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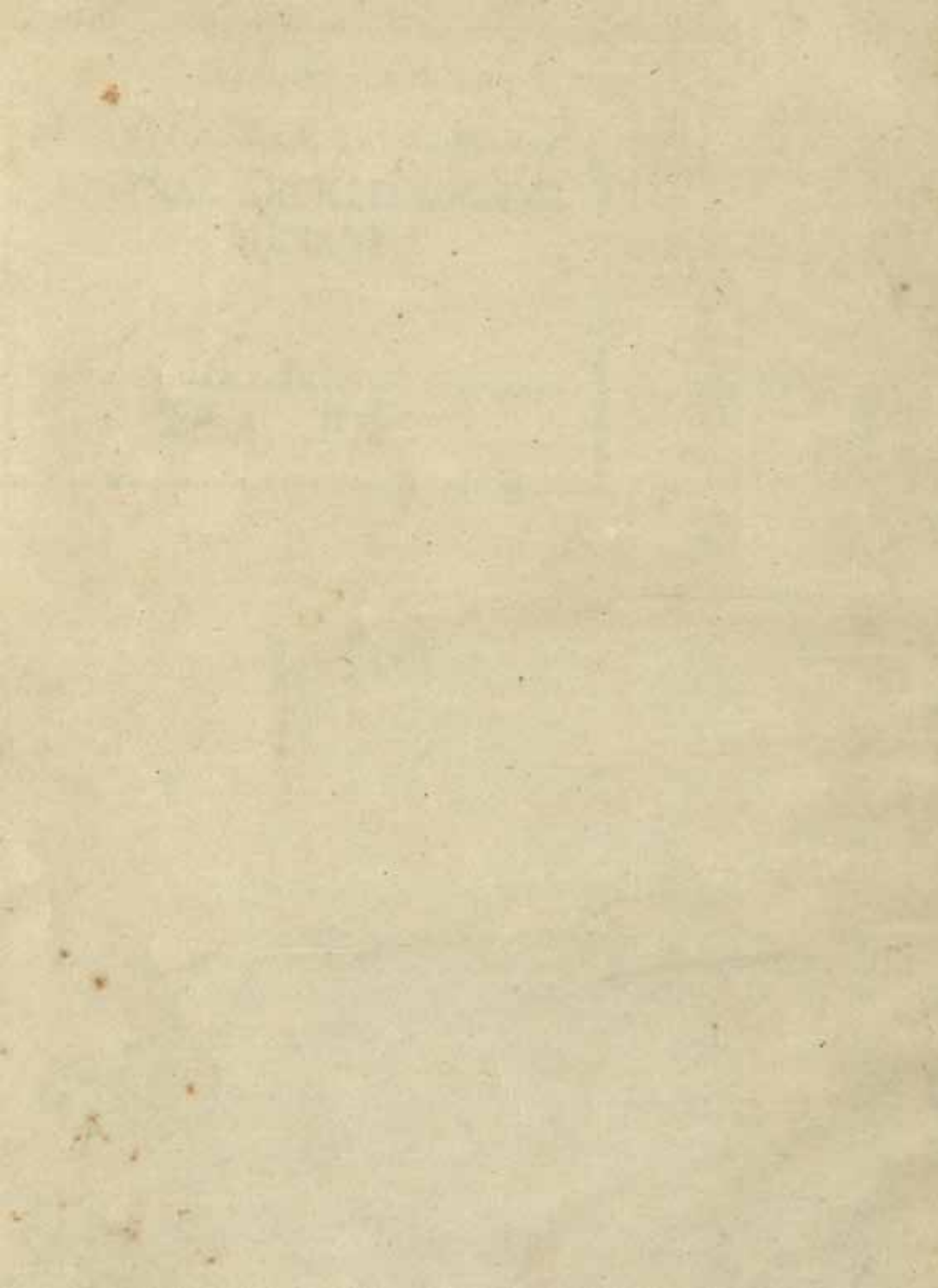
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# OUR HERITAGE IN ART

BY

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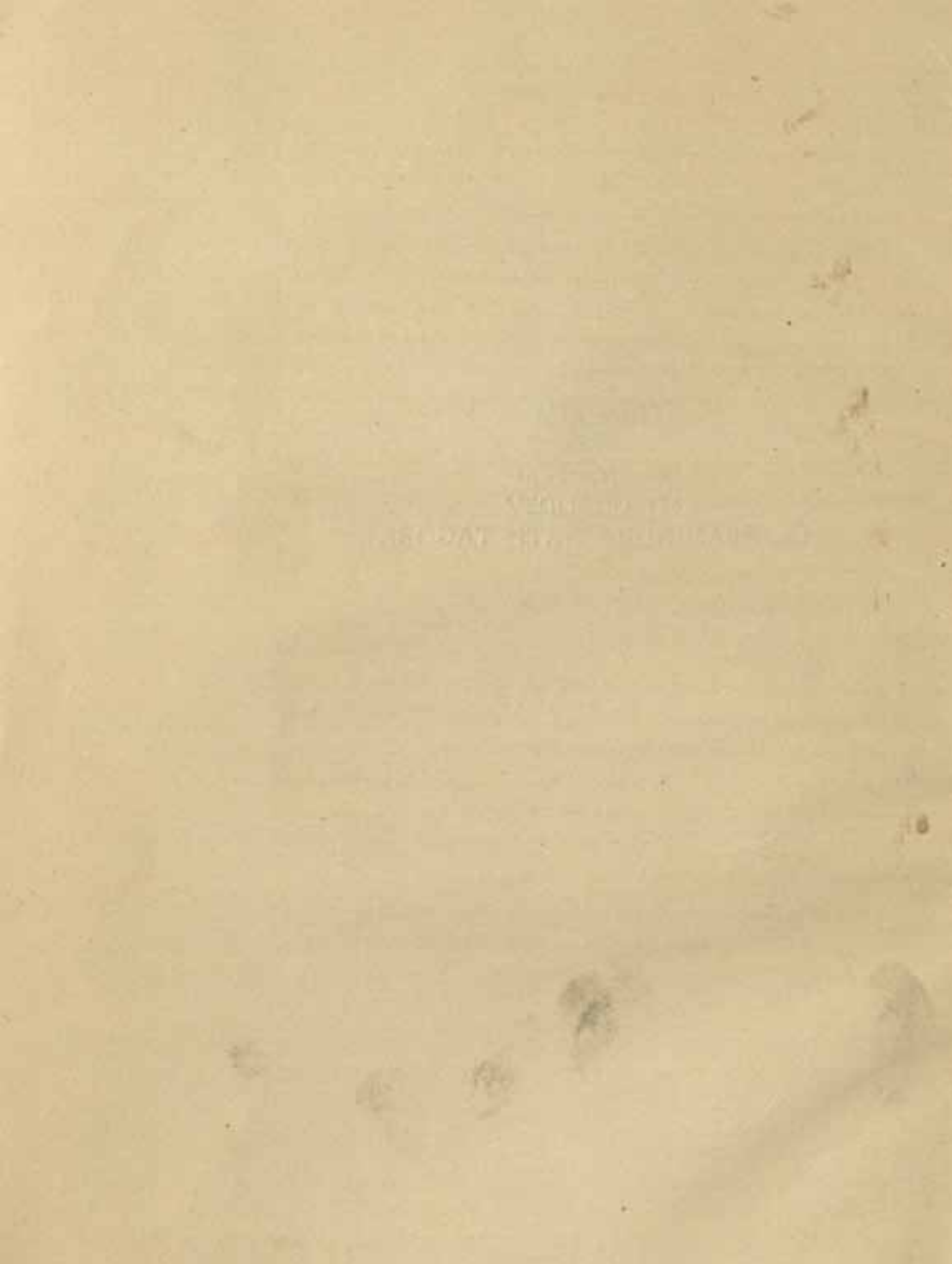
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DEDICATED  
To  
the Memory of  
MY GURUDEV  
DR. ABANINDRA NATH TAGORE





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

My all hopes to dedicate this book personally to my uncle and *Gurudev* Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore have been frustrated due to his sudden departure from this mortal existence.

Just as in the political field Mahatma Gandhi gave a new turn of thought by advocating *Ahimsa* and Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore a new life and ideology in literature, dancing and music in the sphere of culture based on the tradition of our country; similarly Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore brought a renaissance in art paying due regard to the age-long traditional heritage of the art of our country.

As regards Dr. Abanindra Nath's life-history we all know that he was born and brought up in the house of Tagores—a seat of culture.

As a young man he had a nationalistic outlook in life founded on the philosophy, religion and the ideology of the country. He had the vision of a seer to understand the inner beauty of the sculpture, painting and architecture of our country, when men like Birdwood and Wesmicot decried them as of "debased quality which deprives it of all interest as a phase of fine arts". Our educated countrymen also were led by this Western bias and mistaken ideas.

Being one of the first batch of his students, I know how he discouraged his pupils copying nature faithfully in an orthodox Western method—landscape, portrature and pictures painted after the minute drawings from models and sitters.

He always favoured intuition and imagination which were the ideals of art in India. That was the reason, why the special class



started by Tagore in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, in 1905, was named—"The Advanced Design Class". It was in no way return to the past but a regeneration and revivification of the ideology of the Indian Art. This small art centre of Calcutta attracted students from far away places like Nagahawatta of Ceylon, Venkatappa of Mysore, Hakim Mohammad Khan and Sami-uz-Zumma of Lucknow, Shailendra Nath De of Allahabad and the late Surendra Nath Ganguly, Nanda Lal Bose, Samarendra Nath Gupta and the author himself of Bengal.

Tagore's method of teaching was unique. He sat and worked amongst his disciples to inspire them and develop their imagination and taste. He believed in life-long studentship and progress. He never encouraged imitating others and never tried to impose his own personality on his students. He sent his disciples to Ajanta and collected paintings of the old Mogul and Kangra Schools not with the intention of deliberately encouraging to imitate them but to acquaint his pupils with their own country's art and derive inspiration from ancient masters. He urged them to taste the perennial source of inspiration and endeavour to develop expressions of their own. For that purpose he spent quite a fortune on the collection of masterpieces.

He was indeed lucky to get two pioneers as his colleagues—E. B. Havell and Ananada Coomaraswamy were two pioneers who helped to make the art history of India possible. It was due to the late Gaganendra Nath Tagore, brother of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, who subsequently popularised the work of the renaissance school by organising the India Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta in 1907 with Lord Kitchner as its first President. The Society at the outset had only 35 members out of which there were 27 Europe-

ans and 8 Indians. The first Art Exhibition was organised by the Society in 1908 and since its inception no painting was hung which did not bear the stamp of originality of the artist. All imitative examples used to be forthwith rejected. Thus the national aspiration of the country was channelised through art for the first time in India during our present era, and captured the imagination of the artists today. The dynamic cultural upheaval and spontaneous art movement sponsored by Tagore at the beginning of the present century has become popular.

In conclusion, I may draw the attention to the para written by E.B. Havell in his book, "Indian Sculpture and Painting", regarding the future of Indian Art. He says : "The new school of Calcutta opens up a brighter prospect for the future, but as Professor Lethaby has said, 'no art that is only one-man deep is worth much. It should be a thousand men deep'. It remains to be seen whether Indian politicians, handicapped as they are by their Western ideas of art, still possess constructive as well as critical faculties. Will they follow the line of least resistance, that which seems most convenient for departmental routine and themselves, the time-honoured practice of drying up the living springs of craftsmanship in controlling the artistic output of India, or will they apply themselves seriously to the problem of adapting departmental machinery to the needs and conditions of Indian life? Will they take art as serious study, or merely as a pleasant relaxation from the cares of office"?

In this book I have attempted to survey in a short compass all the phases of Indian Art from the prehistoric age to the present time and also its ideology. If it fulfills the purpose of our art-students and also for general reading on art, my task will be achieved

to a great extent. There is unfortunately no handbook on art available for the use of the students, though need for the study on that subject in the schools and colleges has been felt and action has been taken already by the Department of Education. Havell and Coomaraswamy's books on art have gone out of print. I hope this book will also find place in the bookshelves of the lovers of Indian Art.

I am deeply grateful to Sri Krishna Gopal, a young friend of mine, who assisted me in examining the proofs. "Symbolism in Indian Art and Religion" was first published in the "Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" (Dec 1950) Cleveland 6, Ohio, U. S. A. It is due to Sri Harendra Nath Sen of the Oriental Publishing House, Lucknow that I could bring it out today.

Prantika,  
Trans-Gomti Civil Lines,  
Lucknow, U. P.  
April 30, 1952.

Asit Kumar Haldar

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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FIRST

1678

1679

1680

1681

1682



## CHAPTER I

### PRIMITIVE ART

Man is great not because he can be a super-man, but because he is a Man and a creator. This peculiar sensitive creative instinct made him superior to all other living creatures of the world. The record of his early evolution as a creator can be traced from the remains of pre-historic art and culture. None can adequately explain how such evolution occurred in the remote ages. It was in 1879 that a Spanish explorer of antiquity first discovered a specimen of cave-man's art in Altamira. This discovery revealed to us that our primitive ancestors recorded their life-history on the walls of their cave-dwellings depicting hunting scenes, rituals and other episodes. At that time the physical conditions of the earth surface were in many respects unsuited for habitation and different from what they are now. The successive glacial periods were followed by a period of comparative warmth, when under more congenial conditions of living, Europe saw the human itinerant species move about from place to place in the wilds along with other carnivorous animals in quest of shelter and food. They mostly lived in the natural grottoes in the hills and dales and maintained themselves somehow by eating raw-meat of the animals they could collect by hunting.

According to the science of anthropology, the primitive races of mankind were isolated from one another for many thousands of years, and then were evolved the first six types of people, viz.—(1) the Australian, (2) the Negroid, (3) the Mongolian, (4) the Alpine, (5) the Mediterranean, and (6) the Nordic. Anthropologists think that both the Australian and the Mediterranean groups migrated to India and then spread out to other countries. Remains of their art still survive in the various grottoes in India and abroad. Among other remains, the cave-paintings are to be considered as relics of symbolical representation of their daily sport chase and spoils as the basis of their ceremonials and rituals.

In this respect, pre-historic art, though primitive and undeveloped, is not sophisticated by conventionalism in spite of its symbolical character. We can trace from their early attempts at paintings, the behaviour pattern of their culture. As men sought to make their surroundings beautiful, they brought forth the first cultural achievements of humanity. The first discovery of the cave paintings at Altamira in Spain revealed to us the secret of the unsophisticated art of the primitive people which belonged to an age when Asian, Egyptian, and Aegean civilizations were unknown. We may with our modern civilization, at first smile at these early attempts as superstitious ritualistic art,



but cannot at once reject them without giving due consideration to their spontaneous aesthetic development. If we observe the consecutive chronological chains of their legacies from the Protolithic stage to late Neolithic stage and from the Copper Age to the Iron Age, we can perceive multifarious ritual activities which were ultimately assimilated into the formula of art. Apart from the aesthetic value of the cave-men's art, these paintings give us an idea of the primitive men's grim struggle for existence and of their perilous adventures. They were mostly drawn in the inaccessible hill recesses in the dark. So the scholars think that sacred rituals required such seclusion from their enemies. Though they lived a most precarious existence in the past, their creative sense expressed in art work extorts the admiration of the civilized men of our time. It is obvious that aesthetic emotion existed in the most primitive men in a potential state. Primitive men, indeed, never consciously attempted to discover the dynamic and rhythmic forces through their ritualistic art-expression; but it came spontaneously as a desire for self-expression, which however, ultimately remained as a vital keynote for all subsequent art expressions.

In the West, wild rituals and ceremonial adventures led to the great pagan art in Greece, which ultimately culminated into Christian art with the advent of Christianity.

Thus the profound and presistent traits of the primitive expressions can be traced and acknowledged in the art of the highly sophisticated civilized man. It can be easily said that all advanced mythological and romantic art has been originated and evolved out of, and influenced predominantly by, the primitive art-forms. The fundamental principles underlying rhythmic forms were always the same.

Let us now consider about the ritual and the ancestor-worship prevailing in remote days. In India we can easily trace it in the highly civilized Hindu religious rites for the deceased ancestors and also in the making of wooden effigy called Bull-staff (*Brishakastha*). Similarly in Java the deceased soul of the king is honoured with a representation of a bull-effigy, which can be classed as a work of art on its merits. The symbol of the cross is common amongst the motifs used by the various primitive men for their different rituals. It is also the greatest symbol of the Christian faith to-day. The inner significance of such symbolism, of course, greatly differed in these cases. The Zunis of New Mexico symbolized the four quarters of the Universe by representing the cross; whereas the Aropohos indicated the morning star by it. Similarly, in colour too symbolism prevailed. In Hindu folk-rituals, blue indicates infinity and the sky, i. e.,

God-head the creator *Purusha* : and yellow represents the earth, i. e., the creation *Prakriti* : Paralell to this among the Zunis, blue for the male, and yellow for the female are used in colouring prayer-sticks for their priest. Mask and ceremonial garments are painted in colours symbolizing magic spell. Various kinds of charms were used by the cave-men to please the rain-maker and fortune-maker gods and goddesses which later on survived in Greece. The fetish representations of antelope in French Sudan, Peruvian pottery, wooden images and shields of Africa and East Indies, the masks and totems of New Guinea, and the primitive basketry in the Phillippines give ample examples of artistic taste developed through ritual practices. In an ancient Pali text we find while Asoka the Great carried the sacred Bodhitree sapling on foot to Tamralipti port with his daughter Samghamitra to be ultimately carried by his son Mahendra to Ceylon, two primitive men holding a hyena-totem and a eagle-totem also accompanied him along with a mixed retinue of men and women. In India some of the primitive motifs still survive in our time in various symbolical decorative patterns. Moreover, the child-like sense of rhythm conveys to us the aesthetic endowments of primitive men. They borrowed motifs freely from Nature, but modified them to fit in with their own sense



of rhythm and representation. This free adaptation of natural objects often with pronounced abstraction also accounts for the grotesqueness of their designs in many cases.

So, early man got impetus for rhythm from rituals. Rhythm is a dynamic expression of life's fulfilments: this urge for rhythm that undulates in various currents through the limbs of a victorious warrior or a successful hunter and that flows in and through the observances of everyday life. This urge is caught and immortalized through the ages by the painters, sculptors, and poets in their respective artistic creations. Ritual is not always directly concerned with the economic or technological aspects of life, and therefore it gave rise to such invention of art-forms, not intended for utility but for the sake of its artistic quality. Of course, generally the primitive peoples were eager to keep the evil spirits away through their various rituals. With the advent of civilization, the mystery of the universe faded away; but the primitive men lived under the open sky and encountered constant changes in the pyhysical conditions,—volcanic eruptions, forest-fires, floods, droughts and typhoons. As they were so close to Nature, they sought the help of the mysterious spirits embodied in such phenomena to modify their condition of living according to their needs and circum-

stances. This gave rise to demon fetish worship, totemism and animism. To make a worship attractive and imposing they tried to shape it aesthetically and thus the demand for artistic work grew with the need for religions as well.

Ritualistic symbols have been divided into three different categories: (1) fetish-figures and totems, (2) emblems or representations of deities, and (3) ancestral effigies. The fetish figures or totems were used as badges of the clans of the primitive race and were sometimes nicely carved on a post. Such other emblems were also used as signs of the headmen of the villages or priests. This is done by way of tatooing in a special technique or by wearing a particular dress or decorative head-gear. Ancestral effigies were erected for the welfare of the family or community. Rituals evolved also sacrifices and offerings. The ritualistic art-forms expressed by the primitive peoples can be classified as follows; (1) story-telling or recitation of poetry relating to mythological episodes, which also embodied music with measured beats, (2) gesture and mimicry in dramatic actions with masked dance, and (3) plastic and graphic arts, i.e., painting, carving, weaving and pottery. The faith of the primitive people in the healing power of magic gave birth to all kinds of distinctive symbolism and fetish marks with which they tried to evoke spirits, like a magician, to creat

awe and inspiration, or for supplication, bringing down punishment and misery to their enemy or bestowing prosperity and goodwill on the community.

Human sacrifices are not uncommon in ritualized tribes. We have already seen that such rituals are symbolic expressions and everything connected with them has got a special significance and meaning attributed to it. From scientific anthropological research we not only gather various patterns of behaviours of the primitive races but also trace the typical urge and motive for creating art-forms. The aesthetic emotion displayed by them cannot be in any way connected with the biological motive. They did not always try to produce useful art. The primitive tribes like the Eskimos or Konyaks of North Siberia produce objects of curiosity and even absolutely useless things. We cannot discover any other reason than that of an aesthetic urge for the elaborate and fantastic wood carvings of African origin. The primitive toys and decorative patterns of Mexico were obviously made to amuse children. The ritual which evoked art arose partly out of physical or economical necessity, but may also be considered as the result of an interplay of religious and aesthetic urges in mankind. In the highly developed civilization of Greece ritualistic symbols are not lacking. The past always moulds the future. Thus we



find the pagan art of Greece retaining some of the defunct traits of primitive rituals. Similarly Hebrew myths and rituals rehabilitated themselves in the catholic Christian Faith. Though ritual and symbolism vary according to local conditions and usages of the people, yet the art-forms employed to represent it are largely identical everywhere in the globe. The struggle for existence led primitive peoples to speculate and devise all kinds of ritualistic ceremonies and sacrifices. They had to fight for their lives against hostile animals as well as neighbouring tribes who always tried to rob them of their valuable belongings.

