

**The Basic Principles of Satyam (Truth) Śivam (Godness) and Sundaram (Beauty) an Ideational Background of Indian Aesthetic Contexts in Religious and Cultural Aspects.**

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**Abstract:** The Indian theory of aesthetics in religious and cultural aspects is deeply rooted in the triple – principal of Satyam (Truth), Sivam (Goodness / Auspiciousness) and Sundaram (Beauty). We believe that this phrase Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram express beautifully a special confluence of the devotional, the erotic – sensuous, and the real. 'Satyam' is the truth value; 'Sivam' is the good value & 'Sundaram' is the beauty value. This study try to identify the concept of Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram, as a cornerstone of Indian Aesthetics contexts in religious and cultural aspects. Indian aesthetics is a well-experimented psycho-analytical process of judgment. Indian logic postulates the perception of (i) The mundane (laukika), or perceptible by sense organs, and (ii) super sensuous (yauḡika) or realizable introspectively. The classification of arts in Indian tradition is based on different aesthetic senses in Religious and Cultural Aspects. Amongst the senses that lead to aesthetic experience are vision (dṛśya) and (Hearing-śravya). Architecture, sculpture and painting originate from vision, and music and poetry originate from hearing and theatre from the two together. Indian aesthetics have given birth to a distinct approach to Truth and Art. This phenomenon has prompted many scholars to commonly categorize the thought of Eastern cultures into the genre of "Oriental Thinking", the general essence of which is the spiritual understanding of Truth. But the emergence of what came to be termed as aesthetic and art appreciation during the modern age, in the west, and particularly during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was an unprecedented development in the history of Indian aesthetics. During this period, ideational background of aesthetics, that was in earlier times simply used as one of the paths of discovering reality, now comes to be applied subjectively and took on the external form of human emotion and creative expression. This fresh approach, in turn, gave rise to the emergence of new theories and the development of various styles of art in the Indian aesthetic contexts of religious and cultural aspects.

Keywords: Aesthetics; Aspects; Beauty; Culture; Religion

## **Introduction**

Aesthetics may be seen as forming part of a rich and ancient tradition of Indian literary criticism. This ancient Indian esthetic tradition is difficult to be understood unless it is examined in its relation an ideational background rooted into Vedic and Āgamic tradition as well as different schools of Indian philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Aesthetic has played an important role in the development of many elements of religion, architecture, sculpture, iconography, paintings fine arts, the logy and philosophy in India.

India is one of the oldest countries with great cultural tradition. Its aesthetic tradition goes back to hoary past, of which we can get an idea from the archaeological or literary sources.<sup>5</sup>

Casting a glance at the Indus valley cultures and civilization, the date of which is generally accepted to be 3000.B.C. We find that many of material arts, such as architecture, sculpture, paintings, pottery, smithy etc, were then well – known as is made evident by archaeological find such as fort of backed bricks and mortar, terracotta human and animal figurines, seals, bearing effigy of bull and legend, copper mirror, antimony stick, shell spoon, bangles, rings painted etc.<sup>6</sup>

In Hinduism, God is some distant, austere, disciplinarian ruler of the universe who causes devotees to shudder in awe. Instead he is thought of as an intimate and loving master who is extremely beautiful and loveable. This is also the case with most of the popular deities of the Hindu pantheon who are the administrators for the supreme.<sup>7</sup>

Historically, Indian have applied aesthetic principles even in religious rituals. The Indus valley people worshiped their deities with dance. Vedic fire altars were constructed according to aesthetic norms. Ṛgvedic poetry, sound in praise of various forces of nature, personified as gods with human- like forms, is rich in aesthetic value, as are the astronomical calculation, which have been long used ascertain proper time to begin various religious and secular functions. Āgamic works on Śaivism and Śāktism contain wonderfully rich and beautiful

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<sup>4</sup>Kamalesh Datta Tripathi, "A Note an Ideational Background of Indian Aesthetics" published in Indian Art: Forms Concern and Development in Historical Perspective, ed.B.N.Goswamy, p.121

<sup>5</sup>Kanti Chandra Pandey, Comparative Aesthetics vol, II, p.513.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid,514

<sup>7</sup>Pandit .B.N. Specific Principles of Kashmir Śaivism, p.116.

descriptions of different Āgamic deities. It is indeed difficult to find any āgamic deity who does not possess some powerful aesthetic charm for the devotee. Further, the aesthetic value of objects to be offered during the worship of these deities is such an important aspect of the Āgamas that some otherwise prohibited offering and rituals have been freely prescribed.

