

Khulna University Studies 1 (2): 109-113

## **ART AND THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY**

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Manuscript Received: July 14, 1999; Accepted: December 20, 1999

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**Abstract:** Man, the best creation of Allah, can feel joy with the perception of Beauty. Aesthetics deals with beauty. In the field of aesthetics there is the 'best Art' which is also the 'true Art'. This true Art is centrifugal and appeals to human heart. True Art has a profound relation with Beauty which is the very breath of it. The true Art has the strange transcendental quality. It is an organic whole with proper symmetrical pattern. Besides, a true Art contains strong but tender longing which distils the pure consciousness of the artist. There are so many sources of Beauty. The materials for Art are universe, man, nature and life. Good artists are makers of beauty. Artists' own creation comes out of the greater creation of Allah. To enjoy Art, an aesthetic sensibility is required. To appreciate the beautiful, an undying emotion of love towards the mystery of beauty must exist.

**Keywords:** Art; Beauty; Aesthetics; Life; Yearning

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### **Introduction**

Man is the paragon of all animals. He is the best creation of Allah. Man has the intellect and sensibility to judge and appreciate things. Allah offers man intelligence to know, to comprehend, to ponder, to reflect, to invent and also endows him with soul, heart and mind to contemplate on and to perceive the infinite power of hidden knowledge and above all to feel the deepest joy that is indescribable.

### **What is the Best/True Art**

Joy is the sheer outcome of perception of Beauty, the laws and principles of which are made clear by Aesthetics. In other words, aesthetics deals with the appreciation of the beautiful, and its aim is the enjoyment of the best Art. Now the question arises, Art is Art, but why is a particular Art called the best? The best Art, undoubtedly, implies quality. To make it clear, an attempt has been made below to show how the sense of aesthetics grows to produce the best Art with a marked change in quality in human thoughts, feelings and emotions. The innovative idea is the outcome of the famous poetic line. "My love is like a red rose" by Robert Burns, an English poet.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.1999.1.2.109-113-ah>

Table 1. Perception of beauty from a flower to the world.

He is quite ignorant		Flower (He only knows that it is a flower)
He has little knowledge		Rose (He only knows the name of the flower)
His sense of Aesthetics grows		Smell ( He likes rose for its smell)
He appreciates Beauty	ROSE	Table Decoration (He understands the utility)
He worships Beauty		Garlanding ( He is a worshipper of beauty)
He comprehends the meaning of Beauty		Love (He is imaginative and an artist)
He perceives sublime Beauty		Blooming world (He is a symbolist and creates the best Art)

\*Source: Gorrell and Laird, 1967, p. 371.

Thus, we travel from a Flower to the Blooming world, from a material, visible tiny creation to a greater world of Art, from the simple concrete to the vast abstract. In this way we understand that we may not be lost in a flower but, as an appreciator of beauty, may be lost in the concept of the blooming world, the embodied idea of a flower (Table 1) . The best Art is also a true Art, because the ultimate aim of an artist is to seek truth. A true Art is indeed a monumental achievement; it moves, enchants, captivates, inspires, improves and ennobles us to the extent of total self-oblivion. The Art which is inferior does not appeal to human heart. The image of a best Art lives in human heart with an eternal value and deeper import. A true Art is centrifugal and is for the whole humanity, on the other hand an inferior Art is centripetal and only pleases its creator. If a building is deemed beautiful only in the eyes of that particular architect who designs it, it cannot proclaim to be a monumental piece of work.

### Relation of Beauty with True Art

The vast domain of Art embraces Painting, Music, Sculpture, Architecture and Design, Drama, Photography, Poetry, Dance, Oratory and Social Fashion as Costume. All these forms of Arts are concerned with the element of Beauty which is a living reality. If any piece of Art work lacks in that eternal element, it surely fades in the background. So, man's love for Beauty is not only eternal but also the created things reflect and manifest the growth of various tastes, styles and designs. The Poet Keats wrote:

"Beauty is truth, Truth beauty, that is all,  
Ye know on earth and ye need to know".

Here Truth is Ultimate Reality, so it can be said that a true Art is beautiful, or a beautiful Art is true. Beauty is the very breath of a true Art which is aesthetically judged beautiful. Beauty is the soul of an Art. Actually beauty heralds the essential quality of an Art, it is the quintessence of charm that makes the judges or the beholders spell - bound.

