasa* and *rūpa* could be extended to the other art forms. The following dialogue between a *raja* and a king brings out this interconnection between the various art forms rather vividly:

King. O Sinless One! Be good enough to teach me the methods of image-making.

Sage. One who does not know the laws of painting can never understand the laws of

image-making.

King. Be then good enough, O Sage, to teach me the laws of painting.

Sage. But it is difficult to understand the laws of painting without any knowledge of the technique of dancing.

King. Kindly instruct me then in the art of dancing.

Sage. This is difficult to understand without a thorough knowledge of the laws of instrumental music.

King. Pray teach me the laws of instrumental music.

Sage. But the laws of instrumental music cannot be learnt without a deep knowledge of the art of vocal music.

King. If vocal music be the source of all the arts, reveal then to me, O Sage, the laws of vocal music.²⁰

5. THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF ART AND BHAKTI.

The relationship between art and religion in the Indian tradition is an intricate one, particularly when it comes to sacred imagery. *Bhakti* has been a prime moving force in the development not only of the temple but of the various arts that the temple fostered. The Indian view point is very often a holistic one, and to sequester one activity or principle and study it in isolation, is to truncate and distort the Indian view of life. The thrust of our argument will be that, in its widest sense, Indian art directs the aesthete towards ultimate Reality and therefore qualifies to be a yoga. However from the standpoint of *bhakti* yoga, it is difficult to isolate art from religious ritual and everything it signifies, and therein lies the fundamental problem for us. "Ritual and prayer are the

two expressions in act and word of man's sense of dependence on divine or supernatural powers"²⁷ Aesthetics stays outside the realm of ritual and prayer which are a fundamental part of *bhakti* yoga. Stated differently, *bhakti* yoga requires that ultimately all other considerations be subordinated to it. Our concern is to justify aesthetics as an independent and bonafide discipline, not to be subordinated by any other, and capable of leading the prepared aesthete to a higher experience outside of *jnana* yoga or *bhakti* yoga; in other words to demonstrate that art is a yoga on its own. Justification for art as a yoga in this inquiry will be sought not in the *jñāna* or the *bhakti* traditions but in the epistemology of Kāśmīr Śaivism. It will be shown that this system of thought can give ultimate validity to aesthetic experience. It is more than of passing interest to point out that Abhinavagupta, who championed the *rasa* theory was also the high priest of the Kāśmīr Śaivite school.

6. METHOD AND TEXTS

And finally a few words about the methodology and the approach of this inquiry: the method is essentially an analysis of the concepts of *rasa* and *rūpa* from the texts, and of the epistemology of aesthetics from texts of Kāśmīr Śaivism. No field surveys, of artists or aesthetes, were undertaken.

The main *rasa* texts consulted were those by Bharata,

Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. It is interesting that while *rasa* as an aesthetic principle has been exhaustively written and commented upon by Indian aestheticians, when it comes to *rūpa* there has been an influx of Western aestheticians in the field, aestheticians who having totally immersed themselves in the Indian tradition, wrote from within the tradition. From amongst these mention is specially made of Kramrisch and Boner, whose writings have brought to light some important aesthetic principles especially in *śilpa*, and whose findings therefore are important to us. The *śilpa* texts in general give elaborate information about the construction of sculpture and the religious rituals that go with it, and do not seem to deal with aesthetic theories in any depth. For this reason the Vastusutra Upaniṣad is a text of great importance for our purpose, as it is perhaps the only text that sets out in clear terms the aesthetic principles that underpin the concept of *rūpa*. And finally equally important are modern Indian aestheticians, who influenced, as they were by Western aesthetic ideas, dug into their own roots, to present their own aesthetic views. In this group are mainly Rabindranath Tagore, Śrī Aurobindo and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, along with Hiriyanna and Niharrajan Ray. It is important to include these modern aestheticians in this inquiry, both of Western and Indian backgrounds, to show that Indian aesthetics is a very vibrant, modern and on going concern, and that art and aesthetics in all its aspects has enjoyed an

unbroken tradition in India.

NOTES

¹ A.K.Coomaraswamy, The Dance of Shiva. (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1976) p. 26.

² E.B.Havell, The Art Heritage of India. (Bombay: D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co, Ltd., 1964) p. 125.

³ J.Miller, The Vedas. (London: Rider & Company, 1974) p. 5.

* *ibid* p. 14. Rg Veda III.54.5

• *ibid* p. 14.

* *ibid*. p. 14.

⁷ Śrī Aurobindo, The Hour of God. Centenary Edition Vol 17. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1971) p. 198.

• Śrī Aurobindo, The Human Cycle. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971) p. 128.

* Locana 1.6 (pratibha)

¹⁰ K.C.Pandey, Abhinavagupta An Historical & Philosophical Study. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series

Office, 1963) p. 329.

¹¹ J. Miller, p. 53.

¹² *ibid* p. 53.

¹³ Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.12.2 from R.E. Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 248.

¹⁴ S.N. Dasgupta, Fundamentals of Indian Art. (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960) p. 60.

¹⁵ *ibid* p. 5.

¹⁶ D. Barrett & B. Gray, Indian Painting. (New York: Rizzoli International Publication Inc., 1978) p. 11.

¹⁷ Smt. Devangana Desai, personal communication.

¹⁸ A.K. Coomaraswamy, R. Lipsey (ed.) Selected Papers. Volume One: Traditional Art & Symbolism. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) p. 85.

¹⁹ *ibid* pp. 14-15.

²⁰ N. Ray, An Approach to Indian Art. (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1974) p. 131.

²¹ S. Pandit, An Approach to the Indian Theory of Art and Aesthetics. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1980) p. 19.

²² *ibid* p. 32.

²³ *ibid* p. 40.

²⁴ *ibid* p. 43.

²⁵ Barrett & Gray, preface.

²⁶ S. Kramrisch, The Indian Sculpture. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981) p. 59.

²⁷ original by Dādu translated by Rabindranath Tagore, quoted in N. Ray, Idea and Image in Indian Art. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1973) p. 5.

²⁸ original from Visnudharmottaram quoted in

M.R. Anand, The Hindu View of Art. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957) p. 61.

V.S. Apte, The Cultural Heritage of India, ed. S. Radhakrishnan. Vol 1. (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1937) p. 234.

CHAPTER 2. RASABRAHMAN

raso vai sah. rasam hyevāyam labdhvā ānandī bhavati
Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 2.7

In the Indian scheme of the goals of life or *puruṣārtha*, emotional fulfillment has an important place, and in keeping with that schema, which dominates every aspect of Indian thought, it is postulated that each activity of man fulfills itself only when it leads to *mokṣa* or spiritual freedom. *Kāma* or

emotional fulfillment is one of the four ends of life. The rasa theory of Indian art is an example of how emotions can be utilised and transformed through the medium of art for a higher end.

The Indian tradition deals at length with the origin and function of emotion as a part of the human consciousness. Early in the tradition it is made clear that emotional processes are an integral part of a larger and more exalted state of being and not merely the flickerings of a superficial mental state. There is no better place to start an examination of emotion as a human faculty than the Vedas.

1. EMOTION IN THE INDIAN TRADITION.

We are told that the *dhiyas* or 'thought-visions' of the Rg Vedic *ṛsis* arise from a coming together of the '*hrd*' or heart, '*manas*' or mind and '*manisa*' or intuitive reflection, "*indrāya hrda manasa manisa...dhiyo narjāyanta*".¹ The Vedic scholar J. Gonda explains at length the function of the 'heart' and the association of the 'heart' with the *rasa* of *soma* in the vision of the Vedic poets: "the process which the visions undergo in the heart is in the Rg Veda explicitly described as purification or clarification".² He reminds us that the "*soma* juices which are drunk by the officiants are believed to be in their hearts"³ and "by finding with, or in the heart the light of

higher insight ... one becomes an all seeing-rsi."⁴ Gonda , points out that terms such as "ocean in the heart" and "sieve of the heart" are commonly used in the Rg Vedic hymns. It is clear, he writes, that the term 'heart' does not denote a physiological or anatomical organ but the "centre of the integral individual."⁵ According to Caraka, the ancient Indian physician, "the heart is the only seat of consciousness."⁶

Modern aestheticians have drawn on the Vedic concept of 'heart' in their interpretations of the dynamics of *rasa*. Coomaraswamy draws our attention to the Upanisadic term '*antar-hrdaya-ākāśa*' or the "immanent space in the heart...at which place the only possible experience of reality takes place"; "it is the totality of this ideal space at the innermost core of our being where only the full content of life can be experienced."⁷ Rabindranath Tagore refers to the "cave of the heart...where the song is heard".⁸

All of this leaves hardly any doubt that in the Indian tradition emotional consciousness, designated 'heart' is not the seat of raw or gross emotions, but rather a focal point of emotional; intellectual and intuitive processes, and one that can lead the individual to a transcendent state. It is important to keep this in mind when one discusses *rasa* or aesthetic emotion, for aesthetic emotion is not just a heightened state or another type of emotion, but emotion purified and transformed into an altogether new state.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF RASA.

The concept of *rasa* is fundamental to Indian art and has provided the continuity in its long and unbroken tradition. It is the thread which has held all its variegated and diverse art forms together. The meaning and implication of the term *rasa* has evolved over the millenia. In the Rg Veda, *rasa* seems to mean juice or sap or essence, and in keeping with the general tenor of the Rg Veda it perhaps was meant in a botanical sense. In the Upanisads however, *rasa* came to acquire a more exalted meaning, signifying Brahman as the bliss immanent in the universe, and it was this that led the Upanisadic *rsis* to declare, "*raso vai sah*". It was Bharata writing in the first century B.C., (Bharata's dates vary from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D.) who made *rasa* the cornerstone of aesthetic experience. From Bharata to Anandavardhana and then to Abhinavagupta, with many commentators in between and beyond, the concept of *rasa* grew integrally and evolved within the tradition. The contribution of Kashmiri Saivism to the development of the *rasa* theory is a very significant one, although, *rasa* has not remained the sole possession of any one school. In this chapter, our concern is not with the historical evolution of the concept of *rasa* but with the dynamics of *rasa* as a process of transformation, which occurs in the hearts of the artist as well as the aesthete, through the medium of the art

object. In the Indian tradition the term 'art object' is used in its widest sense and includes not only performing and visual art but in particular *kāvya* or poetry.

It has already been mentioned in the first chapter that Indian aestheticians hesitate to probe the heart of the artist, preferring to view artistic creativity as an unfathomable mystery. The emphasis in our exploration of the yoga of art from the *rasa* standpoint is on the experience of the aesthete and not on art creation. The following discussion leads to the understanding of the transformation of raw emotion to aesthetic emotion, which takes place in the heart of the artist and is re-enacted in the heart of the aesthete.

3. BHARATA, THE FATHER OF THE RASA THEORY.

Bharata is considered the father of the *rasa* school and this has important implications for Hindu aesthetics. In the first place *nāṭya* or dramatic expression, for that was what Bharata wrote mainly about, becomes the artistic form par excellence and a model for all other art forms. *Nāṭya* is a performing art, which integrates several different major art forms such as *nāṭya*, *nṛtya*, *sangīta* and *kāvya* or dance drama, pure dance, music and poetry, along with other minor arts such as stage decorating and the making of costumes. The dialogue between King Markendeya and a *ṛṣi* quoted in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* further brings out the inter-relation of one

art form with another in the classical Indian tradition.¹⁰ In dance drama, *rasa* or aesthetic emotion is aroused on the basis of specific dramatic situations, and this principle is extended to all other art forms. This explains, for example, the intensely dramatic quality of Indian sculpture. Another feature of *natya* as an art form is that it highlights the important role the spectator or the art beholder plays in the dynamics of art. And finally, Bharata points out the mythical origin of *natya* as an activity mainly for "*kriḍa*"¹¹ or sport, which subsequent aestheticians uphold, asserting that the main purpose of art is *prīti* or delight, understood in its association with *rasa* as pleasure that transcends the senses. By making *kriḍa*, the spontaneous play of delight, the basis of art creation and appreciation, Indian aestheticians seek to free art from primarily utilitarian or didactic concerns. The implications of the idea of spontaneous play for the yoga of art will be explored in the concluding chapter. Here it suffices to emphasise that both for the artist and for the aesthete, the well-spring of *rasa* is a spontaneous heart.

Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* exalts the position of the *kavi* or the poet and sets him up as the prototype of all other artists. This distinguishes aestheticians from art historians, for the latter take their cue from visual art, with a preference for monumental art, whereas Indian aestheticians give pride of place to the *kavi*. In classical Indian art,

ideologically, if not chronologically, the *kavi* came first, and it is the *kavi* that provides the link between the Vedas and aesthetic tradition. In the Rg Veda, the term *rsi* is used interchangeably with *kavi*, emphasising that the poet is not only an artist but a seer, that he has not only imagination but vision. When Rabindranath Tagore says "*amr kavi*", he is tracing his lineage to the Vedic *rsis*.

4. RASA AND THE POETIC GENIUS.

The tradition places a heavy responsibility on the poet and in turn requires that he be "well versed not only in poetic composition but learned in the ways of the world,"¹² emphasising the *śikṣā* or the training that is required of him. However, the *kavitābija* or the 'seed of poetry', it is said in no uncertain terms, is the *pratibhā* or the poetic genius. The 'seed of poetry' is nurtured by training, but is not produced by it. In fact, what the later aestheticians term *pratibhā* is not different from the *dhī* or the 'thought-vision' of the Vedic poets. Gholi, a modern aesthetician, says in his interpretation that *pratibhā* arises for a moment from the contact of the poet's mind with the essential nature of the *Ātman*.¹³

It is important to note that the tradition does not excessively probe into the poet's genius beyond maintaining that it is a *samskāra*¹⁴ or a "latent (psychic) impression"

brought forward from past births. The term *saṁskāra* carries with it undertones of *karma* and rebirth, concepts deep in the Indian consciousness, giving rise to popular statements such as, 'poets are born, not made.' Not resting with these attributes the *kavi* has been further called a "*prajāpati*"¹⁰ a term usually reserved for the Lord of the Universe, which not only puts the poet on a pedestal, but more importantly gives a secure place to his creation, namely, *kāvya*. We are told that so skilled is the poet that protean are his themes and equally endless his creations.

5. THE DEFINITION OF RASA.

Bharata defines *rasa* as "*tatra vibhāva anubhāva - vyabhichāri saṁyogāt rasa niṣpattiḥ*",¹¹ "*rasa* is produced by a combination of determinants, consequents and complementary psychological states." Several important ideas stem from this rather cryptic definition of Bharata, ideas that have been commented on exhaustively by later aestheticians, but the most important concept in this definition is that the cardinal process underlying *rasa* is one of transformation, from *sthūla* to *sūkṣma* or gross to the subtle, from *laukika* to *alaukika* or mundane to supra-mundane, from *saṁsāric* or worldly realism to artistic reality, from individual to universal and from the particular to the general. In interpreting the transformation that takes place in the heart

of the artist, later aestheticians have implied such processes as 'distancing' or 'detachment' and 'quietening'. The classical example given in the texts is that of the poet Vālmīki, who when he was grieved with the poignant death of the Kraunca (bird) couple, did not write of his personal sorrow, but converted this deeply emotional experience into the epic of Rāmāyaṇa.¹⁷

The implications of the link between *rasa* and these psychological attitudes of detachment and quietening for the yoga of art will be explored in the concluding chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that, whereas detachment and quietening are hard-won fruits in the traditional disciplines of yoga, they arise spontaneously in the heart of the artist, as antecedents of his creative inspiration.

The word '*nispatti*' in Bharata's definition, the dictionary definition of which is 'to bring about', is open to at least two interpretations. It can be argued that *rasa* is a totally new creation, a new state, from the emotive situation. It can equally be argued that it is not a new creation, but merely an uncovering or revelation, not cognition but recognition. *Rasa* will then become an uncovering of that which is already present in the depths of consciousness, and *rasa nispatti* would then be a revelation to oneself of one's own depths. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka championed this latter theory. He is quoted as saying, "that the real meaning of birth (*nispatti*) as used by Bharata cannot be perception or production or

manifestation, rather it lies in something entirely different...namely in revelation (*bhavana*).¹⁶ *Rasa* is realised when, "the thick layer of mental stupor occupying our consciousness is lifted."¹⁷ The Upanisadic implication in this concept of *rasa*, namely that *vidyā* or knowledge is none other than the removal of *avidyā* or ignorance, is clearly evident. According to this interpretation, *rasa* is ultimately a form of self-knowledge, and this has profound implications for our inquiry into the yoga of art. We shall return to this idea of *rasa* as self-knowledge in our discussion of the *rasa* experience of the aesthete.

8. RASA AND RASIKA.

A special quality of *rasa* is said to be its ability to be transmitted or to flow in the same state and without change from the artist to a *sahr-daya* or a prepared aesthete, a quality unique to *rasa* as opposed to *bhāva* or raw emotion. The tradition affords equal status to the art beholder as to the artist, but in turn expects the same training or *śikṣa* and assumes the same inherent capacity or *saṃskāra* in the beholder who is undertaking an art experience. Thus the capacity to experience art is itself an art. Abhinavagupta says, "the poet's experience is the same as the spectator's".¹⁷ Commenting on this statement of Abhinavagupta, Hiriyanna remarks that the "appreciation of poetry is essentially the same as the

creation of it."²⁰ This movement of *rasa*, which aestheticians have compared to the movement of the seed through the tree to the fruit²¹, takes place not only because of the capacity of *rasa* to flow from the artist to the aesthete through the art object, but also, and equally importantly, because of the capacity or readiness with which the aesthete accepts the art experience, as readily as, "dry wood accepts fire."²²

Abhinavagupta defines a *sahrdaya* as "those people who are capable of identifying with the subject matter since the mirror of their heart has been polished, through constant recitation and study of poetry and who sympathetically respond in their own hearts; he is one whose heart melts and whose heart is not hardened by the readings of dry texts on metaphysics."²³ The link of the term '*sahrdaya*' with the Vedic *hrd* is obvious, emphasising that the aesthete, like the poet, analyses poetry not at a superficial mental level but brings to bear all his higher faculties on the art experience. The term 'polishing' in Abhinavagupta's definition also has the Upanisadic implication of 'removal of ignorance'.

It is only the 'polished heart' of the aesthete that is capable of total identification with the art object, a process called *tanmayibhāva*. *Tanmayibhāva* signifies that the heart of the *sahrdaya* engages itself with the art object seriously, deliberately and completely, leaving no room for

feelings such as, "it is happening to me, no it is not happening to me,"²⁴ removing the duality of the subject-object consciousness and assuring a total art experience.

Tanmayibhāva implies the concepts of 'distancing' and 'detachment'. Identification with the art object or situation is not possible if the aesthete becomes personally involved with it, clings to it or craves to possess it. Thus the height of aesthetic ecstasy takes place when the self, released from the burden of its afflictions, finds complete identity with the aesthetic situation. Gholi notes that "the task of generalisation carried out by the poetic expression breaks the barrier of the limited "I" and eliminates in this way the interests, demands and aims associated with it."²⁵ The *rasa* theory regards the process of identification as a distinct and positive phase of the art experience, consisting mainly of an expansion and enlargement of the self on a new plane of existence. Identification implies "an urge for a 'withness' with the object, for becoming one with it; this urge is in the form of a drive which seeks constantly to transcend the self to a plane of existence, where the unhampered consciousness can dilate on and enjoy an uninterrupted delight."²⁶

Tanmayibhāva cannot take place unless the fetters of the superficial mind have been released. Understood in this sense, *tanmayibhāva*, where the *rasika* melts his personality in the art experience, cannot be totally different from a yogic

dhyāna in which the mind of the yogi achieves oneness with the object of concentration.

The term *sahrdaya* for a prepared aesthete focusses attention once again on the seat of art experience namely *hrd*, which as explained earlier is not merely a centre of raw emotions but a focus of emotional, intellectual and volitional forces that are capable of lifting the entire personality to a higher state of being. Sri Aurobindo uses the term "supra-rational aesthetic soul"²⁷ as a synonym for *hrd*. The parallels between a *kavi* and a *sahrdaya* are too obvious to be missed. Also the link of the term *sahrdaya* with the Vedic *hrd* is very clear, emphasising that the aesthete, like the poet, experiences art not at a superficial mental level, but by bringing to bear all his higher faculties on the art object. Between the two there is a dynamic relationship, artist and aesthete bound by *rasa*, reminding us of Tagore's words: "Idea craves to be embodied in form and form seems to release itself in idea."²⁸

7. THE NATURE OF RASA.

Our exploration of art as yoga leads us to questions about the specific nature of the expansion of consciousness that is indicated as *rasa*. Traditional aestheticians seem to hesitate to answer this question, and they point to the indescribable sense of wonder aroused in the aesthete who

experiences oneness with the art object. Aestheticians speak of how *rasa* arises and how it affects the aesthete, but what exactly is *rasa*? Much can be asked and a lot has been written about the *rasa* experience. Etymologically, it can be said, *rasyate iti rasah*, what is relished is *rasa*. Equally cryptically, it has been said, "*pratitireva visista rasana*"²⁹, *rasa* experience is a special kind of knowing. Yet this is not altogether satisfactory and it would be not unreasonable to seek in the *śāstras* a description of this unique aesthetic state called *rasa*. Abhinavagupta calls it, "a form of self-contemplation"³⁰, a "magic flower"³¹; a "life emotion freed of its limiting factors"³². Coomaraswamy suggests *saavega*, which he translates as 'aesthetic shock', as the essence of *rasa* experience, and goes on to explain that *saavega* is "by no means merely an interested aesthetic response but much rather ... disinterested aesthetic contemplation."³³ He goes on to say that "in the deeper experience that can be induced by a work of art our very being is shaken."³⁴ Viśvanātha summarises the *rasa* experience as, "*caṣatkāra*"³⁵ or a sense of wonder, characterised by *cittavistara* or expansion of the heart.

