

## An Overview Of Aesthetics In The Select Verses Of Bhrathiyar And Vairamuthu

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**Article History:** Received: 11 January 2021; Revised: 12 February 2021; Accepted: 27 March 2021; Published online: 23 May 2021

**Abstract :** Crafting of beauty is tapas and the artist who crafts it is a yogi and there is no hiatus between the mundane and the divine. The wafer-thin line between the gross and the subtle gets blurred raising one to the level of *yogi*. This paper entitled “An Overview of Aesthetics in the Select Verses of Bharathiyar and Vairamuthu”, gives a bird’s eye view and delineates how a heightened form of perception and sensitivity is needed to enter into aesthetic rapture. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy and it is closely associated with art. As a science it is the science of perceptible forms and accounts for nature, source, purpose and creative process of art.

**Key Words:** Aesthetics, Rasa, Art, Beauty, Nature

### 1. Introduction

The word *Aesthetics* is derived from the Greek word *aisthetikos* meaning ‘of sense perception’. Most of the scholars believe that aesthetics is a sub discipline of axiology. Axiology is the study of the nature of value and valuation, and of the kinds of things that are valuable. Arts may be poetry, music, dance, literature and so on. It can be divided into several categories like performing, literary and plastic arts. Art is a kind of human creativity that may be formed by human experience of thought, emotions and feelings and is also an activity of expression and communication. The concept in the human mind or the pre-conceived notion is expressed through communication. In the words of Sri. Aurobindo,

The poet has in him a double personality, a double instrument of his response to life and existence. There is in him the normal man absorbed in mere living who thinks and feels and acts like others, and there is the seer of things, the supernormal man, the super- soul or delight- soul in touch with the impersonal and eternal fountains of joy and beauty who creates from that source and transmits by its alchemy all experience into a form of the spirits’ Ananda. (Aurobindo 410)

Any creation of art first disturbs the original state of that particular art to create something new. Anything can be created in the world from a prominent and original state whatever it is. According to Immanuel Kant, a German Philosopher, aesthetics is a unitary and self-sufficient type of human experience. As aesthetics is the theory of beauty and art, Kant proposed that theory of pure beauty has four aspects. They are,

“It’s freedom from concepts, its objectivity, the disinterest of the spectator, and its obligatoriness” (Tiwary 3).

Aesthetic quality and the meaning vary from people to people. It may be the significance of its content, interest among the audience and readers, the creative nature of its forms and the different artistic taste of the audience. Shiv Shanker Tiwary in his work *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* says that, Art not only draws interest of the pleasure but also includes hobbies, travels and sports. He says that when a work of art is expressed it should have some moral considerations and ethics. In sports, travels and hobbies there may or may not be any moral values. It may be a person’s personal qualities but in poetry, art and literature there are certain prominent and valid points regarding moral ethics.

Aesthetics, the traditional form of art criticism, takes into account the conceptions of the artist and the history of the traditions and the culture in which the artist lived and worked. Tiwary further adds that the functions of art can be divided into three groups relating to

Representation, Expression and Form. Art involves in the catharsis or purgation of the emotions and is appreciated according to the taste of the audience and their responses. According to Tiwary, “Creation is not a process, but a public achievement it is a matter of breaking the tape ahead of others in a certain race” ( Tiwary 15).

Aesthetic considerations of the visual arts are closely associated with the sense of vision. There are various categories of art like digital art, maps, marketing, music, performing arts, literature, gastronomy, Information technology, mathematics, Industrial design, architecture and interior design, urban life, landscape design and fashion design. In Tiwary’s point of view, art is a heightened form of perception, and it is called Taste, Sensitivity or Judgment.

Shaftesbury is considered to be the first of the intuitional writers on beauty. He says that the principle of beauty is perceived only with the outer sense of the humans but also with the internal or moral sense. This idea of Shaftesbury leads one to attain spiritual enjoyment, the true delight. Each and every work of art is unique and art may be direct and thrilling. Based on the manner of presentation, Kant has categorised all fine arts into the art of speech, arts of visual form, and music.