Aesthetically pleasing practices of song, music, and dance become very popular in Vaiṣṇavism in the medieval period. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* is a typical example of this era. Ajanta testify to the importance attached to beautiful religious images in India during the Buddhist age.<sup>8</sup> Ancient temples and images please like khajuraho display a highly developed aesthetic sense in the art of stone carving.

The aesthetic outlook of Indian philosophers and theologians reached its full expansion in the Tantric system of spiritual practice (*sādhanā*). *Vāmacāra*, a typically tantric system of theology, prescribes the use of various objects pleasing to the senses that are otherwise totally prohibited in Brahmanic Hinduism. Because these objects and rituals were pleasing to the senses, the system was given the name *vāma*, as the basic meaning of the word *vāma* is "beautiful", as in *vāmāṅgī* (a lady with beautiful form), *vāmalocanā* (having beautiful eyes) *vāmoru* (with beautiful things) and so on.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these highly sophisticated and esoteric practices of tantric theology, there are other aesthetically pleasing aids to the spiritual life which have held a prominent place not only in Śaivism and Śāktism, but also in other branches of Hinduism. For instance, since the earliest periods of Indian history, music has been considered an important element in spiritual practices (*sādhanā*). Chanting of mantras from the *Sāmaveda* has been popular with spiritual aspirants since early Vedic times. Song and dance were popular with the pre-Vedic Indians of Indus Valley civilization. In the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* music of the *vīṇā* is described as a powerful aid in realizing the highest Truth<sup>10</sup>. Music and song are still a central part of the spiritual practice in Śaivism. Aesthetics may be seen as forming part of a rich ancient tradition of Indian literary criticism. This aesthetic aspect is difficult to be understood unless it is

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p.117

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p.118

<sup>10</sup>*Yājñavalkyasmṛti* , 111.115

examined in its relation an ideational background rooted into Vedic and Āgamic tradition as well as different schools of Indian philosophy.

### **Religion and Arts**

Śaivism as a religion has persisted since the prehistoric time of the archaeological finds of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. It has a continuous history of at least five thousand years. The phallic emblem of Śaiva, as found in the Indus valley cultures and civilizations is now well admitted.<sup>11</sup>

The relation between Śaivism and the arts of architecture and sculpture seems to have existed even in the prehistoric time. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that there was a Śaiva art-tradition, in accordance with which the temples and images were built and made. The fact that there is no record of this tradition as old the Ṛgveda, available at present, is indeed to be regretted very much. But after the preceding discussion on the relation between Śaivism and arts, it will not be unreasonable to suppose that whatever may have been the later interpolations in the Śaivāgamas, as we find them today, and howsoever late in our opinion may be the form of language in which we find them written, they present basically the original Śaiva art – tradition.<sup>12</sup> If we accept the view, presented above, the Śaivāgamas are to be accepted to contain the earliest art – tradition in India so far as the arts of architecture and sculpture are concerned. For many of the available Śaivāgamas, Kāmika, Kāraṇa, Suprabheda etc are divided into four parts,

- i. Jñāna
- ii. Yoga
- iii. Caryā
- iv. Kriyā

And the last deals with the technique of building temples and sculpturing images on less than with that of constructing dwelling of different types. The treatment of

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<sup>11</sup>Ancient India: Bulletin of Archaeological Survey of India , p.76.