However, after one has exhausted all similes and adjectives to describe the *rasa* experience, one is forced into a Upanisadic 'neti neti' situation to describe the *rasa* state, as does Abhinavagupta, when he says that "*rasa* is altogether

different from *saṃyagjñāna* (correct knowledge), *bhrānti* (erroneous cognition), *anadhyāvasāya* (uncertainty), *vijñāna* (ordinary knowledge). It is distinct from worldly objects and also different from such things as their imitation, reflection and pictorial presentation, determination, fancy, magic and so on.³⁶ This statement of Abhinavagupta again reminds us that *rasa* is a "magic flower": rooted in ordinary emotional and sensory states, it blooms into an ineffable rapture and sense of wonder.

8. THE NUMBER OF RASAS.

Related to the question, "what is *rasa*?", is the question, "is *rasa* one or many?" If there are many *rasas*, we would have to raise the question whether some *rasas* or some types of *rasas* are more conducive than others in fostering a yoga of art. There is considerable discussion about the exact number of *rasas*. Bharata postulated eight basic *rasas*. Later a ninth, the *śānta* *rasa* was added. From nine the number kept on growing and several sub-types were added. Ramachandra and Gunachandra divide the eight aesthetic sentiments into two classes viz. pleasant and painful; the erotic, comic, heroic, marvellous and quiet are classified as being pleasant, whereas the pathetic, furious, odious and terrible are categorised as painful.³⁷ However, there is agreement that, even though the *rasa* experience may

begin with specific emotions, it culminates in a sense of wonder, which transcends all classifications and divisions of emotion. The sense of wonder indicates a unique and unified *rasa* experience which goes beyond the pleasure and pain of specific emotions. Raghavan in concluding his discussion on the number of *rasas*, accepts that "all the *rasas* are but forms of some one of them...*rasa* is *rasa*. It is one. It is like the Brahman or the *Sphota*. *Rasa* is fundamentally one and hence it is that Bharata refers to it in the singular number."³⁰ Mammata supports the unified concept of *rasa* and declares that "the suggestion of *rasa* is counted as only one kind on the basis of general characterisation, namely non-perceptibility of the sequence."³¹

The idea of a unified *rasa* experience is suited particularly to our quest for a yoga of art, for ultimately we are concerned not so much with the preparatory dynamics of *rasa* and the specific emotions linked with it, as with its culmination and eventual fulfillment. The culmination of *rasa* will be the theme of the concluding section of this chapter, where we will focus on the telling statement that the tasting of *rasa* is the 'twin' of the tasting of Brahman.

9. DHVANI.

Before turning to the culmination of *rasa*, however, it is necessary to raise a crucial question. Is *rasa* capable of

infinite expansion, or does it bear the marks of inherent limitations? If *rasa* is capable of expansion what are the dynamics of its development? Does *rasa* carry within itself the impetus for self-growth? It has been noted that *rasa* as experienced by the aesthete is an expansion of consciousness; but *rasa* is not conditioned solely by subjective factors, for its association with the art object is never severed. The most helpful suggestions, in answering these questions, comes from the theory that *rasa*, through its connection with the art object, is inherently capable of 'reverberation'.

Translated variously as 'reverberation', or 'vibration', *dhvani* has come to occupy a central place in Hindu aesthetics. Attributed to Ānandavardhana, the concept had its origins even earlier. The recognition of *dhvani* was crucial in moving *rasa* from the perhaps less profound connotation given to the term by Bharata to the inner, deeper, more mystical *rasadhvani* of Abhinavagupta. While *rasa* was developed in the framework of *natya* and later applied to art in general, *dhvani* was formulated in the context of poetry and later extended to art. In essence, the *dhvanivādins* assert that *rasa* can only be suggested and not expressed. Viśvanātha states that a word or sentence can have three meanings: the *abhidā* or the expressed primary meaning, *lakṣaṇa* or a metaphorical meaning and *vyangya* or the suggested meaning.⁴⁰ Ānandavardhana simply defines

dhvani as "*dhvanirṇāma arthāntaraḥ*,"⁴¹ "*dhvani* is just another or extended meaning", and goes on to add that, "the learned men of yore have declared time and again that the soul of poetry is suggestion."⁴² We are told in no uncertain terms that, this other or suggested meaning is available only to the refined and the sensitive. Mammata says that, "the expressed (primary meaning) produces a mere comprehension in one who knows the meaning of words, while the suggested produces charm in men of taste alone."⁴³ Anandavardhana says that "it (*dhvani*) is not understood by a mere learning in grammar and in dictionary. It (the suggested meaning) is understood only by those who have an insight into the true significance of poetry."⁴⁴ And he goes on to explain, "that [the suggested] meaning remains beyond the understanding of persons with a grounding merely in the science of meanings and words but averse to aesthetic contemplation of the intrinsic significance of poetry."⁴⁵

A number of implications can be derived from these pithy remarks of the *dhvanivādins*. In the first place, it is made abundantly clear that the *rasika*, if he is to partake of *rasadhvani*, must be a sensitive, refined person. It is in the understanding of *rasadhvani* that the real implication of the term *sahṛdaya* comes through. At the same time, there is little doubt that the true and proper understanding of *dhvani*, and of art in general, was restricted to a small

group of the elite. Such an intention is deep in the Hindu consciousness. When it came to knowledge, it was supposed to be passed on only to one's 'son and worthy pupil'; it is interesting to note that in matters artistic the *mārgi* tradition is no different.

A second, and equally important, derivative of the concept of *dhvani* is the rejection of the primary or the expressed meaning, for it is only when the primary meaning is left behind that the implied meaning comes through. Anandavardhana says, "the suggested meaning flashes suddenly across the truth perceiving minds of perceptive critics when they turn away from the literal meaning."⁴⁴ This 'turning away' is a voluntary act of the *rasika*. For in *dhvani*, as opposed to *lakṣaṇa*, there is no "*mukhyārthabādhā*" or breakdown of the primary meaning and therefore no necessity per se to turn away from that meaning. In electing to opt for *dhvani* rather than *abhidhā*, the art beholder is dipping into his artistic resources and faculties, into his tradition and training, and assuring himself an exalted experience.

A third, and equally important, consequence of *dhvani* is the fact that art appreciation is progressive rather than instantaneous. In the case of *lakṣaṇa* or metaphor, the change of meaning, on account of *mukhyārthabādhā*, is sudden; this is called *samlakṣyakrama*. In the case of *dhvani* it is gradual or *asamlakṣyakrama*. This gradual change in

meaning is compared to the passage of a "needle through a pile of lotus leaves."⁴⁷ It implies a deliberate, contemplative and deeper art appreciation rather than a superficial and trivial art encounter. For the lexical meaning of words is *niyata* or fixed, while the suggested meaning of words is *anivata* or unfixed and open-ended, the only qualification being that the *rasika* stay within the tradition. It is important to point out that in the appreciation and realisation of *dhvani* one does not have artistic license as understood in the modern sense. The question of artistic freedom was not an issue with traditional Indian artists or art beholders. The capacity to extend the meaning of an artistic situation, as understood by the concept of *dhvani*, was assumed to be still within the confines of the tradition.

The concept of *dhvani* was not without its critics. Mahimabhatta who was the most vocal of the critics of *Dhvanyāloka* asserts that "*śabdas* or words have only one function and that is *abhidhā* or the primary meaning. If meanings other than the primarily denoted ones are understood from words, it is because of the peculiar ability of the denoted meaning and not because of the words."⁴⁸ To put it differently, these critics deny that two meanings can co-exist at the one and the same time in the same art object or poetic word. Abhinavagupta answers these critics by saying that "just as the *ātman* comes to be associated with life only when found in a

special kind of body, so also *dhvani* acquires the status of poetry only when it is encased in the body of beautiful sounds and (suggested) meanings adorned with *guṇas* and *alankāras*. "Anandavardhana answers his critics with the doctrine of *ghaṭapradīpānyāya*. According to this doctrine a lamp, *dīpa*, lit within a pot, *ghaṭa*, reveals what is already there but was hidden in the darkness, and having revealed it, the light continues to shine, even though it may lose its importance; by the same token, words (of a *kāvya*) reveal the suggested meaning, but having done so, do not cease to exist.

As it has been pointed out, the idea of *dhvani* was developed by writers on poetics. However, we wish to take the position that what has been said with regard to the poetic word can be extended to all art objects. We hold that all art objects in the *mārga* tradition are replete with suggestive meanings. The art object reverberates with *dhvani*, but the suggested meanings are released or manifested only when there is contact between the art object and an aesthete.

We began by raising the question whether *rasa* bears the marks of inherent limitations or whether it has the capacity for integral growth. Aesthetic experience brings together three factors: the art object, the *sahridaya* and the *rasa* or aesthetic emotion that arises through their contact with each other. We have noted that, when the heart of the aesthete enters

into oneness with the art object, the narrow barriers of the subjective mind are broken, and the aesthete experiences an expansion of consciousness. As his consciousness expands the aesthete becomes more and more capable of penetrating through the face value and primary meaning of the art object. He becomes more and more capable of catching the resonances of *dhvani*. As we have noted, this has been compared to a needle skillfully penetrating through a pile of lotus leaves. The suggested meanings are manifested layer upon layer, each more profound than the one before it. Correspondingly, the heart of the *sahradaya* becomes purified and responsive.

Since the consciousness of the aesthete and the suggested meanings of the art object are capable of such growth and expansion, it follows that the aesthetic emotion that arises through their contact also has the impetus of expansion. We have noted that the aesthete's oneness with the art object awakens in him an ineffable sense of wonder, which is indicated as a unique form of knowledge. *Rasadhvani* signifies that this sense of wonder 'reverberates' and grows as the aesthete becomes more and more attuned to the art object. It is to be emphasised that though these three factors - the *hrd* of the *sahradaya*, the *dhvani* of the art object and the *rasa* that arises through their contact - are distinguished for the purpose of discussion, they interpenetrate each other and are bound together in the unity of the art experience. It becomes evident, then,

that a true yoga of art must be based on the recognition of these three in the art experience. The unique significance of each of them must be preserved, while recognising their bond.

10. A METAPHYSICAL BASIS FOR DHVANI.

It is possible to expand the theory of *dhvani* or suggested meaning from the special field of poetics to aesthetics in general because, in the classical Indian tradition, art objects are considered to be endowed with meaning. We have noted that, according to the *dhvani* theory, the meanings that stem from the poetic word are not on the same level: the suggested meanings, discernible only by the prepared aesthete, are considered to have a higher value than the primary meaning or expressed meaning. And, in putting forward this idea of levels of meaning, the *dhvani* theory maintains that the reverberations of suggested meaning cannot be heard either by a person who clings to the primary, literal meaning of the word, or equally, by one who denies and abandons the primary sense. When the *dhvani* theory is extended from poetics to all *mārgi* art, it is implied that all art objects of the *mārgi* tradition are resonant with levels of meaning.

When the *dhvani* theory is extended to art in general, it is implied that the sensory form and the primary meaning (expressed by the art object are neither superfluous nor unnecessary: they are as necessary for the higher meaning as the

first step is for the second. The lower meaning is never lost, all that is of value in it is included and elevated into the higher. It is not surprising that Indian aestheticians find a basis for the *dhvani* theory in a metaphysical system that accepts, not just one but many levels of reality, the lower yielding itself to the higher without necessarily losing itself. Voicing his discomfort with the *mayavada* of Sankara, Abhinavagupta finds a philosophical undergirding for his aesthetics in Kaśmīr Śaivism.

In this context, Rabindranath Tagore's comments on art are helpful since, in his characteristic non-sectarian manner, he bases his aesthetics on the Upaniṣadic roots of Indian thought. He turns to the *Īśā* Upaniṣad to stress the importance of both the sensory realm and the higher levels of meaning that are manifested through it to a responsive person. In his interpretation of the *Īśā*, Tagore says that this Upaniṣad makes no cleft between the 'apparent' and the 'ultimately real' as Advaita Vedānta does. The *Īśā* Upaniṣad reminds us that, "into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone."⁶⁰ Tagore comments, "the sole pursuit of the infinite leads to a deeper darkness. For the absolute infinite is emptiness."⁶¹ By 'absolute infinite' Tagore means an utterly transcendent Absolute that is totally untouched by the world of senses. The *Isa* Upaniṣad reminds us once again that "he

who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality."⁸² The world of sensory experience does not constitute unreality or falsity, but is the very means of attaining to the ultimate Truth. These words of the *Īśa* can be interpreted to signify that this whole universe, as it appears to the five senses, reverberates with meanings that reach, level by level, towards the ultimate Truth. That which the senses apprehend is not negated, abandoned or deprived of worth as the higher level of meaning becomes revealed, for as Tagore says, "when you deprive truth of its appearance it loses the best part of its reality."⁸³ The Tāntric overtones in this interpretation are too obvious to be missed. He further says that, "there is a point where in the mystery of existence contradictions meet."⁸⁴ When the *Īśa* Upaniṣad is made the basis of the *dhvani* theory, the implications are profound, since we are now in a position to raise the question: do the suggested meanings that reverberate from an art object have a limit or do they extend infinitely? Tagore's answer, on the basis of the *Īśa*, is that art is that mystery where the "infinite becomes finite without losing its infinity."⁸⁵ If one seeks to experience this mystery, the sensory form of the art object and its primary meaning should never be abandoned, for, without them, the suggested meanings can neither arise nor rise towards infinity. It becomes clear why artists and aestheticians have

difficulty with the *māyavāda* of Śaṅkara and opt for a system or an interpretation of reality where one can move from ecstasy to ecstasy. The beauty and the bliss of aesthetic experience is the transformation of the *vāc्यārtha* or the expressed meaning into the *vyangyārtha* or the suggested meaning; without the former there would be no art, without the latter there would be no aesthetic experience. Once again in the words of the *Isa Upaniṣad*, "neither the transitory nor the eternal has any meaning separately. When they are known in harmony with each other only then through help of that harmony we cross the transitory and realise the immortal." On the basis of the *Isa* it can be said that the art object provides this harmony, this meeting of the finite and the infinite.

11. RASA AS AN ALAUKIKA STATE.

In our discussion of the origin and dynamics of *rasa* we have suggested a correspondence between the expansion of meaning reverberating from the art object and the expansion of *rasa* towards an exalted state of wonderment. We now explore what the texts say about the highest reaches of *rasa*. We shall focus on three ideas: *rasa* as a supramundane state, the experience of *rasa* as the 'twin' of the experience of Brahman and the linking of outflowing dynamism (*vimarśa*) and inward rest (*viśrānti*) in the *rasa* experience.

The key to the understanding of the *rasa* experience lies in the concept of *bhuj* (to enjoy) or *bhoga* (fruition).

"*Bhuj*" for Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka meant aesthetic pleasure arising because of release from individuality and specificity, a state described by him as '*sādhāraṇīkṛta*' or universalisation.

Gnoli notes that the task of generalisation carried out by the poetic expression breaks the barrier of the limited "I" and eliminates in this way the interests, demands and aims associated with it.³⁷ An *alaukika* state, it may be argued, can

stem also from a religious experience. Indian aestheticians addressed themselves to this problem in no uncertain terms, and have said the Vedas issue commands like masters and the *īthihasas* give us good counsel after the manner of friends; but poetry differs from them and is unique in its capacity to instruct one delightfully like one's sweetheart.³⁸

Abhinavagupta echoes the same feelings when he categorises *śāstras* as "*laukika*." ³⁹ Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka notes that,

"this *rasa* is poured forth spontaneously by the word which is like a cow, for love of her children; for this reason it is different from that which is (laboriously) milked by the yogins."⁴⁰ The almost pejorative reference to learning and

the learned in this verse are too obvious to be missed, a position that is consistently taken by all *rasavādins*. It is

significant that though *rasa* is not noetic in nature, it leads the *rasika* to a state of intuitive knowledge. Ray

reminds us that "the language of art is not the language of intellectual but of intuitive knowledge, knowledge gained through

feeling and experience and hence through actual living."¹
 He goes on to say that, "art experience is an experience of being, not of knowing."²

Indian aestheticians maintain that the artist is not concerned with giving us a 'photographic' description of an emotional situation as it actually occurs in the everyday *laukika* world. The emotional situation is transformed by the poet's sensitive heart and his imaginative power. The art object expresses the poet's vision of an emotional situation, and not raw emotion. As a consequence art objects do not claim to satisfy egoistic or practical needs. Their appeal is not limited to specific persons and they can be enjoyed by all sensitive aesthetes. Since art objects do not bolster any one's ego or become confined to anyone's specific needs, they can be enjoyed in and for themselves.

12. RASA AS BRAHMASVĀDASAHODARA.

The essence of the ultimate *rasa* experience is found in this famous and often quoted verse of Visvanatha:

"*sattvudrekaḍ
 akhandasvaparakāśāṇandacinmayah
 vedyāntarasparśyaśūṇyo
 brahmasvādasahodarah
 lokottaraśamatkāraprāṇah kaścit
 pramātr̥bhiḥ
 svākaravad abhinnatvenāyam āsvadyate
 rasah.*"³

"Rasa is tasted by qualified persons. It is tasted by virtue of the emergence of *sattva*. It is made up of full intelligence, beatitude and self-luminosity. It is void of contact with any other knowable thing, twin brother to the tasting of *brahman*."

This leaves no doubt about the exalted state of *rasa*.

The transformation that started with the raw emotional state completes itself in the *camatkāra* or the state of aesthetic wonder or rapture. The *rasika* in a state of *camatkāra* has left the ordinary world of nature and history, with its spatial and temporal limitations, a world of dualities of pleasure and pain, of subject-object consciousness, and has taken an aesthetic leap into a world of bliss. It is important to point out that Indian aestheticians do not discuss the psychology or the intermediate steps of this aesthetic leap. "The aesthetic experience though composed of the same material as the ordinary states, breaks away in the intuitive moment from its empirical base and becomes momentarily a new and different kind of experience."⁴⁴ The *camatkāra* of the *rasika* is a totally new state of consciousness, a state of "pure contemplation, characterised by a total absence of conceptual thought." "According to Indian thought the whole realm of intuitive knowledge wherein the aesthetic also partakes, belongs to the highest order of human consciousness."⁴⁵

It is significant that the *camatkāra* of *rasa* refers

not only to a transformation of the emotional state with which the experience started, but a total transformation of the personality of the *rasika*. It becomes clear why the Rg Vedic *rsis* considered *hrd* as only one component of the larger *dhi*, which signifies intuitive understanding or wisdom, for one cannot alter the *hrd* without affecting the *dhi*.

Aestheticians of the Indian tradition maintain that the exalted wonderment of *camatkāra* is brought about by a combination of *druti* or fluidity, *vistāra* or enlargement and *vikāśa* or expansion,⁴⁴ which are states of consciousness brought about by aesthetic contemplation, and which aid in breaking the limitations of the ego. "Aesthetic experience is a modality of this unbounded consciousness, characterised by the immersion of the subject in the aesthetic object to the exclusion of everything else."⁴⁷

The one single feature of the *camatkāra* of aesthetic experience, which truly makes it an *alukika* experience, is *viśrānti*. This is defined as resting on one's own state of consciousness, a state also described as *svaprakāśa* or self-luminous. *Saṁsārika* or *laukika* experiences, and emotion in particular, lack the all important quality of *viśrānti*, for as Abhinavagupta would say, this type of consciousness is not free from "obstacles", "*Vitavighna pratitigrāhyo bhāva eva rasaḥ*".⁴⁸ He goes on to enumerate numerous obstacles because of which "he (the aesthete)

cannot immerse his consciousness in them (the art object), so that no rest...can take place."⁶⁷ The implications of the term *viśrānti* become evident only when it is recognised that Abhinavagupta and many other aestheticians espoused Kāśmīr Śaivism. The metaphysics of Kāśmīr Śaivism provides for two conceptually distinguishable, but existentially inseparable, modes of consciousness: *viśrānti* where consciousness is turned inward, abiding in its own luminosity, and *viśarśa* where consciousness moves outward to embrace objects. The *viśarśa* movement is followed by a reversal, whereby consciousness 'returns' as it were, and rests in its own luminosity or self-awareness. This rest is technically called *viśrānti*. It is in the understanding of this *viśrānti* or consciousness resting on itself, that the essential feature of Kāśmīr Śaivism, a school to which Abhinavagupta and many other aestheticians belonged, comes through. "The intimate essence of consciousness according to the Śaiva is beatitude, a resting in oneself to the exclusion of everything else."⁷⁰ And it is in the understanding of this concept of *viśarśa* followed by *viśrānti* that Kāśmīr Śaivism parts company from other philosophic schools, and in particular, from Advaita Vedānta. Pandey writes that "admission of *viśarśa* or self-consciousness in the Absolute by the Śaiva is the point of distinction between the Śaiva and the Vedāntic conception of ultimate Reality. The latter holds that the Brahman is

Śānta...it is self-shining and not self-conscious...The Śaiva maintains that the Absolute is not only self-shining but also self-conscious."⁷¹ Pandey goes on to say that in ignorance of Abhinavagupta's system of Kāśmīr Śaivism, scholars tried to interpret his aesthetic theory in the light of systems such as Vedānta, but without success.⁷² To put it differently, one can say that although one need not follow any of the accepted schools of philosophy when discussing aesthetic experience, there is no doubt that it is best understood within the framework of Kasmir Saivism. Abhinavagupta, who wrote from within the tradition of Kāśmīr Śaivism, also wrote extensively on aspects of it, which makes it that much more important to choose Kāśmīr Śaivism as a basic frame of reference in the understanding of the ultimate *rasa* experience.

