

## CHAPTER 3

### INTRODUCTION TO MODERN INDIAN ART & EARLY INSTANCE OF ABSTRACTION IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN PAINTING

#### 3.1. Introduction to Modern Indian Art

Around the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the disintegration of Mughal Empire, mughal and rajput styles were on the wane. Painters who had enjoyed court patronage scattered around the country. Tanjore, Lucknow, Patna, Murshidabad, Nepal and the Punjab Hills became their main area of patronage.

At that time a few European painters, such as J. Zoffany, Tilly Kettle, T. Daniell, W. Daniell and others came to settle in India. These were the artists who introduced a romanticized Indian landscape through the medium of Indian oil painting. With the introduction of this academic idiom the art of anonymous Indian Company Painters evolved, uniquely merging Eastern and Western themes and techniques.

Indian thoughts and expressions had been suppressed for a long time under the British Empire. Indian indigenous art had registered quite retardation. Whatever little remained in the name of painting was made to order for the British, catering exclusively to the British taste. At that time indigenous traditions had reached practically at the lowest ebb. “In the world of art, colonial vision was to create a people modern in technique but archaic in outlook. The colonial artist was to be adept at drawing, at using oil on canvas, painting in an academic style, but merely bringing our ancient epic of life in the nineteenth century costumes and poses”<sup>1</sup>

“The eventual fragmenting of traditional Indian arts was mainly the result of a cultural imperialistic infrastructure entrenching itself, bringing a change in sources of patronage, among other factors, and hence a change in the style of art and attitudes. The conflict between notions of individuality, rooted in the dominance of subjective reason, against attitudes of artistic anonymity, rooted in the dominance of joy and its intuitive faith, became one such transition.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1854, the first Industrial Art Society was set up in Calcutta by Rajendralal Mitra, Justice Pratt, Jatindra Mohan Tagore and others. By 1864, this was converted into the Calcutta Government College of Art. Soon to follow were the Bombay Government Art College and the Madras Government College of Arts & Crafts. The fine art education catered to the European tastes, in terms of themes, and mediums, perspective, chiaroscuro, portraiture, landscape and still life to name a few. This academic perspective was not the manner with which the Indian vision had been fashioned.

The influences of the British art school, inspired many talented artists of that time. Among them Raja Ravi Varma was the first Indian to master the technique of oil painting. He learnt the art of capturing likeness in the painting from visiting European artists at the court of Maharajah of Travancore. Ravi Varma took India back to feudal themes, mixing the decorative attitudes of the Tanjore School of glass painting with his British Academic training, arriving at a fusion of Indian themes and the oil on canvas technique. “Ravi Varma struggled to introduce a great many new elements into the Indian painting... perspective, European drawing, construction and composition and a new medium altogether: oil. He tried to wield the new tools in the Indian context and what he produced was not European painting at all but a new way of seeing”<sup>3</sup>

Ravi Varma’s imagery was influenced by and synthesized the various elements of his traditional Hindu upbringing with his British education creating a pictorial language, which the vast Indian public could identify with and were most visually comfortable. He combined the technique of oil painting with the decorative attitudes of Tanjore glass painting and the drama of Marathi theatre to create a fusion between the east and west. Ravi Varma emerged in its time as the first significant painter of modernity and nationality in Indian art. He was one of the first Indians, to be followed by the likes of Hansaji Raghunath, Pestonjee Bomanji, M.V. Dhurandhar, and later, M.F. Pithwala, A.X. Trinidade, Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose and others to master the oil on canvas technique.

### 3.1.1 Emergence of Indian Modernism: The Bengal School

As reaction to this, some sensitive artist observed and theorized that the revival and extension of the Indian traditional techniques of making painting can change the picture of Indian art. The seeds from which a movement towards modern Indian painting grew were the existing Western academic art education, which seemed against the grain of the Indian psyche; a reaction against the popularity of artists such as Raja Ravi Varma; This growing wave of Orientalism influencing European art and thought, as well as the political climate and its urgent issue of national identity, reflected in the Swadeshi Movement. At this point, E.B. Havell, with Abanindranath Tagore and others created a movement to revive the neglected Indian cultural heritage.

In 1896, E.B. Havell was appointed the Principal of the Calcutta Government College of Art. Meanwhile he had delved deep into Indian Lore and culture. “Havell was deeply anguished over the decay and degeneration of Indian art and artistic taste.”<sup>4</sup> He dwelt on the necessity of an intimate acquaintance with the past tradition of the country and of recapturing their glories. His romanticism was instrumental in rediscovering the artistic and educational relevance of the ancient Indian cultural ethos and seeing it in relation to modern art. “Rejection of the western realism almost meant a nostalgic sentimental carving for idealized past and withdrawal from the grim present into an imaginary world of pastoral peace. The paintings of Ajanta and Bagh, Mughal, Rajput and Pahari miniatures provided the model.”<sup>5</sup>

E.B. Havell was a strong defender of Indian art. “The Orientalist defense and rediscovery of Indian ‘finearts’ particularly havell’s campaign and writings, proved vital for nationalist pride.”<sup>6</sup> Havell called the Abnindranath to join the school as a vice principal in 1898. “Under the guidance of Havell , Abnindranath studied the mughal and rajput school of painting which brought a remarkable change in his style and technique. He came to realize that Indian art could never attain great heights by merely adopting European styles.”<sup>7</sup>

Abanindranath Tagore was the first significant artist of Modern Indian Art. He was a major exponent of indigenous values in Indian art. “He founded the movement called Bengal school of art, which led to the development of Indian

painting in the Modern period.”<sup>8</sup> Abanindranath Tagore opted out of his formal training in academic art methods and rejected all realistic replication. He developed the romantic ideal of the artist as a creative genius, placing inspiration over taught expertise, feeling over form, free of ambition for material gain. Abanindranath Tagore redefined the meaning of modernity and Indian-ness locating them in the creativity and orientalist imagery.



Fig.3.1. Bharat Mata, Abnindrath Tagore, 1905

“The origin of the Bengal art is interwoven with the origin of Indian nationalism. To the extent it can be discharged as a rebellion in the essence against the Western Art.”<sup>9</sup> Abnindrath Tagore, in his early painting of Bengal school, mashes the Rajput and Pahari miniature style with the academic style of European painting. Out of this synthesis of influences grew Abanindranath Tagore’s own compositions with mannerized figures, intricately patterned foliage, curvilinear drapery and somber colour palette. His mission was to infuse the emotional content to the miniature technique of Indian heritage. His painting ‘Bharat Mata’ (Fig. 3.1) is the most significant painting in his signature style of wash technique. His another painting ‘Last Days of Shah Jahan’ is also an important work of art, which is considered as the arrival of a new direction in Indian modern painting where the emotive expression becomes most significant characteristic of the painting. “Abnindrath’s stylistic experiments had set the stereotype of ‘Indian-style’ painting; simultaneously, in the language of art criticism, the artistic value he highlighted set out the main criteria of evaluation. The expressiveness of the mood-

intensive aura of a painting become the hallmark of its 'Indian-ness' He and his circle of painters had made their clearest break from Western academic art in their choice of style.”<sup>10</sup> As Coomaraswamy said “In the excitements of the battle to rejuvenate Indian art, Abanindranath’s main focus, however, was not on ‘folk’ but on the ‘classical’ canons of the Indian art.”<sup>11</sup>

It was left to A.K. Coomaraswamy to provide the relevant aesthetic and philosophic framework that would serve as a link between Indian Modern art and its ancient cultural ethos. As he justifying the Bengal painters for their indigenous “The work of modern school of Indian painters in Calcutta is a phase of the national reawakening”<sup>12</sup>

The Bengal School tried to merge individual artistic differences by creating images in Abanindranth’s artistic lineage though Nandalal and Venkatapa were notable exceptions with their use of flat colors defined by strong outlines. In Asit Haldar, Samarendra Gupta and K. Mazumdar, the melancholy and pathos of orientalism was most pronounced.