According to Dr. Patankar, Aesthetics in the West is an age-old game. The first moves were made by Plato and Aristotle. Later Kant and Hegel enriched it and in the present time the baton has been carried forward by the people of the same calibre. The present Indian critical theories have developed through the rich Western tradition. However, India has a long tradition of critical discussion right since the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*.

The poets were seers or sages and were even deified as Gods. A poet is at a certain heightened moment when he turns creative and so his words seem to be charged with magical potency. Genuine poetry flows from a heart filled with the aesthetic emotion called *rasa* and these poets are supposed to have access to subtler states such as the dream state (*swapna*) deep sleep (*sushupti*) and the transcendental state (*turiya*).

The term aesthetics is adopted from a Greek writer Alexander Baumgarten. He says that aesthetics should appeal to the senses. Baumgarten's view is supported by Schopenhauer. According to him, the aesthetic experience temporarily emancipates the subject from the wills domination and raises them to a level of pure perception. John Dewey, a famous writer of the twentieth century supports the rejection of mind and body idealism, democratic instincts and their tendency to break down traditional distinctions. There are some similarities among the works of John Dewey, Dogen's version of Zen and Abhinavagupta, a great Indian aesthetician. Dewey gives to the readers a significant view that unity of feeling gives artistic unity to composition.

The suggestive meaning or the implicit meaning is the highest form of imagination and it is the creative imagination. This pre-conceived notion allows one to penetrate into the hidden meaning of things through fending sensuous feelings as it is revealing and pleasurable. According to Tiwary, the goal of art is to create the perfectly harmonious self. Harmony is a feeling that is in agreement of experience with self and art attempts to satisfy it. To quote his words "... aestheticism is the degeneration of aesthetic feeling, for it is simply love of the pleasures of beauty rather than a key to objective beauty in nature" (Tiwary 143).

Most of the critics believed that the Western systematic study of aesthetics started with the Greek Plato's point of view that, there is a perfect form of beauty in which beautiful things take place. Plato adds that poetry is an imitation of certain thing Aristotle's view is entirely contrasted to Plato's idealist view. He says that every form of an object is the cause of its beauty. To him, tragedy is the highest form of art.

Francis Hutcheson has contributed to the early modern aesthetics. He gives his opinion that all human beings are endowed with a special sense by which one perceives beauty. Omar S. Alattas says in his work *The Development of Aesthetics through Western Eyes*, that for Hutcheson, the perception of beauty is mediated by the external sense to an internal sense that recognizes and appreciates beauty. He adds that the aesthetic experience, is the perception of unity in difference.

The internal sense that experiences the beauty of art is called *rasa*. The outward and explicit meaning would not create that *rasa* but the implicit or the suggestive meaning called *dhvani* is prominent in creating *rasas*, the essence. Immanuel Kant agrees with Hutcheson's view and says that one should gain pleasure by judging something as beautiful rather than considering it as giving pleasure. This is not accepted by everyone. If there is a beautiful thing then there will be ugly things too and this lead, it leads to the formation of duality. Everything is in the eyes and mind of the human and it is not correct to judge anything by its outward experience.

According to Hegel, art is an expression of culture, the spirit and soul of the individuals and humanity. Friedrich Nietzsche professes a unique view on aesthetics. He says that art is the highest expression of human perfection. The eternal justification of all the existing things is considered only as an aesthetical phenomenon. This view is given by Tiwary in his work *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*.

Critics believe that the idea of beauty basically brings forth the idea of aesthetics. It helps to explore the reasons for the kind of pleasure created among humans while experiencing a work of art. Aesthetics is applicable to poetry, literature, dance, music and drama. The primary purpose of all arts is to delight the human mind. Poetry and drama give aesthetic pleasure to the audience. As language is the tool for communication for everything which is to be conveyed, poetry is supposed to have a standard language that is enriched with *dhvani* or suggestion.