Abhinavagupta postulates two steps in the total aesthetic experience. The first step, namely *tanmayibhāva* or total identification of the *rasika* with the artistic situation has already been touched upon. It is the stage at which the "universal mental state is apprehended...(having been) awakened from the sub-conscious (*samskāra*)"⁷³ by the aesthetic situation. This corresponds to the *Parāśaṃvit* of Kāśmīr Śaivism or the *Nirvikalpa samādhi* of the Advaita Vedāntin. The Advaita Vedāntin would stop at this stage contending that this is the ultimate Reality and that one need go no further. The Śaivite, however, posits a single reality with two aspects,

one Transcendental and the other Immanent, the Śiva Tattva and the Śakti Tattva, which operate inseparably at all levels of experience. Therefore the aesthetic experience cannot stop at the stage of *tanmayibhāva*, which is marked by an identity without a trace of difference. At best *tanmayibhāva* can provide the background upon which the next step should take place. The second stage of the aesthetic experience, according to Abhinavagupta, is when the universalised basic mental state sinks back as it were, to open up the Śiva and the Śakti aspects, as they operate in the aesthete, and hold these two in a tension free state of rest or dynamic harmony, which is nothing other than *Ānanda*. It is only by understanding the Śiva and the Śakti tattvas that one comprehends fully why the Śaivites maintain that the Absolute is not only self luminous but reflexively self-conscious of its luminosity. The ultimate *rasa* experience, therefore is not just a contentless aesthetic ecstasy, but a *caśatkāra* that holds the richness and splendour of *rasa* in perfect harmony with consciousness itself, a state of consciousness also called by the Śaivites '*vyatireka turīyātīta*'. The metaphysics of Kāśmīr Śaivism provides for the interpretation of *rasa* as an experience in which consciousness rests within itself, holding together the subjective and the objective aspects in ecstatic harmony. Within the richness of the *rasa* experience there is both *viśrānti* and *viśarśa*. The implications of this

'two-in-oneness' of *viśrānti* and *viśarśa* will be discussed in the concluding chapter. There is no negation of the world, no denial of objective experiences, for the Kasmīr Saivite but merely *bhoga* or pleasure, understood not in a hedonistic but obviously artistic sense. This is a state of aesthetic pleasure where an emotional experience, which began with the encounter of the artistic situation, has not been heightened but transformed into a totally new state called *rasa*, in which the *Siva* and the *Sakti* *tattvas* are held in a state of dynamic equilibrium. At this stage of the aesthetic experience, one can rightly acclaim "*raso vai sah. rasam hyevāyam labdhva ānandī bhavati*".

NOTES

¹ 1. indraya hr̥da manasā manisā... dhīyo marjāyanta
Rg Veda, 1.61.2

quoted in J. Gonda, The Vision of the Vedic Poets. (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963) p. 278.

² samyak śravanti sarito na dhena antar hr̥da manasā
puyamanah

like streams, the words of religious inspiration flow, in the interior together clarified by heart and mind.

Rg Veda, 1.62.2 in J. Gonda, p. 278.

³ ibid p. 279.

⁴ ibid p. 280.

⁵ ibid p. 286.

⁶ hr̥dayam cetanādhiṣṭhaṁ ekaṁ.

The heart is the only seat of consciousness.

ibid p. 286.

⁷ antar-hr̥daya-ākasa.

The immanent space in the heart.

Chāndogya Upanisad. 8.1.1-3

quoted in A. Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) p. 174.

"Ami chini go chini." (from a poem in Bengali by Tagore)

A. Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art. p. 173.

"raso vai sah. rasam hyevāyam labdhvā ānandī bhavati.

For He is rasa, having obtained which, one attains bliss.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad. 2.7

¹⁰ Original quotation from the Viṣṇudharmottara quoted in Mulk Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957) p. 61.

¹¹ *krīḍā nītakam icchāma drśyam śrayam ca yad bhavet*

We want something by way of diversion, something that engages both the eye and the ear.

- Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra. (ed). M. Sastri, (Varanasi: Benaras Hindu University, 1972) 1.11

¹² *śaktir nīpunatā loka śāstrā kāvyādyavekṣāt. kāvyajñā śikṣāyābhyāsa itī hetus tad udbhave*

Poetic imagination, proficiency resulting from a study of the world, sciences, poetical compositions and the like, practice under the guidance of those who know poetry - these constitute (conjointly) the cause of origin (of poetry).

Mammata, Kāvyaprakāśa. (ed) R.C. Dwivedi, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977) 1.3, pp. 6-7.

¹³ Masson and Patwardhan, Sāntarasa & Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics. (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate & Research Institute, 1970) p. 19.

¹⁴ *"śaktiḥ kavītvābījarūpaḥ saṃskāra viśeṣaḥ"*

Poetic imagination is a peculiar latent impression which forms the seed of poetry.

Mammata, Kāvyaprakāśa. 1. 3 gloss, p. 6.

¹⁵ *apāre kāvyā saṃsāre kavirekaḥ prajāpatih,
yathāsmāi rocate viśvam tathedaṃ parivartate,
śringāri cetkaviḥ kāvyē jātaṃ rasamayam jagat,
sa eva vītarāgaś cet nirāsaṃ sarvam eva tat.*

In the limitless world of poetry the poet is the sole creator. The world changes in the way he conceives it. If the

poet is inspired by love then the whole world becomes filled with *rasa*. If he is devoid of *raga* (passion) then everything becomes insipid and spiritless.

Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka*. (ed) K. Krishnamoorthy, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1982) 3.42. p. 250

¹⁶*tatra vibhāva anubhāva vyabhāṇāḥ saṃyogād rasa nispattih.*

Emotion in poetry comes to be expressed through the conjunction of their causes in symptoms and other (apparent) feelings which accompany the emotions.

Bharata, *Nāṭyaśāstra*. 6.31, gloss

¹⁷*kāvyaśyātma saevārthas tathā cādikaveḥ purā, krauncadvandva-viyogotthah śokah ślokatvaṃ āgatah.*

That meaning (*rasa*) alone is the essence of poetry, so it was in the case of the first poet (Valmiki), whose sorrow arising out of the *kraunca* couple took the form of poetry.

Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka*. 1.5

¹⁸R. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968) p. 173-175.

¹⁹*nāyakasya kaveḥ shrotuḥ saṃāno anubhūvas tatah*

The experience derived from a drama by the actor, poet and listener are bound together in a common experience.

Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." 1.6, *Dhvanyāloka*. (*Kāvya-māla* rpt.) p. 34.

²⁰M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Conception of Values*. (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1950) p. 343.

²¹The *rasas* stand in the relation of the seed to the tree. The *rasa* present in the mind of the poet is like the seed in relation to the tree. The poem is in the position of the tree. The poetic ornaments and expressive actions are like the flowers blossoming forth from the tree. And the delectation of the spectator is the fruit. Therefore the whole world is filled with *rasa*. The poet's experience is the same as the spectator's.

Abhinavagupta, "Abhinavabharatī." (*Nāṭyaśāstra*) 6.38

²²*yo artho hṛdayasaṃvādī tasya bhāvo rasodbhāvah, sarīraṃ vyāpyate tena suṣkaṃ kāsthāṃ ivāgnina*

When a meaning, charged with emotion, strikes the heart of the sympathetic reader, it courses through his body, like fire through a dry log.

Bharata, *Nāṭyaśāstra*. 7.7

²³ yeṣām kāvyānuśīlanābhyāsavaśād viśadibhūte
manomukurē varṇanīyatannayibhavanayogyatā te
svahrdayssaṃvādabhajāḥ sahrdayāḥ.

Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." quoted in Masson and Patwardhan,
Aesthetic Rapture. Vol 2. (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate
and Research Institute, 1970) p. 10.

²⁴ parasya na parasyeti maneti na manetiti ca,
tad āśvade vibhāvadeḥ paricchedo na vidyate.

This is another's (experience) only; this is not another's
- this is mine; no, this is not mine'. In the gustation of the
emotive situation there is no consciousness of any such
distinction.

Viśvanātha, Sāhityadarpana. Hindi edition, (ed.) Satyavrat
Singh (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1976) 3.43.

²⁵ R.Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to
Abhinavagupta. p. xx.

²⁶ S.Pandit, An Approach to the Indian Theory of Art
and Aesthetics. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1952)
p.47.

²⁷ Śrī Aurobindo, Hour of God. Volume 17.
(Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. Sri
Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1971) p. 224.

²⁸ N.Ray, Idea and Image in Indian Art. (Delhi:
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Lvt. Ltd., 1973) p. 5.

²⁹ pratīreva viśīṣṭa rasānā
Rasa is a special type of knowing.
Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." 2.4. p.84.

³⁰ svātmārūpanatīḥ svātmadvāreṇa viśvaṁ tathā
paśyan

His mind fixed on his own self and assuming the form of the
self, he sees the world in that very form, through the
contemplation of his own self.

Abhinavagupta, "Abhinavabharatī." 1.107, p. 114

³¹ vibhāvaḍi-carvaṇādhbhutā puṣpavat tatkāla
sāraivoditā na pūrvapara kāla anubandhipitī laukikasvādā
yogivisayāc ca anyā evayam rasasvadaḥ

The gustation of the presented emotive situation is like a
magic flower, something that arises out of that presentation and
lasts only for the duration of that gustation. It is not related
to either the moment preceeding or the moment following.

Therefore this rasa experience is distinct from ordinary relishing as well as from the experience of yogis.

Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." 1.21, p.70.

³² *rasanātmaka-vīta-vighna pratīti grāhyo bhāva eva rasah*

Rasa is the life emotion apprehended as being freed from its limiting factors.

Abhinavagupta, "Abhinavabhāratī." 6, p. 657.

³³ A.Coomoraswamy, (ed) R. Lipsey, Selected Papers. Volume 1, Traditional Art and Symbolism. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, LXXXIX, 1977) p. 182.

³⁴ *ibid* p. 184.

³⁵ Viśvanātha, Sāhityadarpaṇa. 3.13. gloss p. 106.

³⁶ *tatra nāṭyam nama laukika padārtha-tad anukara-vyatiriktaṁ pratibimba-ālekhyā śāstraśya-āropa adhyavasāya utprekṣā svapna-māyendrajalādī-vilakṣaṇaṁ tad grāhakaśya samyagjñāna-bhrānti-saṁśaya-anavadhāraṇa anadhyavasāya-vijñāna-bhinna vṛttantāsvadarūpa-saṁvedanā saṁvedyaṁ vastu rasāsvabhavaṁ iti.*

Rasa is altogether different from correct knowledge, erroneous cognition, uncertainty, ordinary knowledge. It is distinct from wordly objects and also different from such things as their imitation, reflection and pictorial presentation, determination, fancy, magic and so on.

Abhinavagupta, "Abhinavabhāratī." 1.1, pp.15-16.

³⁷ J.Sinha, Indian Psychology. (Calcutta: Sinha Publishing House, 1961) p. 318.

³⁸ V.Raghavan, The Number of Rasas. (Adyar: The Adyar Library, 1940) p. 176.

³⁹ *rasaṁ lakṣyakramatvaṁ tu sāmānyam āśrītya rasād dhvanir ekabheda eva ganyate*

But the suggestion of rasa etc. is counted as only one kind on the basis of general characteristic, namely, non-perceptibility of the sequence.

Mammata, Kāvyaopakeśa. 4.42ab gloss

⁴⁰ *artho vācyaśca lakṣyaśca vyaṅgyaśca tridhā mataḥ*
Viśvanātha, Sāhityadarpaṇa. 2.2

⁴¹ *dhvanir nāma arthāntaraṁ*

Dhvani is just another meaning.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka. 1.13

⁴² *kāvyaśyātma dhvanir iti budhair yah samānāta
poorvah*

The learned men of yore have suggested time and again that the soul of poetry is suggestion.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka. 1.1

⁴³ Mammata, Kāvyaśrakaśa. 5.47cd gloss, p. 175.

⁴⁴ *śabdārtha śāsana jñāna mātrenaiva na vedyate,
vedyate sa tu kāvyārtha-tatvajñaireva kevalam*

It is not understood by a mere learning in grammar and in dictionary. It is understood only by those who have an insight into the true significance of poetry.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka. 1.7

⁴⁵ *atha ca vācya-vācakalakṣaṇa mātra kṛtasamānam
kāvyatatvartha-bhāvana vimukhānam*

But the fact is that the meaning remains beyond the understanding of persons with a grounding merely in the science of meanings and words but averse to aesthetic contemplation of the intrinsic significance of poetry.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka. 1.7 gloss

⁴⁶ *tadvat sacetasam so artho vācyārtha vimukhātmanam.
buddhau tatvartha darśinyam jhatity evāvabhasate*

The suggested meaning flashes suddenly across the truth perceiving minds of perceptive critics when they turn away from the literal meaning.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka. 1.12

⁴⁷ *padma pātra saṭa vyatī bheda nayena*

This original quotation by Abhinavagupta has in turn been quoted by all commentators including Mammata and Viśvanātha.

see Mammata, Kāvyaśrakaśa. Vol 1. p. 62.

⁴⁸ K.Krishnamurthy, Dhvanyāloka and its Critics.
(Mysore: Kāvyaśrakaśa Publishers, 1968) p. 285.

⁴⁹ *śarīrasya khalu viśiṣṭa adhīṣṭhānayuktam satī
ātmani jīvaivyavāharah na yasya kaśyacid iti cet. guṇālankāra-
aucitya sundara śabdārtha śarīrasya satī dhvananākhyā-ātmani
kāvyarūpatā vyavahārah*

One speaks of a body as being alive only when it is invested with (possesses) the various organs of perception... true, but we can speak of *dhvani* as being the soul of poetry only when the various poetic qualities, ornaments and charming words etc. which constitute the body of poetry, are present.

Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." 1.4, p.20.

⁸⁰ Īśa Upaniṣad. 1.9.

Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) p. 65.

⁸¹ R.Tagore, Personality. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1959) p. 56.

⁸² Isa Upaniṣad. 1.11. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads. p. 66.

⁸³ R.Tagore, Personality. p. 51.

⁸⁴ ibid p. 44.

⁸⁵ ibid p. 44.

⁸⁶ Isa Upaniṣad. 1.14.

R.Tagore, Personality. p.61.

⁸⁷ R.Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. p.xxi.

⁸⁸ Mammata, Kāvyaprakāśa. 1.2 gloss

Also see Masson and Patwardhan, Aesthetic Rapture. p.21.

⁸⁹ *uttara karatavya sanukhyena laukikatvāt*

A statement (such as the sastras make) is said to be wordly (or mundane) because it is directed towards the performance of a duty.

Abhinavagupta, "Locanā." 1.18, p. 70.

⁹⁰ R.Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. p.48.

⁹¹ N.Ray, An Approach to Indian Art. (Chandigarh: Publication Bureau, Punjab University, 1974) p.142.

⁹² ibid p. 149

⁹³ *sattvodrekād akhaṇḍasvaparakāśānandacinnayah, vedyāntarasparśasūnyo*

brahmāśvadasahodarah. lokottaracamatkāraprāṇaḥ kiñcit pramātrībhiḥ, svākāravat abhinnatvenāyā āsvadyatē rasah."

Rasa is tasted by qualified persons. It is tasted by virtue of the emergence of sattva. It is made up of full intelligence, beatitude and self-luminosity. It is void of contact with any other knowable thing, twin brother to the tasting of Brahman. It

is animated by a *camatkara* of a non-ordinary nature. It is tasted as if it were our very being, in indivisibility.

Viśvanātha, Sāhityadarpaṇa. quoted in R. Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. p. 47

64 S.Pandit, p. 22.

65 *ibid* p. 28

66 R.Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. p.47

67 S.Pandit. p. 21.

68 R.Gnoli, The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta. p.62

also see K.C.Pandey, Indian Aesthetics. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1959) p. 103.

69 *ibid* p. 63.

70 S.Pandit, p.23.

71 original quotation by K.C.Pandey, in S.Pandit, p. 21.

72 K.C.Pandey, Indian Aesthetics. p. 140.

73 *ibid* p. 141.

CHAPTER 3. RŪPABRAHMAN

"rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirupaṃ bhavati"

Rg Veda, 6.47.18

Whatever be the medium, all art needs to express itself in form. Every civilisation eventually gives visible expression to their concept of beauty; artistic vision if strong enough cannot remain mute and must translate itself into form and acquire the immediacy of the visible and the palpable, and in so doing

acquires a dimension of reality. Man, as Tagore says, is indeed a "maker of forms";¹ for he is not content to contemplate beauty, but he is impelled to give his vision a visible form. The Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad (hereafter called VSU) says, "on account of having two aspects (*nirguṇa* and *saḡuṇa*) Brahman acquires form."²

Kramrisch rightly states that "India thinks in images."³ When it comes to visual form, there are a large, almost bewildering, number of visual images that one has to contend with even within the *mārgi* tradition, and perhaps even more in the folk tradition. At the outset a distinction must be drawn, for the purpose of this inquiry, between aesthetic and religious experiences associated with images within the *mārgi* tradition, emphasising that one experience need not negate the other. An aesthetic encounter stems from purely physical and sensory stimuli presented by the image, and in the prepared aesthete who is fully immersed in the tradition, can be converted to a higher experience, an experience which will be shown to be *ānanda* or spiritual bliss. A religious encounter with sacred images, on the other hand, is undertaken with a specific ritual or *sādhana* which includes, "abhiḡamaṇa or going to the temple or deity with the speech, the body and the mind centred on him, *upāḡāna* or collecting the materials of worship such as flowers, incense, sandal paste, *īḡyā* or the very act of worshipping the icon and *svādhyāya* or the

muttering [chanting] of the mantra usual to the particular cult divinity."⁴. This *sādhana* is also called *upāsana* or *pūja*. Generally, this *upāsana* is undertaken as if the image was inhabited by a living being or spirit, a concept developed mainly by the *Vaiṣṇava* tradition and called *arcavatāra*. This type of religious experience, also called *bhakti*, will not occupy our attention, as our aim is to show that the aesthetic experience has a status of its own, even when it comes to *rūpa*, and that it need not be subordinated to the traditional practices of devotion and knowledge.

In chapter two we have focussed on how *rasa* arises and develops on the basis of the dramatic situation, or *rasa*, portrayed in the art object. We now turn from what the art object portrays to its formal structure. The thrust of our argument in this chapter will be that, quite apart from the dramatic situation portrayed by the art object, its form also is replete with meaning. Only the aesthete who has trained the eye and cultivated the mind can respond to these meanings. We will show that, in this sense, just as the content of the art object gives rise to *rasadhvani*, its formal structure becomes the basis of symbolic and suggested meanings. It follows that, since the formal structure of the art object is the basis of resounding meanings that gradually unfold, the outward shape or structure presented to the senses cannot be abandoned or negated in a yoga

of art. In this sense, there is a *rūpadhvanī*, just as there is a *rasadhvanī* and a true yoga of art cannot ignore either of these *dhvanis*. The discussion on aesthetic form that follows will apply mainly to sculpture in base relief, as this, as explained in chapter one, is the most common idiom of the Indian visual artist.