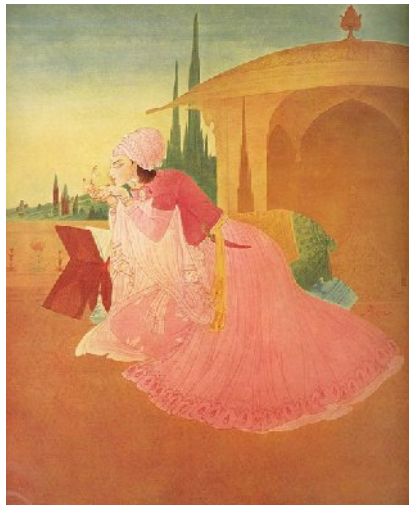


Fig.3.2. The Fragrance By A.R. Chughtai

There was a parallel movement in Lahore around the Government Mayo College which revolved around furniture, textile and jewelry design. John Lockwood Kipling was its principal there from 1878. Kipling tried to amalgamate the techniques of local mistri’s with academic style of training. At that time M.A.R. Chughtai was a significant artist from Punjab who had been completed his early

education in art from Mayo College. His painting style had the same aesthetics as the Bengal artists, but he is incorporating his Persian heritage within his paintings. He was an awesome craftsman and a very well trained in watercolors. In his paintings, his intention was to achieve the emotion through a deliberate distortion of the anatomy with the fine use of line. His work is filigreed with oriental motifs and intricacy of detail. “He continued the Eastern tradition of impeccable draughtsmanship which reached the finest of simplification and had stylistic affinities with the great Chinese and Japanese masters.... His works shows the vigour of design much more than the most of the Bengal school painters.”<sup>13</sup>

Various means of discussing and disseminating artistic ideas were growing to counter colonial structures. The Bengal School matured and gave rise to an infrastructure separate from British patronage. The artists of the Bengal School included Nandalal Bose, K. Venkatappa, Samarendranath Gupta, Asit Kumar Haldar, Kshitindranath Mazumdar, Sarada Ukil and M.A.R. Chugtai.

By the early 1920's the parallel streams of British Academic orthodoxy and modern art inspired by traditional Indian sources ran simultaneously. These two stepping-stones would engender enough reaction to open up new paths, as revealed through the art of a few creative pioneers. “Bengal art that can be measured by universal standards while at the same time bring endowed with its original approach rooted in the rich tradition of our folk and classical art traditions.”<sup>14</sup>



Fig.3.3. Gandhi March (Bapuji), Nandalal Bose, 1930

Nandalal Bose was one of the most significant artists in the 20's. Rabindranath asked Nandalal to join and head the art department called 'Kala Bhawan' at Shantiniketan in 1921. His style underwent a drastic change in its vocabulary, as he was not inspired by miniatures or the orientlists but by his surrounding landscapes and the people. Nandalal's work of this phase shows a remarkable fusion of Bengal school and Shantiniketan school of thoughts. The 20's and 30's contributed significantly towards Nandalal's institutional and national status.

His universal vision, rooted in myth and tradition, which progressed by finding a resolution with nature and simplicity of rural life. It was his firm conviction that Indian artists must learn the authentic language, which is harmonious and enriched with its spirit. "In practice this meant that he was drawn to Ajanta and Rajput painting and Indian sculpture at large – precisely those areas that did not appeal to Abanindranath. His choices did not mark a stylistic preference except in the negative sense of each being anti-realistic. But they did lead him to read Indian art tradition as a spectrum of art forms running from the decorative to representational, the abstract to figurative and from the symbolic to the narrative."<sup>15</sup> He and his first batch of students such as Ramkinkar Baij, Benodebihari Mukherjee, among others pioneered the experiments in the modern Indian art.

### **3.1.2 Individual Pioneers**

However, not all artists were prepared to subserve the demands of the prevailing isms. Jamini Roy, taking a more individualized stance, turned his gaze onto the immediate reality around him. "Jamini Roy was one of the first in Bengal to turn back on Ajanta and the classical tradition, and start afresh with a Neo-primitivism, basing his design on live Bengal folk painting. His highly formalized style opened a breach, through which poured a sizable avant-garde of young artists, quite determined to break with the past, to be modern and to explore with the same experimental processes that have led to some of the modern styles in the West"<sup>16</sup>

Roy turned towards his roots of folk traditions and rituals and made a deep study of the folk paintings of Santhal tribals. He creates a style out of sharp angular lines and bold colours, which indicated the possible direction that must be taken to

discover an indigenous idiom and sensibility. “Jamini Roy made use of the Pat traditions for quite different purpose. It was not the spirit and the social-religious functions of the Bengal folk art, but the formal aspects that he imbibed to devise his style of decorative arabesques and bright colours....In his artistic sojourn he moved from the reality expressed by the quality of line and colour.”<sup>17</sup>



Fig.3.4. Gopini , Jamini Roy, Goushe on Paper, 1940-45.



Fig.3.5. Alpana, Jamini Roy, Oil on Canvas, 1940-45

Jamini Roy gives a new consciousness to Indian art. Some of his landscapes and his portraits definitely reveal impressionist tendencies. But Later, His use of



colour as he experimented with flatness to produce the simplicity that was very new in Indian art. His simplified forms with bold colour strokes create interest in the picture space. Roy's fascination for the geometrical forms and abstract design motifs are also manifested in most of his paintings such as 'Gopini' (fig.3.4) and 'Alpana' (Fig.3.5) "In Jamini Roy's painting, a figure, an animal, or an ornamental motif cannot be understood at its face value. He transforms his objects and figures with the intension of uncovering a stream of experience shared by community.... And whenever it came to painting of the immediate daily events it assumed decorative qualities, giving shape to abstract forms"<sup>18</sup>



Fig.3.6. Bride's Toilet, Amrita Shergil, Oil on Canvas, 1937

Amrita Shergil was really, an important artist in pre-independence Indian art. She comes with the Post-Impressionistic European imagery in her paintings. She was highly inspired by the fresco paintings of Ajanta, which also had a great impact on her style and composition. Amrita Shergil was the first artist to address the need of incorporating international aesthetics within the Indian sensibility in an attempt to nudge Indian art forward. She was trained at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she was taught by Lucien Simon. She lived and practiced art at her home in Amritsar and Shimla.

She was not averse to the idea of creating a dialogue between her Indian and European heritage. "In Amrita Shergil's six brief years of pictorial activity in India,

her work created a new and vital artistic significance. The blood both of the east and west running in her veins, made it natural for her to want to bridge the artistic vision of the West and that of India. In fusing the traditional and the modern she became a milestone in the history of modern Indian painting.”<sup>19</sup> Her vision was heightened by vibrant colors and her themes came to focus around the rural people in villages, which are apparent in her paintings ‘Bride’s Toilet’ (Fig.3.6) and The Hill Men. ‘Her paintings presented the other picture of Indian life and led to increased interaction with orthodox aspects of European modernism. Her last painting ‘The Red Varanda’ was a significant work in the context of abstraction, in which her complete withdrawal of human forms shows her intimation towards non-representational form.