### What is Beauty

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, Beauty means 'combination of qualities that give pleasure to the sense, or to the moral senses of the intellect'. 'Beauty is generally and most simply defined as that which gives pleasure'. (H. Read 1968). It is an oft-used saying that "Beauty is only skin deep". But it is not true. Instead of judging any thing by outward appearance only, we should discover the hidden but captivating sublime qualities of the thing, in which the judge finds self-oblivion. Human intellect, though it is profoundly penetrating, finds no tangible contact with Beauty. Beauty of an Art directly appeals to human emotions, it has a quick short-cut entrance to the human soul. Unalloyed pleasure or eternal delight is that emotion

felt by soul, not by intellect. Beauty has transcendental qualities, it exists beyond time and space, so it is a profound realization in human soul, the supersensible spirit of man, free from all worldly superficialities. Thus, if a man whose heart is laden with worries and sufferings, or who is wallowing in moribund existence, stands before the Tajmahal, he would for the time being discover himself in an autonomous, joyous and solitary world of Beauty which makes him forget his self tortured by worldly anxieties. His worries would soon be replaced by unadulterated pleasure- the source of perennial inspiration. The unique power of Beauty of the Tajmahal would take the man out of his petty mortal self. This is the strange transcendental quality of a genuine masterpiece or an immortal piece of work, or a true Art.

If definitions and characteristics of Beauty are sought, the alarming pile will be simply astounding. Some guardians of civilization may be quoted here. Fitness, suitability and utility are regarded as the elements of Beauty by Socrates. Plato in his 'Symposium' speaks of Beauty as absolute, simple and everlasting (Hardayal, 1945). Aristotle emphasizes that harmony, proportion, order and symmetry are the characteristics of Beauty. The biological materialist Ernst Haeckel 'made a comparative analysis of various forms of natural beauty-rhythmic, symmetric, biological, anthropological, sexual and scenic-' (Astakhov, 1969). To understand the all- absorbing powerful elements of Beauty, an attempt is made below:

B-Brilliance  
E-Excellence  
A-Attribute  
U-Unity  
T-Timelessness  
Y-Yearning

A true Art must reflect all the scintillating qualities that the word BEAUTY contains, including delicacy and refinement. Any Art providing vulgar qualities cannot be deemed wonderful piece of work. Secondly, Art before which all other Arts are eclipsed must excel in the special Art of its making. A genuine masterpiece must exist as a monumental achievement with all its attributes that have paramount importance and attraction in our earth. A true Art must have an organic whole with proper symmetrical pattern. It establishes a harmonious relation with the soul that is alive to aesthetic sense.

A true art must contain timeless qualities and is for all ages, its appeal should be universal as Keats says "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever". Lastly, in a great Art yearning, strong but tender longing of the artist, must be enshrined. This yearning, I like to say, is an inspiration that infuses in him a constant urge for creation and recreation. From a true work of an Art, this yearning will be focused and reflected ; it shall be genuine urge of the pure consciousness of the artist and the true image of his craftsmanship as well.

### **Varieties in Beauty**

There are varieties in Beauty. The architectural beauty of the *Tajmahal* is created by man, on the other hand the beauty of the glorious scene in which the sun looking like a large polished orb of gold, majestically sinking into vast expanse of water of the sea is natural. The beauty of the song of the bird or the beauty of the smell of a flower, though not discernible to the physical eye, is perceived by human soul through senses. But, there is a difference between the beauty of symphony and the beauty of the song of the bird. So, the unique beauty in man's creation, and the sublime beauty and the abstract beauty in Allah's creations can charm any soul unawares.

## **Art and its Materials**

Many critics and exponents of aesthetics opine that Art is an imitation of life. In a broader sense, here life means characters, incidents and situations on earth. In fact, the vast beautiful universe, man, nature, life, unthinkable to human beings, created by Allah are the materials for Art. When it is said that an artist is a creator, it implies a different meaning. The only creator is Allah. According to Aristotle all good artists are makers. They choose and take the best materials from Allah's creations and reshape, refashion, repolish and reproduce them with so fine a brush. Their creative imagination plays a vital role in making and remaking things. These man-made recreations emerge with novelties, announcing newer messages and appear extraordinary, wonderful, glorious, strange and rich. It can be said that these recreations, endowed with beauty, value and originality, are not mere imitations, or dull photographs of society.

Any thing lacking universal appeal is not permanent, but a good work of Art is to some extent permanent, though, in course of time, it is bound to suffer the cold touch of decay and destruction. A true work of Art outlasts the ravages of time and becomes classical only when a universal theme, a profile of culture, a message to civilization, and above all a profound sensibility are reflected in it.