The Western aesthetics can be traced back to the earliest works of Homer, Plato and Aristotle. Indian aesthetics is traced back to the *Vedas* and *Ithihasas* but it is clearly evident through the works of Bharata's *Natyasastra*. The Greek word 'aisthesis' means sensation and reaction to external stimuli.

According to *Alamkar Sastra*, artistic beauty cannot exist unless the heart of man of good taste is moved to delight by the fascination of its expression. Aesthetics concerns with the notion of taste and beauty. While comparing Indian art with Western art, the latter is more about codification. In the Eastern or the Indian tradition, art is mainly about celebration. The *rasas* or the nine emotions in the Indian aesthetics, paves way for the complete celebration of life. Western art and aesthetics is more concerned with visual and the Indian aesthetics is more concerned about the level of consciousness and the *dhvani*. In Western art the audience observe the work of art but in Eastern art the audience become one with the characters in the work of art and the *navarasas* forms a connective link between them.

Aesthetics is for the artist as Ornithology is for the birds says Barnett Newman. Some Critics divide aesthetics and philosophy of art, saying that the aesthetics is the study of beauty while Philosophy is the study of works of art. Aesthetics examines a person's affective domain. This affective domain is in response to an object or phenomenon. Judgments of aesthetic value rely on the ability to discriminate at a sensory level. Any ways the aesthetic judgments normally go beyond sensory discrimination.

Philosophical aesthetics is not only the study of art that gives judgments about art works, but it also gives a vivid definition of art. "Art is an autonomous entity for philosophy, because art deals with the senses (i.e. the etymology of aesthetics) and art is as such free of any moral or political purpose. Hence, there are two different conceptions of art in aesthetics: art as knowledge or art as action, but aesthetics is neither epistemology nor ethics". ("Aesthetics")

Aestheticians usually compare historical developments with theoretical approaches to the arts of many ages. They study and analyze the different varieties of art in relation to their physical, social, and cultural environments and also use psychology to understand how the readers and people see, hear, imagine, think, learn, and act in relation to the materials and problems of art. Aesthetic psychology normally studies the creative process and the aesthetic experience.

Aesthetics helps a person to understand the interests with respect to art. Art and Aesthetics help the readers to become more creative and also assist them in coming up with better ideas for art in the future. It gives the audience a better idea of the art of the past that reflect the cultural, social, economic and political condition. Many people, especially modern artists have brought a great transformation in the field of literature. The old poems and other works of literature are now interpreted by many Scholars and they even go to the extent of modifying them according to modern tastes and needs.

In short, in India aesthetics means the science and philosophy of fine art. In the Western context, particularly from the Hegelian point of view aesthetics means the philosophy of fine art. However, both the Indian and Western aesthetics deal with the problem of aesthetics from technical, metaphysical, psychological epistemic, logical and critical points of view. They have similar pronouncements from the point of philosophy, though the pronouncements of the Western aesthetics are not so exhaustive as those of the Indian aesthetics. Despite differences in their priorities and approaches, the two treat the same phenomenon in literature. In certain respects, Indian aesthetics is more comprehensive, striking and pays due attention to the connoisseurs' reaction to a piece of Literature and so the researcher has chosen Indian poetics to study the works of the two Indian poets, Bharathiyar and Vairamuthu. Another reason is that this process of aesthetic experience derived from their works has helped the researcher to turn from *Laukik* (worldly) into *alaukik* (supra human) state. Though it has not helped to enter into a divine world, definitely it has helped the reader to blur boundaries.

In Bharathiyar's poems one could see aesthetic elements blossoming everywhere. In the poem *Aspiration*, he says that the mind should be steady and the words must be sweet. The thoughts should be pure and one's aspirations must be in an elevated mode. He uses simple language in most of his poetry but it is intricately interwoven with such beauty so that, when a common man reads this poem, it gives a kind of aesthetic pleasure and steadiness to him. But when it is read by the scholars and *rasikas* with deep insight into poetry, definitely they attain a different sort of aesthetic pleasure.