The 1920’s and 30’s George Keyt, a Ceylonese artist, create a very expressive imagery in his bold figurative style of painting. Most significant thing about his composition is the distortion of the figure in the picture space. Keyt try to assimilate the various influences of traditional Indian art and mythology, cubism and Sinhalese art. “Works by George Kyte, combines the influence of Indian, Hindu influence in Buddhism with a sense of “personal” liberation and the breaking away from the old feudal system of pre-colonial society.”<sup>20</sup>

### **3.1.3 Developments of Art in Bombay and Young Turks**

“The interest in contemporary art developed largely in Bombay from where it spread to other centers in India.”<sup>21</sup> In early twentieth century, most of the Bombay artist’s practiced in a very much academic manner. Some of the significant painters of that time were, Pestonji Bomanji, M.V.Dhurandhar, M.F. Pithwala, A.X. Trinidad, V.A. Mali and others

Gladstone Solomon was appointed as aprincipal of the Sir.J.J.School of Art in 1919. He admired the traditional Indian art and started taking initiative to propagate the structure and aesthetics of Indian art. Under the supervision of Gladstone Solomon, Sir J.J.School of Art executed the ‘The Indian Room’ in 1923 for the British Empire Exhibition at the Wembley. “The Objective was to show that

the true work of the modern Indian artists is to revive and national methods of artistic expressions and revitalize and restore them.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1936, Charles Gerrard comes to Sir J.J.School of Art as a new principal. He introduces modern techniques of pictorial design and manner of representation to the various kinds of textural surfaces. As well as technique and application of colors were concerned, students at J.J. School were inspired to work in the modernist notions.

In 1937, Synthesizing the European modernist notion of painting and intermingled it with the Indian design values, a group of young painters came into existence, called themselves to be ‘Young Turks’. The group included P.T.Ready, M.T Bhople, A.A. Majeed, M.Y. Kulkarni, and C.B. Bapista. The group opens the new fronts for modernism in Indian art. Later 1941 the group held their first exhibition with the name of ‘The Bombay Group of Contemporary Artists’. Charles Gerrard wrote in the foreword of catalogue: “The exhibition represent the woks of five young artists who have banded themselves together in a group, to place before the public their individual expression in painting, each approaching the subject from his own particular angle of vision... The group, for all its brave beginnings, was not able to form a cohesive front that could leave an indelible mark on the art world. Their work, however, showed the first tentative signs of modernism where the flourish of the brushstrokes and the emotional use of colors, rather than the subject itself, dominated the canvas.”<sup>23</sup> The group was come to the end with the Quit India movement in 1942, but in spite of its short life it had significant influence on the several upcoming artists.

#### **3.1.4 Development in Bengal and Calcutta Group**

During the middle of 1930’s, the art situation of Bengal was in a state of confusion. There was struggle between the two modes of modernity. One was British academic naturalist trend originated after 1850’s through the works of the Art School trained artists. The other was neo-Bengal school originated by Abanindranath Tagore and expanded by his disciples like Nandalal Bose and others towards various modes of expressions, which was considered to be a prototype of

national identity. By the end of decade both of these modes showed the signs of stagnations and degeneration.

In 1930's Bengal school was going under the phase of transformation. Artist from the Bengal were taking initiatives to explore the new boundaries out of the limitations of the Bengal school. Students of the Government College of Art protest against the academic curriculum. In 1931, students formed a group called Young Artist Union. Students included in the group were Abani Sen, Govardhan Ash, Annada Dey, and Digin Bhattacharya. The group was short lived but some of the member along with the new members formed the Rebel Art Center in 1933. "It is said that the artist of the Art Rebel Center aimed to the practice an art that would primarily be anti-sentimental. While anti-sentimental referred to Bengal school romanticism, the artists also rejected the art school brand of academic realism in practice and tuned towards the art languages that had evolved through the European modern art movements."<sup>24</sup> This group was also short lived and did not last long.

In 1943, eight young artists formed the Calcutta Group, who worked on the idea that "art should aim to be international and interdependent"<sup>25</sup>. Six painters Subho Tagore, Gopal Ghose, Raithin Maitra, Prankrishna Pal, Paritosh Sen, Nirode Mazumdar and two sculptors Prodosh Das Gupta and Kamala Das Gupta are the part of the group.

Around 1940's the Bengal School seems to losing its aura among young practitioners. "The drawback of the Bengal School painting was looming large as the years progressed. The whole school, it seemed, was becoming bloodless, famished and devoid of any strength within."<sup>26</sup> There a primarily concern in art was the social environment of that time. These artists never used the ancient myths and literature as the sources for the subject matter of their expression. They researched their roots, gave a fresh look to their own heritage and had equally observed the revolutionary discoveries of European modern art.

They drew influence from the works of Picasso, Matisse, Van Gough, Brancusi and other modern artists of Europe. In the later years group published a catalogue essay exploring objectives of the group. In that essay they stated that "From Egyptians and Assyrians arts to the works of Italian, Dutch, French masters –

we have to study all of them deeply, develop our appreciation of them and take from them all that we could profitably synthesize with our requirements and traditions. This is all the more necessary because our art has stood still since the seventeenth century. But during the past three hundred years the world outside of India has made vast strides in art, has evolved epoch-making discoveries in forms and techniques. It is absolutely necessary for us to close this hiatus by taking advantage of these developments in the western world.”<sup>27</sup>

The first exhibition of the Calcutta group was held in 1945. The exhibition had mixed responses among the critics who either supported the arrival of the new forms or ridiculed the efforts on nationalistic stands. The appreciation encouraged the artists to send two large exhibits to Bombay in 1944 and 1945 which again was well received. Subho Tagore departed from the group after the first exhibition. Nirode Mazumdar was the first artist to receive a scholarship by the French government to visit Paris in 1946 and leave the India. Prodosh Das Gupta joined as teaching associate at Baroda, Rathan Mitra went to Shimla and around 1953, the group disintegrated.

### **3.1.5 1947-1955**

The India's independence from colonial rule might have strengthened the idea of modernism in Indian art. Freedom also brings freedom of expression to every extent of life in India, which leads towards individualistic vision in art ushered in an era of challenge as well as transgression in art. The so-called 'artists of transition', for instance, seem to be engrossed in a contemplation of simpler pursuits of the everyday life. Perhaps it was a way of suggesting that now that the overriding objective had been attained, it was time to savor the pure sense of being alive. The immediate post-independence era saw the maturing of a number of talented artists, whom Jaya Appasamy calls 'artist in transition.' Artist such as Sailoz Mukherjea, N.S. Bendre, K.K. Hebbar, Shiavax Chavda and K.H. Ara exuded a sense of joy in their expressionism, focusing on the lyrical nature of line, simplified forms and outburst of bright colours.

After independence art scene in India changed drastically. “The changing pattern of the India coupled with the changing norms of aesthetic vision in art.... Art is unfolding of a vision, a reality which has its own independent existence. In the formation of the independent reality having its cohesiveness and cognition, perhaps, various expressions come into play simultaneously. It is futile to analyse whether these experience spring from the figurative, recognizable forms of nature or they are inspired by the cumulative synthetic image of experiences abstracted into a world of fancy”<sup>28</sup>

During 30’s and 40’s number of theater professional, writers and visual artist joined together under the banner of ‘Progressives’. Taking the inspiration from progressive writers in 1947, Progressive Artist Group (PAG) (Fig. 3.28) was formed by F.N.Souza, S.H.Raza, K.H.Ara, M.F.Husian, H.A.Gade and S.K.Bakre in Bombay. The formation of the Progressive artist Group was defining impetus and momentum to the modern Indian painting.