We can cite many examples of primitive fetish, magic and worship. In New Guinea, pig owners use magic-spell so that their commodities may flourish and fetch good prices in the market and may not die during the transit. The Trobriand Islanders perform special rites before launching their newly-built canoes. The Maori tribes consider a priest as possessing 'the three buckets full of wisdom'. The possession of the knowledge of peace rituals and war is essential for becoming a priest. Some of the tribes have got intricate organization for such rituals and their priest is disciplined to forego a number of things in life; viz, eating rat, snake, monkey, porcupine, and dressing in any other colours but white and blue.



He takes his meals under prescribed rules and is brought up under a specially built enclosure. He has to perform certain specific rites daily as a routine job. In other words he has got to abide by the rules of the clan, and so individual initiative on his part is never tolerated. The Zunies of Mexico have rituals of extremely artistic and poetic nature. They have a secret organization connected with spirit-worship. They would like to pray, offer sacrifices, and do penance to discover the will of the god they worship and to act in accordance with that.

It should not be overlooked that primitive art and culture often influenced the highly intellectual civilization which subsequently developed. In Hindu, Buddhist and Christian worship many primitive rituals survive in various forms and we consequently see such motifs and symbols as the Cross, Trisula, Chakra and Swastika in our time. The students of anthropology know how with the invention of fire the primitive men gradually acquired knowledge of materials which grew in a rather phenomenal way. The Megalithic structure in stone invented by them to cremate their dead, when they lived in natural caves, shows the beginning of architecture. The House, 'of the Dead', as the Mundas call it in India, is built with stones set up upright with a roof of horizontal slabs placed on them. In Malta, a block of stone measuring

12'x9' feet used to be placed as a roof by some ingenious method unknown to the present-day world. But the greatest contribution of the primitive man is the development of rhythmic sense through his ritualistic art, which is the essential source of all great arts of mankind. Many folk-rituals of Bengal, viz; *Itupuja*, *Mansapuja*, *Punyipukhurbrata* are survivals of the rituals of primitive culture. In India, many primitive races such as the Nagas, Kukis, Mundas, Bhils, Kols and Santals lived along with the Aryan settlers of the Indus Valley and the Ganges Valley and sometimes served them in various ways. The peculiar designs called *Alpona* in Bengal are still used as decoration for the festive occasions. Certain motifs of the primitive objects, viz : spear, bows and arrows and earthen pot are drawn in a simplified primitive manner with rice-paste on the floor. The Holy-mark (*Tripundra*) on the forehead of the Vaishnavite priests, the *Vasudhara* used in many important Hindu ceremonies and the *Trisula* of the Shaivas could be traced back to the Indian cave-paintings at Singanpur. Apart from the striking similarity found amongst the primitive arts of the World, and the modified ritualistic designs of the highly developed modern cultures, the rhythmic sense, which is dynamic, has remained the same. Highly aesthetic rhythmic values came into being

through the ritualistic efforts of the primitive people. This shows that art-sense developed in human beings long before they thought of inventing fire or of recording their thought in hieroglyphic writings.

In India, such primitive rituals developed into a distinctive mystical religion in the Vedic times. While trying to acquire the knowledge of the cosmic spirit, the Indo-Aryans created numerous gods and goddesses by which they tried to symbolize different aspects of the phenomenal Universe. The artists crystalized these symbolical images in stone and wood for worship. These gradually became conventional and almost fixed ideals in Indian art and religion. The minor symbolical marks, viz. *Trisula*, *Chakra*, and *Swastika* of the primitives underwent, however, very little changes. The homogeneity of these images could be ascertained from their decorative and conventional forms which survived the primitive ritualistic traits. We are struck with wonder at the fantastically twisted poses in Indian sculptural images and paintings which are described as *Trivanga*, *Kshanavang* and *Ativanga* of conventional rhythmic inflexions. We can understand them better if we go to the fountain-head of their origin—the primitive ritual art.

In India examples of primitive art are to be found at (1) Raigarh in Singanpur State (2) at Hoshangabad,



(3) in Mirzapur district at Likhunia, Kohar and Bhalدارia, (4) on the river-bed at Chakradharpur (5) and in the Bijaygarh caves. Except those at Ghatsila and in different parts of the Vindhya range, such pictures are either hewn on the rocks or painted on them with lard mixed with different colours. Most of them are quite exposed and unprotected from the ravages of time and weather. They are drawn with the decisive hands of expert draftsmen. The colours are quite bright and vivid.

It is not within the scope of this short study to give a description of each and every painting, but I shall indicate their main features as briefly as possible. Singanpur rock-paintings are situated eleven miles off from Raigarh—the capital city of Raigarh State—and can be approached through Naharpali station on the B. N. Railway. The approach to the cave-dwellings in which these paintings are found is covered with thick 'sal' forests, which command a fine view of the surroundings. Some pictures are painted while some others are chiselled out of the walls of the caves. Most of them are painted so high up that it is not possible to view them properly without the aid of a ladder. The paintings are generally done in red and yellow ochre. Animals, such as deer, lizards and wild buffaloes are depicted in large numbers. In one of the series an elaborate hunting

scene is depicted. A group of hunters is chasing wild buffaloes; some of the hunters are clothed while a few naked ones, supposed to be youngsters, have gone ahead of them with sticks. The head of the buffalo has been quite accurately portrayed, which goes to prove the power of observation the painters developed in those days; whereas the human figures are drawn in a childish conventional manner. The significance of these paintings lies in the power shown in making these patterned figures so realistic in appeal that one could almost hear the noise of their excitement and feeling their heart-beats during the hunt. In another painting the animal has taken the upper hand,—the man is in danger of being overcome by it. In yet another one, an aged person (obviously larger in size) is dancing with arms stretched out with two young boys round a *Trishula* as if devoutly absorbed in some ceremony. There are also some arabesque patterns which show that a keen sense of artistic rhythm was developed at that time.

In the sand-stone rock of Adamgarh, two and a half miles away from the district town of Hoshangabad in Central India, an interesting series of pre-historic paintings is to be found. As usual, these paintings at the first-sight also look like child's scribbings, but in fact are not at all childish. These are attempts in the

early stages of human invention to express feelings in depicting pictographically and thus have a significance of their own in the story of man's first achievements. In the Hoshangabad group a scene shows a party of men riding on horses without saddles. They were apparently expert riders and had marvellous control over their semi-wild steeds. One of the horses has been depicted as catching the rider's loin cloth with its mouth and trying to unseat him. Another horseman behind this unfortunate man has a very trying time to make his horse move in the right direction. He has got a stick in his hand and a bundle tied round his shoulder, on account of which he looks quite out of balance. The untamed horses with their uncanny riders and a man carrying a sword and a shield behind them represent a most grotesque panorama, from which we could study the moods and thoughts of the people of the palaeolithic age. In another painting at Hoshangabad a *barasinga* (stag), which appears to be in flight, is painted in yellow ochre on a dark background.

On the bed of the Sanjoi river at Chakradharpur, the capital town of Singhbhoom district in Bihar, many such pre-historic records are to be found. Historians think that they are approximately thirty thousand years old. Some line-drawings have been found on the rocky bed



of the Subarnarekha river, a few miles off from Ghatsila in the same district. At Maubhandar village, a huge human figure is chiselled out on a rocky boulder. There are also some remains of paintings illustrating three persons lying flat on their back with brickbats strewn around them. A bow is placed on one of them, and near them there are other three persons seem to be announcing their victory with outstretched hands. Anthropologists think that they represent a proto-Australian stock which came to India many millenniums ago. There are also some traces of their early settlement to indicate this. Most of the other series of such paintings are in the Mirzapur district on the Vindhya Plateau by the river Sone. In this district at Likhunia, Kohbar, Baldaria, Mahararia, and also at Bijoigarh, such paintings have been discovered. Near the village Mahararia on the rock-cliffs, most of them are either chiselled or painted. Amongst them the Bijoigarh paintings are found on the hill on which the famous fort of Bijoigarh stands. The Gara river-stream dropped hundred feet down the hill there and ultimately formed a rivulet on the side of which the Likhunia caves are situated. The place is densely covered with forests, and from the *Babarnama* we could gather that it was a place for hunting lions, elephants, rhinoceros, bisons and wild buffaloes which used to



roam about. In these Mirzapur series of paintings, scenes of flight, horsemanship and hunting are to be found. All paintings in this locality are not of the same period. They generally range from the pre-historic dates to those of the 10th century. Cave-dwellers also decorated their stone and bone implements of various patterns with figure designs.

Ages went by, after these rock-paintings of the Palaeolithic age were delineated. We then come across fragments of painting on pottery excavated at Mohen-jo-daro and Harrappa in the Indus Valley. These paintings were meant for decorating utensils and articles of daily use. The patterns suggesting a row of snags and various flowers show that clever artists were in existence in that remote period, who had true sense of rhythm and balance. The patterns are so smart to look at, that they could pass the severest test of the art-critics of our time. Some of the conventionalized human figures painted on the earthen pots somewhat resemble the cave-man's work, which preceded them by thousands of years. The realistic rendering of the natural objects with a fine sense of rhythm and form produced an art in the Indus Valley which forms a class of its own; the artists' sensitive feeling for reality and also their idea of decoration seem to have wrought miracles in producing such elegant things.

Men of our times with a highly sophisticated knowledge of the subject cannot get back to that sensitive sphere again.

One of the seals discovered in a room at Mohen-jodaro is engraved with a figure reminiscent of a Babylonian deity. It is horned and holds a box in its right hand and is clothed in a costume suggestive of leaves. A considerable number of pottery and clay figures has been found. Most of these figures have got a kind of thin girdles around their loins. They wear a very distinctive fan-like head-dress. The peculiarity of these figurines is the pinner-like object worn on each side of the head. Most of the female figurines are decorated with jewellery. The figures with elaborate head-dress and jewellery are probably sacred images. These are very common there, and archaeologists think that they are well executed, probably made by professional potters rather than house-holders.

After the Mohen-jodaro and Harrappa discoveries, we do not come across any work of art of the Vedic period except the fragments of paintings found in the Jogimara cave in the Sarguja State of the Central Provinces. These give evidence of the continuity of the pre-historic art to the advent of the highly cultured art of the Buddhist period. The big gaps in between these ancient arts cannot be linked up unless some new discovery is made. In the ancient literature of the pre-Buddhist age

(in Ramayana and Mahabharata) the art of painting has been mentioned. The canons of the art of painting developed gradually through the experience of the artists of many centuries, and thus a highly un-sophisticated art developed. The Jogimara cave-paintings cannot claim to be a specimen of the highly developed fine art of India, but can be regarded as a class by themselves. These paintings consist mainly of processions of elephants, chariots, and also *Makaras*. The human figures are quite primitive in their expression. The colours are restricted to black, Indian red and yellow. The paintings of the Jogimara caves are done on the rough surface of the natural cave, which is only ten feet wide. Archeologists think that these paintings are pre-Asokan and were executed some time in the Third Century B. C. The place is hundred miles off from the nearest railway station of Pandra Road and is difficult of access.

As other creatures of the earth changed their behaviour to suit a new environment, so also man, as he encountered variation in environment, changed his artistic methods and expressions. But he was also apt to revert to primitive habits, which are natural, simple and spontaneous. That is the reason why we can trace the basic psychological adjustments in all artistic creations. We are not, therefore, surprised that in the highly civilised machine-



ridden world the ultramodern artists of Europe are going back to the primitive (*Tamas*) sources for their inspiration. Their scientific mind comprehend the dynamism embodied in the savage art-expressions and thus refuse to tread upon the usual path of Romantic art, which used to be considered in the 19th century as the sure goal of all art expressions. They, therefore, instead of seeking refinement in the beaten track of Romanticism, tried to set up a new standard in their work.

Infact, the primitive art has been revalued in our times in Europe, and it will not be out of place to mention that since the advent of photography, cinematography, and television, the whole outlook of Art in Europe has changed and certain groups of modern artists cannot loyally follow in the tradition of the so-called Romantic art. In their new technique of expression, the modernist group of painters have ruthlessly excluded nature and brought about a reactionary change which is nothing but abstractionism and is quite akin to the art of the pre-historic people. The tradition of the pre-historic art-form still persist among backward races in certain parts of the world, e. g., Africa, South America, Australia and Indonesia. The modernist artists of Europe instead of ingoring primitive art (*Tamasio*) as unworthy or bizarre have boldly taken up its essential features and re-named

their psychological aspects experimenting through the various methods of "Dadaism" and "Sur-realism". The habit of invention and creation of new artistic forms however crude they may be, was formed in the primitive people and transmitted with additional experiences to the succeeding generations. With a proper exposition of this fact we can unveil the layers of man's artistic heritage and understand art in its proper perspective.

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## CHAPTER II

### FRESCO-PAINTING IN ANCIENT INDIA

In India there exists big gaps between the paintings of the pre-historic, pre-vedic, pre-Asokan (Buddhist) and Mogul paintings. Due to the ravages of time and constant invasions of various races in successive periods, the art of painting could hardly survive in India and be discerned in chronological sequence. Moreover, the technique involved was such that only by an accident traces of paintings remained in Ajanta, Bagh, Sigiriya, and in some other places. After the pre-Asokan paintings of Jogimara caves in Central Provinces mention could be made of the highly developed paintings at Ajanta caves at Deccan in Hyderabad. The paintings of the Ajanta caves were done between the 1st century B. C. and the 9th century A. D. These series of 29 caves were discovered by a company of British troops in 1819, and first copied by Major Gill in 1857. Except five copies which are now exhibited in the South Kensington Museum, London all his paintings latter on exhibited at the Crystal Palace Exhibition now perished by fire.

These Buddhist cave-monasteries were excavated at the different times by Kings of the Buddhist faith ruling at the time for the rainy-day resort of the Buddhist monks. The *Chitya* caves were meant for worship and the *Vihara*



types were for the congregation of the preachers as well as for the lodging of the layworshippers. But none can say who actually did the paintings on the walls of the caves and their approximate date of completion. The subject matters of the paintings are some important historical incidents and Jataka legends of the Buddhist. Mention may be made of the Persian Embassy at the court of Pulakeshin II and also the invasion of Ceylon by Bijoy Singha of Bengal and many other incidents of the court and daily life of the people as described by the contemporary poets and authors in their works. These incidents are depicted in a panorama, group by group, in such a way as the episodes could be seen one at a time separately without losing the effect of the harmony of the complete picture of the wall. These groups are not divided compartmentally and are so cleverly composed as to give an idea of completeness in keeping with the architectural features of the surroundings. The frescoe paintings of Europe differ greatly in this respect,—they are drawn separately in panelwise and can be easily taken out of the wall without losing the unity and effect of the other pictures painted on the same wall.

Unfortunately the ground prepared by the artists on the stone-walls of the caves in India was extremely fragile, being made of husk, earth and cowdung, which easily fell off. The Nizam Government, however, spent a considerable



sum of money to restore these paintings and engaged two Italian experts. The special features of these paintings have been described by Mr. John Griffith in his monumental work, "The Cave Paintings of Ajanta" and also by Lady Herringham and Mr. Yazdani in their sumptuous monographs on Ajanta cave-paintings. Both John Griffiths and Lady Herringham made copies of these frescoes between 1875 and 1885 and 1909 and 1911 respectively. Incidentally it might be mentioned that the present author also took part in copying them along with Lady Herringham's party consisting of Venkattappa, Samarendra Nath Gupta, Nanda Lal Bose, Miss. Larcher and Miss. Luke. These copies are preserved in the Indian section of the South-Kensington Museum in London. The merits of these paintings cannot be better described than by quoting some remarks made by both Messrs. Griffiths and Binyon. Mr. Griffiths says :—

"The artists who painted them were giants in execution. Even on the vertical sides of the walls some of the lines which were drawn by one sweep of the brush struck me as being very wonderful; but when I saw long delicate curves drawn without faltering with equal precision, upon the horizontal surface of a ceiling, where the difficulty of

execution is increased a thousand fold it appeared to me nothing less than miraculous".

Mr. Lawrence Binyon writing a preface to the Yazdani's book on Ajanta described the paintings as follows :—

"It is a vision of the living world that the artists of Ajanta present; the teeming earth, the springing plants, the birds, the deer, the elephants, crimson-pillared pavellions and porticoes; gateways and roofs of cities: and among all these the life of men, women and children, supple-limbed, gracious in gesture, freely moving, playing in pensive mood; all earthly life in its laughter and its grief, but always emerging from it a life of the spirit prevails the spirit that contemplates and is filled with compassion. Ajanta paintings were executed over several centuries, but still posses some of their former glories in lines and colours. Though apparently done in a realistic manner, realism is subordinated to ideals of abstract beauty. Lines are strong and subtle. We get in glimpse of hundreds of years of art heritage which must have preceded it, as we find mentioned in the epic story of Ramayana".

After the Ajanta we can speak of the famous series of frescoe-paintings at Bagh caves in the Gwalior State,

which is equally vigorous in spirit and in execution. The caves are situated 90 miles off from Mhow in Central India. They are now in a bad state of preservation ; the roof of the caves in many cases has given way, and the bare wall on which the paintings were done is exposed to the ravages of weather and time. It is indeed a miracle that the series of paintings extending about 40 feet still remain intact, whereas some damaged fragments can also be found in different places in the various caves there. The paintings at Bagh are identical with the specimens of the contemporary Ajanta paintings and are done in the same technique and spirit. The Bagh cave-paintings had some disadvantages, in that the caves were hewn from soft sand-stone, and the mortar available was of much inferior kind. Like Ajanta, these paintings remained in obscurity for centuries and were only discovered in 1820 for the first time by Major Dangarfield, in a place 150 miles away from Ajanta. The panorama of paintings that still exists on the wall of the verandah of the Bagh caves depict a continuous scene, representing a queen weeping on a window-sill with a female attendant by her side consoling her. Next to it, separated by a wall, a kingly personage absorbed in conversation with a princely ambassador apparently illustrates a serious political confabulation. Under it



*arhats* (mendicants) fly in the upper air along with a group of *apsaras* girl-musicians playing on musical instruments. The third scene opens up with a dancing troupe of female musicians and a male dancer, obviously a joker, dressed in apparently Persian costume with a wig on his head. Subsequently we see a procession of men riding on elephants and horses advancing towards the dancing party. The dresses are painted gay with all kinds of *hansa mithuna*, lotuses and geometrical patterns. The horses and elephants are so realistically rendered that one can almost hear the movements of the elephants and the galloping of the horses. There are some female musicians on elephant-back holding one another, giving a very realistic and homely rendering of the scene. At the end of it a *chaitiyatorana* (city entrance) out of which the procession is emerging is depicted. The last scene represents a saint sitting in an *arama* (a public park) with a sad demeanour.

After the Bagh Cave paintings we come across the contemporary paintings at Sigiriya in Ceylon, executed at the time of King Kasayapa between 479 and 497 A. D. These paintings are to be found on a precipitous hill in *Sigiriya* or *Singhagiri* inside the niches, representing possibly the queens of king Kasyapa. These paintings



resemble Bagh and Ajanta in their general technique and also in the mannerism of dresses and decoration of the female figures. Some traces of paintings are still to be found in the ancient city of Anuradhapura and also at Rawanweli Dagoba in Ceylon. Apart from these, paintings representing kingly knights seated in a row with folded hands can be found in the Central Provinces at Taman Kadwa. The inscription found near the paintings could not be deciphered and consequently no time or date of the paintings of these groups could be ascertained. Paintings similar to the later types are still to be found in Polanarwa, Dambhole, Kenheri-Vihara in Colombo, and in Dogaldurwa in Kandi. These paintings, executed between the 1st and 11th century A. D., were drawn in the most rigid convention manner, which ultimately made them lifeless. With the advent of the Mahayana Buddhist cult the Buddhist monks tried to preach the consequences of sin and how to avoid it, and we, therefore, notice in these paintings scenes of Hell and various kinds of punishments which are very carefully illustrated. Such paintings can be seen at the Velubanavihara painted at the time of Parakrambahu between 1153 and 1183 A. D., and they are somewhat akin to the Ajanta frescoes but not quite in their spirit.

The Mediaeval period could be called a dark period for Art. Mention of paintings could only be found in the various contemporary literatures. From Taranath's book we gather that a variety of techniques was in vogue in painting pictures and that there were artists like Joya, Vijoya and Prajaya in Northern India at that time. We understand from his works that in Magadha also famous artistst like Dhiman and Bitpala lived and created a school of their own, which survived more than a century.