The poet, through his artistic quality tries to get rid of the dread of death from the mindset of the people. Death is common for each and everyone in this world and there is nothing to be frightened. He gives a kind of strength

to the readers. Similarly, the English poet, Emily Dickinson also welcomes death as her partner. This theme is vividly explained by her in the poem, *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*.

The workers of various categories and their nature of work are brought in by the poet in the poem *Labour*, in order to encourage the working-class people. The poem is filled with aesthetic elements which grabs the attention of the audience in an effective manner. In the final stanza of this poem, the poet adores the artists and poets as they are the observers of the truth in this corrupt, material world. He seems to have a holistic conception of poetry namely its creation, manifestation and its overall impact.

In the poem *Throbbing Heart*, he explains the sufferings and struggles of the people who commit sins and fear dire consequences. The inner turmoil of the sufferer who longs for tranquillity in life is beautifully delineated by the poet. The mindset of such people is clearly captured by him and this is evident through the following lines.

Beyond endurance it is  
To think of the mean  
They fear and perish  
Imagining this world is full of demons:  
'Demons haunt this tree  
That tank and the hill top'  
They blabber and grieve  
With fear-breeding thoughts. (ISGL 53)

Bharathiyar in most of his poem glorifies Earth as his mother as she gives life to varieties of living and non-living creatures in this world. He adores her, praises her and admires her and sees how it is beyond human nature to know and get at the fact regarding the date of her origin. The following lines from this poem *Our Mother* clearly reveal this.

No one can assess  
Our dear mother's age  
Age has not withered her  
She is an evergreen virgin. (ISGL 81)

## 2. Method

The sense of wonder (Adbhuta or Vismaya) predominates this poem and creates an intensity of mood. The possibilities of wonder delight and calm are inherent here. The suggested sense is that we are blessed to be on the lap of this evergreen virgin for ever loving, forever giving, forever patient and forever destroying evil. In short, she is goddess who nurtures, nourishes and protects us.

The aesthetic nature is predominant in his poem, *Kannan, My Playmate*. As a common man Kannan cannot live and play with celestial bodies. But Bharathiyar through his aesthetic pleasure makes Lord Kannan his best friend and playmate and converses with him freely. So the love and caring nature of the poet and the union with god is well delineated. His yoga with Kannan is definite and scientific.

Western scholars commonly study the problem of the good and the bad, and the beautiful whereas Eastern scholars deal mainly with beauty and divinity in creative literature. His poem *Kannan My Beloved* transcends time and place, has a universal and timeless appeal and it denotes that there is something in a literary work that transcends time and space across countries and continents. Readers of literature from different countries, culture, religion etc appreciate and relish literature as it provides aesthetic enjoyment to them. The *Kannan* poem lifts one to a higher dimension and fills one with a sense of new place. The poem drips with *Bakthi rasa*. Here the reader gets personally involved with the poem.

Indian Poetics is also called Sanskrit poetics and it is a library of various theories and doctrines about poetry and drama. Bharata is considered as one of the pioneers of Sanskrit poetics. He is well known for his work *Nāṭya śāstra*, written in the First century B.C. This work gives vivid details of stage effects, music, and dance and so on with the expression of feelings called *rasa*. It contains the systematic discussion of all types of drama and their various parts. It brings forth the theory of imitation, transportation, unities, gestures, sentiments, characters etc. The *Nāṭya śāstra* is like an ocean and like most of the rivers rushing join the ocean, most of the art forms conglomerate to form expression that is *rasa*.

The *Nāṭya śāstra* contains thirty-six chapters and five thousand shlokas with aphorisms.

It means a pithy observation which contains a general truth. Critics say that the creation of *Nātya śāstra* is considered mythical and divine. Brahma created the *Natya Veda* as a source of giving pleasure to the minds which are weary of strife, wants and miseries of daily existence.