Fig.3.28. Founder Members of Progressive Artist Group

Souza write down the Manifesto for the group. He declared that the world progressive meant ‘to go forward’ and that was what they intended to do. The Bombay Progressive Artists' Group was the most influential group of modern artists in India. The group provided a modernist alternative to the revivalist nationalism established by the Bengal school of art and to encourage an Indian avant-garde,

engaged at an international level. They emphasized a new conceptual freedom in the use of colour, allowing it to express their individual emotions desperate to break with the past orthodoxies. As Souza states that “Today we paint with absolute freedom for content and technique, almost anarchic, save that we are governed by one or two sound elemental and eternal laws, of aesthetic order, plastic co-ordination and colour composition. We have no pretensions of making vapid revivals of any school or movement in art. We have studied the various schools of painting and sculpture to arrive at a vigorous synthesis.”<sup>29</sup> PAG artists were more emphasized about was the fact that art as practiced in India till then had to change. They were concerned to create an art that was entirely Indian but also modern.

They consciously sought a new form to describe the Indian reality in a contextual format. Their influences lie in the post-impressionist colours, cubist forms and expressionistic styles. “The group’s member had indeed a long way to go. Too many influences were evident in their work- from the Indus Valley civilization, the erotic sculpture of Khajuraho and Indian folk art, on the other hand, to the works of Impressionism, Fauvists and cubist on the other. But there was enough force to suggest that these were artists of substance who had the necessary courage to discard those influences and evolve their own coherent style.”<sup>30</sup>

The group had lasted in few years but in that short span of time they had achieved a lifetime of success. In 1949, The Group held its first exhibition in Baroda, and subsequently in Bombay at the Bombay Art Society Salon. Famous author and art critic Mulk Raj Anand inaugurated the exhibition in Bombay. His inaugural speech at the show indicated his support to the group. He was first to acknowledge the sheer dedication of these artists towards their art. The forceful vision had already influenced several talented artist of their time. In 1950, Vasudeo S. Gaitonde, Krishen Khanna and Mohan Samant joined the group. More significantly, PAG artists came to be noticed by a group of patrons from overseas. These included Walter Langhammer, R.V.Lyden, and E. Schlesinger.

In 1951, PAG artists did a joint exhibition with the artists of Calcutta Group in Calcutta. This exhibition was well received by artists alike Ramkinkar Baij, Pradosh Das Gupta and others. In the same year, S.H.Raza went to Paris on French

government scholarship to study painting; S.K.Bakre and F.N.Souza leave the India to settle down in London. After Souza and Raza, he was the H.A.Gade with Ara and Husain, looks after the group's activities and annual exhibition at the Bombay Art Society Salon till 1954.

In a meantime, Indian artists began a quest for their individual styles, bringing forward innovative ideas and new techniques. Delhi Shilpi Chakra group emerged in 1949, as a post partition phenomenon a number of artists from the Lahore art school, migrated to Delhi. It was a time of confusion and trauma and the artists felt the need to be self-reliant. They also continued the quest for a national style of expression, turning to local craft traditions for inspiration in this direction. These artists were B. C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, Dhanraj Bhagat, P.N. Mago, K.S. Kulkarni and others.

It is only post-1947 that Delhi received its artistic infrastructure through the efforts of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra. Delhi's first private art gallery, Dhoomimal Gallery opened in 1949. Before it, All India Society for Arts and Craft and Sharda Ukil School of Art were the only establishments for art in the capital. AIFACS was the administrated by non-artist governing body in which artist had less important role to play. A group of like-minded artists come together to form a group to create an environment of art in the society. As P.N. Mago said "It was clear that unless artists come together on the basis of their professional interest and needs, free of the benevolently patronising control of the non-professionals, however well intentioned, no organization could really become meaningful,. Self-reliance and self-respect are synonymous for an artist."<sup>31</sup>

The group worked on the objective of 'Art illuminates life'. The group recognized the central role art plays in life that it serves as a commentator on contemporary life and can influence the forces of progress. As their manifesto stated "the group recognized that art as an activity must not be divorced from life; that the art of a nation must express the soul of its people and ally with the forces of progress. The group recognized the artists had to come together art, help build "a virile national culture."<sup>32</sup>



Shilpi Chakra started organizing more regular exhibitions and other cultural events that helps to enliven the cultural scene at Delhi. “A distinguish feature of Shilpi Chakra was that although it did not have any political ideological base, it interacted actively with artists and critics. It invited eminent artists Sailoz Mukherjea and K.G.Subramaniam to participate in its annual exhibitions and closely interacted with critics like Charles Fabri, A.S.Raman and J.Swaminathan.”<sup>33</sup> Later, many artists inspired by the group and join the group which includes Harkrishna Lall, K.C.Aryan, Dinkar Kowshik, Ram Kumar, Satish Gujral, Bishamber Khanna, Avinash Chandra, Devyani Krishna, Damyanti Chawla and Jaya Appsamay.

M.S. Unuversity was established in 1949, at the time of merger of the Baroda state with the state of Bombay. Faculty of Fine Arts was instituted in M.S. University at Baroda, which introduced the degree courses in the stream of visual arts. This was the first instance that evolves the courses of visual arts to the university level. Institute incorporated in its syllabus in painting and sculpture, graphic arts and applied arts along with the aesthetics and art history creating an advanced educational system. Hunsu Mehta was the first Vice-Chancellor of the newly built university. She was liberal in her approach towards constructive academic climate and intellectual growth. In 1949, Markand Bhatt from the Barens Foundation was invited to set up the faculty of fine arts. She also invited some major figure of Indian art to help the new establishment at Baroda, which includes artists K.K.Hebbar, V.P. Karmakar and Herman Gotez. N.S.Bendre, Pradosh Das Gupta and Sankho Choudhary were also joined as the faculty. All these enthusiastic teachers along with others had started the Baroda experiment in fifties.

At that time Bendre was an important painter, who had been widely exhibited and traveled when he joined the faculty as head the department of painting. He had a strong influence among the students as a teacher. As Ram Chatterjee writes “The aesthetic aspects (of curriculum authored by Bendre with Markand Bhatt) was of the greatest importance, which had a relevance to the contemporary social-political situation... Bendre felt that an artist should have an open mind and should be able to derive inspiration from all facets of contemporary culture as a whole. It was only then that we could make his own contribution to it. It

was only then that the need was not to produce craftsman-artists but to develop intelligent artist through the training that was imparted in the faculty”<sup>34</sup>

Till the late 50’s, there is no specific patronage system is actively involved with art scene in India. This situation was to change radically after 1950. According to the Constitution of the newly-founded state, education, culture and religion were the concern of the central government. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India took the initiative to set up the academies and institution to promote arts and interaction among creative artist. As a result the Indian Council for Cultural Relations was created in 1950 for cultural exchange with other countries and the cultural development of India was entrusted to the Council’s Cultural Service. The interest of the State in letters and the arts gradually became institutionalized in order to serve a specific cultural policy. At the same time, the Republic of India began to create the necessary institutions which would allow it to function as an independent state. National Gallery of Modern Art, National Museum and Lalit Kala Academi were established. Delhi became center for all sorts of art activities. Lalit Kala's Garhi Studio became the meeting point for national and international artist. The atmosphere came alive with art events, exhibitions, workshops, and critical discussions. Artist began to travel abroad for further studies and to exhibit their work. Thus, Indian Arts were exposed to contact and influence from all over the world. All this broadened the perspective of artists to develop their style in tune with the global visual culture.

In 50’s several commercial art galleries came into existence, which began to display and sell the works of an increasing numbers of artists. These galleries were established to showcase these upcoming artists. Modern Indian art typically shows the influence of Western styles, but is often inspired by Indian themes and images.