Only recently, at Sittannavasal, in Padukotta Jain paintings have been discovered in the cave-temples. These paintings were done at the time of Pallava Raja Mahendra Varman in the 7th century A. D. The lotus tanks with playful elephants, ducks, *makara*, and *mahisha*, painted on the ceilings of the caves, are worth mentioning. There are also personages painted with *jata mukuta*, who resemble Siva as an ascetic. At Kashivarma in Kailash temple some paintings in a damaged state still linger on the wall. In the Narathmallai hills there is a painting of *Chamunda*, *Kala-nritya*, which must have been executed during the time of Pandya Rajas in the 9th century A. D.

In the cave temples of Ellora some remains of frescoes still exist on the ceiling of the Kailash Nath temple (Indrasabha cave). This gives ample evidence that the mural

paintings once elaborately adorned the cave temples of India. In Tanjore Vrihadiswara temple some paintings of the Chola period exist. The technique of outline and other techniques in these mediaeval frescoe paintings do not differ much from the Moghul miniature, we could, therefore, safely call them the "connecting link" with the subsequent great art of the Moguls. Paintings at Badami caves, were done at the time of Chalukya Raj Mangaleswar in the 6th century A. D. Some wall paintings are also to be found at Vijayanagar (14th to 17th century).

Some paintings belonging to the 15th century have been found at Trichur in Tirumallaipuram Temple. In Cochin and Travancore State we come across a series of paintings of the early 15th to 18th century A. D. They are full of vigour and life although extremely decorative. We could also trace some paintings on the Jain manuscripts, among which Shalivadra illustrations of the Jain mythology could be mentioned. This long period of two thousand years witnesses the vitality of these pre-Moghul Hindu-Buddhist paintings inspired and spread far and wide at Banuyan caves in Afghanistan, Khotan, Meeran, Tarfan, in Central Asia, Honon and a thousand Buddhist temples in China and Horiyuji and Kongobuji temples in Japan. These recall the character and spirit



of the classical art of Ajanta, which obviously influenced the art of the Buddhist religion. In Nepal and Tibet the tradition of ancient Indian painting has persistently continued upto our time. The Tibetan and Nepali banner paintings (*Tangka*) did not allow the vigour of the Ajanta tradition to decay and continued it in a different vehicle. Thus the art of ancient India remained as potential as ever like her religion.

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### CHAPTER III

#### MOGUL AND RAJPUT PAINTING

Though Mogul art is essentially a Muslim art and flourished in the Imperial courts of the grand Moguls during their long sovereignty in India, we should not forget that the art of painting in India had already reached its zenith in pre-Muslim days. We learn from history that the Hindu-Buddhist civilization had a great hold over Iran up to the west of the Oxus. The Bamian cave-paintings of the mid-7th century near Kabul and the paintings of Khotan, Miran and Tarfan are of Hindu-Buddhist origin. It was only with the Arab conquest that the Hindu artists had to leave Eastern Iran. King Dharmashri had to renounce Buddhism, though his followers of the Buddhist faith still continued to remain there but were finally displaced by the Muslims of Altai in 1865 A. D. The Sino-Buddhist paintings of Tunhuang, Horion and Khotan also influenced the art of Iran to a great extent, if not thoroughly, during the reign of Shah Abbas between 1580-1620 A. D. About this time, the paintings of images of human beings, though forbidden by the precepts of the Muslim religion, were also in vogue. Thus we see remains of such paintings of human figures on the walls of the palaces of Harun-ul-Rashid of the Arabian Night fame

of the 8th century and also in the residences of Caliph-ul-Mutawakkalbilallah in Samara. These paintings show that the Muslim princes began to realize the aesthetic value of paintings and indulged in decorating their homes with figure-paintings along with floral designs. Thus from the beginning of the 10th century book illustrations and illuminations on manuscripts became the fashion in Iranian art. This much we can say briefly about the history of Iranian art in their pre and post Muslim days.

Mogul paintings were chiefly confined to miniatures, and the first group of artists who came to the Mogul Durbar in India produced paintings of a mixed Indo-Iranian kind. A happy blending of Indian and Iranian arts was possible due to the traditions of both the schools being quite alive in India as well as in Iran and also being inspired by the kind patronage of the Mogul Court. The foremost inspiration of the Mogul School of paintings came from the painters from Bokhara, specially from Bihzad and his followers such as Agha Mirak, Sultan Mahmood and Mirza Ali. A contemporary artist, Mir Syyyid Ali could also be mentioned, as one of the good workers in the Mogul Court at that time. Emperor Babar in his Memoirs mentioned Bihzad as "the most eminent of all painters". It could be ascertained also

that Babar, a direct descendant of Timur, had a keen aesthetic sense though he could not do anything in that direction due to the unsettled condition of his newly-acquired kingdom in India. Humayun had a more difficult time, and, therefore, his period was not quite suitable for art to thrive. It was at the time of Akbar that tranquillity prevailed in the Mughal Raj, and in such a congenial condition art too flourished in his court. From amongst the 40 names found in *Ain-i-Akbari* mention may be made of the names of the court painters from Iran—Meer Sayed Ali of Tabriz, Khwajah Abd-ul-Samad-Shereen and Farrukh, and such as Kesudas, Besawan, San-ullah, Mehmeen, Kehmkaren, Tara, Harbuns Ram Lal, Mekend, Mushkeen and Yasawanth of India. These Hindu and Muslim artists worked together in Akbar's Court and illustrated the famous Persian translation of the *Ramayana* (at present in Jaipur State) and also *Nal Damayanti*, *Ginjeznameh*, *Zafar Nameh*, *Akbar Nameh*, *Razam Nameh*, *Kaleia Daman* and *Ayar Danish*. From *Ain-i-Akbari* we know that Emperor maintained a painting gallery and he patronised this art and caused it to arrive at high perfection. With that object this department was established, in order that a number of artists being collected together, might vie with each other for fame and become eminent by their productions.



Excepting some frescoes nothing remains of the pre-Moghul paintings of India which immediately followed the Buddhist art. Some illustrated Jain manuscripts, however, have survived, to show the continuity of it till the advent of the Moghul time. The early Rajput paintings of the Moghul period can be regarded as an independent and typical art of Hindus. The Rajput paintings were not always miniatures and examples of large size fresco-paintings and paintings on cloth are not lacking. Dr. Coomaraswamy has classified Rajput paintings in the following groups according to the places of their origin : (1) Rajasthani i. e., of the places where Rajputs lived, —Jaipur, Marwar, Bundelkhand and Kathiawar ; (2) Pahari, i. e., of Jammu, Kashmir, Kangra and Garhwal ; (3) Sikh, i. e., the paintings that were revived at the time of Ranjit Singh in the Punjab between 1803 and 1839.

Rajput artists were very fond of illustrating Vaishnavite literature and also the *Ragas* and *Raginis* as described graphically in Sangit Sastras. To understand the underlying meaning of Rajput art one should know the *Bhava* and *Rasa* of the Vaishnava culture and also such books as *Gita Govinda* of Jaideva, and works of Ramanuja, Ramananda, Vidyapati, Chandidasa, Kabir, Tulsidas, Keshavdas and Beharilal. Amongst the Rajput and Pahari painters special mention of Molaram should be made.



Rajput school lingered on with this famous Pahari artist (1760-1833) whose ancestors migrated to Gharwal in the middle of the sixteenth Century. This Garhwali artist may be called the "Botticelli of India". True homage to these artists of the Moghul and Rajput schools cannot be paid unless we cultivate our taste to appreciate their monumental works—not only through the knowledge of their technique but also by entering into their underlying meaning, thought and spirit.

Akbar was a student of Ideology and studied the philosophy, religion and art of India and tried to bring about a harmony without losing their aesthetic values. In such favourable circumstances the Moghul art took its root in India without remaining foreign in its newly-adopted home.

The subject matter of these paintings was chiefly court life, scenes of harems, hunting scenes and some such topics as had a particular interest for the Emperor or the nobles of the court. Favourite animals, birds and beasts have constantly found place in these works. The workmanship of these miniature water-colour paintings was such that it is only with the help of a magnifying glass that we can now understand their unrivalled fine brush technique. In Akbar's time we notice the change

and development of the so-called Indo-Iranian style into the Moghul school, which flourished till the end of the Moghul dynasty in India.

Jahangir was extremely fond of fine arts and was keen on developing the talent of his court painters by his personal encouragement and patronage. He also invited Abul Hassan, son of the famous painter Aga Riza of Herat, from Iran to his court. He made a large collection of Iranian paintings by famous artists like Bihzad, Sultan Ahmad, Aga Mirak and Jafar Ali. These works have now been scattered over in various collections in India and abroad. From *Jahangir Nama* we find that Abul Hassan was his most favourite artist in the court, and he honoured him with the title of "Nadvi-ul-Zumma"—Marvel of the Time. Unfortunately the very few of his works survive. There is an anecdote that while sending Sir Thomas Roe as an ambassador of Great Britain to India, James the First, sent an oil painting to the Moghul court with him. The Emperor was so proud of his own artists that he had it copied by them so faithfully that it was impossible for Sir Thomas to make out the original from amongst its copies kept side by side with it. These court-painters were very well off in the Mogul court and *Jagirs* and fees were generously given to them by the Emperor. But they had also to suffer hardships along with the

Emperor specially when he had to face any political crisis. We know Samal Das, Jagannath and Tara Chand had to cover 600 miles on camel's back in eleven days in a scorching summer in May. Mirza Mohammad Hakim and Shah Murad made themselves famous by Simply painting portraits of Jahangir.

The Moghul painting was also fostered and patronized by Shahjehan—the builder of the Taj. His interest in Fine Art could be illustrated by an episode. Sir Thomas Roe went to present him with an English-made watch to which the Emperor remarked that he would have appreciated it better if original oil paintings were presented to him instead. In his regime, Bijapur king too began patronizing a group of painters in his court which later on formed a school by itself. Many noblemen under the Moghul court—both Hindus and Muslims—helped the Fine Art to grow in their respective territories, and thus many painters earned their livelihood under their kind protection and patronage. Dara Shikoh, son of Shahjehan, was extremely fond of painting. He made a special collection of master—pieces which formed his album at present preserved in the India House Library in London.

The decadence and downfall of Fine Arts in India came with the reign of Aurangzeb, though it cannot be



said definitely that he did not tolerate the artists in his court simply because of his orthodox feelings. One could see paintings, depicting historical incidents and various anecdotes of his time, still preserved in various collections in India and abroad. The last resort of the Moghul art was the Courts of Hyderabad and Oudh, where the artists maintained their bare existence without much life and ultimately lost all the glories of their past. Moghul technique survived to some extent at Patna, encouraged by the British merchants and officials of the John Company's time. In this way Patna school was very much influenced by the western art. Portraits were the main-subjects depicted by the artists. Indian painting remained spontaneously productive up to the early Victorian period among the various examples of illustrated manuscripts of the nineteenth century; mention may be made of the *Akhlak-i-Nasiri* (1842) in the British museum and *Behari Lal ki Satsai* (1880) of Dr. Rai Rajeswar Bali's collection.

It would be an incomplete survey of the Moghul Arts without saying something about the Moghul calligraphy which was an allied subject to paintings and the *Shia Kalam* technique of the painters, which involved the same dexterity as is found in the lineal technique of good



calligraphist. The picturesquely hand-written Persian manuscripts were adorned with miniature paintings and with the advent of the Moghul dynasty it came to India as a great inspiration to the Indian Art. Illustrated *Talpatra* and *Bhurjipatra* manuscripts were quite common in India at that time. The Moghul princes brought with them the best of their tradition of calligraphy, which inspired and improved the later Hindu manuscript writings. We thus find illuminated manuscripts of Bhagvata Gita, Gita Gobinda and many other Sanskrit and Hindi literature. There are generally four kinds of scripts; (1) *Kufi*, i. e., angular kind, (2) *Naskh*—rounded type of lettering, (3) *Nastalik*—much rounded than *Naskh*, and (4) *Shikeshhta*—another version of *Nastalika*. Shahjehan's son, Darasekoh, learnt all kinds of manuscript writing from the famous calligrapher Abdul Rasid—Dayalmir. Bahadur Shah, the last of the Moghul Emperors, was himself a great calligraphist, and his works are still to be found in the various art collections in India and abroad. In conclusion we may say that the Moghul and Rajput Arts, discovered the secret of rhythm in line and harmony in colour and balance in form, though these did not attend to the law of perspective and chiaroscuro, which an analytical critic of the European School of thought might regard as meaningless and absurd.

## CHAPTER IV

### MODERN INDIAN PAINTING

In India, Art of Painting was neglected during the Victorian era. That is why it is difficult to analyse the various techniques and styles of different schools of modern painting that have arisen in India as a result of the conflicts of cultural ideology. Some of us were happy with the western ideals imposed upon us by the alien European education and a few national minded men revolted against it. We shall later on mention in this essay all its phases.

The art of painting could be traced in chronological order through the successive ages up to the Moghul and Rajput schools, which, however, did not abruptly terminate with the Moghul dynasty in about A. D. 1760. But coherent development of different styles of paintings after the end of the 18th century could be traced. A great change prevailed in Indian art with the advent of the Victorian era. The artists of India began copying oil paintings from Europe, and the result was the production of hybrid miniature portraits, which were the only achievements of the 18th century. In the beginning of the 18th century, schools of portrait painting flourished in Patna and Oudh. Nawabs, Rajas and high officials were generally depicted surrounded by their courtiers

and attendants. An effort to catch correct likeness with light and shade can be traced in these works though this was never carried to the standards reached in European portrait painting. Many interesting portraits of distinguished Anglo-Indians (*Bura-Sahibs*) of the "John Company" have survived, which give a vivid picture of the epoch.

European influence and education are indeed responsible for the change in art as well as in social judgment and ideal in India. Artists and art-lovers went crazy over the realistic glamorous oil paintings of the western countries that came to India. The inevitable result was that the traditional schools of paintings which continued up to the beginning of the 19th century were neglected and ultimately lost sight of. Only for some time in Jaipur, Delhi, Agra and Lucknow, traditions of the Moghul school continued in a debased and crude form upto the beginning of the 20th century. In the Punjab after the reign of Ranjit Singh nothing remained of the Sikh school of painting. Pahari and Rajput schools thrived for some time in the Garhwal Hill States. Some of the hereditary artists of Northern India went to Tanjor and remained there with the last of the Tanjor kings. They gradually absorbed in their work the local tradition and remained there in a decadant state. Raja Krishna Raja Wodeyar



encouraged the local talents of Mysore, which flourished till his death in 1868. About this time Raja Ravi Varma of Travancore made his mark as an artist by illustrating as well as printing in oleograph a series of mythological subjects of popular interest. His works were sold like hot cakes everywhere in India due to their appeal to the popular religious consciousness.

Art-minded Europeans like Sir George Birdwood and Sir George Watt and many other authorities of that time recognized the talent of the Indian artists in the sphere of Industrial Art but not in anything which they would call "Fine Art". Sir George Birdwood vehemently criticized the ancient Buddha images and remarked that "a boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionate purity and serenity of soul". European critics of those days who cherished any sympathy for Indian art attributed its growth to the Hellenic influence after the invasion of Alexander the Great. They thought that it was the Hellenestic influence that inspired the artists of India and did not believe in the existence of any independent art tradition in India before Alexander set his foot on this soil.

It was as a result of recent penetrating researches and studies made by Havell, Coomaraswamy and Abanindra Nath Tagore that the European critics began



to realize the existence of a sublime Fine Art in India. In the reply given to Sir George Bridwood's criticism of the classical Buddha image, by thirteen eminent artists of England in 1910 at the Royal Society of Arts, we find for the first time a psychological reaction and a change of opinion of the representative European art critics. They said:

"We the undersigned artists, critics, and students of art.....find in the best art of India a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and of their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine. We recognize in the Buddha type of sacred figure, one of the greatest artistic inspiration of the world."

The national re-awakening of India coincided with the regeneration of the art-life of the country, and it was Principal E. B. Havell of the Calcutta School of Arts who with Dr Abanindra Nath Tagore as his colleague established a national school of Indian Painting with the object of "picking up the broken threads" of India's artistic tradition. At the outset this venture aroused suspicion amongst a section of the Indian public, for it thought that the Kensington Art School products should be the standard and the Western art technique,

as taught in the various Schools of Arts by the European teachers, would work miracles in the sphere of art in India. This section of the public also apprehended a check in the progress of Fine Art if this Nationalist school of art was allowed to thrive. Much propaganda was carried against the new movement by the Press and the Public. In such an uncongenial atmosphere, with the help of Mr. Havell Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore collected a small band of his disciples in the Govt. School of Arts, Calcutta, among whom mention may be made of the Late Surendra Nath Ganguly, Nandalal Bose Asitkumar Haldar, Hakim Mohammad Khan, Veikatappa, S. N. Gupta, Shailendara Nath De and Sami-uz-zama. This renaissance school of Indian painting was greatly stimulated by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, established by the late Mr. Gaganendra Nath Tagore, elder brother of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore. The Society popularized the works of the new school by organizing exhibitions every year. This society was established in 1907 with Lord Kitchner as its first President and Sir John Woodroffe, The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rampini, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Holmwood, Messrs. N. Blunt, A. Stephen, H. P. Martin, A. N. Tagore, G. N. Tagore, Thornton, and twenty five European and Indian as members, all of whom helped the movement to grow and made the work of the society a

great success. A sister institution of this kind called "India Society" was established in London, which is still carrying on the good work with Marquess of Zetland as its president. Many exhibitions of Dr. Tagore's pupils' works were held in India and abroad through these societies and various monographs on Indian art were published by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, Dr. J.H. Cousins, Percy Brown, E.B. Havell, Dr. Stella Kramris, W.C. Ganguly and others. Dr. Tagore brought Lala Iswari Prasad a hereditary artist from Patna, in the Govt. School of Arts, Calcutta to train up his pupils in India's traditional technique and also help them to appreciate the ancient masters. With the same object in view, he sent out his disciples to Ajanta, Bagh, Jogimara caves and many other places of artistic interest. Ajanta frescoes were copied by S. N. Gupta, Venkattappa Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar in 1910 and 1911 winters. They worked with Lady. Herringham and her party. Bagh frescoes were inspected by Asit Kumar Haldar in 1917 and subsequently copied by Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and Surendra Nath Kar (1921). Jogimara frescoes were copied by Asit Kumar Haldar and Samarendra Nath Gupta in 1914. It was thus that the recognition of Fine Art and cultural regeneration of art was achieved by his pupils. Dr. Tagore himself experimented with



various indigenous techniques in painting and called hereditary Jaipur artists to demonstrate the methods of traditional fresco-painting. His own experiment in such fresco work as *Katch and Devajani* can still be seen in the Calcutta School of Arts. His disciples also made several experiments in painting in various processes. Messrs. Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar did many such experiments in painting on wood, silk and also in different mediums :

In the book called "The Heart of Aryavarta" Lord Zetland, who as the then Governor of Bengal, personally hepled the movement to grow, said.

"In the family residence of Tagores at Dwarka Nath Tagore Lane in Calcutta, they (Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore and his brother Gaganendra Nath Tagore) gathered round them a group of artists, many of whom—Nandalal Bose, O. C. Ganguly, Kshitrindra Nath Mazumdar, Asit Kumar Haldar, Surendra Nath Kar and Mukul Chandra Dey, to mention but a few have since made names for themselves as exponents of the modern school of Indian painting. The studio where this interesting circle met was described by the same observer as being not so much a school for the encouragement of the indigenous art as a place for the development

of artistic taste, for the cultivation of a sense of beauty, and a love of beautiful things especially such beautiful things as are expressive of the mind of India in its evolution". Dr. Tagore fired up his disciple's imagination with such a broad-minded creative impulse that they never cared to confine themselves to narrow provincialism or seek refuge in the so-called inter-nationalism in art. This accounts for the distinctive and individual styles of his pupils instead of the mimicked mannerism of the old masters. From the books "Selected Examples of Indian Art" (1910) by A. K. Coomaraswamy and "Indian Sculptures and Painting" (1928) by E. B. Havell one could see examples of Dr. Tagore and his pupils' work, who made the Indian art movement an unfailing source of inspiration for the future generations of artists in India. It is indeed a happy omen that the Nationalist School of painting sponsored by Havell, Tagore and Coomaraswamy has now grown up to a family of three generations of artists of distinction and that most of the Provincial Government Schools of Arts in India have got his disciples as their heads.

An attempt at reviving the Indian art is also being made by the artists of Bombay, whose ideal is to blend the Eastern technique of painting with that of the West. Of course such synthesis can bring in some good result

provided the artist had already mastered his own country's art. Otherwise, it will result in a hybrid productions. Moreover, artists will always depend upon other countries for their cultural expressions. Experiments have been made in this direction by men like Dhurandar and Lalkaka of Bombay under the guidance of Principal Solomon of the Sir J. J. School of Arts. Bombay artists have recently taken up sur-realist and Dada art of modern Europe and proudly following these trends.