## **Permanence of Art**

To make it clear, in the hands of an artist an ephemeral and trifling thing becomes prominent permanently (so long our mutable world exists), valuable, unique, radiant, exalted and excellent. Its attributes definitely sparkle in the mirror of minds of the audience, readers or beholders who are also moved with awe and respect, created by the inner and spatial beauty of that Art. It presents and offers an unforgettable moment of profound realisation, canceling dull monotonous aspect of life.

Allah has created this world beautifully. This world is, in reality, dotted with charming landscapes, but in an artist's mind there exists more changeable, more wonderful landscapes. Besides, in an unlimited indefinable mind of an artist, there exists an aspiration to create more and more wonderful landscapes that have no existence in this world. When this ever-wonderful landscape so long uncreated, becomes alive with its all untouchable and unenjoyed beauty and grandeur, it is deemed a genuine master-piece. The aesthetic sensibility and power of the artist recreate beauty and grace, employing all the beautifying qualities of his mind and inner self and there is a difference between the beauty of a landscape existing on this earth and the beauty of the landscape taking shape in the artist's mind. This sort of creation is within the bounds of possibility of powerful imagination of mind which is heavily influenced by the beauty and grace in things and elements created by Allah. Pure imagination, delightful experiences, subtle craftsmanship galvanize him into recreating a new wonder, the source of which lies in the greater creation.

## **How to Enjoy Art**

How will one enjoy an Art? Psychologically, the state of man's mind is indefinable and indivisible. Here aesthetic sensibility of a particular mind acts to satisfy his feelings for beauty in a particular way. Thus same work of Art produces different feelings and effects in different minds. What is important for a reader, or an onlooker, or a listener is to feel oneness with a particular piece of Art, be it painting, poetry, music or a magnificent building. A true work of Art creates a total impact on mind that possesses aesthetic sense to enjoy soulfully and to appreciate properly; only then a pure aesthetic delight is obtained and felt.

## How to Appreciate the Beautiful

How will one appreciate the beautiful? In the mind of a confirmed murderer, be he endowed with learning or not, the image of destruction, instead of recreation, prevails. He is thoroughly oblivious of the meaning and value of beauty in the world. He cannot appreciate any piece of Art, though he can read, see and hear, because he is a base, mean fellow whose mind is miserably devoid of human love. Eyes can see, but cannot produce, recreate, or appreciate, if the sense-impressions produced by them, are not judged by the mind of an artist. Mind is the only thing that acts silently behind all the guiding principles of human sense organs. If the eyes as a sense organ behold the Tajmahal without the help of aesthetic sensibility - laden mind, the onlooker is a glaring failure to be an appreciator of beauty. To appreciate the beautiful it requires that very bent of mind- the mind of a true artist where an undying emotion of love towards the mystery of beauty exists and lasts. When an unlimited power of an imaginative mind works together with the limited power of human sights in an unfamiliar creative way, a true appreciation is obtained.

To appreciate the wonderful beauty of a lone bird flying in trackless sky; or to appreciate the marvelous beauty of a lovely human being; or to appreciate the artistic beauty of skill of making of bird's nest; or the grim beauty of a cyclonic storm; or the tranquil beauty of the mirage; or the dry beauty of an oasis, or the strange beauty of the fish capable of changing shapes and colours at sea; or the absorbing beauty of a painting, or a piece of literature, or a photograph; or the charming beauty of a landscape; or the captivating beauty of the song of a bird; or the abstract beauty of the smell of flower; or the pleasant beauty of a symphony; or the rhythmic beauty of dance; or the arresting beauty of an oration; or the eternal beauty of Divine love; or the graceful beauty of human manners; or the spatial beauty of a building; or the sublime beauty of human love; or the thrilling beauty of a purling brook; or the enchanting beauty of a moon-lit night; or the pleasing beauty of sexual love; or the soul-ravishing beauty of a sonorous melody; or the incomparable beauty of a baby's smile; or the bewitching beauty of a wilderness and to differentiate one kind of beauty from another, men need various sensibilities and emotions with the driving force of active imagination and powerful feelings.

## Conclusion

When Majnun was asked "Where do you find so much beauty in Laila?" He answered, "if you want to see it, you must find her with my eyes." So, a true artist is one who has those eyes to behold, those ears to hear, that nose to smell, that heart to feel, that mind to perceive, that imagination to create and that sense to appreciate.

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