1. THE COSMIC PURUṢA.

In the *mārgī* Hindu tradition of visual art, form or *rūpa*, also called *mūrti*, (although the terms *rūpa* and *mūrti* are used synonymously the term *rūpa* will be used in preference to *mūrti* in this inquiry) comes to acquire a definitive meaning and cannot remain a generic term for a multitude of possible forms. Even within the realm of sacred images, *rūpa* stands for the figurative, representational image, and cannot include abstract art such as the *yantras*, *maṇḍalas* and other abstract art forms, or the multitudinous forms of folk art. *Rūpa* is and must remain, for those within the tradition, an anthropomorphic concretisation of the cosmic *Puruṣa*. It must be made clear that *rūpa*, in this inquiry, refers mainly to public rather than private art, a form of art that was sponsored by a patron, and was displayed permanently in public, but was never for personal or private enjoyment. Art and artists in the *mārgī* tradition enjoyed an exalted status, and the traditional *rūpakāra* or image maker

had a certain responsibility to society. There was a constant interaction between the society on the one hand and the artist on the other, the artist leading in a certain sense, by his artistic creations and the society responding and accepting his creations. The Hindu artist thus functioned within the strict confines of his tradition, and at the same time was governed by his potential audience. This made sure that he gave expression in his *rupa* to the vision of the tradition and never used it solely for self-expression.

The Vedas provide both the concept and the imagery of the cosmic *Puruṣa*, but yet the Vedic Indian showed a considerable amount of hesitancy or inhibition in committing his artistic vision into form. It is interesting to point out that, while the Vedas do not issue any definite proscriptions against the making of visible forms, there are some strong hints at the inhibition of the Vedic tradition in making sacred forms. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says, "there can be no image of him whose name is great glory."⁶ Vedic art remained largely aniconic and the only manifestation of Vedic plastic art was the *vedi* or the sacrificial altar. The Vedic altar was considered to be the one form that corresponds, both in its outward structure and in the symbolism associated with it, to the form of the cosmic *Puruṣa*. The autochthonous⁷ Indian on the other hand, at the same period of time, was expressing himself in a variety and profusion of visible forms.⁷

A number of theories could be offered for the inhibition of the Vedic Indian to express himself in plastic form, although a detailed analysis of this question is outside the scope of this inquiry. It could be postulated that the desire of the Vedic Indian to remain aniconic is in keeping with the tradition of keeping sacred knowledge private and for the benefit of the 'son and the worthy pupil'. Such knowledge was not meant to be offered to all and sundry, although it must be admitted that the Vedic *yajña*, which was considered to be the embodiment of sacred knowledge, was by no means private. The exhibition and display of art was certainly not a Vedic trait. It could also be postulated that the Vedic Indian resisted the ideas and practices of the autochthonous Indian, who was free and uninhibited when it came to creating and worshipping visual forms and figures. Banerjea points out that "words like *sandṛś*, *pratīkṣā* etc. might have signified, from a comparatively early date symbolical representations of divinities which were not associated with particular cults. Such use in fact can be found in texts assignable to a period when the cult gods and goddesses had not made their appearance, or even if they had done so, had not been assigned any important position in the religious lives of the higher sections of the Indo-Aryans." According to this thesis, the use of plastic forms as sacred images around which rituals were practised, as well as the public display of such forms, originated with the autochthonous tradition rather than

the Vedic tradition.

The source of *rūpa* is the Puruṣa sukta of the Rg Veda. It is here that Reality is consecrated as a cosmic Puruṣa. The hymn describes the formation of the world from the body of the primordial Man.

A thousand headed is the Man
with a thousand eyes, a thousand feet
encompassing the Earth on all sides
he exceeded it by ten fingers breadth.

The Rg Veda, after having elaborated on the cosmic Puruṣa, goes on to give it an archetypal status when it declares, "*rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratrūrūpaṃ bhavati*".¹⁰ The VSU interprets this verse to signify that all forms are but reflections of the one primal Form, and that the only form of artistic merit can be a visual representation of that primal Form. Although the original quotation in the Rg Veda refers to Indra, who by the power of his *māya*, puts forth multiple forms of himself, Pippalāda, author of the VSU, takes the term '*rūpaṃ*' in the neuter gender, referring to the cosmic Puruṣa and to forms in general, and not specifically to the form of Indra.¹¹

The conception of the cosmic Puruṣa is the basis not only of aesthetics in the *mārga* tradition, but also of metaphysical speculation, and in combining the two functions, an indissoluble bond between aesthetics and metaphysics has been made in the Hindu visual tradition. Aesthetics and metaphysics,

as far as *rūpa* is concerned, are so closely wedded together that the artist is also at the same time a *udgītha* or sacrificial priest.¹² The idea that the aesthetic form points beyond itself to the source of all cosmic forms has wielded a powerful influence on the Indian aesthetic tradition. The following statements of Śrī Aurobindo bear witness to the continuing power of this idea:

[the] greatness and continuity of Indian sculpture is due to the close connection between the religious and philosophical and the aesthetic mind of the people;¹³ the Indian sculptor is concerned with embodying spiritual experiences and impressions, not with recording or glorifying what is received by the physical senses;¹⁴ the Indian sculptor stresses something behind, something more remote to the surface imagination but nearer to the soul and subordinates to it the physical form.¹⁵

Underlying the acceptance by the *mārgī* tradition of the cosmic *Purusa* as the archetypal form, is a basic Tāntric idea, "What is here is there. What is not here is nowhere."¹⁶ Although this concept of the homology between macrocosm and microcosm comes to the fore in the Tāntras and dominates the Tantric tradition, its roots lie in the world-view of the Vedas and the Upanisads. This fundamental Tāntric idea is at the root of not only the creation of *rūpa*, but also, more importantly, of its appreciation or realisation. The *rūpa* becomes not only a copy of the archetypal *Puruṣa* but a bridge for the correlation of the macrocosm with the microcosm, the *jīvātman* with the *paramātman*. This idea has profound implications for

aesthetics. Since every *rūpa* is considered to be a concretisation of the cosmic *Puruṣa*, it follows that the structural form of every *rūpa* is perceived to be a point of correlation between macrocosm and microcosm. The homologous relationship between macrocosm and microcosm that was first established through the creative sacrifice of the *Puruṣa*, and is reproduced in every Vedic sacrifice, is reflected and reaffirmed in every aesthetic form. In this sense the traditional visual artist imitates the role of the sacrificial priest, the *udgītha*.

From the Veda onwards the image of the cosmic *Puruṣa* is a recurring one and it becomes not a passing but a sustained metaphor. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* a graphic picture of the cosmic *Puruṣa* emerges thus:

The life of all beings became three-fold, the east was his head, the intermediate quarters on either side (north-east and south-east) his arms, the west was his hind part, the intermediary quarters (north-west and south-west) his thighs, the south and north were his sides; heaven his back; the sky his abdomen, this earth the chest, thus being established in the waters.¹⁷

In the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* the cosmic *Puruṣa* is described thus:

Fire became speech and entered into the mouth, air became breath and entered into the nostrils, the Sun became sight and entered into the eyes, the *diśāḥ* became hearing and entered into the ears, herbs of healing and the plants and trees became hairs and entered into the skin, the Moon became the mind and entered into the heart, death became *apāna* the lower breathing and

entered into the navel, the waters became the seed and entered into the organ.¹⁶

Terms such as "ādīpuruṣa, virāt-puruṣa, ādī-avatāraḥ, virāt-prāṇaḥ" occur in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Bhagavadgītā graphically describes the Viśvarūpa.¹⁷

The significance given to the human form in all these texts is of the utmost importance in understanding both the structural form of the art object, as it is conceived in the mārgī tradition and the meaning invested in that form. The human body, by virtue of its individual parts and its organic unity, is considered to be the perfect symbol of the correlation and the harmony between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This explains why most of the art objects of the mārgī tradition are based on the human form. This human form that is so familiar to us is invested with infinite worth in the tradition because it is perceived as a microcosmic copy of the infinite Puruṣa. Aesthetically, the cosmic Puruṣa establishes the human form as the basis of rūpa and the norm of plastic beauty, for as the Aitareya Upaniṣad says, "puruṣo vāva sukṛtaḥ", "Man indeed is well made."²⁰ Metaphysically, it points to the correlation of the macrocosm with the microcosm. Both these ideas are of cardinal importance to the plastic arts in the mārgī tradition. The image of the cosmic Puruṣa provides a focus for the traditional artists to relate to the universe, it is the centrepetal force that prevents a scattering of their

creative energies, it the point of rest of creation and creativity, the channel of reintegration of the universal Reality with the reality within. This is the supreme function of visual art in the mārgi tradition. Rabindranath Tagore, in his writings, expresses the view of modern Indian aestheticians who follow the tradition in accepting the image of the cosmic Purusa as the basis of aesthetic form. These modern aestheticians agree that the image of the cosmic Purusa provides a focus for the traditional artists to relate to the universe, for in the words of Tagore:

art awakens a sense of the real by establishing an intimate relationship between our inner being and the universe at large, bringing us a consciousness of deep joy²¹; [for] the man who shapes brings the real very close to us, throwing light upon our awareness of the reality within man.²² What is hidden, veiled in the shadows of unfamiliarity gives no pleasure... [but] by joining himself to the universe... man makes acquaintance of his own inner being.²³ Thus in artistic creation the Real stands before us in all its immediacy.²⁴

We have cited Tagore as an example of modern Indian aestheticians who hold the view that the creative energy of the artist is put to use, not for mere individual self-expression, but to attain insights into the nature of reality and to heighten consciousness.

It is interesting to note that, with the dawn of the modern era in India, sculptors and painters, desiring individual self-expression, have broken away from the orbits of the

mārgī tradition to a far greater degree than musicians and dancers. Individual self-expression, as understood in the modern sense, was never an issue with the traditional Indian artist. That the mārgī tradition did not stifle individuality is witnessed by the variations among rūpas that portray the same theme. No two Natarājas, for example, are exactly alike. However, for the traditional Indian artist, the ideal of beautiful form continued to be based on the cosmic Purusa. This concept set the tone for all visual art of the mārgī tradition and left but little room for such artistic expressions as portraits and statues of historical persons, or for mere portrayal of landscapes.

2. DHYĀNA OF THE ARTIST.

Rūpa as opposed to rasa, implies a physical formation. For the purpose of understanding the process of art creation, as well as the mārgī attitude towards the self-expression of the artist, the creation of the rūpa can be broken down into various steps. Although this inquiry does not focus on the yoga of the artist or the artisan, but mainly on the yoga of the aesthete, it is important to understand the creation of the rūpa, so that we can better understand the task of the aesthete. For in rūpa as in rasa, the aesthete's undertaking is the mirror image of that of the artist; remembering of course that the artist very often is also an

aesthete. Since the same types of visual forms are created in the *mārgi* tradition generation after generation, it becomes necessary to distinguish between the sage-artist or the pristine artist or *rsi*, who first conceives of a *rūpa*, and others who follow after him. For example, it is theoretically possible to distinguish the sage-artist who first conceived of the form of the *Natarāja* from others who used it as their model.

Accordingly, in this inquiry, we distinguish between the *dhyāna* of the sage-artist and the *dhyāna* of those who follow after him. Although there are no references in the texts to historical personages who were sage-artists, it is evident that the artistic contemplation that gives birth to an original aesthetic form, must differ from the psychological processes through which others re-interpret this model. Second and subsequent generations of artists, who recreate the same or similar type of *rūpas*, are acting under historical and psychological conditions that differ from that of the sage-artist. The aesthete is to take his cue from the sage-artist rather than the subsequent generation of artists.

The first step in the evolution of the *rūpa* is the *dhyāna* of the artist. It will be shown that in this first step, the conception of the *rūpa* is dependent on the coming together of the artist's individual genius and inspiration (*pratibhā*) and his discipline of contemplation (*dhyāna*), which has as its focus the traditional imagery of the cosmic

Puruṣa. It is this step that transforms the *rūpa* from formlessness to form, "*ārūpad rūpa*"²⁰.

Dhyāna; for the Indian artist, was a disciplined activity and one that could be deliberately induced. This *dhyāna* of the artist is not a 'trance', in the the sense of a loss of volitional control, or a contentless ecstasy, but a meditative discipline focussed on the cosmic Puruṣa, with the express purpose of revealing its form. The artist 'sees' the form of the cosmic Puruṣa, in his *dhyāna*, just as the Vedic *rṣis* 'hear' the cosmic sounds out of which they compose the hymns. The desire on the part of the sage-artist to visualise the cosmic Puruṣa is the key to the entire *dhyāna*. As the VSU says, "The intention [to worship] leads to the appearance of a particular form"²⁴. The sage-artist adores and delights in the form that rises in his mind. This could be called an inner or subtle adoration in contradistinction to the ritual worship that is performed in front of images. As the VSU says, "it is in the process of *dhyāna* that the form becomes clear."²⁷

The artist prepares himself for his *dhyāna* by his intense training, *śikṣa*, which includes an intimate knowledge of the measurements and proportions prescribed for the *rūpa* by the *śāstras*. It is important to point out that the artist's *dhyāna* differs from that of the *bhakta*, because of his specific purpose of re-interpreting and re-creating the *rūpa*. Furthermore, his training has made him an aesthete of the highest

order, and his aesthetic sensibilities enter into his *dhyāna*. A *bhakta* on the contrary need not necessarily be an aesthete. On the basis of the sources available to him Mulk Raj Anand describes the artist's *dhyāna* thus:

The artist performs purifactory ablutions and sits down to focus his attention on ... a *dhyana*-mantra. He then offers flowers, incense and other gifts to the form conceived. The mental picture is thus seen in all its details and the work of art is complete in the mind even before being translated into form. The artist then begins the task of technical elaboration, during which time he must hold fast to the conception evolved through yoga... The kind of mental state designed to be secured through the practice of yoga can also be cultivated by the artisan through tuning up the functions of the body and the mind into perfect obedience to the faculty of intuition and though the deliberate invocation of dreams
... 20

Heinrich Zimmer points out that the *mārgī* tradition provides a rich store-house of *bīja*mantras, seed mantras, and *yantras*, diagrams, to facilitate the *dhyāna* of the artist who wishes to re-create a proper variant of a primordial *rupa*. The artist's *dhyāna* is a formal activity, brought into focus by a specific *mantra* or helped by a linear *yantra*. Zimmer notes that, "*mantra*, *dhyāna* and linear *yantra* are three quantities that are congruent in the underlying idea."²¹ The rich store of seed *mantras* correspond precisely with images that can be invoked through them, and therefore, they lead to a complete and accurate inner visualisation. Zimmer explains, "it is the power of the syllable

(*mantraśakti*), whether whispered or simply inwardly articulated, that can, in the realm of inner vision, produce whatever corresponds to the sound."³⁰ If a yantra is used as the focus of concentration, it is the *dhyāna* that harmonises, "outward sight and inner vision."³¹

A feature of the artist's *dhyāna* is that the image, which appears to his inner vision in its entirety, is in perfect harmony. Zimmer, in his description of *dhyāna* says that:

no part of the manifestation presented to the inner vision is in motion, and that inward sight does not shift its focus from point to point. All that appears before the inward eye is equally in focus, so that everything present shines forth with equal clarity. Each part is at rest within itself.³²

Zimmer contrasts our ordinary modes of recalling images that have arisen in our consciousness with the *dhyāna* of the artist. He points out that "our untrained inward sight is generally successful in recalling images that have appeared, only to vanish immediately ..."³³ By contrast, in the supra-sensory inner vision of the artist's *dhyāna*, these images remain stable and ensure that they are translated into aesthetic form. It is important to note that the *rūpa* is algebraically, but not arithmetically, complete in the *dhyāna* of the artist. In this sense, the primary creation of the *rūpa* takes place in the mind of the artist. The translation of it into a material medium, by contrast, is a process of construction, calling in the skill of the craftsman.

It is important to focus on the *dhyāna* of the artist as it sheds light on the *dhyāna* the aesthete must undertake.

3. THE MEANING OF MEASUREMENT IN RŪPA.

We have seen that *rasa* arises, not through the portrayal of raw emotion, but through the transformation of emotion within the context of a dramatic situation. Similarly, aestheticians of the *mārgi* tradition, stress that the *rūpa* is not a photographic representation, but an aesthetic transformation of the natural visual form. The measurements and proportions presented in the *sastras* have the purpose of effecting this transformation.

Vātsyayana, in his *Kāmasūtra*, lists six essential ingredients of *rūpa*. These are: *pramāṇa*, *rūpa-bheda*, *bhāva*, *lāvanya-yojana*, *sādrśya* and *varṇika-bhāṅga* or proportion, perception, emotion, grace, resemblance to reality and the artistic use of implements and materials.³⁴ Of these *pramāṇa* and *sādrśya* need further elucidation since they are related to the *mārgi* view that the aesthetic form is a concretisation of the cosmic Puruṣa.

Pramāṇa is the hallmark of *rūpa*. It is by virtue of its harmonious proportions that an aesthetic form achieves organic unity and becomes a reflection (*pratibimba*) of the form of the cosmic Puruṣa. Mulk Raj Anand makes the illuminating comment that "aesthetic *pramāṇa* expresses in plastic terms

the norm of properly directed action, speculative *pramāṇa* expresses the norm of properly directed thought."³²

It is significant that the proportions prescribed in the *śāstras* are not based on the empirical study of natural forms and shapes but on idealised conceptions in the minds of the creators of aesthetic forms. Thus Śukrāchārya asserts that even an ill-made *rūpa* that conforms to the prescribed proportions is to be preferred to the form of man, "however attractive the latter may be, for perchance one (man) in a million has perfect form, perfect beauty."³⁴ The connotations of this statement will be further explored in the discussion on *sādrśya*.

Pramāṇa in the Indian visual tradition, signifies not just linear measurements, but also rhythm and harmony. This combination and inter-relation of measurement (*mana*) and harmony (*tāla*) is brought out by the term *tāla-mana*. Modern interpreters of the aesthetic tradition have stressed the concept that the measured inner rhythm of the *rūpa* bears witness to the correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Coomaraswamy maintains that, according to the tradition, all rhythm in art corresponds "in the last analysis to cosmic rhythms."³⁷ Writing on artistic rhythm in the same vein Tagore says:

It is the magic of mathematics; the rhythm which is the heart of all creation which moves in the atom and its different measures fashions the rose and the thorn, the sun and the planets. These are the dance steps of numbers in the arena

of time and space which weaves the maya, the patterns of appearance, the incessant flow of change that ever is and is not. It is the rhythm that churns up images from the vague and makes tangible what is elusive. This is maya, this is the art in creation and art in literature which is the magic of rhythm.³⁶

It is worth noting that in Tagore's poetic language *māya* has the double connotation of 'measurement' and 'magic', and is not used in the sense in which Śaṅkara uses the term.

The inner rhythm of the *rūpa*, based on its proportions, creates the impression of movement, a movement *in situ*. Niharranjan Ray, in his interpretation of the aesthetic tradition, says that the measured rhythm of the *rūpa* is to be correlated with the rhythm of the life-breath (*prana*) of the universe. As he puts it, the *rūpa* is endowed with "an inner reality of rhythmic vitality and movement (or) *prāṇa* which is its essential form."³⁷

The large number of texts dealing with sculpture, the *śilpasastras*, give in exquisite detail the principles of measurement and rhythm by which the sculptor must be bound. While the minutiae of these measurements and proportions are of no importance to us in this inquiry, the principle of *pramāṇa* or measurement brings home the fact that mathematical precision is the keynote of *rūpa*, both in its conception, as well as in its execution and realisation. *Pramāṇa* is the *dharma* of the *rūpa*, and it is through this *dharma* that it is perceived as a reflection of the perfect form of the cosmic

Purusa.

The *mārgi* ideal of beauty in form is fulfilled only by a formalised *rūpa* that conforms to certain precisely stated aesthetic principles of harmony and rhythm: hence, in the *mārgi* tradition, only an art form made in accordance with the canon can be called beautiful. Although we are not concerned here with the relationship between the aesthetic tradition and society at large, it is to be noted that the *sastras* influenced the minds of the artists and the aesthetes alike, so that they could seldom see beauty outside the prescribed models. In a certain sense, this could be called the tyranny of the tradition, but it was one factor, amongst others, that was responsible for maintaining continuity through the troubled and chaotic periods of Indian history. It must also be remembered that there was a constant cross-pollination between the *mārgi* and the *deśi* traditions, one enriching the other, so that the *mārgi* tradition did not become stale or irrelevant.

When we turn from *pramāṇa* or proportion to the principles of *sādrśya* or correspondence to reality, it seems at first glance, that these two principles are at variance with each other. As we have noted, the principle of measurement is not based on the study of empirical forms, but seeks to reflect an ideal of perfect beauty inculcated by the tradition. *Sādrśya*, on the contrary, insists on correspondence to empirical reality. How are these two principles brought

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together, and what is the philosophic basis for the harmonising of *pramāṇa*, which looks beyond this imperfect world, with *sādrśya*, which turns towards it? In this inquiry we take the position that both *pramāṇa* and *sādrśya* are based on the concept of the cosmic Puruṣa. The principle of *pramāṇa* points to the perfection and transcendence of the form of the cosmic Puruṣa, while the principle of *sādrśya* indicates the immanence of the Puruṣa in the world as we know it through our senses. Together, *pramāṇa* and *sādrśya* seek to indicate the correlation and unity of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

Although *sādrśya* is accepted as a principle in the *mārgi* tradition, the VSU does not elucidate its significance. We therefore turn to modern interpreters of the aesthetic tradition to seek an explanation of what 'correspondence to reality' connoted for the artist and the aesthete.