While discussing the modern art movements we cannot ignore the influence of the present machine-ridden age of Europe. A group of seers, thinkers and artists have become tired of it and wish to get out of its tangles. They have realized that depicting life and its romance in art are not to be sought only and reality lies beyond their pale. In art they, therefore, started experimenting in impressionist, futurist, cubist and sur-realist movements, and to them the so-called "Romantic Art" lost all its charm. The influence of these schools was felt in India and the late Mr. Gaganendra Nath Tagore made striking experiments in that direction. The late Poet Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore also took up painting pictures in sur-realist style in the late age of seventy. According to Indian art and its ideology no man can feel happy without some kind of romance in life.



Such toys in fact make our home-life pleasant. We can also find in them the vital primitive urge for creation preserved by the villagers throughout the ages, and bring it intimately in touch with our daily life.

The art of the Paleolithic age, of which we find traces in various caves in India, took root in pre-Vedic Indian art in all kinds of demon worship and superstitious ceremony and ultimately blended with the highly civilized Buddhist and Brahmanic art. Folk-art originated in prehistoric days, and thus a great admixture of non-Aryan elements could be easily traced in their different motifs and bearings. *Monna*—the snake goddess, *Sitala* and *Oladevi*—healers of diseases, of Bengal were originally non-Aryan deities worshipped by the primitive folks long before they came in contact with the Aryans. The different *Bratas*—festivals observed by the Hindus, also came from the same sources of superstitious beliefs in magical powers to be derived from observing them. They wish to bring about miraculous results in improving their agricultural products and removing all evils from their home and villages. Other superstitious rituals connected with marriages and social ceremonies, though came originally from the primitive sources, ultimately got absorbed and preserved by the women folk as '*Sttriachara*', even upto the present day. We can collect

facts about the social contact of the aboriginal tribes, with the highly civilized Aryans who came down to India in pre-Vedic days. The Indus Valley civilization unearthed at Mohenjodaro and Harappa gives enough evidence of ancient civilization, and the pottery toys found in these sites with their various motifs displayed in decorative designs go to prove the amalgum of such art forms. The historians have found many such evidences of contact even after the 8th century B. C. Some of them have quoted Kautilya's 'Arthasastra' and collected evidence of commerce in various commodities, between ancient India and the outside world. From ancient Pali Text we come to know that Asoka the Great took with him two aboriginals, who carried 'totems' with them embodied 'Hyana' and 'Eagle' motifs, when he conveyed the Sacred-Bodhi Sapling to the Tamralipta port of Bengal, to be enshipped to Ceylon by his son Mahendra.

The different motifs found in Folk-art not only originated in India, but also came from outside in pre-historic days as the Dravidians traded with the ancient Chaldeans, Egyptians, the Asyrians, the Greeks and Romans, in the West, and China, Sumatra, Java and Malaya Peninsula in the East. To understand Folk-art, its general character and outstanding peculiarities, we

cannot ignore these facts. The spiritual and cultural activities of ancient India would have to be studied before we could understand the significance of our Folk-culture. The Indo-Aryan civilization based upon four Vedas has also to be properly understood to appreciate the art and philosophy of India in general. If we consider the ancestor worship prevailing in remote days, we can as well trace the same in the highly civilized Hindu religious rites, used in the form of an effigy on wood called 'Bull-Stuff' (*Brishakastha*). In this '*Brishakastha*' the unsophisticated peasant-art is still preserved in India. In such other fetish figures, totems and also in tattooing the art of primitive folk can be seen preserved to our days by the folk artists of various clans. The motifs used in such art-forms varied according to the needs of various cults in India. In the Brahmanic order of cults viz., '*Shakta*'-'*Shaiva*' and '*Vaishnava*', various symbolic expressions and forms were created with the help of the original primitive stocks of designs that prevailed in India from the pre-historic days. The motifs consist of '*Bahanas*', viz., '*Garura*' for Vishnu, '*Hansa*' for '*Brahma*', '*Bull*' for '*Mahesh*' and '*Elephant*' for '*Indra*' and different auspicious objects (*Mangalik*) such as '*Sankh*', '*Chakra*' '*Gada*', '*Ashana*', '*Swastika*' and '*Palma*', used in various ceremonies and also utensils



of different kinds used in rustic rituals. As for the 'Swastika', it can be traced from pre-Vedic days not only in India but in all parts of the globe. The only difference lies in giving new meanings and significances to it by the highly sophisticated Hindus. The idealistic, mystic and symbolic meanings conveyed in such motifs varied according to the custom and usage in force at various times. These motifs were originated by the collective efforts and experiences of various races who dwelt in India, who gradually explored their inner meanings according to their experiences and needs. Race-consciousness and ideals developed through the primitive folk-art in such a manner cannot be ignored. The common race-heritage developed by the folk art was gradually absorbed in civilized art unconsciously, and ultimately it could not be separated.

In India we have examples of folk-art in various types of artistic creations. The paintings used in different ceremonies, such as '*Alpana*' in Bengal, '*Chowkpurna*' in U. P., and '*Rangori*' in Bombay, are not only decorative forms, but are spontaneous expression of rustic life given shape into such creative activities, stimulating life and energy. Toys and doll-making are other art-expressions found in various village-fairs and religious gatherings. They consist of sun-baked clay figures, wooden figures

and figures made of 'Sola' (Pith). The gay and attractive colourings and the fantastic and humorous forms not only attract the eyes of our children, but unconsciously go deeper in to the mind of the mass. Some of these types of the toys came from ancient times, and if we compare them with such toys as found in Muttra, Kausambhi of the Buddhist period we can see the affinity in them. Particularly, a popular clay toy called '*Alladi-Putual*' of Bengal can be seen in one of those *terracotta* toys found in Kausambhi. The ancient Sanskrit play '*Mrichhakatika*' gives vivid description of such clay-carts for children. These ancient toys were more elaborate in design and can be considered as a highly developed toy-art of that period, influenced by the higher art of the time. The 'pot' paintings are also done on paper and on cloth and sold cheap at the various fairs. The scroll-paintings used in reciting, '*Ramanyana*' and '*Mahabharata*', illustrating various episodes, consisted of the peasant art and were used for educational purposes in various festivities. These paintings give panoramic views of Rama's life, with all kinds of elaborate settings, to emphasize several episodes represented by the themes. Figures are drawn carefully with the sweep of brush and colours put in a bold flat manner, spontaneously bringing out essentials without the least effort. These paintings

were constantly repeated as commercial products, and served the purpose of our present-day cheap-prints, with the advent of which these folk-arts gradually disappeared.

Amongst minor arts, mention may be made of embroidery work, (*Kantha*), practised by the village girls, and also elaborately made for pot-hangers (*Shika*), and also various kinds of pottery. These articles embody pictographic marks of various symbolic representations, which we have already mentioned. In the embroidery designs, the central flower of lotus is invariably encircled by creeper-motifs, trees, elephants, flowers, and chariots, etc., (with elaborate decorative scroll-designs at the borders) they produce a gorgeous effect. They are generally done on old cloth and cotton thread is used for the borders. Many zig-zag patterns are also invented by the women folk for such embroidery designs. If we study scrutinizingly the multifarious motifs used in these designs, and compare them with that of our highly developed art, we can trace the historical development and also the evolution of sensitive human soul in its spontaneous invention of such symbolic representations. We should not, however, be over-enthusiast to find definite links with that of Ajanta and Bagh but should understand the limit of such art, which meant to be repeated mechanically to cater for



the village folk in their various activities of life and rituals. With sympathetic understanding of village-art, we shall be able to understand the significance of the art of our country, which never wanted to represent nature in its true form as a photographic representation but allowed scope for translating the form in various decorative patterns conveying different aspects of beauties underlying it. To realize this fact, it is obviously required to fathom the primitive minds through their creative activities. It would not only be an intellectual pursuit but would help the art of our country to develop in its indigenous dynamic line.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINE ART OF CHINA AND INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION

Human civilization is old and the culture of China is as old as human civilization itself. Chinese potteries even of the palaeolithic age have been discovered. These potteries are of the most exquisite kind, which goes to prove that cultural evolution inferior to none took place in China in remote days. Nowhere did the potter's wheel produce such articles of beauty with the subtle curve, which makes the 'plastic' form sing in colour, line and pattern. China could be proud not only of her formidable wall which she erected to protect the country from foreign invasion or of her invention of the process of printing, but also of her art both in plastic and in graphic forms—sculpture and paintings. All arts began with beautifying utilitarian objects. In China also evidence of this is not lacking. The word 'China' became a household word for all kinds of ceramic production of the world. The different phases of Chinese thought have been immortalized in the plastic forms both in pottery and in sculpture. Figure modelling in ceramic and statues in glazed pottery of the Tang and Ming periods are of very high quality and form a class by themselves.

We are however at present not concerned with the 'arts and crafts' of China and will deal as much as possible in this short survey about the activities of China in the sphere of fine art alone. The earlier evidence of fine arts could be traced as early as 3000 B. C. to Hsia 2000 B. C., Chow 1000 B. C. Various sculptures and decorative emblems of this early period have been discovered. Hsiao-tun bronzes of the 12th century B.C. could be regarded as good examples of Chinese primitive art. The decorative motives are extremely old and are all symbolical. The bronzes are generally masks of monsters, conventional dragons, thunder-patterns, which speak for the vitality and strength of a great art. The Chinese sculpture, unlike the European, was never given a place as an independent art but was always regarded as part and parcel of the decoration of the temple. The stone-winged lions used as the guardian animals of the tombs are of unusual types. They are represented as guarding the souls of the departed to whom the temples were dedicated. The awe-inspiring gesture of the lion figures are quite unreal and exercise an uncanny fascination for their observer. With the advent of buddhist religion the sculpture of China changed its phase and the sculpture of Hun dynasty began in the third century when Emperor Hsienti became Buddhist



and built many temples with golden Buddhist images. The Buddhist sculpture of the later period gives evidence of Kushana and much more of Gupta influence. The colossal Buddha figure of the cave Temples of Yun-kang was built at the end of the 5th century, and under the Sui dynasties (561—618) a large quantity of Buddhist sculpture was produced. The figures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas at the cave temples of Lung-Meu in Honan and in some of those of Tien-lungshan in Shansi give evidence of direct contact with Indian art. The early period of history of the Chinese art was very much modified by the Confucianism; but in spirit it remained the same for ever. The spirit of self-sacrifice and love for fellow creatures taught in that religion could be traced even in art. Thus we find that the Chinese never forgot their fellow creatures around in the Universe and studied and immortalized them in their art. We find lovely animal-figures in stone and in bronze. In other civilized countries like Europe and India, human figures have taken hold of the mind of the artists, and their gods and goddesses are nothing but their own images, produced simply in a symbolical and conventional way to express cosmic and religious feeling. On the other hand, in China artists, both in sculpture and painting, displayed a special preference for

landscape, animals and bird forms. Examples such as "Two Sparrows on a Bamboo Branch" and "Tiger by a Torrent in Rain and Wind" by Muchu of the Sang dynasty are not uncommon in Chinese art. They are far from realistic, but in spirit more vigorously expressed, which cannot be compared with any other country's art. In the picture depicting the Tiger the artists expressed the fearful looking animal in great agony amidst the torrential rains threatening him; and in the picture of "Two Sparrows" the simple bird forms are cleverly placed on the top of a delicate bamboo branch, which gives the feeling of an ether-like lightness and a restful serene composition. The birds are just awake, and the drowsy feeling is still lingering in them and also in the atmosphere itself.

The early art has suffered much destruction in China, specially during the reign of Sang dynasty. Tartars destroyed vast collections of paintings stored in the Imperial household at the time of invasion, and thus works of many Chinese masters like Wu-Too-Tzu disappeared for ever. Nothing survived of Wu-Too-Tzu's series of will paintings. Similar vandalism was indulged in by the different invaders at different times. Even then whatever art treasures survived are looked at with great veneration by the lovers of the Chinese

Art. Works of Ku Kai-Chih, most famous of all Chinese masters, which are mostly painted on silk scroll in ink and colours, should be specially mentioned. His works flourished greatly, during the C'iu dynasty (265—420 A. D.), but unfortunately very few of his works still remained. Almost all Chinese paintings are done either directly on the walls of the temples or on the silk scrolls.

The special feature of Chinese paintings lies in sensitive touch of the artist's brush and also in the sense of arrangements of space and objects in the three dimensional form. Paintings are never too much crowded with figures or other objects, but the essential points are very subtly emphasised to get to the underlying significance of the subject matter selected for painting. The Chinese painters draw in calligraphic strokes of brush, a method unknown to any other country. They write with brush, a method unknown to any other country. They do not even hesitate to depict abstract subjects like flow and ripples of the water and breeze in a conventional way peculiar to them. The forms of flame, cloud, waves and dragons assume a decorative motif which takes the mind to an unknown region. There is a Chinese legend which explains the loss of a



famous artist Ku Kai Chin's works by saying that they have rejoined the other world where they have become immortal. This story shows how the Chinese understood the reality of life, which is transitory and in which we live to be transitory. The eternal energy of the Universe was actually worshipped by them, and they therefore, were never afraid to depict the spirit form in a more conventional way, as they knew their limit, being themselves mortal. After the works of Ku Kai-Chin we can name the frescoes at Tung-huang of about the sixth century. In the 7th century, under the patronage of Tang Emperors famous masters like Yen-hi-pen flourished. His works were so much admired that the Emperor caused a special shrine to be built according to the model seen in one of his works. The mountation on which the temple was actually built was quite bare, and the artist while painting the mountain view simply added the temple to it to beautify his work.

Tang period is one of the most active periods of Chinese art. The Empire of China was extended by the Tang Emperors towards the West. Intercourse with foreigners, specially with India, changed the type of works and a new era began in Chinese art. Buddhism became the religion of the country, and

consequently a large number of works of that period were Buddhist. The greatest amongst the Chinese Buddhist painters of the period was Wu Tao-tzu. He has left a series of paintings depicting the life-history of Lord Buddha and many other Buddhist legends.

To understand the work of Chinese Masters we should know that they had three religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism; but they assimilated and imbibed their respective traditions in a delightful synthesis. Though, apparently, change in subjects treated occurred to a certain extent, in form and canon of art they remained the same. The activities of Tang period have been traced as far away as in the Central Asia, and Sir Auriel Stein discovered fragments of silk paintings which bear the sign of direct contact of China with Indo-Buddhist and Iranian culture. The Turfani and Khotani frescoes resemble very much those of Ajanta in their linear technique, and even the draperies and poses of the figures peculiar to the Indian Buddhist paintings of Ajanta are quite evident. Tang period is, according to the tradition, the golden age of art. But much of the art-treasures of this period have perished. Amongst the painters whose works survived the time, we can mention Li Chai, whose five portraits of saints, though much damaged, can still be seen in Japan. Most of

the Chinese Buddhist painters of Tang period depicted Mahayana Buddhist images in the artistic idiom of China. The Jataka stories, Bodhisattvas and other Buddhist legends have been illustrated by them.

After the Tang, Sang period is another glorious time for Chinese art. Though the Sang Emperor Hui Tsang was embarrassed by the Tartar conquest of the North China and was himself taken away by Tartars in captivity, his time remained the most glorious period of the history of art of the country. The Emperor himself was an artist, a connoisseur, and a poet. His own achievement as a painter was in copying old masterpieces. Sang age was the age of Landscape painting, and the whole of Southern Sang was devoted to it. Religious themes such as those of Arhat (saints) in meditation became very popular subject-matter of art. Sometimes this was carried too far at that time. Probably Chinese painting is at its best in landscapes. In painting landscapes the Chinese artists would never forget to put in mountain and water, for they wanted to depict the elements of nature in their true forms. Mountains without trees, they considered as heads without the hairs. Chinese landscapes give a peculiar feeling of intoxication, and one could almost feel the smell of the earth in all its elements. They not only record



selected beauty spots seen by the artist but the serene soulforce of the Universe which lies within the spot, and the enjoyment of inner peace and silence.

A Chinese landscape is generally divided into three sections, viz, "Heaven", "Earth", and "Man", which gives the feeling for three dimensions. Heaven is the distance shown very faintly towered with mist, and the middle distance is a little exaggerated in depth of colour and form which is called Earth, and Man is depicted as a strong foreground painted more boldly and clearly. Ma Ynan and Hsia Kuai were two great masters of the Sang period. Their works are mostly drawn in ink and tinted in colour. In Chinese landscape we find an indefinable illusion and mystic feeling. Sang landscapes are specially charged with such aesthetic analysis. It is difficult to understand the value of such illusiveness in their landscape paintings unless we study their mental attitude, which is contemplative and not realistic. Realism to them is a most inferior type of expression. The Impressionist school of modern Europe tried to imitate Chinese landscape, but could not achieve superiority over it. The invention of colour-photography liberated artists from rendering realistic landscape painting. The Chinese art depicts inner contemplative vision and is not representative of any object. Chinese art could be

understood with the sympathetic understanding of their religion and should be approached through the knowledge of the Taoist and Buddhist philosophy.

After the Tang and Sang, the Yuan or Mongol dynasty also kept up the traditional form of Chinese art for a long time, though much of its vitality was on the wane. Choo Meng-fu was one of the academic painters whose works kept up the spirit of the past though not the same noble spirit of Tang or Sang art. We generally see vast collection of art of the Meng period in British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art in Boston and in the various art collections of Japan. The recent Exhibition of Chinese art in London opened the eyes of the Western world to the glories of creative vitality of Chinese art, and there is much that one can learn in rhythm, balance and proportion apart from the spiritual significance which pervades the art of China. Chinese art will remain as a source of imaginative and delicate sensibility throughout the ages.

## CHAPTER VII

### ART AND INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD

As soon as the glamour of the Western Civilization subsided after the mid-Victorian age, we gradually began to realize that our Art and culture not only bore distinctive features of their own but had always been inspiring the world beyond. We became close students of our glorious past and conscious of its heritage. The historians of ancient and mediaeval India told us that in those days India was not an isolated country that had always drawn in the horns like the tortoise. References to contacts with the foreigners can be found in the Sanskrit grammar of Panini of the early sixth century B. C. and also in the *Manu-Samhita*, where the *Yavanas* who came to the Brahminical India in the remote ages are mentioned. With the discovery of the various sites at Mohenjo-Daro, Chanho-Daro and Harappa in Sind, Paithan, Maski and Ter at Hyderabad Deccan, the history of ancient India has been pushed back to 3000 B. C. or even earlier. There we come across a distinct type of Vedic Civilization which was very highly developed indeed. The glazed potteries, copper utensils, terracotta figurines, beads, stone and glass bangles, architecture,



including bath and sanitary system, show that the life that those people lived was never devoid of art or aesthetic sense. The marvellous seals in terra-cotta reliefs of Mohenjo-Daro display the earliest school of Indo-Aryan sculpture. They can be compared favourably with the animal figures carved out on the capitals of Asoka's pillar at Sarnath of the third century B. C. Both are treated very naturalistically. Mohenjo-Daro rhino-ceros, bulls and tigers were represented almost in a life-like manner. Obviously such a culture could not have been confined within the limits of the area excavated. It spread itself beyond the Sind. Modern scholars find similarities between the culture of Sind and that of the distant land of Sumeria.

The later Buddhist civilization of India had a great influence over the cultural movement in Asia. We know how pilgrims and pupils would undertake the risky journey across the Himalayas to learn the secret of India's greatness. Along with the Buddhist religion the early Chinese pilgrims took back with them the art of India to the Far East. From the famous Universities of Nalanda, Taxilla, and Sarnath and many other ancient monasteries and temples, art, philosophy and literature developed and spread throughout the Asiatic Continent. Learned scholars and artists of China,

Japan, Korea, Sumatra, Java and Bali came as pupils and left authentic records of their pilgrimages. Whatever they carried with them were assimilated in their soil. But they also retained the mark of their original spirit as we find so clearly in the Indonesian art of Siam, Combonia, Java, Bali and Sumatra. The result was that in the Indonesian art of Java we see the great stamp of India's contribution as in Baroboduor sculpture and in Balinese temples in the Thousand Buddha temple sculptures and paintings in Honan, in the Ankor Vat, which is certainly the greatest architectural monument of the world. With the exploration of the Sri-Devi temple in Cambodia many sculptures of Indian origin have been found. They are preserved in the Bangkok National Museum. They are pre-eminently of the Vaisnava origin. Though the official religion of Khmer was Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhist faith, which blended peculiarly with the former, was tolerated. The earliest Indian influence in art there could be traced as far back as the seventh century, and wave after wave of the direct influence of the Indian culture can be perceived subsequently.

In Khotan and Miran in the Chinese Turkisthan the graphic art of India spread and we get examples of paintings on silk still surviving the ravages of time.

This also shows the vitality of Indian art. We still wonder how our art-motifs, our technique, and our principles of creation could flourish in foreign lands and that after what may be called transplantation in a difficult territory.