## **6. Early Instance of Abstraction in the Pre-Independence Indian Art**

Early instance of abstraction in modern Indian art comes with semi-cubist style paintings by Gaganendranath Tagore. “The earliest artist to create paintings without a specific or clear subject matter was probably Gaganendranath Tagore whose strange black and white compositions were precursors of the art of today.”<sup>35</sup>

He was much aware of what was going in the western world of art. His paintings in derivative cubist style reveal a rare genius, and his later paintings entirely in black ink of the 20's are really mysterious. "In which, instead of representing likeness of objects in nature; a pictorial space is produced through a mixture of contrast of black and white."<sup>36</sup> (Fig.3.9, 3.10, 3.34) He was clearly responding to diverse stylistic sources like Japanese brush techniques, wash paintings, Sumi-e (black ink) and possibly Chinese ink paintings as well. In the period of nationalism, Gaganendranath Tagore's paintings were significant in the context of developments of international trends in Indian art.

In his early career he usually painted the landscapes in wash technique. His landscapes are also very different in the depiction of the scene mostly devoid from human presence. Gaganendranath's used the oriental approach in the depiction of wide angle view of subject in almost monotonous or subdued colours. His landscapes 'The Blue Mountain' (Fig.3.29) are 'Gauri Shankar' (Fig.3.30) are very significant in this context. In this period Gaganendranath Tagore was highly inspired from the landscape paintings of J.M.W. Turner and J.M. Whistler. His paintings 'Sun above the Sea' (Fig.3.31), Storm ahead in Padma' (Fig.3.33), The Bridge (Fig.3.32) shows his interest in play with light in the picture space. But his approach was not truly impressionists. "This is particularly found in certain very orientalisising landscapes where it is not impressionistic space but the oriental vastness and infiniteness of the space is evoked"<sup>37</sup>

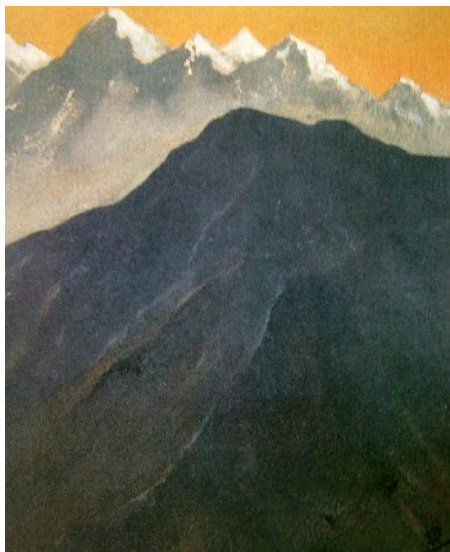


Fig.3.29. The Blue Mountain Gaganendranath Tagore.



Fig.3.30. Gauri Shankar, Gaganendranath Tagore

Gaganendranath Tagore was experimenting separate from the revivalism in Bengal and creating parallel but independent aesthetics which incorporated contemporary European artistic innovations. “In spite of his family’s close association with revivalism, Gaganendranath kept outside the pale of parochial orthodoxy of modern Indian art. He remained a free painter all through, free from fetish of all kinds- oriental or occidental.”<sup>38</sup> Gaganendranath Tagore follow his personal impulses, freely responding to artistic influences from all directions, including from the derided West, and choosing to delineate the hypocrisies of the society around him. “Modern art was seen to have arrived in India with Gaganendranath and Rabindranath Tagore. The Definition of modernism in the sphere of Indian art, in particular, have tended to focus on the issue of cosmopolitanism, revolutionary innovations and open-ness to the contemporary European developments. Certainly the European Cubist and Futurists movements set the context for Gaganendranath’s experiments with the similar construction and splintering of forms.”<sup>39</sup> He has been called as a painter of the modern metaphors.

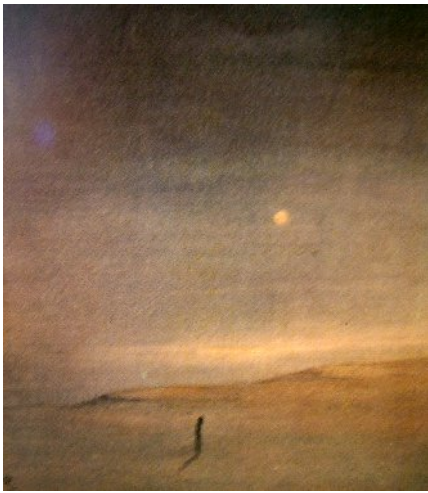


Fig.3.31. Sun above the Sea, Gaganendranath Tagore.

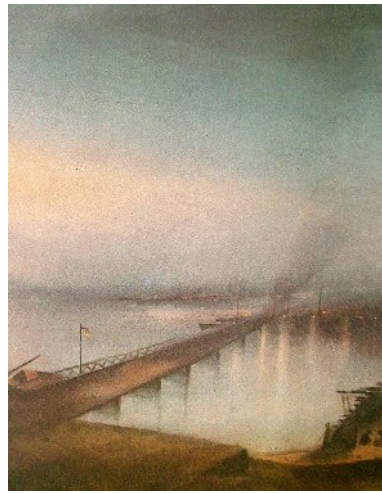


Fig.3.32. Bridge, Gaganendranath Tagore



Fig. 3.33. Storm ahead in Padma Gaganendranath Tagore

Gaganendranath gradually develop his derivative style around 1920's. Incidentally in December 1922, an exhibition of Bauhaus artists of German Expressionism was organized in Calcutta. Gaganendranath helps his uncle Rabindranath and Stella Kramrisch to arrange the first exhibition of Bauhaus's artists outside the German. With the conscious interaction between east and west, the anti-western revivalist art which up until now had been identified as the national art of India, became the expression of yester years, leaving the path open for artists to experiment without rigid guidelines of acceptance.

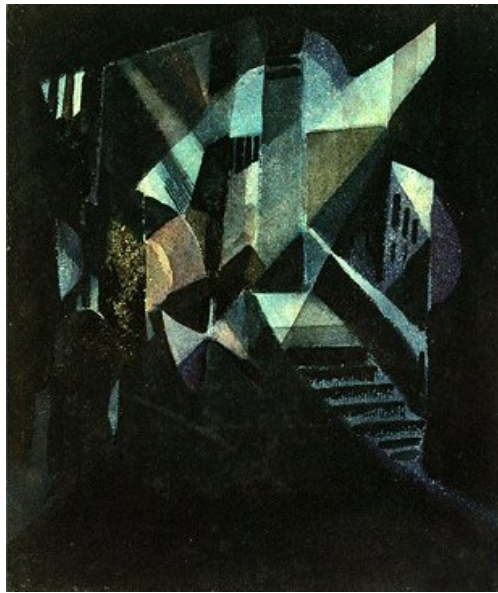


Fig.3.34. Composition, Gaganendranath Tagore, 1922.



Fig.3.35. The Atrium, G. Tagore, 1920-25

His work was exhibited in the 22nd exhibition 'de Societe des peintres orientalistes francais' (1914) in Paris, London, Belgium and Holland, and in a traveling exhibition organized by the American Federation of Art and ISOA (1924) in London and Germany, and he exhibited in the Athene Gallery in Geneva in 1928.

Gaganendranath Tagore had two major sources of inspiration. One was the Japanese wash technique and the other the European modernist art practices. In early 20s he began to paint images with a dramatic play of light and shade using stark geometrical forms and simplified figures, there was a palpable sense of mystery in his paintings. He also created semi-abstract images using small geometric planes of color.



Gaganendranath had a very liberal attitude towards experimenting with Japanese and modern western art, from art nouveaux, futurism and cubism to German expressionism. “Processing an aristocratic culture and a refined mind rich with imaginative fancy, Gaganendranath made creative experiments with various trends and traditions in art; and for that he did not have to wait for the support or appreciation of any patrons.”<sup>40</sup>



Fig.3.9. Artist Studio at Jorasanko House, G.Tagore.