Modern interpreters, beginning with Coomaraswamy, stress that *sādrśya* does not signify realism. They maintain that the artist of the *mārgi* tradition does not aim to give a photographic representation of the empirical form. According to these interpreters, the purpose of the principle of *sādrśya* is to suggest the essential nature of the object and the inner laws of its development, namely its *svadharma*, and to indicate that, by virtue of its *svadharma*, the object is in harmony with the cosmic laws, the *dharma* of the universe. The *rūpakāra* or creator of visual forms depicts the essential

nature of the object, as he intuits it in the inner vision of his *dhyāna*, and shows that it is this essential nature which makes it a manifestation (*pratirūpaḥ*) of the cosmic Puruṣa. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "for the Indian mind form does not exist except as a creation of the spirit and draws all its meaning and value from the the spirit."⁴⁰

Modern interpreters, therefore, stress that *sādrśya* is to be understood at many levels: first, the correlation between the aesthetic form and the intrinsic nature of the object portrayed; second, the correlation between the *rūpa* and the intuitive vision of the artist, and finally, the correlation between the well-proportioned form of the *rūpa* and the ideal form, namely, the form of the cosmic Puruṣa.

Coomaraswamy points to the correlation between the aesthetic form and the inner vision of the object in the artist's mind, when he speaks of the "indivisible identity of form and content."⁴¹ Stella Kramrisch expresses her agreement with Coomaraswamy when she says that, "the figures of Indian sculpture are based primarily on a reality which is not seen but felt."⁴² Kramrisch also elucidates the significance of *sādrśya* as the correlation between the aesthetic form and the intrinsic nature of the object that it portrays, when she says that "the sculpture does not depict the concrete, gross (*sthūla*) physique as perceived and interpreted, but shows the subtle (*sūkṣma*) reality of life as felt in and through the

body."43

According to modern interpreters, *sādrśya* is based on information which is gathered by the eye as a visual organ but which is processed by the inner eye. Stella Kramrisch remarks that "Indian sculptural form then, is neither a record of the appearance nor of the structure of the body. It aims rather to render the inner experience and awareness of life in the body."44 She correctly says that the whole aim of *sādrśya* is to "proceed beyond empirical truth to express the metaphysical", but she perhaps goes too far, when she says in the same breath that "Indian sculpture (has) no reality other than in states of inner awareness."45 *Rūpa* is not photographically descriptive of objects as they are presented to the human senses, but *rūpa* does conform to the manner in which sensory experience is interpreted in the more exalted states of human consciousness. *Rūpa*, as aesthetic form, depicts beauty in its purely physical form, but it hints insistently at the metaphysical basis of beauty. Herein lies its significance for a yoga of art.

4. THE GEOMETRY OF RUPA.

An important intermediate step in the progressive evolution of *rūpa*, still within the *dhyāna* of the artist, is the basic geometric framework of the composition. At this stage the cosmic *Puruṣa* starts acquiring a geometric form-language.

Reduced to its basic geometry, the *rūpa* can be considered as made up of a centre, intersecting lines and the periphery, which is usually a circle or a square, each playing a specific role in the totality of the image. While the periphery delimits the image, the centre or the *madhyabindu* is the source of its dynamism, and the lines give the image its emotional character. It is the interplay of these three geometric parameters that constitutes the *rūpatattva* or the essence of form and it is these three that play an important factor in the *tāla-māna* of *rupa*.

The VSU emphasises the role of *rekhā* or lines in the logic of composition when it says, "the lines are the Truth, and the lines are the cause of the form,"⁴⁴ and, "the line is the support of the composition."⁴⁷ The VSU describes three types of lines: vertical or *agni rekhā* which conveys a feeling of elation, horizontal lines or *ab rekhā* which conveys a feeling of longing, and diagonal lines or *vāyu rekha* which imparts a feeling of energy. The main vertical middle line is likened to the "post of Meru, the backbone in the animal, the marrow of the tree, the soul in living beings."⁴⁸ With horizontal lines, the VSU explains, the panel is divided first into ten and later into fourteen compartments. At every step in the progressive evolution of *rupa* the interconnection between the microcosm and macrocosm is never forgotten.

If the *rekha* displays the emotional character of the image, the *bindu* or the focal point is the source of the image. For we are told, "*bindu brahṃeva*", the *bindu* is the *brahman*, and further, "it is the *bindu* that imparts glory and harmony to the image."⁴⁷ The *bindu* ensures that the *rūpa* does not remain a static art form but gives the impression of a dynamic art process. The *rūpa* gives the impression of at least two types of movement: a dynamic physical movement like the axis of a wheel, and more importantly, a psychic centripetal movement, gathering toward itself forces that it liberates, making sure that the physical centre of the art form is also the metaphysical centre of the art experience. In her interpretation of its centripetal movement, Kramarisch writes that "the urge towards form at any moment has an outward direction but it becomes form only by the corresponding countermovement."⁴⁸ In *rūpa*, no movement exists without its counter-movement. The appearance of balance of movements creates harmony within the *rūpa* and makes it a symbol of cosmic harmony. By the balancing of centrifugal and centripetal forces, the *bindu* creates the ambience of rest in the midst of action, of serenity in the midst of dramatic tension, features that are the hallmark of *rūpa*.

With the *bindu* comes the actual or implied circle. The gloss on the VSU says, "The circle is the All. The breath of life is contained in its form even as the mind is in Man. The

circle is Time according to Vastuveda."⁸¹ The conception of the circle limits the composition in a physical sense, while, at the same time, endowing it with the attributes of wholeness and organic unity. The circle is also symbolic of cosmic unity. Moreover, the concept of circularity gives to the *rūpa* the dimension of time. By means of the circle in the geometric grid, the dramatic situation depicted in the *rūpa* is set within the framework of time, and is given a cosmic dimension. The circle also gives to the *rūpa* its stability by ensuring that it will maintain a centripetal rather than a centrifugal force. Alice Boner explains that not only the circle or the periphery but "every curve with a constant curvature is part of a circle and has in itself the tendency to close into full-circle...it gathers up movement as a pool gathers up the inflowing waters."⁸²

The *vyttas* or circle is, more often than not, an imagined or invisible periphery, sometimes suggesting itself by an arc or a curve, and at other times by a semi-circle, but in no uncertain terms calling attention to itself by the *bindu*. In her interpretation of the geometry of the *rūpa*, Vatsyayan argues that it is the function of the *bindu* to ensure that the "one breaks into the multiple and the configuration of the multiple invariably returns to the unity of the one."⁸³

This "breaking up of the whole into parts and then bringing together of the parts"⁸⁴ is not a meaningless exercise like putting parts of a jig-saw puzzle together, but is meant to

"evoke a psychic state."⁶⁶

The VSU makes it amply clear that these basic geometric shapes, namely, the circle, the square, the triangle and the lines, or the basic grammar of *rūpa*, are not mere abstract or arbitrary shapes but cosmic shapes, reminding one of the Vedic *yajña*. As Vatsyayan puts it "these geometric motifs and figures have their own logic and meaning and the (*rūpakāra*) uses these with extraordinary sensitivity and understanding."⁶⁷ The human body is reduced to the point of geometrical abstraction so that the *rupa* may become, not just another form in the world of forms, but a fit receptacle for the form and feeling of the cosmic *Puruṣa*. It is the function of the geometric forms to manifest the causal and the subtle components of consciousness. The interplay of these basic geometric shapes, as an intermediate step in the evolution of the *rupa*, ensures that the "panel is a microcosm reflecting all the elements of the Macrocosm."⁶⁸ Finally it is the interplay of these basic cosmic forms that creates the "*śahā-chandas*"⁶⁹, the principle of order and rhythm. That *chandas* is not only metre in poetry but a principle of order and rhythm in all arts is shown in the Aitareya Brahmana where the term '*chandaḥśāstra*' is applied to all kinds of *Śilpa*. The VSU leaves no doubt about the importance of the geometric under pinning of the *rūpa* when it says that by "depending on the essential lines (*tattvarekhā*) the soul of

form becomes manifest."⁴⁷ The geometric grid is a yantra and the rūpa is a maṇḍala. This is the principle of form or rūpatattva, a phase when the rūpa moves from a mere yantra to a maṇḍala, and it is this that leads to a firmer, more deliberate appreciation of form, a "dharana"⁴⁸ or clear conception, fit enough to embody cosmic myths.

If the geometric form corresponds to the causal and subtle states of consciousness, the maṇḍala corresponds to the waking state. This is the next phase in the evolution of aesthetic form, "arupad rūpa", from formless to form. It needs to be emphasised once again that although these different processes are being presented here in stages merely to gain an understanding of the underlying mechanisms, in the dhyāna of the artist, the various steps take place simultaneously and at many levels, and without fragmentation.

5. SYMBOLIC MEANING IN RUPA.

We have seen that sādṛśya or correspondence with reality is one of the principles governing rūpa. However, as it has been pointed out, realism was never a feature of rūpa, and the full significance of the aesthetic form does not emerge until its symbolic value is perceived. The sārgi tradition endows the rūpa with symbolic value, and the symbolic meanings that emerge from it can be understood only against the background of

the rich mythology and the multi-dimensional systems of Indian culture. It is evident that an understanding of the symbolic value of *rupa* is essential in developing a yoga of art.

The Indian visual artist does not copy the natural object, but renders it into an aesthetic form filled with symbolic meanings. A modern interpreter of the tradition says of Indian art "it is not so much an illustration as a translation of a reality."⁴¹ He further comments that in the process of this, "translation of a reality" the *rūpa* acquires a visionary character, and he goes on to say that "Indian art is generally synaesthetic - a mixture of media combined in a manner which resembles, but is not identical with, oneiric experience;"⁴² "a kind of recollection in tranquility of the rapture of visionary experience."⁴³ It is this visionary character of Indian visual art that modern aestheticians emphasise when they use such terms as 'symbolic', 'recondite', 'angelic', 'indirect', 'noumenal', 'abstract', 'metaphorical' and 'metaphysical'. All these meanings are captured by the term *parokṣa*.

Coomaraswamy interprets the statement "*parokṣa-priya iva devaḥ*"⁴⁴ to mean that *parokṣa* is synonymous with 'angelic'. The significance of this statement emerges when it is set in the context of Indian mythology. For it is evident that Coomaraswamy, in the historical period in which he was writing, translated *devaḥ* as 'angel' with the hope of capturing the

understanding of his Western audience. Using the language of Indian mythology, we may say that the Indian visual artist depicts the natural object, not as the ordinary human eye sees it, but as the *devas* see it with the 'divine eye'. In the context of Indian mythology it can be said that the artist's *dhyana* is in conformity with the state in which the *devas*, by their very nature, continuously live. It is in this sense that Coomaraswamy translates the following statement of the Aitreya Brahmana as "it is in imitation of the angelic works of art that any work of art is arrived at here."⁴⁰

Modern commentators have also stressed that the symbolism that pervades the entire spectrum of *rūpa* must be understood, not in any superficial or token sense, but as a highly evolved, integrated and sophisticated language of symbols. As Coomaraswamy explains, "symbolism is a language and a precise form of thought, a hieratic and metaphysical language and not a language determined by somatic or psychological categories."⁴¹

Artists of the *mārgi* tradition use, "geometric, vegetable or theriomorphic symbols"⁴² drawn from the *purāṇas*. It is in the manifestation of these symbols that the artist displays his skills, and in the understanding and realisation of these symbols that lies the skill of the aesthete. Only the trained eye can penetrate beyond the outward form of the *rupa* and perceive its symbolic meaning. Thus, symbolism in

rūpa demands a resolution not by the eye, but by the 'eye of the eye'⁶⁶. Coomaraswamy reminds us that the "traditional symbols are never the invention of the particular author,"⁶⁷ but are, rather, the treasure of the tradition. It, therefore, becomes clear why both the artist and the aesthete need to be steeped in the tradition. The traditional mythology undergirds and inspires both the creation of the *rūpa* and the aesthetic appreciation of its full import.

Because of the mythology that undergirds it, the symbolic meaning of the *rūpa* cannot be realised if it is approached from a purely intellectual level. Zimmer rightly points out that the:

mythical symbols of India resist intellectualisation and reduction to fixed significations. Such treatment would only sterilise them of their magic. In the myths of India we are brought the intuitive, collective wisdom of an ageless, anonymous and many sided civilisation. The myths are effective primarily on a subconscious level, touching intuition, feeling and imagination...[they] soak down and shape the deeper stratification of the psyche.⁷⁰

The myths form part of the oral tradition that is incorporated in the *rūpa*. Zimmer describes this oral tradition as that "whole and consistent body of culture which has been handed down not in books but by word of mouth ... from time beyond the reach of historical research."⁷¹ Since this treasury of myths arises from the primordial wisdom of a mythopoeic society, if they are unduly dissected and explained,

their charm, beauty and meaning is destroyed. A person who cannot allow the mythology to "soak down and shape the deeper stratifications of the psyche" is incapable of realising the full aesthetic value of the *rūpa*. For the myths provide the emotional content of the *rūpa*, which becomes the basis of the *rasa* experience. It is by virtue of its symbolic import that the *rūpa* moves the mind, from its involvement in physical forms, to the contemplation of metaphysical realities, thereby becoming a fit object of *dhyāna* both for the artist and the aesthete.

The symbolism of the *rūpa* links it not only with the myths of the Puranic tradition but also with the *yajña* or sacrifice of the Vedas. Pippalāda, the author of the VSU, emphasises that sculpture is indeed a *yajña* and the sculptor, a *sthāpaka* or a priest of art. *Yajña* has both a metaphysical and magical sense, and it is with the former that we are concerned. The overriding metaphysical meaning and motive of *yajña* is establishing a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm. We have already shown that this is the keynote of *rūpa*.

The various components of the *rūpa* not only blend into a harmonious whole but the inner harmony of the *rūpa* acts as a catalyst in the transformation of both the artist and the aesthete. This transformation equilibrates one's inner being with that of the cosmos. *Rūpasaubhāgya* or harmony, is the

sine gua non of *rūpa*. "The entire composition consists of self sufficient units, which paradoxically enough gain that quality only by their intrinsic inter-connectedness."⁷² The lay out of the Vedic altar and the *śilpa-pāñjara* or the grid upon which the *rupa* manifests have much in common. The VSU⁷³ tells us in no uncertain terms that "Śulva is the discipline for sacrifice, *śilpa* is the discipline for image making."⁷³

The strong connection between visual art on the one hand and *yajña*, on the other, is further underlined by the VSU when it says: "it is from the knowledge of form that sacrifice originates in the world."⁷⁴ In equating *rūpa* with *yajña*, Pippalada gives Indian sculpture its pedigree and connects it unquestionably with the Veda itself.

There is another sense in which the *rūpa* is compared to a *yajña*. The Vedic altar was laid out in a pattern of geometric shapes which blends together to form a harmonious whole representing the harmony of the universe. In the *mārgi* tradition, this inner harmony of the Vedic altar was taken to be the prototype of all harmonious shapes.

6. RŪPADHVANI.

In a prepared aesthete the *rūpa* cannot remain a mere piece of art, useful for its superficial sensual artistic qualities, but, by the very nature of its ultimate meaning,

breaks out of its form to reveal the formless, much as in the artist the formless gave rise to form. In many ways, the *dhyāna* of the aesthete is a mirror-image of that of the *dhyāna* of the artist: in the former it is the formless that gives rise to form, in the latter it is the form that proceeds to the formless.

There is ample evidence in the texts to establish that *rūpa* like *vāk* has a function and meaning beyond its outer form. The VSU says that "whatever one attains through (sacred) word the same they can attain through form".⁷⁰ For a word is a mere symbol and carries with it a meaning, either singly or in combination with other words. By the same token, the constituents of the *rūpa* are capable of offering a metaphysical meaning to the prepared aesthete. The aesthete does not merely react to the superficial structure of the image, but interprets the symbols and combines the visual imagery with the verbal tradition to derive the *artha* or the ultimate meaning.

This meaning is clearly above and beyond the actual form. Since it is a vehicle of meaning the eventual function of the *rūpa* is for *dhyāna*. The VSU says, "thus form is to be meditated upon as a means of spiritual ascent."⁷¹ Herein lies the importance of the Indian *śilpakāra*; for just as a *kavi* will use words to create *kāvya*, the *śilpakāra* uses form so that it can contain and yield a metaphysical meaning. The *śilpakāra* achieves this metaphysical meaning indirectly,

"vakratah",⁷⁷ by using artistic devices and by ensuring fidelity to myths and legends. This revelation of meaning by indirect means is the function of *rūpa* characterised by harmonious proportions and correspondence to reality, *pramāṇa* and *sādrśya*. The meaning abides, in and emanates from, its physical shape and form. If its aesthetic properties are denied or negated, it ceases to be a vehicle of meanings. What is true of *rasa* is also true of *rūpa*: it is the heart of the *sahṛdaya*, the prepared aesthete, that has the capacity to receive and respond to the indirectly suggested meanings that arise from the aesthetic form. As the VSU says, "the science of sculpture is mainly to manifest the attributes [of the deities, as revealed in the myths]".⁷⁸

The VSU gives us firm support for our own position that *rūpa*, like *vāk*, is capable of revealing manifold meanings, both directly and indirectly, by suggestion. At the same time it is to be understood that the purely aesthetic nature and value of the *rūpa* is never jeopardized or abandoned. It is precisely because of its aesthetic qualities that at no point is the aesthetic excellence of the *rūpa* undermined, compromised or taken for granted. For *rūpa* is no ordinary form but *surūpa* or perfect or ideal form. And it is this perfection of form that leads to "*divyatva*"⁷⁹ or divine nature in the aesthete. In this context, 'divine' can be interpreted as the tranquillity, rapture and heightened

consciousness of aesthetic *dhyāna*. In order to effect this transformation to divine nature, the first requisite of *rūpa* is that it lead to "*prāṇoda*"¹⁰ or pleasure in the beauty of the image, for from this pleasure will arise love and from love contemplation, which in turn ensures "the very bliss of Brahman".¹¹

Pippalāda declares in a sentence that sums up our entire argument when he declares "the higher and ultimate understanding of artistic form is none other than metaphysics",¹² making the unequivocal connection between aesthetics and metaphysics. For the purpose of this inquiry, it is of the utmost significance to note that nowhere throughout the VSU does Pippalāda mix *bhakti* and aesthetics, or the holy and the beautiful or magic and meaning, or *arca* and *artha*. Instead, he leaves us with the very definite impression that a purely aesthetic appreciation and realisation of the *rūpa* is a valid, bonafide, artistic activity, fully capable of leading the prepared aesthete to ineffable *anāṇḍa*.

It can be argued that the meaning of the *rūpa* resides not in the *rūpa* per se, but in the mind of the *rūpakāra* who created it and in the consciousness of the *rasika* who appreciates it. And, on the basis of this argument, it can be further claimed by some that the *rūpa* is totally meaningless on its own, when it is separated from the artist and the aesthete. Guided by Pippalāda's exposition, we take the position

that the aesthete's mind is influenced by the physical attributes of the *rūpa*: its shape and form, its harmonious proportions, its inner rhythm and its capacity to resemble Reality. These physical attributes turn the mind of the aesthete, stage by stage, like the "needle through a pile of lotus leaves" of the *rasa* experience, from its primary meaning as directly presented to the eye to its symbolic import, and finally to the metaphysical realities that it symbolises. The *rūpa*, though mute, gives insistent visual hints that encourage a calmer, more deliberate understanding of its form. Such continually deepening understanding is what Pippalada calls *rūpaprājña*.

The value of the *rūpa*, therefore, lies not just in its *bāhya ākāśa* or superficial attractiveness but in its capacity to suggest an *artha*, or another, deeper meaning, a quality that we propose to call *rūpadhvani* after the *dhvani* of Ānandavardhana. We emphasise that the *dhvani* of the *rūpa* is, first and foremost, an aesthetic phenomenon, and is not governed by such factors such as *bhakti* or ritual. *Dhvani* in the *rūpa* arises because of the artistic devices used by the artist. These devices not only embellish the beauty of the form, but lead the aesthete towards the highest possibilities of aesthetic experience. A number of these artistic devices can be enumerated, namely: *aukhyārthabādhā* or breakdown of the primary meaning, *audras* or hand gestures, *bādhra* or the weapons, *lakṣaṇas* or superficial

attributes, *pramāṇa* or proportion, the *gāthas* and the *kāthas* or the mythology that introduces a sense of cosmic realism, and finally the overall rhythm or harmony of the form. *Mukyārtthabādhā* arises as a result of the superhuman features of the Hindu *rūpa*, features such as multiple arms or heads that may lead a non-aesthete to call it monstrous, or unrealistic situations such as a figure sitting on a lotus or a swan, or lying on the coils of a serpent. *Mudras*, as the VSU says, demonstrate the "emotional attitude of the image",²³ but invoke the aesthete to enter deeply into the tradition to move their meaning from the merely psychological to philosophical. Thus the *abhaya mudra* or the gesture of 'fear not' prompts the aesthete to ask, "fear not from what?" and thereby initiates a contemplative inquiry. Likewise, the *bādhra*s, which "communicate the power of the figure,"²⁴ invite the aesthete to penetrate their outer form to get at the symbolic meaning. Specific *lakṣaṇas* or visible marks have been assigned by the tradition to certain divinities, a good example of which are the signs ascribed to the Buddha; it is these *lakṣaṇas* that connect the *rūpa* to the myth that forms its context, and therefore, its ultimate meaning. And the last, but not the least, of the artistic devices that impel the aesthete to move beyond the outer form of the *rūpa* to its total import is its overall harmony. This harmony is created by its geometric constituents and by the formalised proportions that govern it.