Naturally such a phenomenon requires explanation. The cultural expansion of India into greater India was mainly due to the spiritual fact that India always tried sincerely to get into the spirit of the cosmic reality and that she was never content with the surface value of life. Our artist-philosophers have always preached the expansion of life, though they never understood it in terms of material success. Before the days of Sankara and Ramanuja there were no restrictions imposed by the caste and creed, and people could travel to distant lands to preach the gospel of Buddha. They went to Ceylon, China, and Afganistan—wherever they wished to, and left their marks in the shape of architecture, sculpture and painting. It will be wrong to consider this culture-contact as a single track journey. India also gained immensely. There are many beautiful things in the art-history of our country which came from outside. We were never so weak as to discard anything good only because it was foreign. We were young, bold, vigorous and expanding. Thus Chandra Gupta I



could erect a replica of the Persipolitan architecture in his capital Pataliputra. It was a magnificent palace. We still cannot imagine how it was possible to carve and build a hundred stone pillared hall with a highly glazed surface when steam, gas or electricity were unknown as motive power to do such jobs.

From the Buddhist chronicles we know that Mahendra invaded Ceylon and King Tishya of Ceylon established good relations with India after being himself initiated in the Buddhist faith. So we find the glorious examples of Indo-Buddhist sculpture and architecture in Anuradhapura ruins inspiring the later major and minor arts of Ceylon.

We have so far taken examples from ancient India. But it would be wrong to think that India ceased to grow after the downfall of Buddhism. In the time of the Moghul Emperors too Indian art kept up its great traditions, and we know that the famous court-artist Bishan Das was specially commissioned by Shah Abbas I in Iran to paint his likeness. In the West, artists like Rambrandt were eager to collect specimens of Moghul miniatures in those days, (1654-56 A.D.) which are still preserved at Schoenbraunn palace in Vienna and at Bodlean Library at Oxford. He also made several copies from Moghul miniatures \* The Moghuls contributed not only

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\* Rambrandt by Otto Benash (Phaidon—Paris)

to the art of painting, but also to the architecture of India—the Indo-Saracenic type of which the Tajmahal stands up to this day as one of the greatest architectural monuments of the world. To mention only few of them, the granite mausoleum of Sher Shah at Saseram, Adil Shah's famous mausoleum in Bijapur with the largest single dome in the world, Akbar's picturesque Fatehpur and Delhi fort palaces are buildings of which any country can be proud.

After the downfall of the Moghul Empire the vitality of the country seems to have been reduced. So when India resumed contact with the outside world, the immediate effect was an indifference to, if not a wilful neglect of her own genius. Educated people began to ape foreign manners and reject the traditional values of our art. But by the beginning of this century, Lord Curzon turned the attention of all thinking people to the glory, the beauty and the significance of India's monuments. As yet the interest was still archaeological. It was left to Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore to raise the level of that interest into one of deep appreciation of the spirit of Indian culture, and along with his disciples, he worked through art to achieve that end. And their attempt was indeed successful. Now it was no longer possible to condemn Indian painting as being primitive

in its absence of naturalistic rendering through the science of perspective and anatomy. On the other hand, there are evidences to prove that Indian painting, Music and other fine arts have influenced modern Euro-American art, for it too, has begun to seek primarily idealism rather than naturalism. If in the 19th century the main influence of India on Europe and America came from philosophy, in the 20th century it pours out through Art.

To conclude this hasty survey, every nation has got its own special physical and mental features. Art cannot grow without a vigorous life around; it is life that moulds the art-form of every country. Therefore, the individual merits and demerits can be adjudged only when we know the process of evolution and the achievements of the country's culture. India has her own heritage, and the world has profited by it. To-day, more than ever, the world should know more about India's legacy, and we the inhabitants of Hindusthan should be possessed by it. For we feel that India's message of peace by the cultivation of the soul, which she has so long conveyed through her art and culture, has to be learnt by the world, sooner than later. If in the ancient and mediaeval times India was the hub of Asiatic culture, in the modern period she has a larger



part to play and a greater and much richer contribution to make to the world as a whole. And we are strongly of the opinion that such a contribution will come mainly through India's Fine Arts. India was never poor in her creative imagination.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ART AND CULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Art has an important role to play in the cultural reconstruction of India. The significance of the history of art and its growth in every country and its influence in every sphere of its activities are related to the peculiar environment and social and religious conditions of a country through the epochs. These account for the varieties in art-construction of all periods and all countries of the world. At the same time art is the source of unity and integrity of the country and would always leave behind traces of spontaneity and vitality of culture. The rhythmic and dynamic expression of art-form will remain vibrating throughout all creative activities. Dynasties after dynasties of Egypt have vanished from the face of the earth, but the buried pyramids with their paintings and sculptures survived them and still breathe the joy of life of those who lived to create them in the bygone past. The artist who created them were never conscious of their uniqueness and splendours of inspiring qualities. Similarly we can cite examples of ancient Mayan, Indian, Chinese, and Indonesian art of the Orient, which still remained buried in ruins to inspire generations of artists of their respective countries. These ancient art works left memories of struggle, peace,

reconciliation and synthesis of the various races of mankind covering many centuries of artistic experience. Artists of the past came into contact with various countries through trade and adventure. Just as various seeds in the botanical world spread out in far away lands through different methods of migration, so the art of different countries find a synthetic mixture and blending in different lands, developing new varieties of forms, just as plant forms do in their new habitats by admixture with indigenous species.

In India, we too had our distinctive art-tradition and forms which thrived in other lands as well spreading through religion, trade and adventure. With the advent of Buddhist religion Indian thought and culture gradually caught hold of the imagination of the entire Far-East. Buddhist art as inspired by the art of India can be observed in its immense variety of expression throughout the Asiatic countries. The same rhythmic flowing lineal technique and dynamic grace which had developed in India retained their original beauty and spontaneity in countries like China, Japan, Korea, Java and Cambodia.

Now the question would arise as to whether the traditional art of India would be of any use to our present-day re-construction and rehabilitation problem.



Luckily this peculiar problem was solved as far back as in 1905 by a great seer-artist Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore at the very time when cultural reconstruction on national lines was urged by the leaders of the nationalist movement. It was at that time that we began to love India's ancient artistic heritage. Such a heritage is entirely different from that of Europe, which has always adored the classical Greek mode of natural representation. In Europe, the philosophy of beauty, which reached its zenith in the eighteenth century, ultimately terminated in the renaissance of the classical style with the advent of Neo-Gothic and Neo-Classic schools of the nineteenth century. This science of beauty was initiated mainly through the Epics and the lyrics and literary thoughts in general, and thus literary considerations became dominant with the result that Sir Joshua Reynolds' and Gainsborough's art remained the ideal, which none could dare to challenge. Consequently the canons of beauty traditionally saturated with the Greek ideal reached mathematical accuracy. The sciences of anatomy, perspective and chiaroscuro were invented by generations of artists who followed them. The technique to reproduce "what the eye sees" was perfected. As the ideal became fixed, the artists went along the path of tradition established by

their predecessors. Ruskin brought Whistler to book because he deviated from the old method in his technique. Byzantine painting, which lacked representation of distance with the aid of perspective, was also rejected by critics as 'barbarous' and 'primitive'. In India the 19th century European ideal of fidelity to nature and photographic accuracy in bringing out forms held the field, and the artists of India remained unmindful of her past legacy. Oriental artists penetrate through Nature and man the the super-natural and the superhuman, and obtain from the super-sensible world their canons of beauty. They feel the existence of the Divine Spirit in Nature and wish to bring it out in their work. In the past they tried many super-natural divine forms which have nothing to do with the images of man and nature. According to Oriental art, in a pictorial composition space and matter should be woven into a pattern aesthetically and not haphazardly as is done in modern art of Europe, and they should be like the limbs of a human being which cannot be separated or re-arranged in any other shape.

The art of India in the past was never representational in a critical sense. The Indian artists rather produced images of their own choice neglecting the

human forms in their frame work of flesh and bone and brought these out from their imaginative consciousness with their own subjective and objective appeals. Thus resulted the many-armed gods and goddesses in sculpture and painting that represented transcendental truths and feeling and that gradually wove themselves into the spiritual memory and imagination of the people. No realistic representations could have so influenced the thought and experience of the race through the ages. The modern renaissance school started by Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore with his disciples took up the same principle in developing the art-expression of the country. The representational and materialistic art of Europe might have found a new conception in such scientific outlook as was expounded by the literary art-critics through the various 'isms', but the problem of Indian art cannot be solved by these fixed standards formulated by different schools in Europe. Clive Bell's theory of art-form has recently taken a hold over most of the western art-critics, and the "significant form" is now the main objective of aesthetic expression. Whether it signifies anything or not is being sought by the art-critics. We too are now going to copy the West by "Ajantaism", "Patism" and "Kangraism", being unmindful of the true meaning of art, viz, sincere and unique



individual expression which an artist could display by going deep into his country's indigenous spirit and subtlety of form. The idealistic quality and dynamic force that the Indian art stands for cannot be ignored or revalued according to the scientific or logical standard of the West; for art is far from science and logic. Otherwise an art-critic like Mr. Roger Fry could have seen in his "Last Essays", something new and inspiring for the West in Indian art instead of deprecating its value. Asiatic art mostly depended upon the spirituality of expression-forms, for the artists lived in a mental climate where renunciation and abstraction, which is itself a process of withdrawal, ruled. "Isms" that brings the materialistic fundamental reality to the forefront, has, therefore, no place in Indian art. We also see that a European art-critic like Sheldon Cheney could discover the "Brahmanic abstract attitude" in the Indian art which prevailed throughout pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods. Art cannot be separated from life, and the Hindu view of life is to find the *Soul* as the true reality and, as such, the only object of pursuit of the fine arts and literature.

On the other hand in the case of modern European art, what Matisse says of himself is true: "I am trying to think myself back into the state of a child." The critics in Europe support him and regard art as "an endeavour

to regain the primitive sense of awareness". Here the scientific outlook is predominant. Similarly, Herbert Read observes that he can "learn more of the essential nature of art from its earliest manifestations in primitive man and child than from its elaboration in a great period of culture". Here too the voice of science, eager to search for the fundamental reality through matter, is stressed. We also do not wonder when we see that in Europe Kandinsky finds psychic effect in colour and tries to correlate it with music. This is indeed a highly interesting scientific experiment for which Western culture is celebrated. But as far as the attitude of the artist is concerned, his one and only aim is to express himself thoroughly as much as possible through his emotional and spiritual urge in art. Some scholar-critics of the West who support this modern art movement have gone to the extreme by creating a materialistic and scientific approach to art. They think that the sense of aesthetic perception or uniqueness in plastic form of human ideas will have no value in future machine-ridden world. They, however, believe that the sur-realist form of abstract art will serve the humanity in shaping the machines in artistic ways, as they will have to live in and within the machine in future. None will deny the scope for such utilitarian demand of industrial art. But the seemingly

suitable arrangements made by these scholar-critics can never be taken as a gospel by the artist so long as there remained human interest, passion and love in the biological aspects of life. One cannot, on the other hand, deny the fact that machines have been produced to help humanity in their humanistic progress and not to mock the spirit which will always try to explore the mind in order to come in contact with the cosmos, out of which all creations evolve and into which they again disappear and which no machine can fathom. The primitive or scientific approach to aesthetic expression belongs to a specially cultivated mind, but cannot lead the artist to his ideal, which must transcend both nature and his own mind. If we apply the primitive man's or child's approach to literary expression, scholars should unlearn everything and get back to the jargon of the child or the cave-man's inarticulate myths and legends. This retreat into the past would mean nothing creative. It is progressive achievement and not atavism that is sought in art and literature. We build upon the past continuously new edifices by the perfect knowledge of our heritage. We therefore consider that there is no reason why we should not try to explore further possibilities in representational art, which has been unnecessarily shelved by the modern European art-critics, specially



as we have got an abstract spiritual principle through which fresh un-imagined depth of meaning may be imported into representation.

In commerce, social and political re-construction some definite principles for change could be adopted according to the peculiar needs of the country. But in the matter of art, these will depend solely upon the achievements of individuals—the master artists with such dynamic qualities as inspire the generation. Over and above the vicissitude of social life and destiny or the crisis and happenings of nature, artists would go on drawing their materials on their own imagination and super-sensible consciousness, ever creating graceful, plastic and graphic forms in rhythmic lines and harmonious colour without any utilitarian significance.

## CHAPTER IX

### MODERN VIEWS ON ART

It is rather interesting to study the modern tendencies in the re-valuation of art through scholarly criticisms. The approach is purely a scholastic one. It embodies scientific, philosophical, economical and psychological ways of thinking, devoid of such creative experience and equilibrium which artists actually enjoy in their creation. This new approach to art originated with the advancement of the new science of psycho-analysis in Europe. The same scientific mind of Europe prevailed in earlier days and was responsible for bringing art more to the realistic and representational forms. The artists of Europe discovered through generations of their progressive pursuit the laws of perspective and light and shade, to perfect their standard in bringing about three dimensional aspects of nature on the flat surface of their canvas. Ultimately of course science went a further step forward by the invention of photography. The result was that in the Twentieth century artists of Europe began to think afresh to overcome photographic representation of natural objects in art. At this opportune moment the modern scholar-critics, well equipped with their experimental science of psycho-

analysis, came to their rescue. They began decrying early achievements as too romantic and thus full of sophistications. Traditions seemed to them as a bondage and adventure in art as freedom. Though this new approach to art cannot be accepted and appreciated by all the practising artists and many of them would revolt against it, none can escape these philosophers who are writing volumes after volumes, analyzing all the aspects of art and its creations.

These modern critics stress the significance of the unconscious, and find in the primitive crude drawing the full blossomed art and in caveman's or child's sketch the real beginning of art-forms. Modern critics, therefore, are averse to traditional and representational art-heritage. To them, therefore, ignorance is nothing but primitive timeless simplicity, and knowledge acquired through the study of traditional art is sophistication and should be considered as unreal.

To understand the changes in such outlook in ideology for selecting beauty, we must study the various attitudes of scholar-critics and philosophers of Europe. The meaning of beauty has been defined in various ways by the philosophers and scholar-critics from the time of Aristotle to that of Clive Bell. Some opine that



"the beautiful is that which has a specific form" and some emphasize the technique—the "feeling of pleasure through the successful manipulation and exploitation of a medium". Kent, Nietzsche and many others cherished the idea that "any creation by a genius must be beautiful". Plato's ideal, expounded by Ruskin, Tolstoy, Morris and Bergson, maintains "that any work of art that expresses Truth, the Spirit of Nature, the Ideal, the Universal, Divine goodness or the Typical, is beautiful". And ultimately Clive Bell thought that "anything is beautiful which excites specific emotion." Thus the word "significant form" came about. In the 20th century, universalism in art has been sought by many scholars, and a "state of equilibrium" has been conceived as the universal definition of beauty. In this, all the elements selected by the artist should be arranged in harmonious ways to bring the observer to that state.

In India, too, some of us began studying these problems and found consolations in imitation of provincial primitive Folk art and even of the surrealist school amongst the modern artists of our country. We should not, however, forget the essential differences in the characteristics of the Oriental and Occidental mind while judging arts of the two continents. The

Oriental mind both in India and China developed through their religious ethics an emotional approach in creative work rather than a scientific analysis. The peaceful elements in life and joy for creation are the essential cultural features of the Orient; whereas intellectualization through scientific research in art is evident in Occidental culture. To illustrate this we might mention here that the Oriental artist while depicting a tree would observe closely the laws of nature governing the particular species in branching and arranging the leaves and bringing about rhythmic decorative patterns which the very life-energy has expressed, instead of giving us its superficial external representation, which is obvious and could be copied out or perhaps photographed. In Indian art this dynamic decorative quality is developed and captured through the artist's own emotional feelings and, as such, cannot be true to nature in a strict sense. On the other hand, the modern trend in European art expressed in Sur-realist, Dadaist and Futurist schools is but psycho-analysis done by the artist in imitating primitive and child-art, which is considered by them as the germ-force in creation.

Even undeveloped Byzantine and folk arts are tolerated by these intellectuals more than the spontaneous associational objective arts of the Orient. The psycho-

analysts know very well that the germ is not the finale of creation, and if we go back to it, we shall be lost in the horizon, and a cipher would be the result. By self-analysis through the medium of paintings and sculpture these artists have been able to imitate the child, which could bring about illusion in art rather than its spontaneous evolution. Nature brought about gradual evolution from the primitive germ-cells to the complicated human beings. The artists also expected to build their heritage by acquiring knowledge and achievements of the masters of the past.

To understand the art of a country, its historical and ethnical conditions and culture should have to be examined at the outset. The earliest Indian culture of Mohenjo-daro and Harrappa goes back to about 3,500 B. C. It gradually developed through centuries of cultural contact with other Asiatic nations, viz, Chinese, Scythians, Persians, Aryans and Mongolians. To understand Indian art, we shall have to keep the cultural history of Asia as its background, with the general trend of religious and philosophical expressions of it as a whole.

In India Hindu philosophy sought a synthesis of the universe in a fundamental dualism of mind and creations



of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*—that promoted an experimental emotional approach in both religion and art; whereas in other countries religion emanated from a heaven-born personality and was full of rigid dogmas that hampered art. In India the religious enquiry and its philosophy began spontaneously from the enquiry of a child about the natural phenomenon. In the Vedic period in India Nature-worship was thus developed into the dual idea of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. This is one of the reasons why the Indian views life and art in a more poetic way than the Occidental. Indian philosophy always remained mystic and poetical. Greek philosophy was couched in prose. There lies the difference in the attitude of thinking. Hindu art is the natural sequence of aesthetic appeal evolved through early pre-historic humanity. It therefore tried to render the emotion evoked in the mind by observing life and phenomena through art. In this case there is no going back to the fundamental primitivity, nor is there a chance of deterioration through copying primitive art. Indian art developed through observation and thinking. The stability in nature, the emotional expression to be found in the landscape and the sky were studied deliberately by the artists of India. They thus evolved the dynamic, symbolical and rhythmic form in art, which is essentially Indian.

Not only in Indian but also in Asiatic art the emotional quality sought by the artists is evident. There goes a story about the famous artist of Japan Hokusai that while drawing a "Tiger in Rage" out of his imagination, he became so emotionally moved that he went actually to bite inmates of the house. Another artist while going to depict a "Crane in a fishing attitude" stood a whole night on one leg to bring out the right expression of it on his canvas. Although these stories show exaggeration, one cannot deny the fact that there is always a substratum of deep emotion in everything that is conceived by a real artist. The Oriental mind could be understood from these stories how it is emotionally disposed and poetically inclined. The art of a country, therefore, should be judged and developed through such a thorough understanding and not by the study of the so-called literary art criticism. Preconceived ideas formed by such reading of art literature without proper understanding of art itself, would stunt the natural growth of Indian art and would lead to the imitation of the primitive folk art of no significance. If we study the past achievements of the classical arts of Ajanta, Sigiria, Bagh, and the later developments of Moghul and Kangra, continued upto the 19th century Cochin Murals, we shall see that the Indian art differs

greatly from the art of other countries. There is no reason why we should go back to the principles laid down by the psycho-analyst art-critics and attempt self-analysis through the medium of art that leads eventually to the lowest childhood-levels of the sub-conscious mind, where expression is incoherent, uncertain, and inadequate. The difference between insane and sur-realist work is that the latter boldly displays such primitive images consciously and thus goes beyond objectifying them and create a "nonsense-symbolism", which is to a psycho-analyst the reality governed by true aesthetic value devoid of intellectual and literary interest. The intuition plays actually a large part in all such creative activities, and as such, deliberate self-conscious research has got no place in art. Even in histrionic art, the actor, to play his role faithfully, should have to be absolutely free from such a self-conscious attitude.

In India our views of life and art differed greatly, from that of the West and the symbolism displayed in Indian art produced poetic and mystical appeal, which can only be understood by the proper study of their myths and religion. Indian artists never tried to imitate Nature but gave expression of the impression conceived



by them through their emotional appeal. This could only be understood by the sympathetic study of their *Yoga* and *Dhyana* and the philosophy of their life and religion. As in India we have such an heritage in art and a development, which can be noticed in the works produced even up to the 19th century of the Christian era, there is no reason why we should borrow new ideas from the psycho-analyst school of sur-realism and determine our own by their judgment. It will lead nowhere but to the primitivity and simplicity of a child and ultimately result in the emptiness of a void. The joy of life for which art stands, requires romance, and as such, the principles and canons laid down by the ancient Indian artists cannot be ignored, for they developed on a rational basis and lead to romanticism and showed a distinct evolution from the primitive to the classical.

