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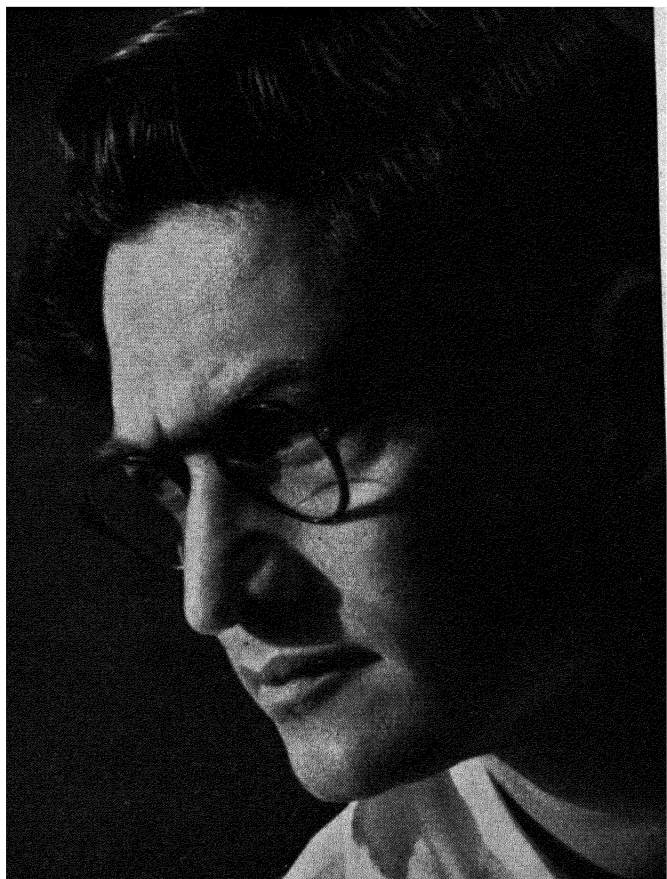
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ASIT KUMAR HALDAR

ART AND TRADITION

ASIT KUMAR HALDAK

PREFACE

BY

THE RIGHT HON'BLE THE MARQUESS OF ZETLAND

LAKSHMI NARAIN AGARWAL

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AGRA

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Dedicated
to
The Memory
of
The Late H. B. Havell

PREFACE

The esteem in which Mr. Haldar is held by those who are familiar with his work as Principal of the Government School of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow is well illustrated by the decision recently taken by the governing body of the sister-city of Allahabad to reserve exclusively for his works a hall in the municipal museum.

6 But Mr. Haldar's musings upon art are of interest to a far wider circle. He was one of the small band of artists who realised instinctively the significance of the movement which sprang from the momentous meeting more than thirty years ago of Abanindranath Tagore with E.B.Havell, and he is able, therefore, to speak with intimate personal knowledge of the circumstances attending what has proved to be a genuine renaissance of Indian art. It is interesting to learn that of the thirty members of the Indian Society of Oriental Art which came into

existence to sponsor the movement only five were Indians; it is equally interesting to the reader of the pages which follow to know that their author was an exhibitor at the first display of pictures held under the auspices of the Society in 1908.

On the many aspects of art upon which Mr. Haldar touches it is not possible to comment within the limits of a preface. Those who are aware of the mastery of line which has been so striking a characteristic of Indian art from the days of Asoka onwards will read with interest what he has to say on that subject; and few will dissent either from his plea that the crafts of a people should not be dissociated from their art, or from his contention that if craftsmanship is to flourish as a creative activity instead of as a mere reproductive process—even if the designs reproduced are those of earlier epochs of artistic achievement—it is essential that the patronage of the wealthy which disappeared with the eclipse of Moghul rule, should play its part once more.

