



ART AND MORALITY

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- According to the Indian traditional theory of art, art has no other aim or objective rather than to flourish itself and this aim is to provide the reader or viewer a chance to gain an experience of artistic achievements at all levels, the pure and not personal joy of separation from and disinterestedness in the realities and conditions of the actual world.



But, we have also noticed that in achieving the process of this aim, art achieves some other aims. Art provides us a most impressive source for making our senses and emotions work in a disciplined way. Art helps us to widen the limits of knowledge of our vision and deepens the sphere of our experience and life. Art's main objective is to refine all of us and to provide joy and delight to us.



To understand Art, we should throw some light on the Art-Morality relationship. So, basically, art has a moral aim and purpose. The ultimate aim of art is to attain impersonality, separation and disinterestedness and it itself is a moral purpose, as it implies a total liberation from personal affection and mean interests is the main source and basis of morality. The artist helps us to attain this liberation and attempts therefore a moral act.

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- According to the ancient Indian views, art activity is a moral activity. It can be questioned on different grounds. Art activity consists of the situations as perceived and viewed by the artist according to his feelings about life. There is something demanding by the artist, something evil in the actual sequences of reality and circumstances that he faces. He tries to clarify what is that demanding and evil and re-thinks about the reasons and situations which had created those demanding and evil views.

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- Same is the case with the process of **‘ethics’** also. The presumption in ethics is that something wrong or evil in the actual sequence of things and situations is there in which one finds himself. Ethics or morality try to get rid of the wrong or evil in the individual or society by bringing about a change in the actual sequence of things and situations.

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- The moral function of art is not taken seriously in the Indian art. Art is a human activity. So, its value is human value. The value of art should be associated with other values of life interfering in various human activities. To criticize the life and its value is considered to be really a moral act.

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- Art is a human activity. So, its value is human value. The value of art should be associated with other values of life interfering in various human activities. To criticize the life and its value is considered to be really a moral act. But **art is not morality, nor morality art**. So, these two are different on various aspects. Morality is an active and stable process in life and is a part of one's nature and personality.

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- It is not morality at all. It functions constantly having an aim in mind, which is definitely not selfish and mean. Art experience is thoughtful, but not active, nor is it stable but short-lived. Also, it has no other aim than to persuade the feeling of impersonality, detachment and disinterestedness and by doing so, provides a feeling of pure joy.

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- An artist presents the facts and circumstances which show only the **‘imaginative reality’** because they might have been adopted from the **‘actual reality’** of life and nature. Artistic feelings are constantly persuaded by an external excitement, when this excitement no longer remains, one does not really make it sure about how long the experience and its results will last.

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- If art is not morality, it does not directly aim at morality and therefore, it has no relation, direct or innate with morality. So, art aims at nothing, but to provide us a special kind of experience which has no personal joy at all. According to the Indian tradition, art activity is a moral activity and there is a moral interference in the process of creation (creative process).

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- But Indian traditions appear to be more demanding. It means that the question of Morality is based not only on the process of art, but also on its subject matter. It is viewed that such facts and circumstances should have a whole moral interference. The ugly and the fruitful, the atrocious and the wicked, the most cruel and the most hated one may have all their position in artistic field, but an artist should handle all such facts, situations and circumstances in such a way and in so total a view point of life which leaves an impression of a moral and noble effect.

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- ➔ This feeling leads to the impression that one gains from the increasing result of the creations of Literature and visual arts that used to be and are still presently regarded as good and great by almost the whole Indian society universally. So, according to Indian attitude, the idea of good and great is universal in nature.

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- IT goes without saying, that it is impossible within the limits of an article, to deal exhaustively with the relations of Ethic and Aesthetic. An entirely adequate discussion of the subject could be accomplished only by a thorough examination of the question as to whether there be an essential connection between the human instinct that finds expression in strictly moral phenomena , and that which reflects itself in the forms of Art. We should, of course, have to examine and settle the difficult problem as to the precise sphere of Aesthetic properly so called, and to say whether and how far Art, by its nature, is essentially a mode for the manifestation of moral ideas and aspirations; we should have to decide whether there be a Good outside of the Beautiful, or a Beautiful outside of the Good.

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- But approaching the subject from a somewhat popular stand- point and making the very simple assumption that Aesthetic and Moral or Social phenomena are essentially modes of spiritual manifestation, one may endeavor to show that the Art impulse, when it has issued in Creation, as opposed to mere Imitation, has been, in one or two strongly marked phases of social development, a correct and accurate exponent of the moral movement of the period to which it belongs.

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- Want of definiteness is the characteristic of all primitive forms of spiritual expression. Necessarily it is in the domain of Art that the earliest record of this want is left for posterity to read. Long ere poetry, politics, religion, have found adequate media, through which the thought they contain may live as history, the creative instinct has found means to imprint upon the world imperishable traces of the results of its activity. Through these, and often through these alone, can future ages guess at the poetic, the social, the political and the religious ideas that moulded and mastered the development of prehistoric man.