The *Nātya śāstra* was created with the combined effort of Brahma, who gave Natya (Drama), Vishnu, who gave *Abinaya* (Acting) and Mahesh, who gave *Nritya* (Dance).

Generally, aesthetics is interwoven into poems and is also recognized as a regular part of philosophy. Professor M. Hiriyana says that when a philosopher holds a particular view of reality, he is bound to square his theory of art, if he formulates one, with it, and the consequence is that we have as many theories of art in the West as there are theories of reality. This cannot be helped in the case of beauty in nature, but there is no reason for acquiescing in such diversity of views in a theory of art. That is the view of Indian aestheticians.

According to Rai Technology University, the Indian aesthetics means an Indian art that evolved with an emphasis on including special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience or with representing them symbolically. *Rasas* are the emotions which are created by *bhavas*. They are clearly explained by Bharata Muni. *Rasa* is produced when the audience feel the emotions of the players on the stage. This work of Bharata is considered to be the base for the history of Sanskrit poetics and aesthetics. It is believed that any work of art is viewed with the concept of experiencing aesthetic pleasure. Bharata's work explains this kind of aesthetics and *Rasa* is considered to be the corner stone of Indian aesthetics.

Vairamuthu's poem *AD 2028, October 26* is the best example for the aesthetic rapture it gives, because it beautifully tells the formation of earth in scientific terms. The beauty of nature and the impact of destroying mother earth is brought out with futuristic point of view. He condemns the wicked and selfish nature of humans for causing severe injuries to our prestigious mother earth.

"Destroying the earth is the birth right of these damned humans" (ADSO 87)

The word damned implicitly states that the destruction of the earth would sound a death knell to humans. In the poem *Prayer for Humanity*, the poet asks the readers to show compassion to other living creatures. He has a belief that every living organism in this world is created with a significant purpose. So, it is not correct to punish and kill others for one's own desires and selfish motives. In this materialist and capitalistic world there is no one to offer helping hands to these mute creatures. Vairamuthu ridicules the mad materialistic pursuit in this poem and tries to drive home a sensible point by binding the aesthetic rapture in the reader.

### 3. Result

The following lines are inspirational, Grant us tears to shed for others and perspiration to exclude for ourselves. (ADSO 82) Vairamuthu looms large as a poet of divine understanding of this existence. Ecology is given great care by Vairamuthu. Through his poems he inspires the readers to care for nature and not to destroy it. The overwhelming usage of natural resources leads to its depletion. For example, the Western Ghats acts as a proactive tower to Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Due to its extraordinary beauty and abundant natural resources it is much tampered with and exploited. Some of the scientists believe that if the mountains in the Western Ghats disappear, then for sure it will create natural calamities beyond human imagination. According to Vairamuthu the wrath of Mother Goddess gets augmented by destroying the green lands and constructing buildings of towering heights. Here he wants to advocate the idea that more greening and less cementing would ensure a hale and healthy planet.

The concept of vanishing natural resources is brought out by Vairamuthu in the poem *Burnt Rose and the Last Questions*. The Ozone layer is gradually depleting because of the harmful gases present in the atmosphere. In India, Delhi is one of the cities which is highly polluted. Due to the pollution and other natural calamities many have already lost their lives. It is mandatory for all living organism especially human beings to protect earth, the Mother goddess. The over heat in the atmosphere is increasing day by day. The poet rings an alarm bell, Rain of fire Waves of flame how can my tender skin suffer the melting liquid of broken sun. (ADSO 89)

The terrifying and the disgusting emotions invariably occupy these lines. *Bibhatsa* and *Bhayanaka* seem to be the important *rasas* here. Within these lines the emotion or state which is generated is that of fear. Also, the elements of disgust, grotesque, uncertainty terror and disillusionment dominate these lines.