Much curiosity was excited when some little time ago it became known that at the advanced age of seventy Rabindranath Tagore whose fame

as a poet had long been established in both hemispheres, had begun to give pictorial expression to his thoughts. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of the author of these pages who discusses with sympathetic insight the nature of the urge which has been responsible for it. In the domain of metaphysics the Indian monist in his search for an explanation of the universe which we see around us, has found it in the idea contained in the Sanskrit word *lila* which may be said to correspond in this connection to the English word spontaneity. The universe in the words of an Indian writer is "the divine exuberance blooming into a perpetual efflorescence"; it is not, that is to say, the creation either of God's necessity or of his desire, but is inherent in God's nature. In the case of the poet become painter the explanation would seem to be a similar one, for to use Mr. Halдар's words we see here the outcome of concentrated *ananda*; and in such circumstances any lack of precise knowledge of the technique of line and colour does not detract either from the value or the attractiveness of the resulting picture.

In another chapter the author gives us a fascinating account of his expedition to the

Ramgarh Hills in the Central Provinces in pursuance of the task which had been entrusted to him of copying the two thousand year old paintings on the ceilings of the Jogimara caves.

Were I to give further rein to my pen I should exceed by far the limits appropriate to a preface. The mention which I have made of these two particular chapters is in itself sufficient to give some idea of the variety of fare which Mr. Haldar has set before the reader and, as I should hope, to encourage him to study these fascinating pages for himself.

ZETLAND.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the articles in this book originally appeared in periodicals and papers viz. *Rupam*, *Roop-lekha*, *Calcutta Review*, *Modern Review*, *Advance*, *Amritbazar Patrika*, *Hindusthan Times*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *Saqi* and *Dawn of India*.

I am grateful to Mr. D. P. Mukerjee of the Lucknow University and Mr. Bireswar Sen of the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow for having gone through the proofs. "The Stray Thoughts on Art" originally appeared in the Bengali Magazines *Bharati* and *Paricharika* under the title *Chite-Phonta* and was subsequently translated in English by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty for *Rupam*. Thanks are due to Mr. L. N. Agarwal of Agra who very kindly took up its publication readily as he believes that the book will be of some use to our younger generations in understanding and appreciating art in its true perspective. I, however, do not

know how far it will serve its purpose and it entirely depends upon the readers to decide.

I wish to express here my gratitude to Mr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta for according his kind permission to publish an abridged version in English of the Adhar Chandra Mukerjee Lecture delivered by me in 1934.

Govt. School of Arts & Crafts
Lucknow,
March, 1938

ASIT KUMAR HALDAR

CONTENTS

Art and Individuality	1
Grace in Line	6
Mannerism and Tradition	9
Harmony and Contrast in Art	14
Mind Behind Works of Art	24
Art and the Artist's Mind	30
The Renaissance of Arts and Crafts in India	40
Arts and Crafts of India	47
Twenty-five Years of Contemporary Indian Painting	64
The Future of Indian Art	83
Subject-Matter in Art	87
Rabindranath—The Painter	92
Jogimara Cave Painting in Ramgarh (C.P.)	99
The Painting of the Bagh Caves in Gwalior State	111
Stray Thoughts on Art	129

ART AND INDIVIDUALITY

THE greatest modeller and sculptor of modern England, Mr. Lanteri, has said, "The individuality makes an artist;" and this would certainly be endorsed by everybody who has any knowledge of art. A study of the works of the great masters will prove this. The paintings of the renaissance school though superficially they looking almost alike, owing to similarity of medium and subject matter, when studied properly, show the individuality of the artist, each artist having his peculiar trait. To the layman this difference may not be apparent, just as though it is difficult for the Aryan to recognise individual difference in Mongolian faces, nevertheless the difference remains. If the pre-Raphaelite, Byzantine or any other schools of art are scrutinized, it will be seen that none of the great masters ever tried to force their own individuality upon their pupils, thus making them intellectual slaves. In India, too, if we observe the Bagh cave-paintings, Ramgarh paintings or the paintings at Ajanta, we shall see that though the names of the artists are not signed in their

respective works, their individuality stands out quite conspicuously.