Fig.3.10. O'Master, Gaganendranath Tagore

Gaganendranath, through his experimental play with brush and color, captured the amazing illumination of refracted light. A master of beautiful geometric composition as he was Gaganendranath's work should yet be characterized not as aesthetic in absolute sense, but as emotive. His mind was on creating forms for their own sake. “His artistic motivation was a curious amalgam of deliberate intellection penetrated and surcharged by the romanticism of the emotional-impulsive type.”<sup>41</sup>

Gaganendranath experimented with cubism and studied the pictorial possibilities of the life in interior scenes and coalescence of forms. He was not influenced by the ideological context of the cubist style of painting but to its formal properties. “He did not just accept the geometrical pattern and confine himself to the creation of decorative pattern and design of European cubism.”<sup>42</sup> “He understood the structure underlying the cubist paintings realizing the same time, how much of

Indian painting of his contemporaries was devoid of it, being rather puerile and over-decorative . He agreed with the simplicity and stark essentials of cubism.”<sup>43</sup>



Fig.3.7. Cubist Temple, Gaganendranath Tagore.



Fig.3.8. City in the Night, G. Tagore, 1925

His paintings of that period included the interiors of buildings, city architecture, dark and gloomy places. ‘Temple Cubistic (Fig.3.7), ‘City in the Night’ (Fig.3.8), ‘O’Master’ (Fig.3.10), ‘Rabindranath in the Island of Birds’ (Fig.3.11) are some of the best example of Gaganendranath’s cubist experiments. He tries to create a mysterious kind of atmosphere with the use of light. “Gaganendranath’s interest in light must have generated his interest in photography which in turn seems to have played a role in his compositions with light and shadow.”<sup>44</sup> He creates a semi abstract style of painting in which he distorted the form in much like the cubist manner. “In order to grasp the nature of Gaganendranath’s appropriation, we need to compare it with the reception of cubism in European countries other than France. But first let us remind ourselves of cubism’s contribution to modern art. European painters since Giotto had related different objects within a picture by means of consistent, directional lighting. The unique importance of Analytical Cubism (the Braque-Picasso experiment of 1909-10) rests on the fact that it finally destroyed the pictorial illusionism created by ‘directional lighting’. This was achieved by setting up conflicting relationships of light and shadow ‘within’ a picture frame, thereby dissolving the solidity of an object.”<sup>45</sup> As Jaya Appasamy said “Gaganendranath’s

preoccupation with light and its use in mystery is both new and original in Indian art.”<sup>46</sup>



Fig.3.11. Rabibrannath in the Island of Birds, Gaganendranath Tagore

His paintings after the mid 30's also have a strong affinity with the abstract trends of art European art movements including Futurism, Vorticism and Rayonim. He drew inspiration from various masters like Franz Mark, Kandinsky, Feininger, Larianov and Klee. “The so-called ‘cubism’ of Gaganendranath with has little similarity with the French cubism, for, from the very beginning, he kept his art within two dimension-Length and Breadth...It would be more correct to say that he was on the whole drawn towards the abstract art and to all the experimentation made with it.”<sup>47</sup> “The principal subject of his art was nature bathed in the glory of light. As he came into the contact with abstract art, he became conscious of the possibility of creating patterns containing little or no likeness of visible objects... Gradually, through an amalgamation of the concrete and the abstract, he produced an art, the originality of which has indicated a new way in the sphere of abstract art of modern age.”<sup>48</sup>

Rabindranath Togore, becomes the poet of international recognition with the winning of Nobel Prize for his book of poems entitled ‘Gitanjali’ in 1913. Nobel Prize opened the world to him in many ways. He travelled extensively and in his journey he got opportunity to saw art of the various European countries. At the Chicago Art Institute, he encountered an astonishing number of works of modern painters, from the Impressionists to those by the Fauvists.



In 1919, Rabindranath Tagore established Kala-Bhavan at Santiniketan where he tried to broaden the aesthetic sensibilities of the artists. Tagore's idea is to create an institution with global vision to create all-round development of human faculties by interaction with other cultures. "Far removed from the neurosis of a metropolis, this experiment would be conducted in the serene rural setting of Shtiniketan, where the community of teachers and students would coexist, not in the rigid and formal way of the education system, but one of the complete freedom, interdependence and self-reliance."<sup>49</sup>

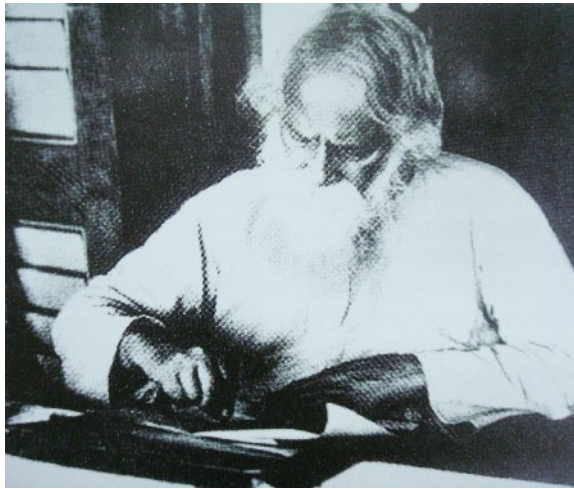


Fig.3.36. Rabidranath Tagore working in his Studio

In 1920, he attended lectures of distinguished scholar and art historian, Stella Kramrisch. He was highly impressed by her sound knowledge history of European art. He invited her to come to teach at Santiniketan. Stella Kramrisch delivered a series of lectures on the historical development of the visual arts in Europe. In 1921, he went to the Bauhaus School at Weimar in Germany, where he met with various expressionist artists, including Johannes Itten, Kollowitz and Kandinsky. He also visits to British Museum, where he saw the art of the primitives of Ireland and Indonesia and North America. Rabindranath Tagore was influential in bringing an exhibition of Bauhaus's artists to India in 1922. Many of the avant-garde expressionist painters like Klee, Kandinsky, Mark and Macke were the part of the exhibition. This was for the first time Indian artist had came face-to-face with cotemporary European art. It was the first time that the Indians were exposed to the pure painting and painting without the subject matter.

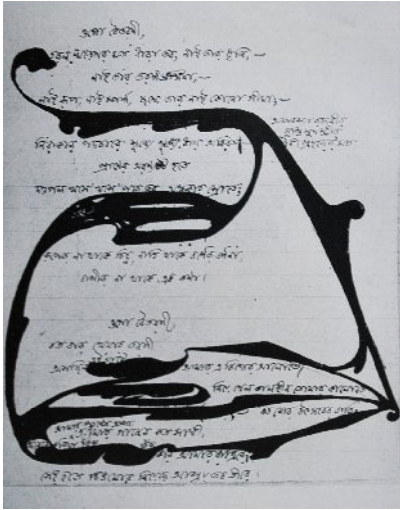


Fig.3.12. Manuscript No. -102, Purabi, Rabindranath Tagore, 1924



Fig.3.13. Manuscript No. -102, Purabi, Pg. No.-154, Rabindranath Tagore, 1924

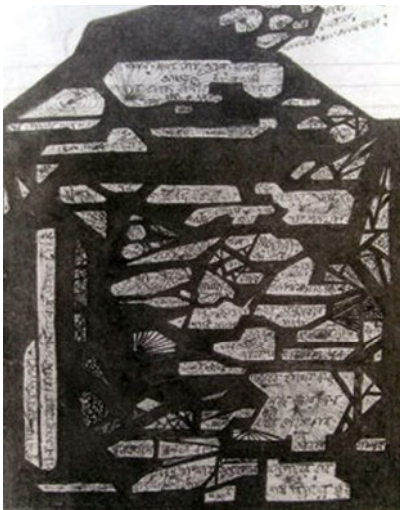


Fig. 3.14. Doodling, Rabindranath Tagore.