It is these artistic devices that eventually nourish and support the *rasa*, and together constitute the *artha* of the *rupa*; it is this that gives the *rūpa* a *rūpadhvanī*, an extended meaning without which the *rupa* cannot lead the aesthete to *ānanda*.

Thus, both in *rasa* and *rūpa* experiences, *dhvani* becomes the key aesthetic concept in the *margī* tradition. If the *dhvani* of *rasa* is mediated through emotions, the *dhvani* of *rūpa* is mediated mainly through a visual process, neither activities demanding a religious ritual or outlook, and both strictly staying within the confines of aesthetic phenomena. Pippalāda uses at least two terms to qualify *rūpa*: *rūpasaubhāgya*⁶⁶ or harmonious form and "*surūpa*"⁶⁷ or perfect form, both emphasising the artistic perfection of the *rūpa*. However, Pippalāda makes it amply clear that the *rūpa*, by definition, is a "*vyaktarūpa*"⁶⁸ or a form that, though mute, is capable of manifesting attributes, or in other words, meanings. He further states, "it is the form that transforms the mind."⁶⁹ It is this transformation that qualifies *rupa* to be called truly a *rūpadhvanī*. Ultimately the Indian concept of *rūpa* or beauty in form lies in the conception and understanding of *dhvani*.

We are now in a position to argue that it is not necessary for a *rūpa* to be consecrated as a ritual object or made the

focus of *bhakti* in order to give it the capacity of transforming the mind. We have the support of the Visnudharmottara when it says, "*hetumca tadākara*, form indeed has a purpose"¹⁷. The *rūpa*'s perfect form, inner harmony and its capacity for reverberation of suggested meaning, and above all its *rasa*, combine to give it the capacity to transform the consciousness and to heighten the awareness of the aesthete. It remains for us to explore whether a yoga of art can be developed on the basis of *rasadhvani* and *rūpadhvani*.

NOTES

¹ R. Tagore, On Art & Aesthetics . (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961) p. 81.

² *dvidhāto brahma rūpavat bhavati* .

"On account of having two forms [nirguna and saguna] Brahman acquires form."

A. Boner et. al. Vāstusutra Upaniṣad . The Essence of Form in Sacred Art (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982) (hereafter referred to as VSU), 4.3.

³ S. Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple . (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976) Volume 2, p. 342.

⁴ J.N. Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography . (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956) p. 78.

⁵ *na tasya pratimā asti yasya nāma mahādyasah*

"There can be no image of him whose name is great glory"

J.N. Banerjea, p. 78.

⁶ The word autochthonous is used in preference to terms such as original or native.

⁷ Personal communication from Mrs. Pupul Jaykar. Mrs. Jaykar's monograph The Earthen Drum is perhaps the first attempt to analyse the folk arts.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 39.

⁹ Rg Veda X.90.1. quoted by K. Vatsyayan. The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts (Delhi: Roli Books International, 1983) p. 9.

¹⁰ *rūpam rūpam pratirūpam bhavati*

"Every form is an image (of an original form)."

VSU, 1.2

¹¹ VSU, 1.2 gloss

¹² VSU, p. 54 fn # 45.

¹³ Sri Aurobindo. The Foundations of Indian Culture. Volume 14, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1972) p. 229.

¹⁴ *ibid*. p. 234.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 203.

¹⁴ *yad ihāsti tad anyatra, yan nehāsti na tat*
kvacit

"What is here is there, what is not here is nowhere."
 Woodroffe, J. Śakti and Sakta. (Madras: Ganesh and Co.,
 Pvt. Ltd., 1965) p. 296.

¹⁷ Brhadarānyaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.1. quoted by
 K. Vatsyana. p. 14

¹⁸ Aitareya Upaniṣad, 1.2.4. Śrī Aurobindo. The
Upanishads. (Pondicherry: Śrī Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) p. 357.

¹⁹ The Bhagvadgītā. Chapter XI.

²⁰ *puruso vāva sukr̥taḥ*

"Man indeed is well made."

Aitareya Upaniṣad, 1.2.3, Śrī Aurobindo. The Upanishads.
 (Pondicherry: Śrī Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) p. 357.

²¹ R. Tagore, p. 86.

²² *ibid.*, p. 84.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁵ *ārūpad rūpa*

"From form to formlessness"

VSU, 5.21

²⁶ *sankalpād vikalpa iti viśeṣaḥ*

"The intention [to worship] leads to the appearance of a
 particular form."

VSU, 5.19

²⁷ *dhyāna prayoge rūpa sauṣṭhavaḥ spaṣṭaḥ bhavati*

"It is in the process of dhyana that the form becomes
 clear."

VSU, 3.14

²⁸ Mulk Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art. (Bombay:
 Asia Publishing House, 1957) pp. 75-76.

²⁹ H. Zimmer, Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred
Images of India. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984)

p. 71.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 58.

³¹ *ibid*, p. 53.

³² *ibid*, p. 60.

³³ *ibid*, p. 56.

³⁴ Mulk Raj Anand, p. 85.

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 85.

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 81.

³⁷ A.Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) p. 179.

³⁸ R.Tagore, p. 79.

³⁹ N.Ray, An Approach to Indian Art. (Chandigarh: Punjab University Bureau, 1974) p. 108.

⁴⁰ Sri Aurobindo, p. 211.

⁴¹ A. Coomaraswamy, p. 183.

⁴² S.Kramrisch, Indian Sculpture in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966) p. 29.

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 26.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 24

⁴⁶ *tatha rekhā hi satyam, rekhā rūpasya kāraṇam*

"The lines are the Truth and the lines are the cause of the form"

VSU, 4.26 gloss

⁴⁷ *rekhā nyasasyadhāraṇa sa dhāreva*

"The line is the support of the composition."

VSU, 2.8 gloss

⁴⁸ VSU, 4.26 gloss

47 *brahmabindvavalambanena rūpāṅgaṃ saubhagaṃ bhavanti*

"It is by adopting the centre that the limbs of the image become harmonious"

VSU, 6.11 and 6.13

48 S.Kramrisch, Indian Sculpture. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981) p. 58.

49 *vṛttaṃ iti viśvaṃ, tad rūpa prāṇaḥ, yathā puruṣasya manah sa vṛtta-kālaḥ eṣa vāstu vede*

"The circle is the All. The breath of life is contained in its form even as the mind is in Man. The circle is Time according to Vāsturveda"

VSU, 2.6 gloss

50 A.Boner, Principles of Composition in Hindu Sculpture. (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1962) p. 46

51 K.Vatsyayan, p. 48.

52 *ibid*, p. 49.

53 *ibid*, p. 49

54 *ibid*, p. 56.

55 VSU, p. 18.

56 VSU, p. 111.

57 *tatva-rekhāvlambane rūpātmapratyakṣaṃ bhavati pratirupe cā*

"By depending on the essential lines the soul of form becomes manifest."

VSU, 2.21 gloss

58 VSU, 1.7 gloss

59 R. Lannoy, The Speaking Tree. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 29.

60 *ibid*, p. 21.

61 *ibid*, p. 24.

62 A. Coomaraswamy, pp. 136-37.

63 *ibid*, p. 126.

66 R.Lipsey, (editor) Coomaraswamy. 1:Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) p. 174.

67 *ibid*, p. 152.

68 K.Vatsyayan, p. 12.

"The Kena Upanisad (1.1) while urging the pupil to go and seek beyond the reach of the eye, the ear, the speech or the touch, describes this absolute Brahman, as the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, speech of the speech, life of the life (Breath), the eye of the eye, and yet beyond all this."

69 VSU, 5.21

70 H.Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation. (New York: Harper Torch Books, The Bollingen Foundation, 1946) p. 41.

71 *ibid*, p. 286.

72 S. Kramrisch, Indian Sculpture. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981) p. 132.

73 *yajñasya śulvasāadhanam śilpa rūpasya sādhanam*
iti

"Sulva is the discipline for sacrifice, silpa is the discipline for image making"

VSU, 4.9

74 *rūpa-jñānād yajñah prabhavati loke*

"It is from the knowledge of form that sacrifice originates in the world."

VSU, 6.25 gloss

75 *yat kiñca vācā tad rūpeṇa vijñānavācā prapannena ācaranti. sa evaṃ veda*

"Whatever one attains through [sacred] word the same they can attain through form."

VSU, 4. introduction

76 *evaṃ ārohaṇe rūpaṃ dhyeyaṃ*

"Thus form is to be meditated upon as a means of spiritual ascent."

VSU, 5.17 gloss

Here, it is to be noted, we have departed from the original text. The text uses the word *aropane* which would mean 'superimposition'. We have taken it to read *arohane* which

means 'spiritual ascent'.

77 VSU, 2.10 gloss

78 *lakṣaṇa-prakāśārthanśilpavidyā*

"The science of sculpture is mainly to manifest the attributes (of the deities as revealed in the myths)."

VSU, 6.3

79 VSU, 3.1 gloss

80 VSU, 6.15

81 *sa esa rūpaprājña brahma sākṣātkāra ānandaḥ iti*

From understanding the image [comes] the very realisation of Brahman

VSU, 6.15 gloss

82 *yathā brahṇavidyā tathā rūpaprājña*

"The higher and ultimate understanding of artistic form is none other than metaphysics."

VSU, 2.10 gloss

83 *kāraṇudra rūpasya bhāvaḥ jñāpayati*

"Hand gestures manifest the emotional attitude of the image."

VSU, 6.16

84 *bādhrāḥ balāḥ jñāpayati rūpe*

"The weapons communicate the power of the figure."

VSU, 6.17

85 VSU, 2.22

86 VSU, 3.1

87 VSU, 3.13

88 *rūpadhārāya vṛttirīti śreṣṭhā*

"It is the form that transforms the mind."

VSU, 6.24

89 *hetuḥ tadākara*

Form indeed has a reason.

Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa. Third Khanda, Priyabala Shah (editor), (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1961), 46

CHAPTER 4. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF AESTHETICS.

"bhogo yogāyate sākṣāt pātakam sukṛtāyate,
mokṣayate ca saṁsārah kuladharmē kuleśvarī"
Kulārṇava Tantra. 2/24

Chapters two and three explored the dynamics of the *rasa* and *rupa* experience, with the emphasis on the art object, as exemplified by *kāvya* and *śilpa*. It was shown how these art forms, which are repositories of artistic information, yield this information to the aesthete. The emphasis in the preceding

two chapters was primarily on the art object. This chapter will examine the epistemology of aesthetic experience and shift the attention from the art object to the aesthete. We are concerned here with the processes that occur in the mind of the aesthete who receives and responds to the *dhvani* of the art object.

In applying epistemological methods to the examination of aesthetic experience, our purpose is to expand and clarify our argument that aesthetic experience is a form of intuitive knowledge.

1. METAPHYSICS AND AESTHETICS IN THE INDIAN TRADITION.

Both aesthetic emotion and aesthetic form in the *mārga* Hindu tradition, are artistic creations, created within the strict confines of the tradition, embodying in the one case a feeling; and in the other a vision, giving outer expression to a sense of beauty and delight, exalting the senses and leading, almost demanding, the aesthete to enter into his inner resources, to bring the experience to a transcendent culmination. Śrī Aurobindo is right in saying that: "the whole basis of Indian artistic creation perfectly conscious and recognised in the canons, is directly spiritual and intuitive", and that "its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine."¹ He further comments that the Indian artist does not depend on "an idea in the intellect, a mental imagination, an outward emotion" but instead dips into an

"idea, image, emotion of the spirit." He continues, "This is the distinctive character of Indian art and to ignore it is to fall into total incomprehension or into much misunderstanding...And it is because of this that the ordinary aesthetic instinct will not suffice, a spiritual insight or culture is needed if we are to enter into the whole meaning of Indian artistic creation."²

Sri Aurobindo's statement has been given in full because it emphasises that the word 'meaning' or *artha* sums up the entire undercurrent of the *mārga* artistic activity. Aesthetic meaning is to be grasped not by the intellect but by direct intuition; and, unless the aesthetic emotion or form is propelled to its ultimate meaning, the artistic encounter remains sterile, incomplete and superficial, perhaps not moving beyond a hedonistic experience. Hiriyanna puts it succinctly when he says that "the beautiful as a value needs to be striven for and achieved (*sādhya*) no matter whether one approaches it as an artist or as a spectator."³ Thus, the creation and appreciation of beauty in art is, in essence, the intuitive understanding of the meaning of the art object, and such understanding is a discipline or *sādhana*. Stated differently, it is the function of the aesthete to seek and realise artistic meaning.

A sound epistemology of aesthetic experience must be grounded in a metaphysics that provides first, a firm support for

objective experience as exemplified by aesthetic experience, and second, an ontological basis for affirming creativity and creation as values that are not denied or negated at any point. We need to place art experience within the orbits of a system of thought that gives credence both to the creator as well as to the connoisseur, the artist as well as the aesthete, art creation as well as aesthetic experience. In the major *darśanas* or schools of Indian philosophy, the question of the relationship between the subject and the world of objective experience is set within the framework of the quest for ultimate Reality. Radhakrishnan sums up the problem when he says, "When we divide the subject from the object the question of building the bridge from one to the other becomes difficult. Either we have to hold that the object is the creation of the subject or that there is no object at all."⁴ The epistemology of aesthetics must not only provide an understanding of objective experience as exemplified by art experience, but at the same time, explain creation and creativity.

Art precedes aesthetics, and the proper understanding and realisation of what is created cannot be done in isolation from the creative process itself. The major schools of Indian thought set their examination of the nature, value and significance of creative processes also within the framework of the quest for ultimate Reality. From our perspective, it is important to note that a metaphysical system which considers creative processes to

be either ultimately unreal or of little value cannot provide a firm basis for artistic experience. We have already pointed out that Abhinavagupta and many aestheticians who followed him, found in Kasmir Saivism a firm metaphysical basis for their aesthetic theory. In this chapter we will show that Kasmir Saivism, both in its metaphysics and its epistemology, offers a strong support to artistic experience, both for the artist and the aesthete.

Abhinavagupta maintains that the schools of Realism, which include Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsa and Cārvāka, cannot provide a satisfactory basis for art. It is true that all these schools of thought, except Cārvāka, accept consciousness as an ultimate metaphysical category, but they do not perceive creativity to be an ultimate value within consciousness. In Sāṃkhya, for example, all creative processes stemming from human consciousness, including art creation, are seen as happenings within *samsāra*, governed by *kārmic* or current psychological causes. If pushed, this school may offer a psychological explanation for the artist's activity, but it does not perceive conscious acts of creativity to be of any ultimate value for the soul, the *puruṣa*. Abhinavagupta takes the position that for those who are content with the superficial and the momentary, these Realistic systems of thought are ideal. He implies that, for those who seek to give an ultimate meaning to the objective world, as exemplified by art, these schools of thought will not suffice. ▢

From the Idealist schools of thought, we only need to consider seriously the epistemology of Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, for this was the exalted system of Indian thought in Abhinavagupta's time, and still is. The Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmaṇuja is an important school of thought, as far as Hindu aesthetics is concerned, for it gave a prominent place to *kavya*, *saṅgīta*, *nṛtya* and all forms of visual art within the auspices of the temple. Chronologically, Rāmaṇuja came much later than Abhinavagupta and therefore, we do not have Abhinavagupta's evaluation of Viśiṣṭādvaita and of the practices of *bhakti* associated with this school of thought. From our perspective, Rāmaṇuja's system offers only qualified support for a yoga of art. The major obstacle in Rāmaṇuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, from the aesthetic point of view, is the fact, that for Rāmaṇuja, *bhakti* is the overriding modus operandi, and all experiences must be subordinated to it. A pure aesthetic experience, devoid of *bhakti*, would be unacceptable to Rāmaṇuja. However, it is to be noted that Viśiṣṭādvaita, considered purely as a metaphysical system, can offer a firm ontological basis for establishing the ultimate value of aesthetic experience. Viśiṣṭādvaita affirms the reality of the world and the validity of objective experience, by regarding this world as the 'body of God'. It establishes the value of all creative processes by granting them an ontological basis in the creative energy of God. And, above all, it grants ultimate value to

beauty by perceiving it to be an essential attribute of God. But, by the same token, in practice, the followers of Rāmānuja insist that the perception of beauty should be subordinated to *bhakti*, thereby denying the possibility of developing aesthetic experience as a *sādhana* in its own right. And in this lies the problem for aestheticians.

2. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF ŚĀṆKARA.

Śāṅkara recognises the objective world of name and form as provisionally real, and further recognises that the perception of this objective world is a function of all beings. For Śāṅkara, this world of manifold perceiving subjects, and objects of perception, has no existence apart from Brahman. In his metaphysics, Śāṅkara recognises the world as provisionally real, and in his epistemology, he strongly argues that the world of objects is not a creation of the subjective mind, thereby distinguishing his view from that of the *Vijñānavādins*. Nevertheless in the end, he would have us insist that the universe is ultimately unreal, an appearance maintained by ignorance (*avidyā*), and superimposed on Brahman. Correspondingly, in his epistemology, there is a sharp break between the perception of objects and the knowledge of Brahman. To use his own analogy, there is no way, whereby the truth of the rope and the illusion of the snake, can be upheld at one and the same time. In the light of ultimate truth the reality of the

universe is contradicted and consequently, objects of perception are divested of ultimate value. The mind that rests in the contemplation of Brahman and the universe of objects are "adrift like two logs in the ocean." never to meet again. From the perspective of Abhinavagupta's criticism, there are major problems in accepting Sankara's metaphysics as a framework for aesthetics. Sankara's *mayavāda* ultimately rejects the world of objects and, therefore, cannot give ultimate value to the art object. Further since Sankara's Brahman does not include the world of objects and is essentially passive and *nirguṇa*, as a consequence, all creative processes, whether in material nature or in human consciousness, including art objects, are relegated ultimately to the status of *māyā*.

3. THE TĀNTRIC EPISTEMOLOGY.

Abhinavagupta worked within the framework of Kāśmīr Śaivism, for it was important for him not only to enunciate his theory of aesthetics, but to show that art was a form of higher realisation. He found in the metaphysics of Kāśmīr Śaivism the most suitable framework for his theory of aesthetics. Kāśmīr Śaivism is a generic term for a number of heterodox, advaitic systems of thought brought together under the umbrella of Śaivism. Believed to have been systematised and developed in the Kāśmīr valley, in the tenth century, it had a number of exponents, but the high priest of them all was Abhinavagupta. It

is not necessary to outline this system of thought in any great detail, in particular we need not consider its rituals and cults. Our interest lies in its epistemology, with special reference to aesthetic experience.