Art-teachers should not as a rule impose their personality on their pupils. On the contrary they should see that the individuality and personality of their pupils are developed without jeopardizing the natural growth of talents in them. They can only help by giving them the proper environment and cultural atmosphere in which their talent might thrive. Thus the teacher will have to remain always alert to enlighten and admonish his *chela* (disciple) in every respect without hampering the spontaneity of his individual development. It deters the spontaneity of the individual artist if he is not allowed freedom to choose his style of work and if he is coached too much in an academic fashion. In ancient days art teaching depended upon the personality of the teacher who inspired his students. The students used to live with the master and learn things directly through close association with him, but they did not simply imitate him. The works of the old masters were put before the students for their guidance to give them opportunities of judging the standard of the artistic work carried on in the past. This kind of help, conducive to the imaginative faculty of the new artist, was generally conducted by men of immense experience and talent. Combined with other qualities, the imagination of the disciples was sought to be developed ; that is why mere imitation of master artists was so strongly condemned by great teachers.

tion of artistic creation. The sculptor in his sculpture, the painter in his picture through the harmony of line and colour creates beauty. We can all appreciate the harmony of a song or the cadence of a poem, but that there is a rhythm in the composition of the artist, that this composition is no blind imitation of nature is a thing more difficult to understand, for to obtain this rhythm the artist has to probe down right into the mystical essence of nature. Yet this rhythm is most unconsciously obtained. Look at that small pathway leading over the fields to a neighbouring village—because it is created from the harmonious beat of a thousand foot-prints of human beings led with the same desire, because there is no consciousness in it, we find it gaily following the natural ups and downs of the field, thus giving us the feeling of rhythmic motion which is in entire harmony with the surrounding country side. How different is this from the paved street of some big city which haughtily ignore the natural unevenness of the ground and moves along levelling down all obstructions that lie in its way.

In a picture it is through the outlines of the various objects that this rhythm or harmony is created. But the outline usually consists of curved lines not straight lines, for it is the curved line which gives grace to the picture. Nature loves curves—whether it be in the rippling waters, the swaying forests or the bare mountain-tops, everywhere we see the emotional ecstasy of the curved line. There is a canon

in Japanese art that the world of nature in its barest outline reduces itself to certain curves. Thus most forms of nature, whether it be that of a man or a tree can be represented by slight curves joined end to end in the form of a spiral. It is only in the crude handiwork of man that we see the straight line predominating. The artist always tries to avoid straight lines, and even where he has to use them as in architecture, there is a tendency to hide its bare effect, as for example if in a picture there is a building the artist always composes it along with trees, animals, clouds or other accessories where the curved line is predominant, so that the severe effect of the straight line is softened. The ivy covered walls of an old castle or church, the floral carvings and decoration of an Indian temple is nothing else but an attempt to relieve the monotony of the straight line. The curved line not only gives softness, grace and charm, but creates various emotional effects. The infinite effect of the heavens is produced by means of curves. Again in Indian sculpture or painting certain attitudes are characteristic of certain gods. This gives the artist the opportunity of using certain curves which expresses certain feelings. Thus we have the 'Tribhanga' attitude of 'Krishna' in which the three main curves of the body are emphasised, thus giving us the feeling of infinity which 'Krishna' represents. Again the curves of the hands and fingers in the various poses which are so characteristic of the Ajanta style, seem almost to speak to us so

expressively are they wrought. We have seen that the curved line is the means by which the artist produces the effect of rhythm, though sometimes as in Cubism and Futurism artistic rhythm is produced even by straight lines, but here too the straight lines must be so arranged as to produce the effect of a curve. But just as in a piece of music the introduction of a false note jars on the ear or in a poem the metrical flow is interrupted by the introduction of a too long word, so pictorial harmony may be spoilt by the introduction of lines which do not harmonise with the composition of the picture. For instance, if instead of giving him the background of a Himalayan peak we should enclose Shiva within the precincts of a room, a note of emotional discord would be sounded. For the curve of the Himalayan peak which gives the idea of space and infinity is in entire harmony with the conception of infinite mercy associated with Shiva, whereas the straight lines of the room give the effect of limitation which would be out of harmony here.