In the Tamil tradition, people trust one another with deep insight. Though they fight with one another they always cherish a kind of unity and fraternity. They subscribe to the adage,

“United we stand”, divided we fall, yet as civilization keeps developing, which is also an aftermath of colonization, this unity is slightly shaken and Vairamuthu wants to erase this attitude from the mindset of the people.

To Vairamuthu everything in nature bespeaks of moral aspects. Thus, nature insulate a sense of wonder which eludes us often but never escapes the eye of an artist. Extensive uses poets as a means to write herself.

The act of using rabbit for scientific experiment is ridiculed by Vairamuthu in his poem *Affinities*. At first, he describes the morphological characters of the rabbit and then its beauty. He offers this rabbit a bowl of water every day to get rid of its thirst. It is a good habit to keep water in a small bowl near one’s house for birds and animals. This concept forms the main theme of this poem. The care and attention given to the rabbit is brought out. On the other side Vairamuthu does not fail to register the sufferings of these rabbits in the hands of scientist. This is well brought to light in the following lines,

Into its uterus he injected the AIDS virus in a few days the rabbit began to shrivel like a crumpled sheet of paper. (ADSO 185)

Later he says one Sunday afternoon--the scientist forms desolate as the antidote that he had injected had been ineffectual. The pathetic strain gives rise to *Karuna rasa*. There is disgust and world weariness seen in these lines. He concludes the poem by asking a valid question that who among us in the scientist? and who the rabbit? So as human beings, we have to treat every living thing with kindness and without any bias. Evoking aesthetic pleasure among the audience is not an easy task. But Vairamuthu in a way has done a great job of getting the reader’s attention through his poems that are replete with aesthetic value. The importance and the prominent feature of aesthetics is found throughout his poems.

Western Aesthetics usually had the idea of experiencing bliss as the main aim of poetry, because the mental setup of literary theoreticians has failed to arrive at the infinite that constitutes the seat of bliss and beauty. Western theoreticians emphasized the concept that poetry is an expression of the individually of the artist.

#### 4. Conclusion

In India Anandhavardhana and Abhinavagupta have projected the theory of poetry propounded by Gestalt and assert that poetry is an organic whole incapable of being divided into component parts. The analysis of the Indian poetics and Western poetics by the great scholars indicate the vastness of the concepts and the multiplicity of the theories adumbrated by different literary theoreticians, both Indian and western.

The concept of Eastern and Western poetics is well established in the work of Professor Mohit Kumar Ray, Retired professor of English, Burdwan University. His work entitled *A Comparative Study of Indian Poetics and Western Poetics* deals with the search for the theories concerning literary embellishment and literary blemishes discussed by Indian theoreticians.

According to some critics, especially Mohit Kumar Ray, Indian mind is guided by the philosophy of spirituality, while the Western mind is guided by the philosophy of materialism. The poems of both Bharathiyar and Vairamuthu’s are endowed with aesthetic nature. Aesthetic rapture of art and beauty is prominent in both their poems. In Vairamuthu’s poems the appreciation of nature and its beauty is prevalent.

One of Nature’s wonders is that it makes a plant go through various stages to yield a fruit like shoot, bud, blossom, floret, unripe fruit and finally the ripened fruit. Similarly, poetry also has certain stages to pass through before becoming beautiful meaningful poems. The poet says that human life has constantly been ensnared in the webs of physical needs and emotional wants. The life of human beings is based on the feeling and emotions which they express and experience. He says that this world is an algae-layered pond and life is the enchanting lotus that blooms amidst the algae.

This paper studies some of the poems of Bharathiyar and Vairamuthu by passing Western poems because the focus is on Indian aesthetics and its limitless possibilities of evoking the *rasa* experience. The content of their poems is relevant to all generations of people and their views on aesthetics are explicitly revealed in their poems. Their love for God and nature and compassion towards other creatures run through all their works. Also, their fiery spirit is seen hopping across the pages. Both Bharathiyar and Vairamuthu write with a deep insight and both are able to touch a chord in every human heart.

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