4.1 THE CONCEPT OF ĀBHĀSA.

The transcendent godhead of Kashmir Saivism, called *Parāśarīd* or *Anuttara* resembles the Brahman of Sankara, and is something about which nothing can be said, an entity therefore beyond words. The Śaiva śāstras declare that "it is undefinable in terms of everyday life,"⁷ which is similar to the Vedāntic declaration that, "there the eyes do not reach, neither speech, nor the intellect."⁸ However the fundamental difference between the two systems is that Kashmir Saivism does not recognise the *māya* of Sankara but instead postulates the concept of *ābhāsa*. Etymologically meaning "reflection", Abhinavagupta defines *ābhāsa* as "all that appears, all that forms the object of perception or conception, all that is within the reach of the external senses or the internal mind, all that can be said to exist in any way and with regard to which the use of any kind of language is possible, be it the subject, the object, the means of knowledge or knowledge itself, is *ābhāsa*."⁹ Several metaphysical implications follow from the concept of *ābhāsa*. First and foremost, *ābhāsa* affirms the reality of the manifested world, without

negating the non-duality and the transcendence of the Absolute. *Ābhāsa* allows differentiation without duality and affirms the ultimate reality and value of creation without compromising the integrity of the creator. The Śaiva śāstras explain the significance of *ābhāsa* with the analogy of one flame lighting another, where the first flame remains intact when the second arises, and both flames are identical in essential nature, though manifestly distinguishable. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad hints at the concept of *ābhāsa* when it declares, "That is whole, this is whole; from the whole the whole becomes manifest. From the whole when the whole is negated, what remains is the whole."¹⁰

The concept of *ābhāsa* is central to Tantric epistemology, and it enables one to understand creativity and the understanding of what is created as an integral activity. It is *ābhāsa* that assures the ontological bonafides of the art object. The concept of *ābhāsa* signifies for the Kāśmīr Śaivas that the world-manifestation arises out of a free and a spontaneous creative activity, *spanda* in the Absolute. Furthermore, *ābhāsa* connotes that creativity is the spontaneous self-expression or self-projection of the Absolute: the created world displays the very nature of the Creator. In Kāśmīr Śaivism, therefore, creativity of all forms is of ultimate value because it has its ontological basis in the Absolute. The concept of *ābhāsa* or emanation has, as its correlative, the idea of levels of reality. Each lower level is a manifestation

or *ābhāsa* of the one above it. All the levels are correlated and at each level a form of differentiation is displayed without the negation of non-duality. At every level there is the differentiation into subject and object, but this differentiation is based in, and unified by, the non-duality of consciousness. In this sense *ābhāsa* signifies the "self-projected reflection of consciousness"¹¹ In making it dependent, ontologically on consciousness itself, *ābhāsa* is not an illusion but like a "dream within a dream."¹² The analogy of a dream should not be taken as a reversion to the *śāyāvāda* of Śāṅkara, or as the espousal of subjective-idealism. For Kāśmīr Śaivism, this universe of individual subject and objects is the true self-expression or real emanation of the consciousness of Śiva. In this sense the world is Śiva's dream. Similarly, the subjective awareness and objective experience of the individual is the dream of self-expression of individual consciousness. The individual's 'dream' is included and transcended in Śiva's dream. In questioning the reality or otherwise of *ābhāsa*, the Tāntric would argue, "are you real?"¹³ For if you are real, the Tāntric would argue, the *ābhāsa* is also real. As Tagore writes, "the fact of their [the art objects] existence enkindles in us the awareness that we also exist."¹⁴ The reality of the objective experience reinforces the perceiver's subjective reality, in proclaiming its own reality, the art object encourages a realisation of the aesthete's reality. This onus in

the dialectic about reality, for the Tantric, is on the subject and not the object, objective experience merely reinforcing subjective reality. The concept of *ābhāsa* implies that the artist's creative self-expression is a reflection or a manifestation, at the human level, of Śiva's creative self-expression. As the world reflects Śiva's consciousness, so the art object reflects the consciousness of the artist. The aesthete's enjoyment of art is a reflection of Śiva's spontaneous enjoyment of the world.

What is noteworthy in the Tāntric argument is that at no stage does it allow any sense of duality, for the Tantrics argue that, "any sense of duality in an experience is a source of ignorance."² No level of experience is abandoned as untrue, no type of experience is negated; every experience, on the other hand, is included and transcended in a higher level of experience, every level of *ābhāsa* used to activate the otherwise passive self.

4.2 THE AHAM AND THE IDAM.

The immanent godhead of Kāśmīr Śaivism is termed *prakāśavimarśanaya* indicating that the Absolute is now beginning to display its two constituent parts, which were preserved in potentia in the transcendent state as unity-in-diversity; *prakāśa* also called Śiva tattva or *Aha* signifying self-awareness or the sub-stratum of

manifestation, and *viśarśa* or Śakti tattva or *Ida*, denotes that power of manifestation which gives rise to self-awareness, will, knowledge and action. Stated differently, *prakāśa* is the 'I' and *viśarśa* the 'myself', both being held in dynamic equilibrium, an example of reflexive consciousness, which is a cardinal feature of this variety of Indian thought. *Viśarśa* or reflexive consciousness is the active component of the immanent godhead, as compared with *prakāśa* which is the passive and dormant. It is *viśarśa* that provides content to what would otherwise be an empty godhead. The Kāśmīr Śaivites point out that *viśarśa* acts spontaneously and with freedom, it possesses not an act of will but play, not the expression of a lack, but the display of fullness, its action termed *kriyā* or *spāṇḍa*, meaning spontaneous action rather than *karma* or volitional action. The concept of *viśarśa* is the key to the understanding of not only creativity and creation on the one hand, but the appreciation of what is created, or aesthetics on the other. In making *viśarśa* a part of the immanent godhead the Kāśmīr Śaivites opened the door to objective realisation as a form of higher experience. *Viśarśa* is no *māyā* or illusion, it is real. At the human level, constituting what the Vedantins would call the *ātman*, the same *prakāśaviśarśanaya* principle operates at the core of the human personality, with one important difference, namely that *prakāśa* which is of the essence of

knowledge at the human level, is not capable of self-awareness, since it is dormant, and therefore needs the activity of its *vimarśa* aspect. While the cosmic Śiva is capable of self-knowledge and does not need objective realisation, the Śiva tattva at the human level is dormant without its Śakti. In making *vimarśa* an integral part of the *ātman* or the core of the human personality, Kāśmīr Śaivism opens the *ātman* to the world and provides it a window to embrace and entertain all forms of worldly experience. Herein lies the fundamental difference between this system of thought and Advaita Vedānta, for Śaṅkara's *māyā* which is the operative principle of worldly experience, would have no place in the *ātman*. The Śaivites then go a step further and emphasise that since *prakāśa* at the human level is not self-aware of its luminosity and essentially dormant, but becomes so only on account of it being awakened and aroused by *vimarśa*, the more the *vimarśa* is active the more self-aware will the *prakāśa* be. Pandey remarks that the "phenomenon of knowledge is not the result of mere existence of the subject and the object but that of the unification of the two by relation of identity, *tadātmya sambandha*."¹⁴ This not only encourages, but makes it mandatory for the self to seek out, participate and indulge in worldly experiences, rather than turning the back on the world, as the Advaita Vedāntins would have us do.

4.3 COGNITION IN INDIAN EPISTEMOLOGY.

We now turn to the cognitive process with the purpose of establishing that aesthetic awareness is not merely an emotive experience, but a process of knowledge, which has the capacity not only of grasping nuances of meaning but of expanding into the realisation of ultimate Reality. Cognition in Indian epistemology begins and ends with the cognising self. The first step in this process is the wish to perceive the object. The next step, the actual process of cognition is likened to a ray of light that leaves the subject, reaches the object and is reflected back to the cognising self giving rise to an image. The first cognitive experience is a superficial, dim and tentative experience of the object and is called an indeterminate experience or *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*. After the object has been dimly cognised a determinate experience or *savikalpa pratyakṣa* takes place, where, "there is a union of the subjective and the objective wave of consciousness in the sea of the all inclusive universal consciousness."¹⁷ In other words, Kāśmīr Śaivism maintains that the cognitive process is more than what it appears to be. In the final analysis, cognition is a super-sensuous experience, *anubhava*, which implies "the subject becoming what the object is."¹⁸ To use the Indian idiom, 'you do not just cognise the jar but you become the jar'. This is the basic framework of cognition in most Indian system of thought and one that applies to any objective experience, in any

individual, aesthete or otherwise. In an aesthetic experience, it is at the stage of the *savikalpa pratyakṣa* that *dhvani* comes into play, for without it, it would remain a mere intellectual activity. For *dhvani* may begin with aesthetic reasoning but ends with a suprarational aesthetic experience. It is here at the level of *savikalpa pratyakṣa* that both *rasadhvani* and *rupadhvani* lead to a progressive realisation of the particular art experience, the cognising mind experiencing layer upon layer of *rasa* and *rūpa* like "the needle that goes through a pile of lotus leaves,"¹⁷ each step producing a subtler, more refined, universally expanded and extended experience. It is here that *rasa* is tasted, it is here that *rupaprajña* or the inner sense of form is revealed. The suggested meanings or resonances revealed by the art object are grasped by direct intuitive insights at this stage, these insights becoming more profound as they move through the resonances. It is to be noted that the attitude of the perceiving mind and what it puts into the cognitive process, is an integral part of determinate perception. *Savikalpa pratyakṣa* calls into play the various aesthetic faculties of the aesthete, faculties acquired by *śikṣa* or training or by *samskāras* or latent inherited psychic impressions. It is here that the *gāthas* and the *kāthas* have their full import, the aesthetic *pramāṇas* are translated into their metaphysical counterpart, and the suggestiveness of *dhvani*

comes into full play. Hiriyanna notes that, "the *savikalpa pratyakṣa* is a matter of observation and is given in introspection. We become aware of it not as it arises but in a second knowledge termed *anuvyavasāya*"²⁰. The Kāśmīr Śaiva interpretation of the cognitive process provides the epistemological framework to explain the union of the aesthete and the art object. Thus *savikalpa pratyakṣa*, rendered as a multi-layered, open-ended cognitive step, becomes vital to the development of an epistemology of aesthetics.

4.4 BHOGA AS A COGNITIVE PRINCIPLE.

It is important to note that, while *savikalpa pratyakṣa* as a cognitive process is common to all Indian systems of thought, Kāśmīr Śaivism stresses it to bring out the full objectivity of the experience. It is this multi-layered, open-ended cognitive step that is utilised to realise the full impact of *dhvani* in an art experience. What is more important however is that Kāśmīr Śaivism permits this *savikalpa pratyakṣa* to proceed to a higher realisation, without sacrificing any of its objective content. In other words Kāśmīr Śaivism shows the way how cognition can be transformed into a yoga, how objective (rather than subjective) contemplation leads to higher realisation, how an art experience is converted into the yoga of art. At no step in the epistemology of Kāśmīr Śaivism is the objectivity of the experience lost. The subject

embraces the object, not only to enjoy it, and fully realise it, but to transform this cognitive process into an act of higher realisation, a process called *bhoga* in Tāntric terminology.

Kāśmīr Śaivism was developed in the intellectual and cultural ambience of the Tāntric tradition, from where it inherited the idea of *bhoga*. For Tāntrists *bhoga* is knowledge, *bhoga* is yoga, and conversely there can be no yoga without *bhoga*. Tāntric yoga is therefore essentially a type of *jñāna* yoga. The Kulārṇava Tantra clearly says that, "O' Kuleśvari, in this path of Kula, the objective worldly enjoyment becomes the means of yoga; what is normally taken as vice becomes a virtue, and the world which is ordinarily a cause of bondage becomes a means of liberation."²¹ It is made amply clear that the purpose of *bhoga* is sublimation leading to *mokṣa*, for *bhoga* arises from, and leads to, the higher self, leaving no room for a hedonistic interpretation of *bhoga*. It is only when *bhoga* is truncated from the higher self, introducing a sense of duality, that it becomes hedonistic and materialistic, for as Misra points out, *bhoga* implies "being seated in the transcendent Self enjoying the pleasure of the Self and not the enjoyed object, or enjoying the pleasure of the Self through the object."²² Tāntric *bhoga*, while giving validity to the objective world, shifts the emphasis from the object to the subject, just as, to use a Tāntric analogy, the enjoyment of the light of the moon is not

right until one realises that the light of the moon does not belong to it but really to the sun. The Light of lights is the immanent godhead, Śiva-Śakti, through whom all subjective-objective experience becomes possible. The Tāntrics remind us that "the moment the attention is turned from the Self to *bhoga*, it is a fall."²³

We have shown that, in the Tāntric *sādhana*, enjoyment and knowledge are held together so that our experience of the world of objects becomes the means of the realisation of Śiva as the ultimate subject. One more aspect of *bhoga* remains to be discussed, namely the inseparable association of enjoyment with tranquility, *bhoga* with *viśrānti*. Abhinavagupta argues that the cognitive process, which moves out towards the knowledge and enjoyment of objects, is not complete until it is reversed so to speak, and brought to rest in the knowing subject. This signifies that all objective knowledge culminates in a deepening awareness of the subject and of the significance of subjectivity. This culminating moment of resting in the subject is technically called *viśrānti*.

It is for this reason that that the concept of *bhoga* is described as "*asidhāravrata*"²⁴ or moving on the edge of a sword. *Bhoga*, which take place at the stage of *savikalpa pratakṣa*, ensures two things; firstly that the object is fully and properly enjoyed (cognised), and that secondly that this cognition is brought to rest by the process of *viśrānti*.

Abhinavagupta describes the process of cognition thus:

As for the knower, when he attends to an object and says I have known this object, he takes delight in the object, having freed himself from desire and possessiveness, and he then rests in himself. Therefore even from the encounter between the knower and the object, there arises the fullest delight from the complete and ultimate knowledge of that object.²⁰

Tantric cognition implies a complete and total understanding of the objective experience as presented by the object, and ensures the "destruction of the sense of the not-self, not being the self."²¹ Applying this to the *rasa* and *rūpa* experiences it suggests that *bhoga* means a total, deliberate and penetrating aesthetic realisation rather than a mere superficial aesthetic appreciation, and calls into play the total commitment of the aesthete. The Tantric epistemology of *bhoga*, therefore, shows the process of removing the duality between the object and the subject, making the object ontologically a part of the subject. Unlike subjective Idealism, this process does not obliterate the identity of the object, but merely brings it together. *Bhoga* ensures that the subject and the object will not be "adrift like two logs in the ocean".

4.5 VISRĀNTI, A CULMINATION OF BHOGA.

If a full, and total cognition of the object is the afferent aspect of *bhoga*, *visrānti* is its efferent aspect. *Visrānti* or rest, implies resting the *vīkārśa* on the *prākāśa*; rest understood not in a physical or psychological

sense, but a psychic or spiritual rest, where every trace of duality in consciousness has ended. Aesthetically speaking, it can be said that *viśrānti* means that there is no more searching for meanings, no more the quest for symbolic significance, no more does the mind wander with the *gāthas* and the *kathas*, no more the play of *rekhā*. In the words of Tagore, "From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to thee."²⁷ *Viśrānti* is this "last meaning," *viśrānti* is the bliss of aesthetic experience, *viśrānti* is the bringing together of Śiva and Pārvatī.²⁸ At this point there arises the "fullest delight from the complete and ultimate knowledge of that object."²⁹

Savikalpa pratyakṣa at this stage of *viśrānti* gives way to *savikalpa jñāna*, or *saṁādhi*, which is knowledge of the ultimate subject. It is important to point out that in this culmination of objective experience the objectivity of the object is not lost, but merely brought into dynamic harmony with the essential consciousness of the experiencing subject. Up to this point aesthetic appreciation has been an intellectual process, beyond this it moves into the suprarational. Aesthetically speaking, *viśrānti* is the suprarational realisation of the triune unity, without any trace of duality, of beauty as presented by the art object, the individual self and cosmic Śiva, a realisation that beauty is none other than Śiva. It is

viśranti that applies the "collyrium paint of wisdom (to) grant glorious vision to the eyes,"³⁰ to bring a realisation that beauty is Truth, that *rasa* and *rūpa* are nothing but *brahmānanda*. It is this feature of Kāśmīr Śaivism that sets it apart from Advaita Vedānta, for, in the latter, objectivity is a hindrance rather than a help in an *ānanda* experience.

Epistemologically, *prakāśa* or dormant self-luminosity and *vimarsa* or an active display of self-consciousness are inseparable, like Śiva and Pārvatī, and it is only in that state of unity and full activity of both that there can be *ānanda* or bliss. The process of *viśranti* not only assures the culmination of cognitive experience in *ānanda*, but at the same time removes the gulf between the subject and the object, so that the subject looks upon the object as "identical with one's own self." It is for this reason that Kāśmīr Śaivites consider cognition a recognition, and this system of thought is also sometimes called *pratyabhijñā* or remembrance. It is, as it were, the cognising self, as a result of the cognising experience, remembers the identity between the subject and the object which has existed all along, but which was hidden. In this sense, it can be said that the aesthetic experience has not added any new knowledge, but has merely uncovered existing knowledge.

5 COGNITION IN A JIVANMUKTA.

Aesthetically, the question arises whether every form of cognition leads to *ānanda*. Abhinavagupta states that, "to the liberated in life the entire objective world appears as a mere reflection on the self, and therefore, as really non-different from it."³¹ "He looks upon the entire objective world that is reflected on him as his own manifestation."³² Such a person is a *jivanmukta* and to such a person the diversity of the objective world which is ordinarily looked upon as bondage, appears as identical with one's own self. In the case of such a person even the cognition of an earthen jar would lead to *ānanda*; the aesthete however would need an encounter with *rasa* and *rūpa* to lead him to *rasananda* and *rūpānanda*. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it is said that *rasānanda* resembles *brahmānanda*, like a twin brother, but is not identical with it.

6. TOWARDS A YOGA OF ART.

The origins of yoga are pre-historic but it was Patañjali who systematised the concepts and objects of yoga. Although when it comes to its methods and ultimate objectives, Tāntric yoga parts company from Patañjali's yoga. Patañjali's yoga calls for the eventual withdrawal from the objective world and can be termed the "yoga of alienation", while the Tāntric yoga is the "yoga of integration."³³ Tāntrists have no difficulty in accepting

the basic postulates of Patañjali as preparatory steps. Patañjali worked within the Sāṃkhya tradition and the end point of his yoga was *kaivalya* or *kevala Puruṣa* or a state in which the *puruṣa* is self-contained and uninvolved with *prakṛti*. *Kaivalya* is said to be a state of pure consciousness, transcending the duality of subjective and objective modes of experience. This position is obviously unacceptable to Tantrists for whom the objective experience is a means of realising the transcendent subject.

Abhinavagupta regards six components as essential to his yoga, viz. *prāṇayāma* or breath control, *dhyāna* or contemplation, *pratyāhara* or restraint, *dhāraṇa* or concentration, *sattarka* or logic and *samādhi* or the merging of the consciousness with the Ultimate.³⁴ Abhinavagupta eliminates *yama* or self-control, *niyama* or ritual observances and *asana* or postures from the basic eight of Patañjali. Thus contemplation, restraint and concentration form a part of the Tāntric yoga. Aesthetically speaking, it emphasises the basic discipline required of an aesthete, who approaches the art experience, with a sense of dedication and purpose, devoid of egoity and after proper preparation. Any superficial or hedonistic artistic activity would not qualify for a true aesthetic experience in the *mārgi* tradition. The disciplines prescribed by Abhinavagupta have much in common with the disciplines prescribed for the aesthete in the *mārgi*

tradition. The non-acceptance of *yama* or self-control by Tantrists is not hard to understand, as Tantric yoga requires a seeking out, embracing and participating in objective experiences and not an introspective withdrawal which is a feature of Patanjali's yoga.

The main feature of distinction between Tāntric yoga and Patāñjali's yoga is the concept of *sattarka*. It is *sattarka* that brings about self-recognition, by uprooting the apparent distinction between the subject and the object, grasping "the true subjective nature of what appears to be objective."³⁵ *Sattarka* is the understanding that in every act of cognition the subject projects itself into the object, so that objective experience is always a reflection of the nature and attributes of the subject. In Tāntric yoga it is *sattarka* that permits a seeking out of objective experiences and making it a part of higher realisation. Lest it be felt that every objective experience, irrespective of its quality, becomes a *bhoga*, Tāntrists are quick to point out the concept of *apūrṇakhyāti* or incomplete knowledge. Aesthetically speaking, while there is no illusion in art experience, there is always the risk of an incomplete art experience. To be more specific it would suggest that to be content with a superficial *rasa* or *rūpa* experience without an unfathoming of the *dhvani* would be an *apūrṇakhyāti*. Built into the Tāntric epistemology is the step-ladder approach of knowledge to greater

knowledge, a position particularly suited to Indian art that incorporates *dhvani* as its principal artistic technique. Nothing is rejected and nothing is negated, by the Tantrist as he embraces art experience and elevates it to its ultimate, by penetrating the surface to arrive at the deeper - who tastes emotion only to transform it into *rasa*, who is not content with mere form, *rupa*, but seeks its inner sense, *rūpaprāñña*. It is only *apūrṇakhyāti* that would introduce a sense of duality in the art experience, and duality is the very source of ignorance for the Tantrists say, "it is the sense of duality that becomes an obstacle in (right) knowledge."³⁴

7. BHOGA AS YOGA.

The term *bhoga*, even within the Tāntric tradition, is capable of several interpretations. Although we have restricted its use to aesthetics, for a Tāntrist, any objective experience that leads to a higher realisation can be called *bhoga*. For those who prefer to follow the Tāntric rituals, the *pañcamakāras* or the five 'Ms' (women, wine, meat, fish and gestures) become *bhoga*. Since the corner-stone of Tāntric yoga is *bhoga*, and ~~*bhoga* itself is so protean~~, no consistent definition of yoga is possible in the Tāntric framework. Mishra is right in pointing out that "unlike the yoga *sūtras* of Patañjali there is no systematic treatise on the Tāntric yoga"³⁷ Different interpreters of Tantra offer

various definitions. Mishra suggests that Tāntric yoga is the "unfolding of the Kundalini."³⁰ Abhinavagupta in the Tantrasāra states that "yoga is a form of experience which is of the nature of perceiving unity with that form"³¹, that form referring to the ultimate nature of Śiva. Tāntric śāstras, as opposed to Patañjali's yogasūtras, remain rather imprecise about yoga, and leave its concepts rather amorphous.