Besides harmony of line the proper regulation of space and the right proportion of the various objects is essential for rhythmic unity. It is the regulation of space and not the size of a picture which gives the sense of largeness or smallness. A picture may be small in actual size, but if the space between the objects is great we have an impression of largeness, but however large a picture may be if the space between the

objects is not great we have the effect of smallness. The size of the objects too must be carefully arranged and in proper proportion both as regards one another and their own various parts. Again just as in reading a lyric the mind naturally seeks rest in a rhyme, or in listening to a melody the ear anxiously awaits the note to which the voice returns again and again as if with a caress, so in the composition of the artist, the eye seeks naturally for the rhyming lines without which the picture would lack balance. It is this combination of proportion and balance which creates rhythmic harmony.

The sense of rhythm and harmony is not to be found in art only, though it may attain perfection there. It is present everywhere in Nature. It is to be found in the human movement, in the flight of birds, in the growth of trees. Who has not seen the rhythmic flight of a flock of birds over a stream swaying and curvetting to keep in tune with its bends and curves, or who has not noticed the harmony in a grove of trees whose branches and leaves fit in so exquisitely with one another that they form a rhythmic whole.

So much for rhythm and harmony. But just as in the external world it is contrast which gives life and variety, so in a picture there must be contrast—the element of surprise which gives tone to it. We have seen that rhythm depends mainly on outline, but contrast depends also on the arrangement of colour. Just as flowers light

up and beautify a tree so labour lends charm to a picture, and it is through proper manipulation of the colour scheme in a picture that life and tone is given to it. Contrast in colouring is one of the chief instruments of the artist in giving this tone. Very often we see a delicately harmonious picture, but somehow it lacks life and distinction. The reason is that it is painted in Semitone. Colour contrast is not used to show up the various colours. Everywhere in nature we find this contrast. But in nature it is in the form of light and shade. There must be light to throw shadow, and it is shadow which shows up light. In order to give distinctness and definiteness to an object there must be a contrast, light against shade or shade against light. In European art the artist studies the effect of light and shade in nature and then reproduces it in his art. The Indian artist, on the other hand, has only taken the principle and uses it in the form of colour contrast in order to show up certain features in his picture. Imagine a dark night and a solitary traveller making his way with a torch along the steep side of a mountain. Before he arrives at the top suddenly dawn overtakes him, the torch falls from his hands and the rosy beams of the rising sun light up the whole scene giving form and animation to it. Here in a metaphor we have the effect of colour contrast in a picture. Just as the contrast of the light penetrating the darkness shows up the scene, so contrast in colour lights up and gives form and beauty to a picture.

Rhythm and harmony in a picture give us the sense of peace and enjoyment, contrast introduces the element of surprise and fear. A sudden shiver disturbing the calm slumber of a child as it rests on its mother's lap, the sudden flight of a flock of birds sporting in the meadows—these opposite movements in nature give the same effect as contrast in colour gives us in a picture.

This element of surprise is introduced in various ways. It may come in the form of a sudden contrast in a subject matter. We have a palace of sleep, the soft rays of the moon, people resting in golden beds, not a sound anywhere; suddenly a demon appears with eerie shrieks and waves his wand, and the whole palace is full of noise and action. Here in folklore we have the effect of contrast in subject matter. In art too we see it in the works of the ancient artists at Bagh and Ajanta. In the Bagh caves there is a picture of the deep grief of a queen and next to it the picture of an annihilated crowd engaged in joyous song and dance. This sudden change in subject emphasises all the more the bitterness of the queen's grief. In the Ajanta caves again we have the picture of the Buddha preaching to his disciples and next to it the scene of luxury and mad enjoyment in the inner rooms of the palace. It is possible to use this form of contrast in subject matter in cave paintings, because though each picture is complete in itself, the whole is linked together and forms a huge panorama. It is like the

different scenes which go to make up a drama. But even in a single picture it is possible to have this method of contrast. The Japanese and Chinese artists make good use of it in their pictures. For instance, we have a picture of spring, cherry blossoms everywhere and a sense of joy pervading both man and nature. Suddenly riding at terrible speed comes an envoy bringing the news of battle. This sudden element of fear only emphasises the happiness of the atmosphere of spring. Once more we have a scene of battle, the clash of armies, houses on fire, rivers flowing with blood, all creating an atmosphere of terror and cruelty, and the horror of the scene all the more emphasised by the peace reigning in a cloudless sky and a full moon shedding its soft lustre over the earth.