In depicting romanticism through subject-matters of human interest, neither of these Indian and Western artists have done any dis-service to their country's art. Art can only come nearer to the people's heart if it bears such human interest. Abstract colour, lines, and forms, however rhythmic they may be, can perhaps evoke surprise but cannot inspire human emotion. Such work, however, could be a playful pastime for

an artist, which would require no serious endeavour. On the other hand, to conceive subject-matter in art it would involve time, serious thought and above all, academic discipline. Art without discipline is no art. Romantic art, which requires a thorough knowledge of tradition, cannot be produced as mass production; whereas the present machine-ridden Western world has its sur-realist school, which can go without tradition and discipline and, therefore, can produce pictures in any number without the least trouble and thought. In the matter of romanticism and discipline Indian art does not differ from the Western school of painting. But from a close observation other differences could be noticed. In Indian art, true imitation of Nature is lacking. Indian art in this respect is a natural evolution and development of primitive expression, which to some extent could be compared with the modern Western school of Impressionism. The human interest in art can indeed be evoked through the subject-matters. As it plays emotions of the spectator, it brings him nearer to art and its creator. When we move about the caves of Ajanta observing multifarious images depicted on the walls, we become at once one with the artists who painted them thousand years back. The panoramic scenes of various historical and mythological subjects

become real and living to us. The ancient Byzantine art of Europe, though not representational in the strictest sense of the term, had the same quality and feeling of remoteness. The author-critics with their scientific analysis caused a great change in the outlook of art-form in Europe in even earlier days, and thus we see in the post-Byzantine school a change for the realistic rendering of natural objects in art. Ofcourse, with logical and psychological observations the scientific mind can find synthesis in any form of art representing scribbling only, and there is a Bengali joke that a good writer can write a volume on even a straw if he does not find any other suitable subject-matter. On the other hand, a painting which always bears sentiment connected with life-history can take away infinite sorrow and turmoils of life we experience every day. We know that many people visit art galleries to divert their mind from the hubbub of life. Artists too can take refuge in art from the wickedness of life by spreading the wings of imagination through romance in art. I myself experienced such effect and wrote a playlet at the time when my beloved daughter had been suffering from death-agony. That is why we also see that extreme poverty never prevented artists from pursuing their work.



Artists could observe progress made in the developments of Romantic art of the various schools in both East and West, but no progress could possibly be noticed by them in the modern sur-realist art, which is itself against any progress. On the other hand, if we compare primitive caveman's work with that of the surrealist, we notice progress only in their philosophical and psychological interpretation of it and not in technical or emotional quality. Sur-realist's work might be artist's relaxation but cannot be called as art which indeed involves technical perfection and academic discipline based upon the country's art-tradition. The artists should not be an easy prey of the scientists or psychologists and give up their free interpretation of life and its emotion through their creation. Of course, it is easy for them to convey their dogmas through their books to the reading public, but art cannot have such a scope. But there is no reason to think that so long as the artists are part and parcel of life with natural feeling for its emotion, they cannot do without representational art if they want to express their sentiments suitably. No such revolution is, therefore, possible by their logical interpretation and newly-formed dogmas in favour of of primitive scribblings. It has, however, served erroneous views regarding the art of the Orient. The

conservative European art-critics have now found new meanings of it and do not, therefore, bother any more about its deficiencies in scientific rendering of perspective, anatomy and light and shade. Some of them have begun giving prominent place to Indian art while compiling the history of the art of the world. Sheldon Chenny and Stalite have gone deeper into the spirit of it and have written most sympathetically and rationally about it.

Art is like a tree, which requires natural soil and congenial surroundings to thrive. Botanists know that certain species of trees have even changed and become extinct due to the change in climatic conditions of the Earth. There are trees like Burmese "Thise" (Japanese call them "Urisi") the gum of which is required for lacquer work, which cannot grow outside the Mongolian countries. In the case of the art of a country there might be some outside influence and changes in technique observable to some extent, but it must not draw its nourishment primarily from the spirit or tradition of other countries. Asiatic art is discernable from European art, though much contact of ideas has taken place.

We remember that the late Mr. Gaganendra Nath Tagore, the brother of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore,

instead of following his brother in the revival of Indian art made throughout his life experiments in bringing synthesis between Indian art and modern European art, viz., Cubism, Impressionism, and Futurism but found no followers at that time, and that because he did not in fact get any spiritual nourishment from his own soil. His interpretation of foreign art became, therefore, static; whereas his brother Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore at the same time discovered the vital spirit which remained unnoticed in the traditional work of his country and thus re-moulded Indian art and never could disrespect it. An interesting recent development, however, can be noticed in the late Poet Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, who took up brush in the advanced age of 70 in the same line as his late nephew Gaganendra Nath and thus set an example at Santiniketan in Western art. The Poet Tagore over again brought home the subsequent modern art movement of Europe when Gaganendra Nath gave up painting pictures due to his long illness, which he did not survive. In this case we could easily compare this movement with that of the late Raja Ravi Varma, who at the end of the 19th century encouraged representational "true-to-nature" art of Europe, though the subject-matters selected by him were always Indian. Poet Tagore closely followed sur-realist artist Alfred Kubin of



Germany (Vide : Junge Kunst Band 1 Max.—Pechstein, by Von George Biermann—Published in Leipzig, 1920 — Verlag Von Klinkhardt and Biermann) and created his own expression, which might have been easy for him to do at his advanced age. The only difference between Poet Tagore and Ravi Varma is that the former required no training for sur-realist scribbling, as he had the privilege, as an old seer, to get to the child mind, whereas latter had to study life-long in a thorough academic manner to master foreign technique. The famous French author Andre Maurois said, "A great man's manias must be respected, because the time required to combat them is too precious to waste". But Poet Tagore's influence over the younger generation of artists of his school at Santiniketan cannot be ignored. This is too obvious from their recent creative works. The deliberate imitation of sur-realist art combined with primitive Indian art has already produced an interesting hybrid art impeding further progress of the art of our own country. At one time followers of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore tried to escape from the hold of Western art as preached by Ravi Varma, and they encouraged the revival of art in India drawing inspiration from the fountain-head of India's traditional art. But the more recent product, sur-realism

with its author-critics has already captured the imagination of the post-Poet Tagore artists of Santiniketan. The modern form of Western art started by the Santiniketan School must have some followers if only because it has been initiated by the Great Poet Tagore in his own school.

Whatever good or bad the influence of the present psycho-analyst school might be on art in Europe, it may not have healthy development with its borrowed ideology in India. We should solve our own peculiar problems, by studying and understanding our old masters. The potential value of our ancient heritage which was neglected for a century, during the Victorian era was first observed and discovered by our *Guru-deva* Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore towards the beginning of the 20th century. Under his inspiration developed a neo-school of Indian Art on the basis of this very ideal. This new school has done much to foster our country's art and no one would like to see their good work sacrificed at the alter of the psycho-analyst-cum-sur-realist school, which was the product of self-conscious research in art rather than intuitive spontaneous efforts.

Universalism attributed to such art-expression can never mean an uniformity in which all art should look alike. Rather, it should be a unity in diversity that is

always observed in Nature, each country presenting its individual type of expression-forms. So, Indian art too should retain its creative individuality and typical Indian stamp rather than bear the uniform hall-mark of some other country. It should not be an amalgam either of a hybrid expression of different schools of art, such as an admixture of modern sur-realism and primitive Rajput style, or of the styles of different countries, such as the mixture of ancient Chinese and Pre-raphaelite techniques, but should be the sincere expression of an artist conveyed in his spontaneous creation.

To some modern scholar-critics of Europe aesthetics seemed like sophisticated behaviorism and quite insignificant to labour upon. They do not believe art can be attributed "beyond science"—in some mysterious sense initiative and that it cannot be a subject-matter for science. After the Gothic or Byzantine school, which was of course of purely aesthetic and mystic nature, artists and art-critics of that period begun scientific rendering of realistic forms and invented perspective and laborious processes in technique of light and shade. Again with the advent of the new era, they at present going back to science for its ideological approach. They lost sight of the heart of a man as a creator (artist) who brings out his sincere expressions without any scientific sophistication. An artist may not be a "pandit" but still can be a creator.



## CHIPTAR X

### NATURE AND ART

In the hymns of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, our ancient sages discovered the spirit of Earth as 'speech' the sky as 'mind' and heaven as 'breath', by their close contact with nature. The supreme consciousness was expressed through different physical aspects of nature. The co-ordination with beauty and sublimity was achieved. On touching a fringe of nature a glow of rapture revealed the essence of a creative mind and the soul of the Universe. A mind which is progressive, gives expression to such dynamic philosophic interpretations.

The great poet *Kalidas* once saw a piece of cloud on the advent of monsoon, in first of *Asava*. lo! there appeared to him a banished *Jaksha* a servant of the celestial Lord of wealth, addressing the cloud that gathered round the ridge of his hill-abode in *Ramagiri*. The poet went on describing scene after scene how the cloud would sojourn in different places of worldly interest and depart from *Ujjain* to enter the etherial homes of *Siddhas* in the upper Himalayan alcoves and the perpetual snow-clad *Kilasa* and enter *Alaka*, to convey the message of love to the deserted

wife of *Jaksha*. In one touch of nature the greatest lyrical poetry of the medeaval days was thus born. 'In nature' Goethe saw 'the living, visible garment of God'. Shakespeare witnessed 'a spirit of youth in everything'. Tagore in the *Gitanjali* perceived 'in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all.'

If we come to the art of painting, to the first drawings and frescoes wrought by the pre-historic cave-dwellers on the cave walls, it was nature which aroused art-conscience in them the feeling for beauty and ultimately its expression. Living in the wilds, they indulged in hunting to gather their food, but it also disclosed to them all the germs of aesthetic forms embodied in nature. The efforts of humanity to express such newly discovered emotions and experiences first came into existence. The super-reality of the Cosmos and the human personality was thus found shape in art-form by the magic touch of nature.

Apparently we see that the external touch of beauty in shape and form manifest in nature is inseparable from the creation of both highly developed art and that of the primitives. This sense of the beautiful being

thus born, the imagination of man continued to create and realize the unconquerable spirit of nature. It is a spark—a flash which creates a work of art. An artist re-creates an object to find it again and again in its rhythmic pattern with his emotional devotion and ecstasy. These enable him to win the primordial Mother Nature. The Spirit of Nature—"muse", not only amuses her children but makes them dance with their creative urge. The supreme joy discovered in nature often, however, bewilders the artist. He is required to understand the value of her quality, her wisdom, and also gather knowledge from his predecessor's legacy of art to acquire the requisite technique to be able to express her inner moods. A mere imitation of nature will not serve its purpose. As Coleridge has said, "An artist or a poet ought not to pick Nature's pocket". Let him examine it accurately and trust more to imagination than to memory. Through imagination the artist should add his own soul to it and "make the dry bones live". He will also have to search nature as she will unfold her treasures and teach how to assimilate them. Any object of nature can stir the imagination of an artist and consequently the train of ideas and emotions may take objective forms through the symbolical and cultural inheritance of the past.



To the artist, art does not begin and end in his creation. The artist discovers his own spirit repeatedly through his art-works. At the same time he observes a fundamental law governing such creation. The artist travels in his mind's infinite vistas in the ever-enjoyable rhythms of nature. He ultimately tries to find the eternal truth in nature. The cosmic and dynamic law of nature was discovered by the ancient artists of China in three dimensional forms in a painting. Heaven stood for infinitely distant background, the Earth—for mid-distance and Man—for the foreground. In Hindu classics, this metaphysical notion has been expressed in the A-U-M, three letters. A, is *Adhal-ka*,—Space beneath, U, *Urdhaloka*,—upper space and M, *Madhyaloka*,—mid-space. Such trinity symbolises the eternal spiral movement which can be discovered in all creation in nature. The dynamic Universe with fleeting phenomena is captured by the symbols of art which though apparently sensitive and insignificant, reveal fathomless ever-expanding infinity. To express this in India, the artist-seers use the dynamic symbol of *Swastika*, which was obviously derived from the running wheel. The sculpture and painting of ancient India record the same rhythmical dynamic spiral movement of the wheel. The *trivanga*, *atihhanga* poses of the human figures, both male and

female, depicted in sculpture and painting, reveal patterns of spiral movement and rhythm derived from the heart of nature.

In such dynamic cosmic forces of nature, the artist in India found expression of tranquility, repose and self-fulfilment. In sculpture and painting the figures though revealing dynamic movement, maintain an exquisite poise and peace. Our seers of ancient India were great lovers of nature and solitary meditation in the midst of nature was one of the features especially prescribed in the *Bhagavat Geeta*. The same was the injunction of the Buddhist scriptures for the monks as well as painters. Spiritual and artistic contemplation mingled together in art. Our artists never produced anything jarring, gorgeous or noisy in expression. Throughout India, China, Japan and Indonesia a divine silence, the flight of the alone to the alone dominated over art. *Buddha*, *Bodhisattva*, *Tara* and *Siva* are the best examples of this. With the advent of Buddhism of the *Mahayana*, *Zen* schools, the artists of China and Japan not only endeavoured to reveal such tranquility in sculptured human figures, but also in landscape paintings. In such landscapes the artists found and expressed oneness with nature. There is no turmoil, not a single disturbing note. If we turn to the West, the same tranquil spirit

was discovered by Whistler, when he found the London fog a theme for his painting. None knew the beauty of the London fog before—nay, it was shunned by all. The ugly shapes and forms of the chimney and boxlike buildings on the Thames stood out in his canvas as mysterious emblem of sublimity and solitude.

An artist knows that Nature always keeps her lamp alight to kindle his soul. The curiosity to know nature is another aspect of the artist's creation. Change comes rhythmically in the procession of the Seasons, and of day and night. Thus colour and shape are in constant transformation and tries to catch the true significance of the ever-varying lines, colours and forms. An unnoticed flower growing along with grass, a little flake of snow in perfect crystal can carry a new message for humanity from the artist. Nature has been truly described as a scripture, every page of which may serve the artist for revealing the eternal inexhaustable mysteries of the Universe ;—there is no pause nor inaction in both nature and art. In other words, to an artist, full of creative inspiration, "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose". Ruskin has truly said,—“All great art is the expression of man's delight in God's work”. Therefore the problem of art is the problem of expressing the ultimate reality. It is concealed in nature and the artist



should discover glimpses of it through constant endeavour. The means adopted by the artist to discover the soul of nature cannot be anything else except true devotion and worship of the greatest artist *God* himself. He should not only feel his presence as the inscrutable, beyond thought and imagination, but breath in heaven, think in the Sky and understand materialistic ways of the Earth. A mere copy of nature cannot bring the artist anywhere near the reality. He should express the soul which is still untouched in Nature. The dead skeleton can be copied out, but to reveal its soul one should commune with it. The artist to achieve this object should practice elevated spiritual contemplation and intuition. Just as the lover's life may be linked with the blossom of a favourite tree, an artist find the same kind of link with nature. To him some familiar object of beauty may not be a source of inspiration, but a tiny butterfly fleeting about in the garden or a worn out petal of the lotus might bring glad tidings of the infinite. In the butterfly he will perhaps find the eternal longing for life-giving honey and the broken petal of the lotus—the symbol of decay of life and its ultimate annihilation. Human life can thus be converted into a constant creative experience through the magic touch of Nature. For this the artist should learn from past

experience in the symbolism of art and live constantly in commune with nature. His work then can achieve permanence and guide the artists for generations to come.

Art is never an idle dream or a past-time hobby. To an artist the resplendent morning sun glorifies the day and removes the covering of gloom. The unfathomable ocean of experience can be explored by the artist with one stroke of the brush, provided he can perceive nature's signal. On the other hand nature like life will grant what he asks of her;—with the adoration that she deserves. Just as a man whose senses are perfect is at once able to enjoy food, music, and other sensory objects, similarly the artist with a perfect soul is alone able to feel the joy emanating from nature that is ever ready to give him the requisite intuition to perfect his art. Perfection cannot be achieved easily in a art, but can be cultivated throughout life through observation and acquisition of inspiration from Nature.

## CHAPTER XI

### SYMBOLISM IN INDIAN ART AND RELIGION\*

To understand the symbolism in the art and religion of India, we must trace the trend of thought evolved for us by sages of the past, and try to understand it without pre-conceived dogma or intellectual bias. Before explaining some of the symbols, let us investigate how our prophets balanced the senses and mysteries in both *Rupa* (objective phenomena) and *Bhava* (emotional conception and intellectual interpretation). In India the Vedic Hymns embody the early reaction of the unsophisticated mind to the wonder and awe of our physical existence. They were born of an intellectual synthesis of the conflicting phases of the Universe—its diversity and unity. These Hymns are not commandments preached by any particular prophet or priest for a particular community. They prescribe no rigid discipline in their emotional appeal, which emerged from the depth of calm meditation and realization. The composers of those Hymns could understand that truth is one though the wise men call it by various names. (*Rigveda*—1,164,46)

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\* Written for the Religious Conference held at Lucknow University inaugurated by Sri Shankaracharya.



Long before physical science was invented, the sages of India lived close to nature and minutely observed the complicated series of phenomena conveyed to them through the behaviour of the material world of appearance. In *Chhandogya Upanishad* (111.9) and also in the *Manushamhita* (1.5) the ultimate reality permeating all phenomena was explained as follows: "In the beginning this world was non-existent and was immersed in *Tamasa*—imperceptible, destitute of distinctive marks, unattainable by reasoning and undefinable—as if in profound sleep." Now to express further this ultimate reality, the sage in *Chhandogya Upanishad* invented the symbol of "an egg which lay idle for a year after its creation, and was split open. Of the two parts of the shell one was silver, one gold. The silver shell is Earth and the gold is Sky. The outer membrane is mountain, the inner cloud and mist. What were vessels are rivers. These early prophets realized their own limitations in their attempt to explain away physical phenomena and began inventing *Mantras* and *Brahmanas*—hymns and rituals, gods and goddesses; *Agni* (Fire), *Varuna* (Air), *Indra* (Jupiter), and *Vishnu* (Preserver) etc. They were at the same time aware of the oneness of things in *Akasha*—space and *Saristi*—matter. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, a sage called

his son to fetch a fruit of the *Nyagrodha* tree and asked him to break it open. He then asked his son, "What do you see in it?" "Seeds, Sir; a multitude of almost infinitesimally small things," was the answer. "Break one of them open and look there," said the sage. "I discern nothing," replied his son. Then the learned father said, "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive, in that very essence this *Nyagrodha* tree exists. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self."

Similarly in the post-Vedic period numerous Hindu sages dwelt on this one-ness in all creation. As the same all-pervading space is both inside and outside a jar, even so the eternal all-pervading single *reality* exists in all things. The modern development of physical science has also proved the theory of a single element underlying all matter and space in different manifestations of material nature. The present scientific invention of splitting into cosmic showers has gone far ahead of it. And the complementary process, materialization of energy into matter, has also been observed in the phenomenon of cosmic rays.

According to *Surangama Sutra*, Lord Buddha said, "All conceptions of phenomena are nothing but activities

of the mind." Mind conveys everything through our sense-perception, *Rasa*. In both Vedic and Puranic periods our sages accepted this inevitable power of sense-perception, *Rasa-bhava*, and explained eternity and existence by inventing various symbolical patterns and images including deities. At first these were used as similies of their Hymns—objects typifying or representing things of resemblance; later on these grew into multifarious symbolical representations. The sages had to invent epic stories, such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, to educate the masses. The God-spirit *Brahma*, according to the *Bhagavat Gita* and Vedas, was never born. "He shall cease to be never. Never was the time it was not. Beginning and the End are dream." They had to conceive of a mysterious form to symbolize such abstract truth. In the *Bhagavat Gita* the Divine Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna: "Behold, O Partha, my manifestations by hundreds and by thousands, of various kinds, of various hues and shapes divine. See today in this my *Body* the whole Universe together with its movable and immovable creatures and all else that thou desirest to see". In these sublime, mysterious words, our sages have described infinity in terms of symbolism. In this found place all the splendour and wonder of the Almighty, of the countless eyes beholding, countless



mouths commanding, enfolding countless mystic-forms, wearing countless radiant glories, bearing countless heavenly weapons, crowned with garlands of Sun, Moon, and the Stars in heavenly ordours and blinding brilliance; ever-expanding, boundless, and beautiful. Infinity has been explained through such a majestic symbol which a man could hardly visualize through his senses. In the above manner the sages symbolised the eternal spirit and analyzed it in its three main aspects, viz., *Brahma* the Creator, *Vishnu* the Preserver, and *Shiva* the Destroyer. Gradually they had to invent all kinds of symbolical images to represent multifarious phenomenal activities. In other words the visible manifestations of the universe revealed themselves to them through such symbols as a human mind could easily accept. The ego in man requires him to know himself. He sees himself in the other through this romance of self (if this term is permissible)—*Rasa bhava*; in bodily existence, he can perceive all everywhere. To expound the perennial philosophy he had to invent such god-heads of his own type.