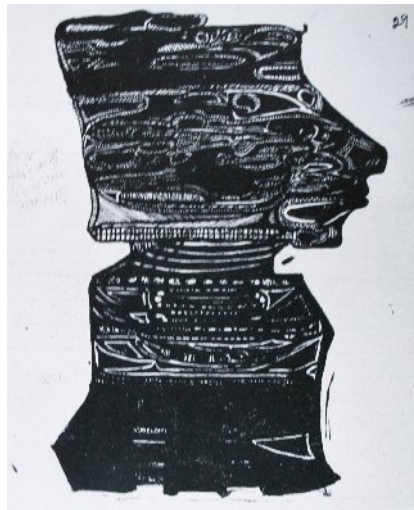


Fig.3.15. Manuscript No.-102, Purabi, Pg. No.-29

Around 1928, at the age of 67, he usually started painting without any preoccupation of the idea to become a painter. He started making painting by cross-cutting in his own poetry notebook. His painting grew out of his doodles, his erasures, in fact. Pages of his manuscripts have survived, especially of his Purabi, (Fig.3.12), (Fig.3.13) and (Fig.3.15) which he was working on then, in which one sees him correcting or revising some lines or words in black ink and then, at some point of time, beginning to join those erasures and shaping them into strange, mysterious forms.

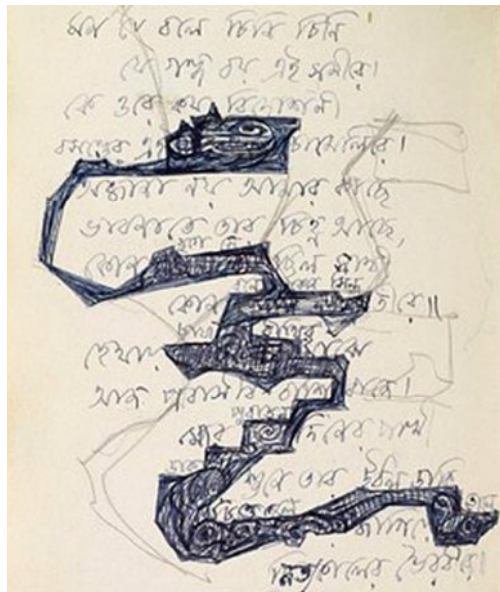


Fig.3.16. Manuscript Doodling, Rabindranath Tagore.

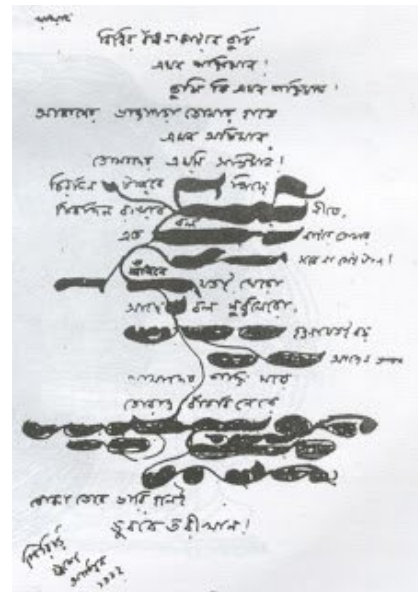


Fig.3.37. Manuscript Doodling, Rabindranath Tagore

“To Rabindranath painting was a medium of direct communion with eternal beauty.”<sup>50</sup> He usually draws and paints on paper with charcoal and crayon. He was very innovative in the use of tools and colours in the paintings. He used stubs, rags and finger tips to draw and paint. “The first major modern painter in India, who made primitivism a vehicle for his artistic expression, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to make an effective use of bold ‘expressionist’ distortion in his paintings.”<sup>51</sup>

In the early period of Bengal school Rabindranath Tagore initially supported the idea of art rooted in the national tradition, but as long as he observed the art movement, of western countries, he separated himself from the Bengal school. He

criticized the artist's deliberate unawareness of artistic developments in the world. "In the meanwhile the modern art movement, following the line of the oriental tradition, was started by my nephew Abnindranath. I watched his activities with an envious mood of self-defense, being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refuse me passport across the strict boundaries of letters."<sup>52</sup> Rabindranath Tagore painted steadily for the last seventeen years of his life. His artistic priority to free creative spirit, nature and aesthetic imperatives within a National-Universal framework made him a standout as a true artistic visionary.

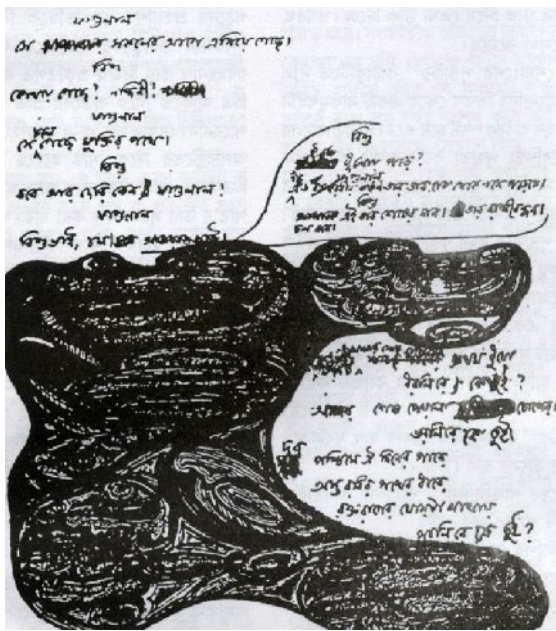


Fig.3.38. Manuscript Doodling, Rabindranath Tagore



Fig.3.17. Landscape - Watercolour & Coloured Ink on Paper, Rabindranath Tagore





Fig.3.18. Untitled, Rabindranath Tagore.



Fig.3.19. Vase, Rabindranath Tagore. 1928-29

It is a generally accepted fact that Rabindranath Tagore initiated modern art movement in India in the thirties. In 1930, Rabindranath did his first major exhibition of paintings in Paris at Gallerie Pigalle. The same exhibition traveled across the twelve cities including London, Birmingham, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Copenhagen, Moscow and Geneva in Europe and Boston, New York in America. His paintings in the expressionistic manner got immediate critical appreciation in the world of art and he took to painting more self-consciously

Rabindranath Tagore, who preferred to devote himself to his more personal and universal vision, though one that was expressed in paintings executed in strikingly modernist terms. “The purpose of art for him was self-expression or more precisely expression of personality; and by personality he meant the intimate and mutually transforming dialogue between individual man and world.”<sup>53</sup> Although Rabindranath Tagore was not an abstract painter but. As he wrote “Art represents the inexhaustible magnificence of our creative spirit, it is generous in its acceptance and generous in its bestowal; it is unique in the manner and universal in its appeal, it is hospitable it has the wealth which it own: its vision is new though its view may be old”<sup>54</sup>

Tagore never put any title to his drawings and paintings as he wrote “It is absolutely impossible to give a name to my pictures, the reason being that I never make a picture of any pre-conceived subject. Accidently some form, whose genealogy, I am totally unaware of, takes shapes out of the tip of my moving pen and stands out as an individual .... My work is done with certain of rupa (form), It is for the others-to where in the deluge of nama (name)”<sup>55</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore turned towards painting in his old age. He felt an urge for creation with visual medium of line and color. Incidentally he had been supportive for non-imitative art. As he wrote “Lines and colours in art are no carriers of information; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures. Their ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy some outer fact or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is, above all meaning.”<sup>56</sup>

His early paintings of crossed out lines in his manuscripts are very close to abstraction. “Tagore’s affinity with European avant-garde was not a form of emulation but simply a parallel approach to artistic primitivism. There are several crucial aspects to Tagore’s paintings that display his unmistakably personal style. Tagore’s paintings originated in his game of creating shapes out of crossed-out texts, his ‘erasures’. On the draft of his writings, he often experimented with the Bengali script and the visual effects of different page designs. Tagore, along with the Bengali intelligentsia, was fascinated with the innovative combinations of text and image developed by Art Nouveau and Jugendstil illustrators, especially by Adolf Holzel.”<sup>57</sup>

In 30's and 40's Ram Kinkar Baij’s work was leaning more towards European modernism. Cézanne and Cubits movement influenced him initially. He painted some abstract compositions in this period. The influence of western modern art was felt long before independence in the various art centers in India. Few scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy, Herman Gotez, Rabindra Nath Tagore, O.C. Ganguly, Niharanjan Ray and Mulk Raj Anand also played significant role to establish the new and proper interpretation of modern Indian art.