Even in small every day happenings contrast is what inspires the artist. He feels the rhythm of things and by the introduction of a sudden element of surprise turns the key of our imagination and lets it wander forth in glad freedom. For instance, we have the picture of a village girl going with her empty pitcher to fill water. Suddenly she sees a lovely lotus and leaving her empty pitcher on the stone steps wades out to pick the flower. This sudden touch of fancy in the midst of common work gives our imagination scope. In another picture we see a village girl going with a basket to the market place, but suddenly attracted by the sound of a flute puts down her basket and listens absorbed to the flute music.

Besides contrast of subject matter the artist uses contrast of colour to enhance the effect of his picture. This depends chiefly on the arrangement of tones. For instance, blue with its impression of distance can be described as a soft shade hardening gradually into green, yellow and brown. Thus if there is a predominance of brown in a picture, splashes of blue or one of the softer shades will relieve the hard effect by contrast or if a picture is painted mainly in soft tones, a harder colour effect is necessary to give it stamina. We see this contrast in the colour scheme of nature. The green grass and yellow and blue flowers blooming in its midst, the brown earth covered with variegated vegetation, the green branches spreading against the blue sky, all these contrast with each other and give greater vividness to the scene.

Even in decorative design where rhythm and symmetry is most important the artist uses contrast to heighten the rhythmic effect of the design. For instance the rhythmic flow of a decorative scroll is all the more emphasised by the straight lines of a geometrical pattern placed in between. This use of straight lines is not confined to designs only. We have it in nature. Who has not noticed a small Indian village hidden amidst foliage with its curving thatched roofs rhyming with the curves of the tops of the trees and here and there the straight tall coconut stems emphasising the rhythmic effect of the scene. Thus contrast in outline is attained

by the alteration of the flowing curve with the dead effect of the straight line.

In a picture therefore both harmony and contrast are essential and it is the delicate adjustment of the artist which without creating a clash gives emphasis and distinction to the picture.

THE MIND BEHIND WORKS OF ART

AT the outset let me speak to you on the problems of art education in India and abroad. The problems do not concern so much the teaching of the technique of the various arts and crafts as the training of the mind itself so that it may be able to think out and produce new forms, and free from the bonds of routine craftsmanship and traditional design, which have been handed down to our craftsmen from generation to generation. This monotonous repetition makes the work of our artizans dull and lifeless. Consequently, their work loses charm and what was once a source of income and prosperity to them becomes a drag on their lives. They gradually lose heart and abandon their calling which once brought them credit not only in India but also abroad. This aspect of art education has been a puzzling question not only in India but also abroad and how to solve it still remains unanswered.

I propose to talk to you on this moot point and I shall come straight to the issue, namely, how to improve our arts and crafts so far as this

depends upon correct art training imparted on correctly understood principles. A craft article produced for utility cannot be called a work of art if it does not appeal to the aesthetic sense. Now, what is aesthetic sense? It is a sense which can discriminate and distinguish between qualities. This sense is a special cultural product and comes through the development of the mind. The working of this developed mind is to be sought behind a work of art. The difference between an art object and a machine-made article lies in this aesthetic value. The one has the mind behind it and the other nothing of that to its credit. The training of the mind is therefore the basis upon which effective art training and ultimately the improved quality of art industries depends. Through that only new forms and original designs can be treated and developed.