Tāntra has been called the right system for the present age or Kali yuga. It has been said that, "in the Kali age the fool who seeks to attain *siddhi* by the paths shown in other śāstras is like a thirsty man who digs a well on the very banks of the Jahanvi."⁴⁰ For no other system can incorporate *bhoga* or pleasure and *moksa* or liberation, no other ideology can claim to be "*bhukti-muktikarāṇica*"; and no other practice would "make it possible to attain in one life or in one week that which was rarely attained even by Devas like Indra."⁴¹ There is yet another reason why Tāntric yoga is the yoga for this age. The Tāntrolokaviveka states, "[Tāntric yoga] permits one to be a Kaula within, a Śaivite outside and a Vaidika amongst the people, like a coconut which keeps its nectar-like juice hidden inside."⁴² This sūtra brings out at least two important features of Tāntric yoga. Firstly, the *sādhaka* is enjoined to keep the Tāntric practices personal and private, almost a secret to himself, making this kind of yoga a private rather than a public yoga. Secondly, it

permits the *sādhaka* to be an eclectic, and prevents his aesthetic *sādhana* from being a cult. Thus a practitioner of the yoga of art has indeed great freedom; he need not change his outward religious and social practices, and does not get into any conflict with other traditions. It is for this reason that aesthetics does not set up any social and sectarian boundaries. Thus *bhoga* leads to freedom without necessitating withdrawal from the world. This signifies that, by accepting the Tāntric principle of *bhoga* the artist and the aesthete alike, can aim to develop a life-style of personal and artistic freedom and yet lay claim to an exalted state of being.

In conclusion, we return to the question with which we began our inquiry. Can aesthetic experience be seen as an independent form of yoga? The concept of *ānanda* pervades the entire Upaniṣads and Bharata hints at the exalted nature of *natya* when he says that, "what final goal the scholars of Veda reach, what final goal the performers of *yajña* reach, what final goal the benefactors reach, that same goal is attainable (by the *Natyasāstra*)". He has further said that "the gods will not be propitiated as much when they are worshipped with sandal and garlands as they will be when they are by the praises contained in the enactment of the drama."⁴³ However it remained for mediaeval aestheticians like Abhinavagupta to fully expound this view that art experience points to a transcendent goal. Understood in this sense one is able to affirm the Upaniṣadic

mahāvākya: 'tat tvam asi', 'that thou art', through the yoga of art.

While art in India is pre-historic and has had an almost unbroken tradition through millenia, aesthetics came into its own only with the Tāntric aestheticians. Not only did Tāntric aestheticians legitimise aesthetics as a form of higher realisation, but they succeeded in giving aesthetics a status of its own, independent of religious implications, the term 'religion' being used in a ritualistic sense. Aesthetics for the Tantrists and specially the Kaśmīr Śaivites, was an artistic truth to be realised through a process of knowledge, and not as an appendage of *bhakti*, as it in fact became when the *bhakti* cult spread across the country in mediaeval India.

The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra which elaborates on the "tatasthalaksana Brahman" or the Brahman that is objectively realised from its earthly forms, clearly states, "That same Brahman which is known from His external signs...for those who would know Him through these external signs, for them Sādhana is enjoined."⁴⁴

"That is, the same Brahman, who may be known in Its inner nature by the real or direct knowledge (sva-rupa-jnana) of Self, may also be apprehended through the senses, from Its manifestation in the created world." Thus Tāntra does not disclaim the introspective contemplation of the self as advocated by Śāṅkara and Patañjali, but points out that objective contemplation based on sensory experience, or *bhoga*, can also lead to the same

results. Following Abhinavagupta, there were a spate of aestheticians, who wrote exhaustively on various aspects of aesthetics, and it would not be wrong to say that in mediaeval India there was more aesthetics than art in India.

8. MODERN INDIAN AESTHETICIANS.

Of the modern Indian aestheticians there are two worthy of special note, namely, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore. It is they, from amongst many others, who have preserved the Indian tradition of keeping aesthetics within the realm of philosophy rather than art history. They themselves were artists first and aestheticians next. On examining their ideas it is interesting to note that the influence of Tantrism on them seems obvious. It is important to stress the contribution of these modern aestheticians, in order to show that the influence of Tantrism was not just short lived or local, but has fully pervaded Indian culture. When Tagore says, "I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the pearl of the formless" ⁴⁰ or "Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs." ⁴¹ or "In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless", ⁴² he is defining the basic postulate of Tantric yoga that one may ascend "from form to formless." And then again when Tagore says that, "deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight. No I will never shut

the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight,"⁴⁸ he indeed is speaking of *bhoga*.

In opting for *bhoga* as a sustained aesthetic principle, the door opens up for breaking away from tradition and bringing in its wake the acceptance of modern and secular art. For *bhoga* lays down no *grahāṇās*, knows no limits, accepts no barriers and works without boundaries. Tagore says this in no uncertain terms:

Art is not a gorgeous sepulchre, immovable brooding over a lonely eternity of vanished years. It belongs to the procession of life, making constant adjustment with surprises, exploring unknown shrines of reality along its path of pilgrimage to a future which is as different from the past as the tree from the seed."⁴⁹ "If today we have a living soul that is sensitive to ideas and to beauty of form, let it prove its capacity by accepting all that is worthy of acceptance, not according to some blind injunction of custom or fashion, but in following one's instinct for eternal value."⁵⁰

Sri Aurobindo has stressed the suprarational nature of art creation and art appreciation:

But as with truth of religion, so with the highest and deepest truth of beauty, the intellectual reason cannot seize its inner sense and reality...its secret inner law of beauty and harmony... can be seized by vision, not by intellectual analysis; great art...seeks for a deeper and original truth which escapes the eye of the mere sense or the mere reason...Where the greatest and most powerful creation of beauty is accomplished and its appreciation and enjoyment rise to the highest pitch, the rational is always surpassed and left behind."⁵¹

Indian art, from its pre-historic beginnings to its contemporary state has evolved and changed, but yet remains a palimpsest, where the past is not totally erased, it is a *sangam* where folk and classical traditions have mingled, an upside down tree "*urdhva√ula*"⁸², which has sent its branches in every direction in a celebration of life, but has kept its roots above. Aesthetics, in the *Margi* Hindu tradition is the domain of the "supra-rational aesthetic soul"⁸³, and "to find highest beauty is to find God."⁸⁴. We have given an exalted position to art and aesthetics in India, for it was none other than Bharata who said that "music and singing are more holy and beneficial than thousands of religious baths and incantations."⁸⁵

Art in India is a spiritual adventure, driven by a quest for delight and indeed a yoga.

NOTES

¹ Sri Aurobindo, The Hour of God and Other Writings. Centenary Edition, Volume 17, (Pondichery: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1971) p. 198.

² *ibid*, p. 211.

³ M. Hiriyanna, Art Experience. (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1954) p. 23.

⁴ K.C. Pandey, Abhinavagupta An Historical and Philosophical Study. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963), p. 401.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 382.

⁶ S. Radhakrishnan (editor), A Source Book in Indian Philosophy. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 509-543. This chapter on 'The Non-Dualism of Sankara' is taken from the The Vedanta Sutras with the Commentary by Samkracarya, translated by George Thibault.

Sankara's position has been explained at length as Abhinavagupta directed his critique mainly at Advaita Vedanta.

⁷ *na vidyate uttaram praśnaprativacorūpaṃ yatra*
"it is undefinable in terms of everyday life."
Para Trimsika Vivarna, 19. in K.C.Pandey, p. 321.

* *na tatra cakṣur gacchati na vāg gacchati na mano na vidho na vijānīno...*

"There the eyes do not go, neither the mind, nor the intellect..."

Tavalkaro Upaniṣad. 1.3 in K.C.Pandey, p. 323.

† K.C.Pandey, p. 320.

¹⁰ *pūrṇam adah pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate.
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam eva avaśiṣyate*

"That is whole, this is whole; from the whole the whole becomes manifest. From the whole when the whole is negated what remains is again the whole."

This is an invocatory verse from the Upaniṣads. Swami Chinmayananda includes it in Discourses on the Chandogya Upaniṣad. (Madras: Chinmaya Publication Trust, date not given) p. 67.

¹¹ K. Mishra, Significance of the Tantric Tradition. (Varanasi: Ardhanarisvara Publications, 1981) p. 135.

¹² *ibid*, p. 135

¹³ Personal communication from Prof. Kamalakar, Mishra.

¹⁴ R. Tagore, On Art & Aesthetics. (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961) p. 108.

¹⁵ *dvaitaprathā tadajñānaṁ tucchatvad bandha
ucayate*

"This apprehension of duality is the real illusion (or ignorance)"

Tāntrāloka. 1/30 in K.Mishra, p. 136.

¹⁶ K.C.Pandey, p. 417.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 412.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 412.

¹⁹ *padma pātra sata vyati bheda nayena*

"a needle going through a pile of lotus leaves."

This original quotation by Abhinavagupta has been quoted in turn by all major commentators including Mammata and Visvanatha. see Mammata, Kāvyaaprakāśa. Vol 1. (ed.) R.C.Dwivedi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967) p.62.

²⁰ M.Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1932) p. 251.

²¹ *bhogo yogāyate sākṣāt pātakam sukṛtāyate, mokṣāyate
ca saṁsāraḥ kuladharmā kuleśvarī.*

"O! Kuleśvarī, in this path of kula, the objective worldly enjoyment becomes the means of yoga, what is normally taken as a vice becomes a virtue, and the world, which is ordinarily a cause of bondage, becomes a means of liberation."

Kulārnava Tantra. 2/24 in K.Mishra, p. 49.

²² K.Mishra, p.79.

²³ K.Mishra, p. 79.

²⁴ K. Mishra, p. 79.

²⁵ K.C.Pandey, p. 539.

²⁶ *ātmani ātmabhāvo vilīyate*

"destruction of the sense of the not-self, not being the self."

Abhinavagupta, Tantrasāra. (Bombay: Nirnayasagar Press, 1918) 5.40

²⁷ R.Tagore, Gitanjali. (London: Macmillan, 1967), song # 75.

²⁸ Indian artists have artistically depicted the concept of *prakāśavimarśanaya* by showing Siva and Parvatī as a couple in love.

²⁹ K.C. Pandey, p. 539.

³⁰ J. Woodroffe, Principles of Tantra Part I (Madras: Ganesh & Co. Private Ltd., 1969) p. 94

³¹ K.C.Pandey, p.688.

³² K.C.Pandey, p. 688.

³³ K.Mishra, p. 139.

³⁴ K.C.Pandey, p. 538.

³⁵ K.C.Pandey, p. 535.

³⁶ *dvaitpratha tadajñānam tucchatvād bandha ucyate*

"it is the sense of duality that becomes an obstacle in (right) knowledge."

Tantrāloka. 1/30 in K.Mishra, p. 136.

³⁷ K.Mishra, p. 142.

³⁸ K.Mishra, p. 142.

³⁹ *tat svarūpaṃ anusandhāna atma vikalpa viśeṣo
yogaḥ*

"yoga is a form of experience which is of the nature of perceiving unity with that form [of Siva]"

Abhinavagupta, Tantrasāra. 4.27

⁴⁰ J. Woodroffe, Principles of Tantra. Vol 1. p. 115.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 114.

⁴² *antaḥ kaulo bāhi śaivo lokācare tu vaidikaḥ,
sarmadaya tiṣṭheta nārikelaphalaṃ yātha.*

"[Tantric yoga] permits one to be a kaula within, a Saivite outside and a Vaidika amongst the people, like a coconut which keeps its nectar-like juice hidden inside."

B.N.Pandit, Aspects of Kashmir Saivism. (Srinagar: Utpal Publications, 1977) p. 230.

⁴³ *ya gatiḥ vedavidusaṃ yagatiryaññākārināṃ ya
gatirdanasalināṃ taṃ gatiṃ prāpnuyāt hi saḥ.*

"what final goal the scholars of Veda reach, what final goal the benefactors reach, the same goal is attainable by [the Nāṭyaśāstra]."

Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra. 37.27

*na tatha gandhamdyena devaḥ tasyati puṣṭaḥ. tatha natya
prayogasthaiḥ nityaṃ tasyati manglāḥ*

"the gods will not be propitiated as much when they are worshipped with sandal and garland, as they will be when they are by the praises contained in the enactment of the drama."

Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra. 37.29

⁴⁴ J. Woodroffe, The Great Liberation. Mahanirvana Tantra. (Madras: Ganesh & Co. Private Ltd., 1963) pp. 32-33.

⁴⁵ R.Tagore, Gitanjali. song # 100.

⁴⁶ *ibid*. song # 101.

⁴⁷ *ibid*. song # 96.

⁴⁸ *ibid*. song # 73.

⁴⁹ R.Tagore, On Art & Aesthetics. p. 62.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 61.

⁵¹ Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971) pp. 137-135.

⁵² S. Radhakrishnan, (translator), The Bhagavadgita. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1960) 15.1 "As the tree originates in God, it is said to have its roots above." p. 326.

⁵³ Sri Aurobindo, The Hour of God and Other Writings. Centenary Edition, Volume 17. p. 224.

⁵⁴ Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle. p. 135.

⁵⁵ *snāna jāpya sahasrebhayah pavitraṃ gitavāditaṃ*
"music and singing are more holy and beneficial than
thousands of religious baths and incantations."
Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra. 36.26

EPILOGUE.

If the turn of the present century was an axial period for Indian aestheticians, who led a renaissance in the visual and performing arts, the present period for Indian art, marked as it is by art festivals and glossy art books, seems to be characterised by a certain superficiality and a drifting away from its roots. What was once the preserve of the cave temples is now displayed in exhibitions, what was once in the hands of *rsis* and *kavis* seems to have been taken over by art historians. Increased awareness of Indian art seems to have been at the cost of a proper understanding of its methods and meanings. Art appreciation seems to have replaced art experience. It is important to state this to provide a backdrop for the present inquiry, which endeavours to put classical Indian art in its proper perspective. Towards this end, this inquiry is a small but original contribution.

The inquiry has been an undertaking to demonstrate that aesthetic experience in the classical Indian tradition, on its own merit, without being subordinated to rituals and practices commonly held under the rubric of religion, is capable of providing a transcendent experience to a prepared aesthete. Two major art experiences, in the *mārgi* tradition have been

chosen, and it has been demonstrated by presenting their dynamics, that each leads the aesthete to a higher experience. From the perspective of its dynamics, it has been shown, that *dhvani* or the transformation of meaning, is the central artistic device of classical Indian art. It has been further demonstrated, that from amongst the schools of Indian thought, Kaśmīr Śaivism provides the legitimacy to aesthetic experience, and within its framework, art experience can be understood as a form of yoga. Ontologically, Kaśmīr Śaivism affords a reality to art objects and art experience alike. Epistemologically, Kaśmīr Śaivism, points to the twin concepts of *bhoga* and *viśrānti*, as essential for a yoga of art. It is important to point out that in opting for Kaśmīr Śaivism as a school of thought, within which to understand art experience, one is not committed to the rituals and practices of either Kashmir Saivism in particular or Tāntrism in general.

The creation and realisation of art, has been and will remain, in the Indian tradition, an exalted experience, consorting with every aspect of Indian life, but yet at the same time retaining its freedom, for itself and its followers.

- GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT WORDS

A

abhidha expressed meaning of words
 abhasa in Kasmir Saivism: reflection
 abhigamana going to (a place of worship)
 adikavi first poet in the Indian tradition viz. Valmiki
 adisilpi the first or pristine sculptor
 advaita non-dualism
 agama the Tantric texts
 aham in Kasmir Saivism: the Siva tattva, the 'I'
 alankara ornamentation
 alaukika other worldly, supra-mundane
 amurta formless
 anadhyavasaya uncertainty
 ananda bliss
 aniyata not fixed
 anubhava experience
 anuttara transcendent godhead
 apurnakhyati incomplete knowledge
 artha meaning
 arca worship
 atman individual soul or essence
 avastha state of being
 avidya metaphysical ignorance

B

badhra weapon
 bahya akarsana outer attraction
 bhakti devotion
 bhavana revelation
 bhoga enjoyment
 bhranti erroneous cognition
 bija seed
 bindu centre
 brahman ground of all being, not an object of worship but
 rather of meditation and knowledge
 brahmananda bliss of Brahman

C

caṣatkāra wonder
 cittavistāra expansion of consciousness
 chandas metre, rhythm
 chandamaya full of metre
 chitra painting

D

darsāna vision, applied to school of philosophy
 deva god
 deśī folk
 dhāraṇa hold
 dharmā moral order
 dhīya thought vision
 dhvani reverberation
 dhvanivādin advocate of the dhvani theory
 dhyāna contemplation
 dīpa lamp
 druti fluidity

G

gathā story
 ghaṭa pot
 guṇas qualities

H

hr̥d heart

I

idaṃ in Kasmir Saivism: the Shakti-tattva, the 'myself'
 iṣyā offering through worship
 itihāsa history

J

jīvanmukta liberated in life
 jivātman individual soul
 jñāna knowledge

K

kāma desire
 kaivalya Sāmkhya term for spiritual freedom
 karma volitional action
 kathā story
 kavi poet
 kavitaḥṛīja seed of poetry
 kāvya poetic composition
 kevala only
 krīḍā play, sport

kriya spontaneous act

L

laksana mark, attribute, metaphor
lokānurañjakam secular entertainment
laukika secular

M

madyabindu centre point
maheśvara another name for Śiva
manisa intuitive reflection
manas mind
mandala circular diagram
mantras sacrificial formula, mystical verse, incantation
mārgi classical
maya illusion
māyavādin those who advocate the maya doctrine
mokṣa spiritual freedom
mudra hand gesture
mukhyārthabādhā breakdown of primary meaning
mūrti image

N

nada sound
nāgarika urban elite
nāṭya dance drama
nirguṇa without qualities
nirvikalpa indeterminate, devoid of concepts
niṣpatti manifest, born, bring about
niyatā fixed
nr̥t̥ya dance

P

pāñcamakara the five gestures of the Tāntrics
parāśarīd in Kāśmīr Śaivism: the transcendent godhead
parāmatman cosmic soul
parokṣa symbolic
pramāṇa source of right knowledge
prāṇoda pleasure
prajāpati lord of creation
prakāśa light, refulgence
prakaśavimarśanaya in Kāśmīr Śaivism: the twin concepts of
prakaśa or self-awareness in dormancy and the *vimarśa* the
 outgoing consciousness, held in dynamic harmony
pratibhā poetic genius, creativity
pratyabhijñā recollection
pratyahāra withdrawm of the senses from external objects
prāṇa life breath
prīti pleasure

pūja worship
 purāṇa ancient text
 puruṣa The universal Being, literally that which resides in a body, visualised both as an anthropomorphic cosmic Being and the unrevealed universe.

R

raga passion
 rasa aesthetic emotion
 rasadhvani a suggested aesthetic emotion
 rasika aesthete
 ratha chariot
 rekhā line
 ṛṣi sage
 rūpa form
 rūpasaubhāgya harmonious form
 rūpadhvanī suggestiveness in form
 rūpakāra one who makes rupas
 rūpaprājña intuitive understanding of form

S

śabda word
 sādhana discipline
 sadhāranīkaraṇa generalisation (of emotions in poetry)
 ṣaḍaṅga the six limbs
 sādṛśya correspondence with reality
 sādhya that which is to be accomplished
 saḡuḡa with qualities
 śakti energy, the female principle of Siva
 samādhi state of deep meditation
 saṡlakṣyakrama of perceptible sequence
 saṡskāra latent psychic impression
 saṡvega aesthetic shock
 saṡga confluence
 saṡgīta music
 saṡsārika secular, wordly
 saṡyagjñana correct knowledge
 śanta peaceful, quiescent
 śārūpya similarity of form
 śāstra a scientific treatise
 sattarka in Kasmir Saivism: that principle which brings about self recognition by removing the distinction between the subject and object.
 sattva purity
 savikalpa determinate knowledge
 shraddhā commitment, faith
 sharaṡāgati surrender (to a higher Being)
 siddhi spiritual accomplishment
 śikṡa training

śilpa sculpture
śilpa pañjara the cage or grid of sculpture
spanda in Kāśmīr Śaivism: spontaneous creativity
sthūla gross
sthāpaka priest
sukṣma subtle
śulva sacrifice
śūrūpa pleasing or perfect form
sūtra aphorism
svādhyaya chanting to oneself
svaprakāśa self-awareness
svargya heavenward

T
tala rhythm
tanmayībhāva total identification
tattva essence

U
udgītha Vedic priest
upāya means, method
upādāna offering in ritual worship

V
vak Divine word
vakrataḥ indirectly
vastu architecture
vacyartha expressed meaning
vedi sacrificial altar
vidyā knowledge
viñāṇa secular knowledge
vikāśa expansion
viśarāṣa in Kāśmīr Śaivism: outgoing consciousness
viśrānti rest
viśtāra enlargement
visvarūpa the cosmic form
vṛtta circle
vyangyārtha suggested meaning

Y
yajña sacrifice
yama restraint
yantra instrument
yoga yoking the individual soul with the Universal Soul
yuga aeon

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