In this small note it is not possible to analyze the various meaning of a hundred thousand images of gods and goddesses with their unlimited emblems. We can, however, explain one of the most powerful symbolisms

expressed in a wheel of a chariot (*Chakra*) which was discovered by the saints through the vision of their spirit. It was the custom of the sages to sit and face the rising sun at the time of their meditation. They could see in front of them the disc-like sun rising at the horizon in far-extending radiance. They conceived in it the ever-rolling dynamic element of a wheel (*Chakra*). The sun (*Surya*) was described in the Hymns of *Rigveda* (IV-8) riding on a car with seven baysteeds representing seven colours of the ray. This subtle existence of the wheel-element which permeated nature was observed by the seer-artists of ancient India. The concave and convex parts of a circle placed in opposite directions, forming a spiral movement, was noticed by them in all objects of nature. In the science of botany such elemental spiral growth has been observed by some scholars in all trees and plants.

Life has been compared to the center of a wheel and all things are resting on the spokes of a wheel (*Prasna-Upanishad*). This wheel (*Chakra*) is also held as one of the emblems of the Preserver (*Vishnu*). The *Chakra* had also been explained in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (IV-13 & 15) as follows: "This mankind is the honey (*Mudhu*) of all beings and all these beings are the honey of this mankind. He indeed is the same

as Self (*Atma*), that immortal, that all. As all spokes are contained in the axle and in the felly of a wheel, all beings and all these selves (of the earth, water, and sky, etc.) are contained in self'. In another way the constitution of words and of individuals is compared to a wheel of which the hub is the heart, the spokes powers, and their point of contact on the felly, our organs of perception and action.

All ceremonial symbols convey more meaning in a concrete way and with greater vividness than in any other verbale formulae. Symbols are languages much easier to learn and understand in order to express the spiritual reality through them. Some aspect of the divine can be clearly defined. In India such symbols (*Mangalik*) are to be found in abundance. *Sankha* (conch), *Chakra* (wheel and *Padma* (lotus) and *Vajra* (thunder) are constantly employed in both art and religion. Of all symbols the wheel of a chariot, which is the emblem of all progress, took great significance in both art and religion. The kings and priests were called *Chakravarti*. Sorrows and pleasure of life have been constantly compared to a wheel movement. The chariot stands for the psycho-physical vehicle as which or in which according to our knowledge of 'who we are' we live and move. The steeds are senses, the reins their controls,



the mind the coachman and the spirit (*Atman*) the charioteer (*Sarathi*). Lord Krishna preached *Bhagavat Gita* standing on a chariot. Buddha turned his wheel of Eternal Law Divine (*Dharma*). In early Indian art when making images of Buddha was forbidden, the wheel took its place to symbolize his dynamic teaching. Aesthetic and religious experience burst forth with an exuberance of manifestations through the symbolic representation of the wheel in ancient India. The *Swastika* symbol (though invented much earlier than Hindu Buddhist civilization) took root in art and religion as it also came from the wheel pattern. In this pattern the infusion of *Purusha* (Energy) and *Prakriti* (Matter) is expressed in two opposite curvatures out of which all creation was possible. In another way, the constitution of world and individuals is compared to a wheel in India. We therefore find that early India art, in caves and temples, human figures and numerous scenes of life carved and painted, bore this effect of the wheel, and a rhythmic and dynamic wave persisted. It can easily be traced in the composition of sculptural panels and in paintings. A warm current of mystical consciousness, the forces of the "wheel of life", can be observed in all Buddhist Hindu art. The "wheel-order" is evident in the circular composition, the gestures of the "*Kshanabhanga*" and "*Atibhanga*" poses

of the human figures of Ajanta, in the Bagh caves, Sanchi and Bahrat paintings and sculptures. The curve of the limbs and poses of the figures apparently indicate the wheel-movement which was ultimately adopted in all Hindu Buddhist art of Asiatic countries: Khotan, Miran, Tarfan to China, Java, Cambodia and Japan, through the infusion of the *Mahayana* Buddhist religion in earlier days.

The artists of ancient India never considered that the reality of existence is based on its apparent seed of origin. It went further to the absolute—the center-point of the wheel of life. Ideology in Indian art went beyond the primitive existence of the seed—straight to the sphere where only the spirit can exist. In one of the Ajanta frescoes a wheel of life is painted in which all aspects of human life and activities depicted between the axles of it.

To understand the human mind as a whole we should try to realize the lost significance of art and religion in their proper light. The barrier created by the misunderstanding of symbolical representation in Hindu Buddhist art and the religion of India should be cleared away. We can then see oneness in all beings, in both art and man, and recreate this world of our own as a harmonious whole. Our present world, which is growing

more powerful day by day through scientific and mechanical inventions, should stop for a while to ponder over and understand the central oneness of the life-wheel where all essence of growth lies. It was not for magical rites that symbols were invented, but in order to realize the ultimate truth. The wheel of life was conceived to set up a chain of idealism in our mind's eye which is dynamic and ever-expanding in thought and action. Therefore the discord which we now find ravaging the earth through scientific warfare can be prevented only if we can find out the inner significance of *Dharma-Chakra*—the wheel of eternal truth. The first wheel that was invented by a primitive man in the pre-historic days really brought about a great change in life and its outlook. It indeed brought discipline, culture and cultivation. The same wheel can be traced in all ancient civilizations including Mohenjodaro and Harappa. It was gradually adopted by the sages and artists in India and invested with greater significance through their learning and meditation. The unity indicated in the centre of a wheel which is the Eternal Soul (*Parana*) should again be evoked in both art and religion to help our mind in enlarging to bring about the unity and brotherhood of mankind. The wheel center is the life-channel through which power can flow out of our



psychic universe of embodied selves. The other component parts of the life-wheel would run their due course in the right direction (*Dakshin-avarta*), provided we understood the central point of the wheel, which is all-pervading life—the *Atman*.

## CHAPTER XII

### INDIAN ART AND IDEOLOGY

The historians and art-critics of the West had to acknowledge that Indian art had fallen into undeserved neglect in the Victorian Era and a true appreciation of its spiritual meaning was due to the work of three pioneers E. B. Havell Ananda Coomaraswamy and Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore. As regards the apathy of the early European art-critics, Professor Wilkinson writes: "the main reason for this is simply that Europe would not lift its heavy eyes and look beyond its borders." (vide : 'Indian Art'—Essays by H. G. Rawlison, K de B. Cordington, J. V. S. Wilkinson and John Irwin. 1948) Another reason for such misunderstanding, he points out, "it was difficult for the European to see with Indian eyes without Indian guidance. Indian paintings were accordingly under-estimated and misunderstood".

Dr. Coomaraswamy and Havell were hardly understood by our Indian scholars of old generation and they never could take their works as authoritative versions. Among a few others, who took up their pen in India, were those who looked at it as a part of the national

awakening and as such, found an opportunity to make themselves known by advocating renaissance in Bengal. They in fact looked at the outer fringe of Indian art and began writing on it in a scholarly manner without understanding much of its inner meaning and ideology. This accounts for the utter negligence by our countrymen of the good work done by Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore and his pupils for about half a century. We now notice that some of our modern artists, (like the artists of the early Victorian era,) have again begun to brush aside the traditional art of India to achieve something new by deliberately imitating the Surrealist or Dada School of art in modern Europe. Tradition to these artists means imitation of the past and as such intrinsic value of the past experience lost all significance to them. When we praise Kalidasa we should know how much he was indebted to Valmiki for producing his epoch-making 'kavyas.' Indian art which continued for over two thousand years, up to the early 19th century in Cochin, Travancore and also subsequently thrived in the folk-art of Bengal up to the beginning of the 20th century, received a great blow and lost its distinctive ideology and dignity in the hands of our so-called modern artists and art-critics. After Havell and Coomarswamy, we have unfortunately got no one to throw more light



on the meanings and vitality of traditional art and possibilities of its adoption to suit the modernist's outlook.

If we, on the other hand, trace the development of European art, we would see that it continued for a long time (after Gothic and Byzantine period) developing realistic aspect of pictorial composition in a most scientific manner with multifarious Christian romantic conception. With the advent of photography and the two successive wars, the ideology of European art, painting and sculpture lost all its charm due to the scientific approach in all sphere of life's activity. Europe left its pure form of art of painting long ago in Gothic and Byzantine art. A modern European art-critic, Maurice Dennis describing the ideology of some of the modern art of Europe unwittingly defined pure form of traditional Indian painting and said, "a picture is a plane surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order." Indian art does not differ fundamentally, but only when he advocates that it should not convey any emotion, romanticism or traditional bias. According to another art-critic of the West, Claude Journot, "the painters of Europe have tried new experiments, taken lessons from the East and from Africa and turned towards the middle ages."

According to Indian conception, a painting 'chitra' literally means a creation which evokes surprise ('ascharjya').\* Therefore it never meant to be a photographic likeness of Nature. Moreover to understand art of both Oriental and Occidental countries in their true perspective, we should know about their historical developement and ideologies. Art developed along with the increase of interest in life and growth of culture. Art like religion, therefore can never be devoid of life's ambition and as such it is impossible to make it secular. Fundamental differences of Oriental and Occidental art therefore lies in their respective approach. Secular and personal art can only appeal to cliques and like fashion can disappear, but a hieratic art unites a whole race in one spiritual foundation. In this respect what Hindu-Buddhit and Christian art did to Asia and Europe can well be ascertained through their continual achievements of several centuries. The inner significance of the religious form of Oriental art can be explained through their multifarious examples. Hokusai, a great Oriental

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\* "As the energetic process (*Vipaka*) is modified by Karman and by the affects (*Kileta*) it is also called *Citta* (Skt. *Chitra*, variegated).

The meaning of *citta* can also be understood in the following way: as each *citta* owing to its innate diversity is capable of effecting a diversity in objects it is called *Citta* (*Citta-Karana*, producing a variety).

Vide: the Buddhist Conceptions of Art by Herbert V. Guenther, Ph. D.—The Journal of the Maha Bodhi Society, December, 1951.

artist (of Japan) explaining the function of an artist said that he must identify himself with his subject which he paints in a spiritual sphere; and it should be an insult to credit him with observation; for to observe, implies a separation from that which is observed. It is likewise a taste of art, that it should enable spectator to forget himself and to become its object as he does in dreams. But this procedure is not really a short one. "Only when", he said, "I was seventy-three had I got some sort of insight into the real structure of Nature; at the age of eighty shall have advanced still further; at ninety I shall grasp the mystery of things; at a hundred I shall be a marvel and at a hundred and ten every blot and every line from my brush shall be alive". This mystic experience bears the "reality"—the Eternal truth, which has been explained in *Hindu-Buddhist* philosophy. Oneness of things were felt in "akasha"—(space) and in "sristi"—(matter). Artist can feel oneness with the object he depicts in his works, provided he can understand the symbolism and ideology which framed the whole structure of our ancient Indian philosophy.

Indian artists never ventured to copy Nature realistically and therefore sometimes invented awe-inspiring symbols which a man could hardly visualise through his senses. In 'Bhagvata Gita', the Vishwa-rupa, is an



artistic conception of the 'Virata-purusha'—the infinity, ever-expanding all permeating force,—the abstract and absolute truth. Symbols are concrete expressions, much easier to disseminate the spiritual value in human mind. The ceremonial symbols of Pouranic types were evolved to convey more meaning in a greater vividness within a simple structure. Indian mythology with artistic symbolism can claim much scope for concrete interpretations, of human mind. Rossetti or Blake, however strong they may have been in their allegorical conceptions, they had to invent deliberately symbolism of their own to express respective mental images through paintings. But an Indian artist can express such allegorical meanings in their work provided he can utilise symbolisms after understanding them from common ritualistic objects, expressing multifarious aspects of manifestations of divine spirit. These symbolisms had sound meanings and were understood by the man in the street ; but due to our secular form of general education and also for the unwillingness on the part of the orthodox priests to explain, their inner significance remained a closed chapter for us. Otherwise infinite variety of allegorical and abstract form of original paintings, with the back-ground of high-class scientific education of the artists were possible. If we have to live as a nation, we shall have to thrive just as

other nations of the world with their respective cultural heritage and are genuinely proud of their distinctive art tradition and its ideology. Some of them are making experimental efforts to bring about a solution for a secular form of art. In all these diverse outlook of the nations blossom variety of art-forms, just as the flowers of different land thrive in their own particular soil. Such unity in diversity can be traced all over the world in music, painting, dancing, sculpture, architecture and also in languages, physiognomical character and dresses. We all can tolerate and understand their value and respect them. Similarly our own distinctive culture, which has got a great traditional background, cannot be ignored.

In this way, Indian artists were rich in symbolical motifs in art and not isolated examples like Rossetti, Blake and few others to evoke symbolical and spiritual meaning deliberately. Artists of India could therefore afford to be visionaries and mystics. The central abstract and spiritual aspect of all undifferentiated creatures of this earth have been defined by them through multifarious symbolism. The central philosophical ideals found definite scope in visual art of this country. We can find this ideology of Indian art through the analysis of the inner spirit of human mind and its nature as described by the Indian sages. According to the *Hindu* religion, which primarily

aimed at philosophy the creative power of God Eternity is "Maya", ultimately transformed itself into "Kama" (desire) and "Sankalpa" (determination), which are essential aspects of all human activities. "Prakriti" (Nature) consists of three distinctive forms of virtues (Gunas) and all human beings are subject to their influence; they remain active in the psychological sphere in "Sattva"—purity; "Raja"—activity and passion; "Tamas"—apathy and darkness

According to *Bhagavata Geeta*, 'Sattva', 'Raja' and 'Tama' are nature-born 'gunas' (aspects), which bind fast in the human body of which 'Sattva' from its stainlessness, luminous and healthy expression bound by attachment to wisdom. Whereas, 'Rajas' having the nature of passion, is the source of attachment to the thirst for life, that binds the dweller of the body by attachment for action; but 'Tamas' is born of unwisdom, indolence and sloth. In other words, 'Sattva' attaches to bliss; 'Rajas' to action and 'Tamas' having shrouded wisdom is attached, on the contrary, to negligence. When the wisdom light streams forth from all gates the body, then it may be known that 'Sattva' is increasing. Greed, outgoing energy undertaking of action, restlessness and desire, these are born of the increase of 'Rajas';



darkness, stagnation and negligence as well as delusion are born of increase of 'Tama-guna'. All artists and poets of our country observed these ideologies in classifying their art and literature. We had the good fortune of meeting the last of the indigenous 'Pat' artists (Folk artists) of Kalighat (Bengal), who used to classify their works in the same manner. All paintings depicting Gods and Goddesses were classified by them as work of 'Sattva-guna'. 'Raja-guna' type of paintings were generally birds, animals, fish or a lady in toilet, etc.; and 'Tama-guna' type of pictures were unhappy married couple beating each other, a demon devouring a lady and such other hideous scenes. If we analyse the art of Europe through our ideology, all types of Biblical paintings including Madonna can be classed as 'Sattva-guna' type of work; all landscape and portraits as 'Rajas' and all ultra-modernist's experiments in art in Europe, which contained the element of pride and destruction, can be classed as 'Tama' art. These reactionary art-form obviously originated due to the two successive world wars.

We can now, according to the 'Sanskrit Kavya-Alankar Shastra' divide these three elementary virtues (gunas) in nine different types of Rasas (Bhavas).

*Sattva-Guna* essentially contains the following three virtues:— (1) 'Santa-rasa' (the quietistic) which brings peace in mind with the philosophical outlook on life; (2) 'Karuna-rasa' (the compassion) evoked through the death and calamity of the fellow-beings; (3) 'Vatsalya-rasa' (affection for all creatures).

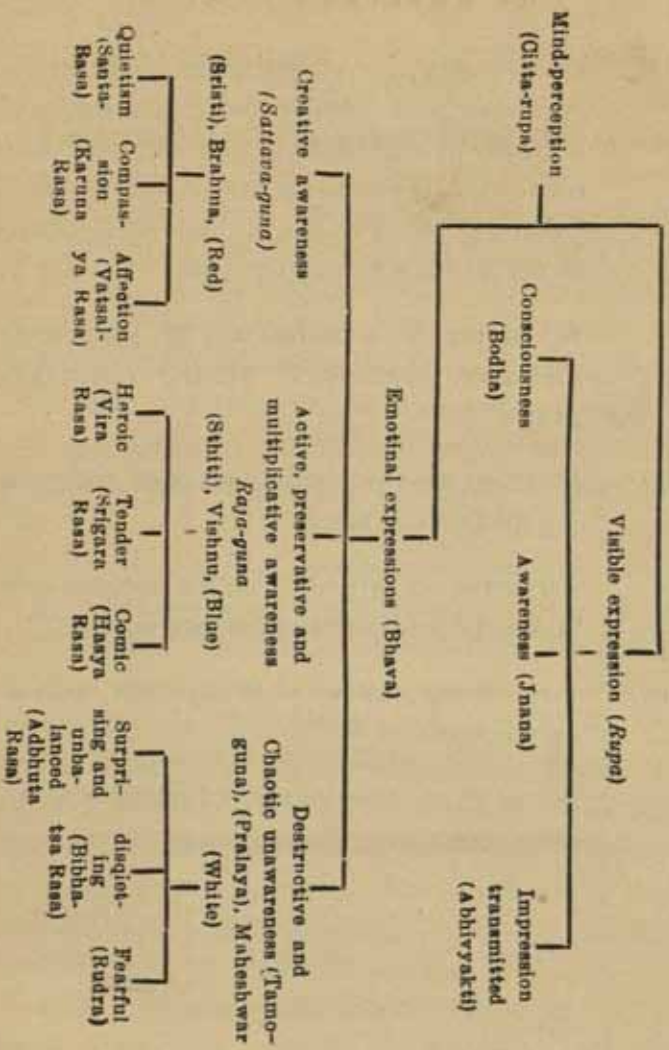
*Raja-Guna* contains:— (1) Vira-rasa (the heroic expression and courage with which people fight for their country, patriotism, charity and all other works containing ethical morals; (2) Srīngar-rasa or Adī-rasa (the tender) which evokes love in man and woman essential for biological reproduction; (3) 'Hasya-rasa' (provoking laughter and humour).

In *Tamo-Guna* we find:— (1) 'Advuta-rasa' (surprising and unbalanced element in our mind); (2) 'Bivatsa-rasa'— (the disgusting); (3) 'Rudra-rasa' (the fearful expression). These three Rasas are all psychological unsophisticated and primitive expressions of a child or a cave-man. It contained anger, pride and destructive elements. No artist can therefore escape from the above mentioned 'gunas' and 'bhavas' whether he prefers modernist ideology of Europe or spiritual abstractness of Indian art. Valmiki wrote about them in his epic 'Ramayana' explaining the aim and object of his 'kavya' (vide : valmiki : 1-4-9).

With the abstraction of various aspects (gunas) of the life-expression, civilised man invented many symbols and patterns of art. Of course, such symbols depend upon the range, depth and exactitude of his apprehension. He should have an analytical power to discriminate and a trained mind and habit to hold the sequence of individual definitions in thought and imagination, compare them with each other, determine just where and how they focus sharp and clear meanings, ideals and attitude.



The chart may further explain it.



*Sattava :* Image-ination, i. e , bringing the image within. A very sensitive person can only posses such a faculty of experiencing para-normal phenomena and realise the supreme truth of "Self" ( Atma ). Psychic phenomena—phenomena of the soul are revealed to him.

All works of art done out of imagination, subjective, objective or abstract which bring peace.

*Raja :* Focussed towards worldly activities and bringing materialistic gains.

All works of art with commercial objectives, landscape and portrait paintings included.

*Tamo :* Represeting unbalanced mind, vague, inchoate representations.

All art of primitive immaturred imagination and perception.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MODERN TREND IN EUROPEAN ART

Strictly speaking, modern views and ideology on art are a century old dictum and as such far removed from the criticism by men like Marsilio, Ficino, Giorgio Vasari, Elic Faure, Carel Mander and many others of the Medieval period who wrote mostly on history of the artists rather than analytical discourses on art. The greatest of such art historians was Elic Faure, who for the first time produced a comprehensive work of the Italian masters about the end of thirteen century. In each opening sentence of the first edition of his work he said: "Art which expresses life, is as mysterious as life. It escapes all formulae as life does". In his work he did attempt to find a common equation for a universal understanding. These ancient art-historians generally reveal how a contemporary reacts to and records the life and achievements of an artist he knew and admired. The scholar-critics like Walter Pater and Ruskin of the Victorian era first analysed different schools and their trends of thoughts and ultimately evoked inspiration for such literary art-criticism in men like Clive Bell Roger Fry, Jan Gordon, Marriott, Wilenski and Herbert Read of our time. These critics mostly found in the experimental science



of psycho-analysis an entirely new sphere of approach. Literal fidelity to Nature—maintenance of traditional principles in technique have been entirely revalued by them.