Here I would like to distinguish the village crafts which will always be the crafts of unsophisticated mind, from the arts and crafts of the metropolitan towns which will always seek perfection through academical training. The problem is not so difficult in the case of the former as it is in the case of the latter. The former will always find a market through local fares and occasions of festivals and domestic ceremonies. There is therefore a certain kind of steady demand for them. The arts and crafts of the town however demand more serious attention. Some might however think to the contrary and might feel it possible to improve

the standard of the village arts by leaps and bounds in order that it may compete with the modern art of the civilized world. To achieve this they would suggest the introduction of art models from towns into villages which might be imitated by the village artists, who work in their dark corners and are not familiar with anything that is going outside their limited sphere. This would, indeed, sound very well, but would practically mean the blunting of the faculties of creative urge of these folk artists by letting them merely copy others. On the contrary they find a freer play of their imagination in their cruder products because thus they have to draw everything from their initiative. Only that work which has the mind behind it, has vitality. Therefore if these village artists are simply asked to imitate others they will only become adjuncts to machines and their work will become entirely mechanical.

According to the theories of biology the child does not come to the earth with a mind ready to imagine and create. The mind develops this quality gradually, till the child becomes a grown up being. This is called by the scientists the descend of mind !

In this world there are men, born specially to use their faculties for the intellectual and spiritual advancement of mankind. There are others who are just existing and are carrying on with the mere mechanical pursuits of life. Of course we cannot only have men of culture and aesthetic taste filling this earth to the disap-

pearance of the others ; on the other hand, the cultured with all their education and sophistication would sometimes come down from their height to seek new knowledge among the unsophisticated village folks even in matters of art. It is therefore that we find that Epstein in England and Picasso, Matisse and others in Europe are trying to probe into the significance of these primitive peoples with the help of their sophisticated minds and are thus creating new forms for arts and crafts.

These ultra-modern artists of Europe have got down to the psychology of the child-mind and they know how a child would feel and bring out a world of ideas from suggestive, but unrealistic, and sometimes shapeless objects. A child if given a most crude object, can give it a local habitation and a name, out of his capacity of make believe. The primitive objects made up by village craftsmen are more suited to their imagination than the realistic objects turned out by a sophisticated artist. The realistic toy or any object may not kill its imagination altogether but might not allow a creative play and would naturally sophisticate it and so curiosity may vanish for ever.

Thus we find that the child-mind is a mind which could be moulded into any shape, but once it has grown up, it is as rigid as anything. That is the reason why folk arts should be respected ; and the teaching and the progress of the arts and crafts will not only depend on respecting and honouring these indigenous crafts

but also in permitting the imagination of craftsmen a free play in their own sphere. If the artisans depend only on a definite group of artists for their inspiration and themselves do not take the initiative to produce new forms and designs their work would soon become full of mannerisms, monotonous and cheap. The artisans therefore require training in creating designs for their respective crafts, and for this the proper method is to teach them the creation of designs and not to offer them mere models to copy. Much harm has been done by them by simply imitating the work of their forefathers, and if we allow them to copy models the imitation may be good, but their work will not be able to stand competition in the field of arts and crafts products of the world.

Now the point is, how to teach these craftsmen to work out for themselves new forms and designs. The best means is to open schools of arts and crafts at various centres in the districts. The District Boards may advantageously bear the cost and push art education among the villagers. The primary object of these schools would be to specialize in giving training in designs, i. e., training of the mind rather than teaching technique or mere manual skill. In this connection I am glad to tell you that the Government of the U. P. have laid the foundation of this propagation of art education by opening the central School of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow. Formerly it was more correctly a School of Designs.

About a hundred years ago a great stride was made in the West to establish schools for technical education and with Morris and Ruskin the arts and crafts movement flourished in England. They understood that to overcome the deficiency in aesthetic training, handicrafts and designs were the only things to be first of all cultivated. They also considered the question of utility, beauty and mass-production. They sought for quality rather than quantity and thus achieved a great success.

The training of the mind could be effected not merely by educational teaching but by creating an environment for the development of imagination. The mind should find food through observation and exercise.