Fig.3.20. Basanta, Goushe on Paper, Govardhan Ash



Fig.3.39. Landscape, Gopal Ghose

In Calcutta, Govardhan Ash painted a few abstract composition in which his locomotive gesture play an important role to create surface tension in the picture space. (Fig.3.20) He synthesize through assimilation of naturalism, folk and western modernistic distortions to create his own expressionistic mode of painting. In this context, other significant painter was the Gopal Ghose. He was a landscape painter, but his landscapes are with very distinct in its mystic approach. His landscapes are devoid of human presence. His inspiration comes from the trees, mountains, the sea, valleys, and clouds and he has lovingly tried to capture the atmosphere and various moods of nature (Fig.3.28). Although he was not an abstract painter, but some of his landscapes are very near to abstraction. Paritosh Sen also did some experiments with

cubist influence, but he was more a figurative artist who works with distortion in his compositions.

Shailoj Mukherja was one of the significant artists, who become the earliest among the artist to take initiative to explore the new vocabularies out of the limitation of Bengal School. He removed all the decorative properties from his paintings. Nevertheless, his boldness made other artists also experiment with abstraction of forms; or drawing out the very essence of their expression. (Fig.3.21) “In the works of Shailoz Mukherzja, a painting can be described as a visual communication of visual concept, in terms of color. Now, most of the visual concepts are based on the memory of appearance. The painting is no way important information about the outward looks. Shailoz’s paintings, like any other work in the past, came into being as an affirmation of an inner necessity.”<sup>58</sup>



Fig.3.21. Untitled, Sailoz Mokherjea.

In Bombay, H.A.Gade was a significant artist in the context of abstraction. He was first among the progressives who had a leaning towards abstraction. His compositions of early fifties show his belief in unconventional and rational artistic style. He also, had revolted against the traditions of academic art, which the British education system had clamped on Indian art education. He was trained first at Bapurao Athalave’s Nagpur School of art, where he acquired the basic skills of drawings and watercolours and where he came into contact with S.H.Raza. Later, he completed his Art Master Diploma from the J.J.School of art.





Fig.3.22. Untitled, Oil on Canvas, H.A. Gade, 1949

He was a compulsive traveler, and visits to diverse places which inspires him to paint. Gade moved on to one medium to other, notably gouache and oil colour. He also did experiments with texture in his paintings. In this context his painting ‘Gulmohar’ (Fig.3.24) is an important painting which he painted on his journey to Belgaum, Kashmir in the early fifties. Whole painting is made out of board patches of non-representational colours.



Fig.3.23. Untitled, H.A. Gade, 1954.



Fig.3.24. Gulmohars, H.A. Gade, 1952-54

In 1954 Gade was invited to participate in the Venice Biennale. In 1955 he travels to European countries including Hungary, Bulgaria, and Moscow. European

tour had a great impact on his painting. In mid 50's he started painting compositions inspired from urban streets and houses of the city. He creates his own style of abstract paintings which was in fact rooted in the aerial perspective.

N.S.Bendre was also an important artist in the nineteen-fifties. He was appointed as reader and head of department of painting in 1950 at newly established faculty of fine arts, Baroda. After 1950's, Bendre perceived his most important phase of his career. He was influential teacher also, who had inspire a whole generation of artists. He started his experiments with the varied styles of painting including Expressionistic and cubist tendency. During his early period in Baroda, he gradually turned towards cubist vocabulary. During this phase he painted 'The Sunflower' and 'The Thorne' (Fig.3.25) which were his significant works of cubist tendency.



Fig. 3.25. The Thorne, N.S.Bendre, 1955

Bendre was born in 1910 at Indore. He studied painting at state school of art, Indore and then he had obtained his Government Diploma in Art from Bombay in 1933. Around 1940, Bendre was settled in Bombay and started his art practice there. He regularly found commissioned works of Portraits and Murals from wealthy

businessmen of the city. In 1945 he spent a year as artist in residence at Santiniketan, where he met and worked with Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar Baij and Binode Behari Mukherjee. In early years of his career he usually painted landscapes in impressionistic manner.

After independence many Indian artists went to Europe and America. Ram Kumar and S.H.Raza went to Paris, Satish Gujral went to Mexico, F.N.Souza and S.K.Bakre leaves the India for London. The need of the young artists to keep in step with the new currents in visual art was completely justified and expected. India was now an independent state. This need was also gradually recognized by the State as one of the aims of state cultural policy, so that it served the broader pursuits and interests of an independent state.



Fig.3.40. Untitled, S.H.Raza, 1946

The fact that the large number artists those studying art in the Western countries in nineteen-fifties had contributed to the creation of a new artistic climate in India. On their return to India after completing their studies, these artists had started their art practice with new vocabularies those prevailing on the international art scene. They questioned the conventional method and explore new modes of

expression, techniques and materials in their practice. The new concepts which prevailed gave new directions to art.



Fig.3.26. Untitled, V.S. Gaitonde, 1952.

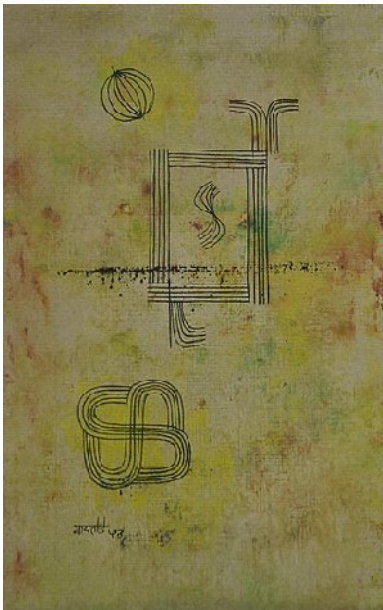


Fig.3.27. Untitled, V.S. Gaitonde, 1953

The fact that the vast majority of those studying art in the 50s were at Western countries contributed to the creation of this new climate. On their return to India after completing their studies, these artists looked to the future with the almost sole intent of harmonizing their artistic vocabularies with those prevailing on the international art scene. They questioned the conventional, introduced new modes of

expression, new techniques, and new materials. The new concepts which prevailed gave new directions to art.

Indian artists were influenced by doctrine and technique prevalent in the western art. Changes in the economic environment and socio-political advancement had its influence on the Indian artistic scene. Artist came to know that a section of viewers and artists have been inspired by the display of colors in the place of representational human figures and its sophistication. In this period no any artist practiced abstraction it the full length and discourse. Some Indian artists stylized Indian tradition with the norms of western modernism and many other significant artists turned towards the early twentieth century developments in abstraction for their inspiration. The birth of modern Indian art and the abstract forms could be attributed to several social and environmental conditions that the country endured and which was well brought out by many artists of this period.

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