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- It is in architecture, that we find the most characteristic attempts of the aesthetic impulse to express itself. Barbaric Art, in the distinctive features of it, must be studied through the religious monuments of races whom Herodotus would have named civilized Barbarians. In ancient Babylonia and India, but most of all in ancient Egypt, the creative instinct wrote itself in larger symbols than are to be found among 'any other scenes of primitive human activity. What little we can learn of the ethical ideas of such a dim antiquity, we can guess at only by attempting to spell out the religious conceptions of ancient peoples from the stone symbols in which they strove to give them sensuous form. Strove, for everywhere are the marks not only of struggle but of failure

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- In the vastness and gloom of huge temples, in the bewildering size of stupendous pyramids, in the giddy loftiness of tower and obelisk, in costly sculpturing and rich arabesque,-in all these are the records of a painful strife, in which the human spirit was ever vainly endeavoring to find articulate expression for ideas which, with all its labor, it could not reduce to form. They tell the story of peoples in whose life dwelt the veritable creative force, a force that could find no articulate voice, a force that issued in monstrous births, that spent itself in vain quantitative and iterative effort, striving to subdue nature and speak through it, but ever- more itself subdued to what it worked in, struggling to make matter luminous with the light of mind, but evermore itself cast down in darkness and buried under the pyramid which it raised.



The moral ideas that influenced the lives of these early artists in stone and brick, it is more than difficult to form other than a theoretic estimate. If we may judge from the ethical phenomena manifested by the ants, as that history is reflected for Herodotus, we find that Art, however fair reflection of such moral instincts enough conceptions of the value and dignity of law and order, of reverence for authority human and Divine, for age and wisdom and genius, of submission to fate, of the need for propitiating offended deities by sacrifice and ritual, sometimes an exaggerated humaneness, sometimes a superstitious recognition of the sanctity of human life,-all this often consisting with the most chaotic disregard of individual moral relations, the most monstrous sexuality and the most revolting cruelty .

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- Morality like Art is here purposeless, inarticulate. It is impossible to deny the existence of an ethical consciousness, but the half articulate voice of moral obligation is drowned in the clash of the cymbals that accompanies a mere quantitative atonement for moral failures, just as the bright grace of the Spirit of Beauty is quenched amid the awful gloom of the Temple, or killed by the ugly mass of the pyramid.

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- In one aspect of ancient Art, however, there is both ethical and artistic possibility. In the idea of the Sphinx, the spirit of the ancient world found a partial articulation. Here the struggle with nature is most manifest, here where victory and defeat so strangely mingle. The divine womanhood of the head and bust, the contemplative power of the broad massive brow, the soul of eternity that sleeps in the calm wakefulness of the eyes, the depth of emotion wedded to indomitable will in the full firm lips, and below all this, and supporting it, and linked with it as indissoluble part of one organism, the lion's body with its virile force of muscle in shoulder and thigh and haunch,-such are the elements in this, the most marvelous aesthetic conception of the genius of antiquity.

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- It is the dualism of Nature and Spirit, the eternal war of the actual and the ideal of the moral life. To a later age of Art was left the task of disclosing the inherent inadequacy of the half beast, half human creation, to express, with a clear articulateness , the conflict of matter and mind; an age which, in the complete human form, should find the balance of the antithesis, and in finding it should lose it and itself be lost in the growing light of its own thought, no less than in the darkness of its extinction by a world conquering alien .

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- The ideas thus reflected in this golden age of plastic Art were precisely the ideas that moulded the social life of Athens. To make the life of its citizens free, happy, beautiful, purposeful , naturally artistic, as well as artistically natural, was the aim of the lofty leading spirits whom the genius of the Greek life inspired. The actual of that life came so near to the ideal, that that aim was all but realized. The self-conscious- ness of that realization constituted at once the serene sunlight of the Attic Spirit and the darkness of the Fate in which ere long it was swallowed up.

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- The artistic and the ethical ideals were, as if for a moment, one. Art reflected life and educated it; the moral impulse found in Art its truest and fullest expression, until the idea of "Art for Art" became an ethical as well as an aesthetic aspiration, destroying the deepest life of the former, and depriving Art of its moral significance.

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- The Reformation could not come while a genuine artistic impulse promoted a pure worship and a lofty morality. It had to come when sensuousness took the place of aspiration, and spiritual adoration was exchanged for idolatry. The success of Medieval Art was unquestionably owing to the fact that genius was nourished in the atmosphere of a passionate social purity.

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- It is unnecessary, perhaps, to discuss at length the relation of Art and Ethics after the Renaissance and the Reformation, for it is in Music and in Poetry, rather than in the Plastic or Pictorial spheres of Art, that that relation is most clearly seen. The moral movement of post-Reformation society is, of course, from age to age, reflected in the portrait and the landscape, as well as in the spirit of the periodic modernizing or imitation of pagan Models; yet these are but accidental reflections ; they are not the creative impress of an ethical impulse.

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- One instance of such an impress under such an impulse, we select in closing from the history of four centuries: one of the most obvious and one of the most suggestive. The social earthquake of the French Revolution had no concomitant and no result more significant for the Aesthetic or the Moral.

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- In wide diversity of manner and form, yet with a perfect oneness in spirit and in originality.
 - they expressed an idea which all the glory of Mediaeval Art at its highest point failed to reach

Conclusion

- The ugly and the fruitful, the atrocious and the wicked, the most cruel and the most hated one may have all their position in artistic field, but an artist should handle all such facts, situations and circumstances in such a way and in so total a view point of life which leaves an impression of a moral and noble effect.