<sup>12</sup>Kanti Chandra Pandey, Comparative Aesthetics, vol II, p.521.

the subject is very detailed and compares well with that found in such work on architecture as Mayamata, Mānasāra, Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāta etc.<sup>13</sup>

Further, other fine art also, such as music, dance, acting etc, are closely related to Śaivism. In early Śaivism there was no bifurcation between religion and philosophy. In fact the religious practice (Vidhi) was one of the categories recognized in early dualistic Pāśupata system, which flourished before the commencement of the Christian era. And in the Lakulīśa in the first half of the second century A.D as is evident from the epigraphically evidence, the five primary categories of the earlier Pāśupata system are retained as is clear from the Pāśupata Śūtra of Lakulīśa. Here we find instructions regarding the religious practices of Śaivas. The devotee is enjoined to dance and to sing, standing to the south of the image with face turned towards the North. He is also enjoined to act as a lover at a public place. Thus, we find that fine arts of architecture, Sculpture, music, dance and acting are very closely related to Śaivism from a very early time.<sup>14</sup>

The Indian theory of aesthetics is deeply rooted in the triple – principal of Satyam (truth), Śivam (Goodness / Auspiciousness) and Sundaram (Beauty). We believe that this phrase Satyam, Śivam, Sundaram express beautifully a special confluence of the devotional, the erotic – sensuous, and the real. It is important to realize that there is no rigid distinction between them, as there is in some of the western tradition.<sup>15</sup>

This distinction between what is sacred and what is not sacred, understood from this perspective does not hold everything – all life – is sacred. Some people choose to see this concept of Satyam, Śivam, Sundaram as a colonial import, but really all these words occur in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads.

The beauty is not so much an intellectual understanding as an emotional experience. Therefore the concept of beauty, the perceptions of beauty, the manifestations of beauty and the descriptions of beauty. Either in words or in a painting or in sculpture, being a matter of human experience have a continuity with the past. In fact, beauty has been a constant

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid p.522

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p.523

<sup>15</sup>Kamalesh Datta Tripathi "A Note on Ideational Background of Indian Aesthetics" In Indian Art, Forms and Concern and Development in Historical Perspective ed.by B.N.Goswamy PHISPC, Centre for Studies in Civilization, Vol VI, Part 3, New Delhi, pp.199-200

factor and salient feature, not only in ours, but in many other civilizations. However the Indian civilization is remarkable in that it has specially and explicitly linked these three cardinals' ideas together in phrases such as Satyam, Śivam, and Sundaram or sat – cit – ānanda.

In the Pan Indian philosophic thought the term 'Satyam Sivam Sundaram' is another name for the concept of the Supreme. 'Satyam' is the truth value; 'Sivam' is the good value and 'Sundaram' is the beauty value. Man thought his 'Sravana' or education, 'Manana' or experience and conceptualization and 'Sādhana' or practice, through different stages of life (Āśramas) comes to form and realize the idea of these three values to develop a value system. This value – system helps us to develop two basic ideas 1) that of 'Dakṣa' or the adept/expert and 2) of Mahana/Parama or the Absolute and thus to judge anything in this universe in the light of these two measures, known as 'Ādarśa'. A person who has mastered great amount of knowledge of the grammar, rules, and language of an art-form are adepts (Dakṣa), whereas those who have worked through the whole system and journeyed ahead of these to become a law unto themselves is called a Mahana. Individual idea of 'Dakṣa' and 'Manana' is relative to one's development of the concept of 'Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram'.<sup>16</sup> For example, Tagore's idea of these two concepts should be way above any common man's and many perceive Tagore as a 'Manana' Artist in the realm of literature. This concept of Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram, a kind of Value Theory is the cornerstone of Indian Aesthetic contexts in religious and cultural aspects.

### **Objective of this Study**

The purpose of this research is to shed light on an area of Indian theory of aesthetic thoughts in Sanskrit which is often talked by Sri Lankan authors. The objective of this research is to emphasize on the structure and contribution of Indian aesthetics as a well-experimented psycho-analytical process of judgment and as a science and theory of Beauty and fine arts and Hindu civilization in religious and cultural aspects.

### **Significance of this research**

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<sup>16</sup>Kanti Chandra Pandey Comparative Aesthetics, Western Aesthetics Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 2Vols.p. 76.