Accordingly to the modern art-critics,—since the time of Dego, Pissaro and Renoir—the impressionists left the technique of reproducing natural elements such as it had been taught since the renaissance through relief and chiaroscuro. In fact with the invention of photography, the Western art got a rude shock and to liberate painting from such imitation of natural objects, invented a new ideology which has been recently expressed by Maurice Denis—"a picture is a plane surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order". According to the modern art-critics, just as a poet can compare a girl to a swan, a painter can set his creative power into motion and transcend appearance. They call it "a fight against realism on rational construction or brutal sensation". These criticism deliberately favoured experiments of the modern French artists. Matisse, Rounalt, Valminck—authors of Fauvism—refuse to depict natural sensation received through observation. Similarly, Picasso, Barque, Villon and Leger, who advocated Cubism, reacted in favour of three-dimensional structure and discarded instinct and intuition as sentimental realism. Though

the Expressionists were keen on bringing back human significance to paintings, but Surrealism ended art-form with fantasy and dream-expression of a sub-conscious mind. In this way the long cherished ideal of Western art of reflecting nature in all its aspects on a canvas has been far removed by a set of artists and art-critics of the present generation. To them early achievements were too emotional and unreal—and consequently hampered the progress of European art.

In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries artists paid increasing attention to, technique and pictorial interpretation of subject-matters which became a fashion. The century old dogmas could not be shaken off during the Nineteenth century, but ultimately the Twentieth century saw an end to it in a short time in the West. In Europe these artists and art-critics of the modern school approached art more rigourously in a scientific method to stir up new trends. These artists are egoists and argue that "in composition of a picture, nature, which provides the artist' subject and pretext, is not the only factor; there is also the artists himself who communicate to others through his work what he feels and what he is—the very essence of life". This kind of scientific and materialistic approach to art can be traced through out the history of Western art criticisms.

It is wrong to say "that Western art since its inception have appointed itself for one essential task, that of 'copying nature in all its forms'". In the early middle-age, the transitional period of Hellenistic art created a typical formalism and "stiffness". The Byzantine tradition when established in its place, gradually removed such stiffness in pictorial composition. The plastic sense however was totally lacking at that period. Just as the Christian religion, the art of Byzantine school originated from Oriental sources. Art of the Orient was impersonal, and as such, stripped of the reality of man's material, anatomical world. Because of this, Byzantine way of thinking differed greatly from the post-renaissance art of the mediaeval period: the very human figures drawn in murals and icons left out humanism and sentimental naturalism, so much so, that in the latter period the realists called them "Scarecrows" and caricatures. It was a Catholic art and will always remain a milestone of spiritual and cultural endeavour of the West. Byzantine art suffered much in the hands of the iconoclasts for over a century. What treasures of art were destroyed no one will ever know. Byzantine or the Gothic art which were graphic expressions of the saintly christian souls always bore christian mythology and its various symbolism. The word "icon"—on which Byzantine art mainly



stands, meaning "image" derived from the Greek word "Eikon" and was not portrait i. e. a photographic likeness of a person. Most of the paintings of that period were executed by the Christian saints and priests and done entirely out of their imagination. The use of models or 'sitters' at that time was unknown. Pictures of Holy images were evoked through deep meditation and with the result the figures came to the surface of the canvas, of course without leaving any trace of perspective views in the background. In this way the image of Lord Christ was first discovered by the mystic-artists of the early Christian era. This typical Oriental tradition continued from about the seventh century to the twelve century in Europe. The fundamental methods of Byzantine art lingered to a certain extent in pre-renaissance and renaissance schools: the primitive Byzantine Madonna became more human and realistic woman in later periods. At the same time conception of a Madonna out of one's imagination gradually replaced living models or sitters. In all post-Byzantine paintings a strange tired feeling of the sitters is evident. According to them "unless an artist has a special interest in certain subjects and models, he is not an artist". It is indeed strange to believe that even after the revolt against realistic expression in art none of the modernists gave up this method. A distortion of a

figure in a surrealists' work can be accounted for in the use of a 'magic mirror'-concave or convex, placed purposely before a model. The only change occurred in this case is the models treated differently according to the wishful thinking of the individual artist. The real significance of portraits drawn from models and landscape from actual scenery has been almost diminished with the advent of colour photography. The idealists' methods of landscape painting had also been invented long by the artists of China and Japan. In the circumstances, the modernist artists and art-critics of the West want to deliberately liberate art from its common tract and re-create fresh idealisms for the future progress. How far it could achieve its objective can be ascertained from the report of the second International Congress of Art Critics held under the auspices of *UNESCO* in Paris in July, 1949. After reviewing modern art, viz., Impressionism, Surrealism and Abstractism they came to the conclusion that "modern art had achieved great success, but it also has its serious limitations,—its lack of social sense, its escapism and its estrangement from the spirit of the people, with the result, that a larger section of the public was deprived of the privilege of enjoying modern art".

No secular art of any country can get its legitimate support from the entire nation. It can however appeal

to a clique—a section of scholars of certain cultivated taste or to the public for a short time as a fashion. With the result the modern trend of art of Europe is already declining and art-critics are now in the quest of a new approach. They seem to be more inclined to establish a new ideology and its technique rather than the typical mood which is expressed in all creative art-forms. The philosophical idealism in art as expounded by men like Kant and Nietzsche—"any creation by a genius must be beautiful"—if taken into consideration, then the faith in idealism in art will very much depend upon the personality of the artist. Plato's ideal further expounded by Ruskin, Tolstoy, Morris and Bergson maintains that "any work of art that expresses truth, the spirit of nature, the ideal, the universal, Divine goodness or typical, is beautiful".

A state of equilibrium existed in all art of the world. The spirit of nature depicted by cave-men and also by highly sophisticated priests of the Byzantine school bear same fundamental attitude and artists of all time continued their ideological pursuit up to the present day. In this respect spiritual and religious art was never lost sight of. Such a perennial source to interpret life and its surroundings with emotional appeal can still be developed in the modern progressive art provided the vehicle of



expression, the technique does not overshadow the creative urge of an artists. The modern European art is a deliberate challenge to overthrow the realistic representation of nature, and as such, always seeking asylum in pre-historic technique rather than accepting a method which was universal.

The problem of Indian art is quite different. We enjoyed an unbroken art heritage and tradition of our own and our artists never attempted to copy Nature. The plastic sense and the three-dimensional aspects have been introduced during the Victorian Era by the Western masters just as they tried to introduce their theological ideology through their missionaries. As photographic realism is totally absent in pure art, for its further progress we need not launch a deliberate campaign to imitate the modernist art or the West. We should on the otherhand re-discover the inner significance out of self-expression and imagination through art, which may some-day surpass all beaten-tracts of East and West and bring about a spiritual harmony in this wartorn world.

## CHAPTER XIV

### TASTE IN ART AND OTHER EXTREMES

The expression "Vulgarity in Art" sounds quite absurd for art is supposed to evoke exquisite emotions. But sometimes the trend of evil thought of the creator lingers in his work, which no man of aesthetic sense can possibly stand. A pedestrian once enquired of a professor whom he met on his way—"Sir, may I know the way to the Theatre please?" "Yes I know the way, but I am not going to direct you there"—was the reply which he received from the learned man. The same professor while visiting abroad was shocked to find the nude paintings by the great masters, which adorned the Art Galleries of Europe—such was his sense of decency and puritanism! With a pure heart full of good intentions he rejected the glorious monuments of art. We are at present not concerned with similar evaluation of vulgarity in art. Puritanism has got no place in the sphere of art. But various types of vulgarism can be traced in art and also amongst the so-called art lovers. The scope of artists is very great, and they can interpret emotions of different kinds in their works. Some of these may be sublime, tragic, austere, and awe-inspiring, or even erotic. The sculptures of Konarak and Khajuraho

puzzle the minds of the puritans, because of their obscene subject-matter. Whereas the artists, art-critics and philosophers seek in them something beyond their subject-matter—the soul-force and vigour. The dynamic and vital movements expressed in these works stir the imagination of the artists and art-critics and the philosophers, who find in them the secret longing for biological reproduction, which conducts the principle of preservation of the species. God's potentiality is a problem which cannot be otherwise solved by humanity, though, on the other hand, for obvious reasons this class of art cannot be brought to the Art Galleries, where all could share their views and understanding.

Of course it all depends upon how art manifests itself to the observer. There are artists of extreme sensibility who would abhor to look at a painting which is badly composed—to them that work of art is also vulgar. We are not concerned with this kind of sentiments either. An artist is concerned with "beauty" and its original forms. He expresses the impression of beauty-form according to his own realization, which also depends upon his education, cultural environments and imaginations. Of course, to a certain extent his creation is subject to the taste of the people, for whom art ultimately exists but with whom the artist is not directly concerned. This test



for art is not to be found in, or cultivated easily by, the public. It is not something like their daily bread that they could acquire by sheer dint of toil or through vocational training. Good sense or taste for understanding art is an aesthetic enjoyment, which in the present condition everybody cannot afford to have. Generally, therefore, art suffers much in the hands of people with uncultivated or no taste. It is indeed a painful fact that to cater for such vulgar public taste there also exist artists whose one and only aim and object is to exploit it. They vulgarize art to appeal to the uncultivated art-sense of the public and its hunger for matter rather than the spirit. These artists find easy to earn money, and they do not care for aesthetic emotion or self-realization through art, but allow them to be dragged into the sphere of vulgarity.

Before we define the attitude of the artists and art-lovers on vulgarity in art we must say something about the popular demand and standardized pseudo-art objects which are flooding the market and selling "like 'hot cakes'". Thus it is that we notice in the drawing-rooms of the so-called cultured citizens overcrowded with cheap almanac pictures on the wall or the photographs of cinema stars instead of paintings of some merit, or porcelain replicas of great masterpieces. (You can indeed very well judge by such odd collections of pseudo-art how the wealthy

businessman with his newly acquired surpluses gives expression to his sense of leisure and escape from the toils of labour). When you again observe his newly built house you will find overcrowded ornamentations on the facade and on the colonnades. You will at once feel uncomfortable on account of the "show off", which verges almost on vulgarity. This kind of unintentional vulgarity is growing day by day because of industrialization, which makes people grow rich in physical resources and not in mental wealth. The love for repetitive production is unconsciously cultivated by the magnates and industrialists in their factory atmosphere, and thus they gradually lose the sense to differentiate the original artistic creation from the soddy luxury-articles manufactured by the machinery in mass production. They would therefore prefer to buy a reproduction rather than be proud to possess a masterpiece in original. The new rich would concentrate on acquiring wealth, but cannot seek the rudimentary aesthetic joy which is embodied in the creative work of an artist. The machine-ridden world is responsible for enveloping our every-day life with vulgarity and for the suppression of aesthetic pleasure.

Our remarks do not apply to Indian art alone. Their also exists a studied negligence in understanding the art of other countries. On many occasions we have noticed

uncharitable and biased criticism made by men of great learning and repute.

The established tradition of the art of other countries can only be appreciated and understood by an open and sympathetic mind that can judge the inner significance of foreign achievements by observing closely their religious and cultural aspects, without which art cannot grow. We thus sometimes find that some foreign scholars during their short visit to India found fault with one of the world's noblest architectural creation—The Tajmahal of Agra. They either compared it with a "wedding cake" or found the minarets disproportionately fragile and ugly. Here the commentators showed their superficiality in decrying such a noble architecture, which has been universally admired. In this respect their egoistic originality in expressing their individual views surpassed vulgarity. Literary-men of one country, however brilliant in their own fields, sometimes fail to understand the spirit underlying the art of other countries. This kind of vulgarity is sometime indulged in by the so-called nationalist artists, whose one and only aim is to show in a bad light, in comparison with their own, whatever they find in other countries' habits, manners and customs. Art with such a fixed motive is always vulgar, however good may be the moral it might preach temporarily to the



people concerned. Science scores an advantage over art in this respect. What we mean is this : to harness art to patriotic purpose is basically erroneous and bound to lead to vulgarization. Art is originated spontaneously, and not intentionally, deliberately, to suit particular interests, however large and laudable they may be.

Another kind of foulness to be found amongst the artists who wish to imitate other people's art and thus gain influence and popularity, may be noted here. We have been noticing these days amongst the so-called pioneers of Indian art a tendency to imitate indigenous local or provincial schools or ancient paintings and thus try to establish himself. Though the idea is seemingly praiseworthy, it may easily give rise to mannerisms, which cannot be a sign of vitality in art. All mannerism is vulgar, and if it is confined within the narrow limits of local provincialism it tends to create more ugliness than mere imitation of the great masters, which is sometimes required for the art student to understand the tradition and technique of the classical works of his own country. Imitation is nothing but the reproduction of the surface value, but the spirit that is embodied in the original work, no mere imitator can ever copy. But we must guard against one misconception about what is vulgar in art. Simple ugliness need not be the cause of vulgarity in art.

Look at the deformed cripple or the dwarf. Both may repel us at sight, but an artist can immortalize them with his brush and canvas. The dwarfs in Ajanta paintings and also of Velasquez's work will remain immortal for ever. Similarly, in painting a landscape an artist could with his magic hand turn the ugliness of a factory-chimney into a work of fine art. Caricature, by itself, is not vulgar, a comic expression is not devoid of aesthetic appeal and can be compared with the "Character" in an image, a portrait or in a serious work of art. But if it is tied too much to any ulterior motive, as is done, for example, to help the temporary national propaganda, then its object would be reduced to utter vulgarity. To amplify the character, artists sometimes do exaggerate by accentuating certain expressions in humourist's art. Some artist while depicting romantic characters carry them to the extreme "soap-bubble" and "jelly-fish"-like pretiness, which too is deplorable in art.

Lastly, there is the ultra modern school in Europe—the Sur-realists—, whose work might sometimes give rise to the vulgar tender sense. They are in one way a realist school trying to give exact expression to the artist's emotion, and, in another, honestly trying to find out a new technique in modern art. This school is a mystic school, and nothing can be said against or in favour of it

as far as the vulgarity is concerned. The intention may be a noble one but its apparent crudeness can, never be defined. It yields to the purely temporary feelings in which the Sur-realist artist is himself involved, at the time of taking up his brush.

The truly mystic and aesthetic joy of art can be acquired only through everyday expression and environment. Art consciousness and aesthetic sensibility cannot be trained but can be cultivated through constant desire to achieve that end. To an artist, art is an aesthetic pursuit and not a means of livelihood, and those who try to make it so will be bound to drag it down to vulgarity.

C





**Sattva :** Heavenly and imaginative painting of "Mother and Child" It illustrates blue-coloured Cosmic spirit—(Krishna—the infinity) born on the lap of an Earthly mother (Yashoda—spirit of the materialistic existence. Here symbolical figures were drawn out of imagination without distorting anatomical features in god's creation, expressive of ideas and romanticism.

(See page 133)



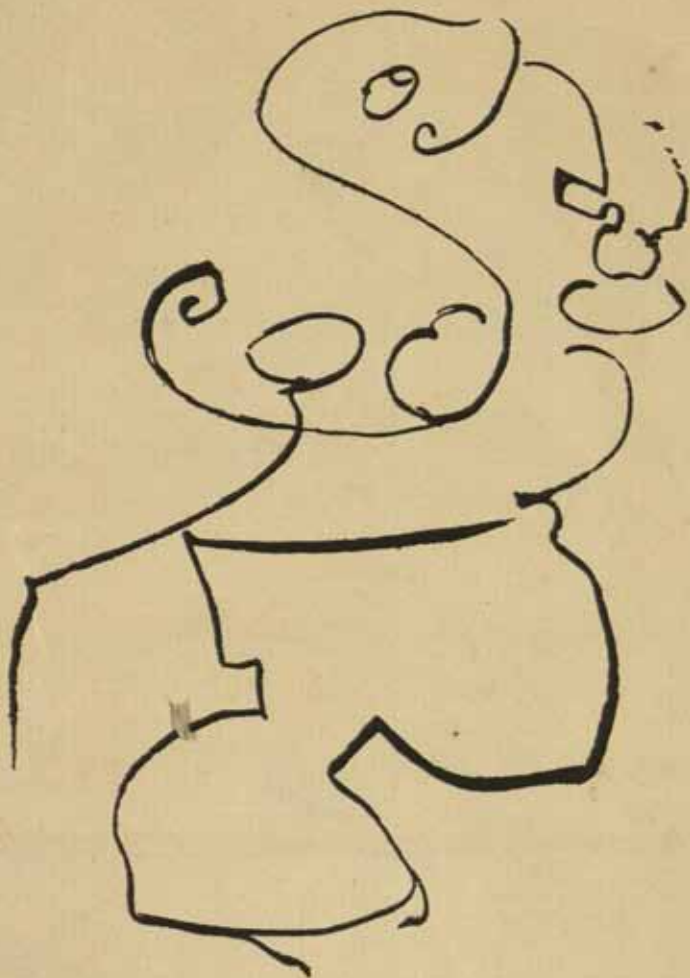


**Rajasic :** Eearthly all commercial activities in art. Figures are purposely distorted to suit the painter and for the object it is utilised. It can be repetitive without expressing any sence. Must be attractive and may not be pleasing. Poster design, realistic landscapes and portraits can also be classed as Rajasics as they are attractive and can be sold easily.

(See page 133)







**Tamasic:** Timeless primitive art of a child and a cave-man. A psychological romance. Just as a seed is the reality of a tree a child mind is attributed as an unsophisticated mind-seed of a man. There is no traditional bias and drawn in a sub-conscious state of a child. They are all alike in expression: ultra-modern sur-realist art of Europe deliberately copied this instinct to create a new reality.

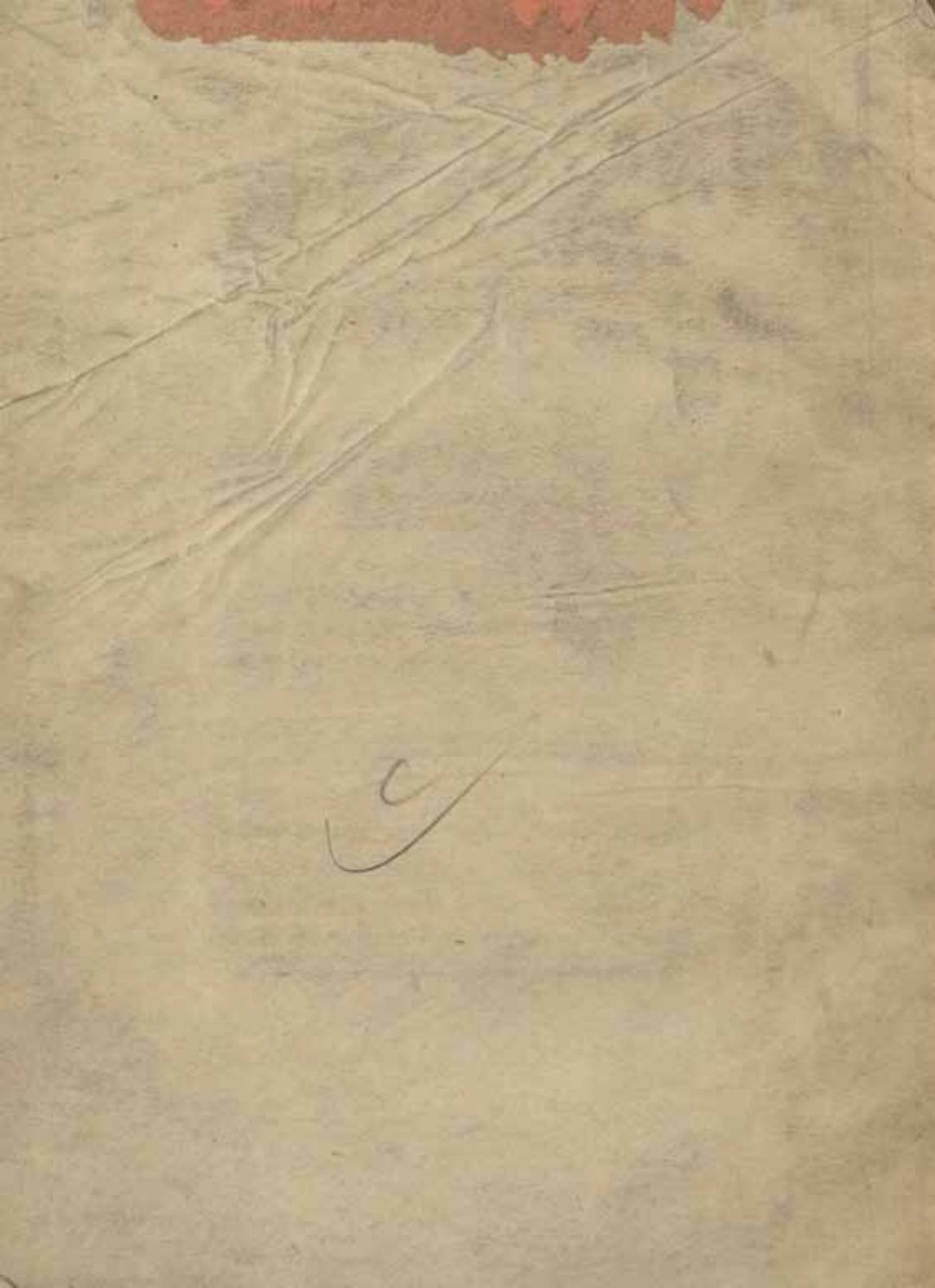
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