Nowadays the concept engagement with environment basically relays on the commitment to the socio-economic development of the communities surrounding with operations goes hand-in-hand with ensuring that the natural environment in which they live and work is healthy and well-conserved. Harmony in each aspect makes every effort to ensure this concept. Harmony's responsibility to care for the environment surrounding its operations extends beyond the life of every human beings. Objective of the human life depends on life satisfaction and inner manners. Aesthetic as a discipline is the science of perceptible forms and account for nature, source, purpose and creative process of art. But its central concern is the nature and source of art experience.

Traditionally, in west, Beauty has been the defining parameter of aesthetic experience. Aesthetics basically being the science of perceptible forms, it should not surprise us that India has not had a science (śāstra) of Aesthetics. How can a cultural community that holds the object of perception, the appearance of things, abhasha mantra, as only a part, the ephemeral part, of the total reality develop a science of perceptible forms? Even Plato that beauty, does not, cannot, belong to the appearance of things. In the west, this parameter of Beauty has had a turbulent history particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – with Ruskin's moral imperative contending against Bentham's utility parameter. The Aesthetics movement culminated in the modernists, the Great moderns, with the aesthetic values becoming super – ordinate and replacing the religious / moral values. This study emphasis that the Indian theory of aesthetics is deeply rooted in the triple – principal of Satyam (truth), Śivam (Goodness / Auspiciousness) and Sundaram (Beauty).

### **Methodology**

Basically critical analytical method which is conducted to provide a better understanding of a literature is used in this study. Using qualitative measuring, it is hoped to explore important facts related to the Indian theory of aestheticsexplained in this study. Using descriptive research method, identified elements of Indian theory of aestheticswere discussed in detail for the depth understanding of the concepts.

### **Findings - Three Main Streams**

Indian aesthetics has three main streams:

#### **i.Literature and poetics**

ii. Drama and dramaturgy

iii. Fine arts and sculpture

But its scope circumscribe almost all the branches and sub-branches of Indian Arts, Crafts, Science, Literature, etc., which entertain our sense organs, satisfy our mind and convey happiness to our soul. All sorts of literature – Prose, Poetry, Criticism, Drama, Dramaturgy, Dance, Music, both vocal and instrumental, Painting and also allied faculties, which convey joy to an aesthetic. It can also be anything, which is sweet, bright, beautiful and true in the phenomenal world, even in dream and imagination, because in ecstasy paramount of good and absolute happiness 'Supreme' reigns.<sup>17</sup>

### **The World of Aesthetics**

The word 'aesthetic' in its original Greek from (aisthetikos) means anything that is connected with perception by senses. Interestingly, to feel or to perceive is more or less the common characteristic of all the Indian philosophies (darśana). Indian Darśana is something, which draws its references from the "seen", the real world, whereas philosophy (Phil+Sophia are assumed) draws its references from assumed content. Aesthetics is not an independent system of Indian philosophy. The former is regarded as the kingdom of the heart and the latter as the realm of the head. Indian aesthetics is supernatural and divine, and to some extent super sensuous also. It may not be always justified by logical propositions. The elements of Indian aesthetics find their roots deep down in the mystic esoteric concept of "Two – in – one", and unveil the secret of how does one's own soul should look back at the "Paramount Soul" face to face. But Indian philosophy is natural mundane and justifiable by logical maxims. It is to convert the pain and suffering into pleasure and peace; the poison into nectar and mundane life into a divine hermitage.<sup>18</sup>

The word aesthetics is usually translated in several Indian languages as saundaryāśāstra, beauty or saundarya. It does not seem to be a crucial term or concept in any of the major aesthetic theories of India, except the alaṅkāra school. (for instance, saundaryāmalaṅkāraḥ the well – known phrase of Vāmana). Apparently, beauty was neither

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<sup>17</sup>Kapil Kapoor "Soundarya and Indian Aesthetic" In Soundarya, The Perception and Practice of Beauty in India, ed. by Harsha.V, Dehejia, Samvad Indian foundation, New Delhi, p.104

<sup>18</sup>Karmarkar A.B the Religion of India, Lonvala, India, Vol I.p.100.



understood as an essential or necessary component of the art experience nor was it considered a pre – requisite to any work of art. Its presence was instead taken for granted in much of the artistic and daily activity of people.

Ananda or even sat, seem to be key terms in the history of Indian Arts. Because the artistic experience is considered to be non-dualistic, the question of whether beauty is objective or subjective is also usually ignored. The aesthetic and the spiritual are kin, not identical (brahmānanda sahodarah). With this both the autonomy and the loftiness of the aesthetic domain is at once ensured. Traditionally, the art experience is primarily thought of as emotional, leading to a heightened and surcharged state of mind or consciousness. Saundarya is not a necessary ingredient or trigger for such an experience of sublimity. That is why what may be termed as the deliberate and self – conscious – ugliness of some of modern art does not automatically falsify these traditional theories.<sup>19</sup>

### **Psycho – Analytical Process**

Indian aesthetics is a well-experimented psycho-analytical process of judgment. It is understood today as a science and theory of Beauty and fine arts. Indian logic postulates the perception of (i) The mundane (laukika), or perceptible by sense organs, and (ii) Super sensuous (yaugika) or realizable introspectively.

It assures super-sensuous taste in relishing aesthetic beauty and bliss. It is not only concerned with the problem of beauty but also with the question of art and the enjoyment in art.<sup>20</sup> The classification of arts in Indian tradition is based on different aesthetic senses. Amongst the senses that lead to aesthetic experience are vision (dṛśya) and (hearing-śravya). Architecture, sculpture and painting originate from vision, and music and poetry originate from hearing and theatre from the two together.

### **Aesthetic Value**

The thinkers and philosophers have always found themselves preoccupied with questions like – (i) what is the essence of beauty? (ii) Can aesthetic values really be defined? – And with many other intrinsic inquiries, to which they have offered a range of answers

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<sup>19</sup>Majumdar.R.C The History & Culture of the Indian People, The Struggle for Empire Vol.V.p.316

<sup>20</sup>Makaran Paranjape “Forward” in Saundarya, The Perception and Practice of Beauty in India, ed.by Harsha.V.Dehejia, Samvad Indian foundation, New Delhi, P.40.

according to their individual trends of thought and the dictates of their times. The theoretical understanding and evaluation of such inquiries can certainly throw light on the different periods of the history of art and on the ways in which the works of various artists/scholars of arts are distinct/ different from each other. An artist acquainted with the fundamentals of essential inquiry as well as with the trends of the artistic thought in the history of art, could go a long way in paving the path for fresh, new expressions and innovations in this field. An Artist's concepts of beauty and aesthetic values are automatically and strongly influenced by his/her way and level of thinking.<sup>21</sup>

### **Truth and Arts**

Indian artists have given birth to a distinct approach to Truth and Art. This phenomenon has prompted many scholars to commonly categorize the thought of Eastern cultures into the genre of "Oriental Thinking", the general essence of which is the spiritual understanding of Truth. But the emergence of what come to be termed as aesthetic and art appreciation during the modern age, in the West, and particularly during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was an unprecedented development in the history of art. During this period, the idea of beauty, that was in earlier times simply used as one of the paths of discovering reality, now came to be applied subjectively and took on the external form of human emotion and creative expression.

### **Conclusion**

This fresh approach, in turn, gave rise to the emergence of new theories and the development of various styles of art. This new development in the west that gave birth to the emergence of an innovative kind of essential inquiry based on aesthetics seems to have resulted in the illusion.<sup>22</sup> This concept of Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram, a kind of value theory is the cornerstone of Indian Aesthetic of religious and cultural aspects.

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<sup>21</sup>Max Müller History of Sanskrit Literature, p.204.

<sup>22</sup>Malla.B.L "Beauty in Indian Art", In Appreciation of India Art, Ideal and Images, ed.C.P.Singh, P.U.C. Dwivedi, Indian Art History congress, first, published, Guwahati, Assam, Pp.48-49.

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