TWO TESTS OF ART

THE first test of all art is that it is not something static like a brick or a stone. Whether it is a picture, or is represented on stone brick, wood or anything else, it is always dynamic. If a picture does not express this dynamic quality adequately, it is not worthy of its name. In the Shastras of our country there are references to the sixty-four arts. In those days everything used to be taught in a real and dynamic way with the help of art. Gradually, by reason of our modern education, by fine art we have come to mean chiefly painting, sculpture and architecture, completing the hexad of art by including music, poetry and dancing too. All other forms of art we now designate as the minor arts or crafts.

If we consider the subject depicted in the picture in its dynamic aspect, we shall find evidence of two different kinds of expression. In the one imagination is preponderant, while the other is realistic. When we are before a picture, it takes us right into the scene depicted and we forget all about the room or place

where we actually are. This is another test of art. Besides, the more an artistic production hold our mind and stir us our thoughts, the greater is its worth. So it has been seen that many people found relief at times of sorrow through the fact that some picture had taken possession of their mind. That is why in the old treatises on art there was reference to imparting nine "rasas" (*i. e.*, feeling). It is the work of the artist to bring this to our minds, although people may think that artists have nothing, in the world, to do. Artists have the power to make our existence on this earth more beautiful and full of meaning. The architect tries to build houses in such a way as may broaden and spiritually uplift people's minds. The sculptor creates forms out of earth, stone, metal, etc., budding forth various human moods. All these lifeless objects can be endowed with life by him and made to speak all that is in his mind.

Thus, the creation of the artist possesses all the aspects of his own mind. It is the ego of the artist which is embodied in the object made by him, and, bursting forth, as it were, from the shapes of wood or stone, it keeps on saying, "Look at me, look at me." It is this mind behind the stroke of the chisel which makes the piece of sculpture a thing real and moving in its appeal. Similarly, in the domain of painting, there are two kinds of artists; those who arrange in their mind whatever beauty they perceive in actual life and embody it in their

work, and others who conceive a form of imaginative beauty in their minds and put it in their pictures. European artists are chiefly realists, whereas Oriental artist, are followers of the imaginative style.

That real art has a dynamic quality and the artist's mind is the source of it is also seen from this that when the mind of the artist becomes static or inert his imagination also grows less. Then he just goes on seeking for the various local styles or manners of art that he may hear of. In the name of experiment, he goes on adopting the style of the Bengal "pot"—artists, that of some famous Japanese printer, or of the European ultra modernists or the Chinese style. The great artist Abanindranath has disclosed to us the essence of art in this country: many have adopted it. But others, as we see, even after adopting it, are going away from it on lonely roads of experiment.

We often find in our periodicals that some of our famous artists are trying to introduce a novelty in their work by drawing ugly and deformed figures. These pictures chiefly bear testimony to one fact, namely, that they are not drawn with adequate care. If we see with them some unfinished picture by Cezanne or Van Gogh, we feel that the lines from the artist's brush which show an extraordinary power and movement have, in course of a forceful expression, come suddenly to a stop. The one gives evidence of a challenge in the artist's mind to

depict a novelty, the other is a free expression of that mind. The one indicates a disease of the mind, the other testifies to a remarkable wakefulness of it. Man has both the sleeping and waking states. When he is asleep, he does not know where he is, as his mental machinery is not working then. Then again, there may be a state in which a person, even though awake, sends his mind far beyond his body by force of meditation; this "turiya" state is known to the "yogis." When a person attains this state, there does not remain for him the necessity of giving things a shape. That is why the work of artists expresses much more of their waking state. What we call abstract art, is the embodiment of shapes and postures of which we may get intimations in the land of dreams during our sleep. Sometimes in our dreams we seek to visualize strange and grotesque shapes which it is possible for us to embody in pictures of abstract art.

Thus we again see that in the case of all genuine art, the mind of the artist will somehow or other find expression through his brush and that it will establish the merit of the work by imparting to it its own dynamic quality.

Looking at the matter historically, in the paintings of the primitive people, we get a record of their danger-ridden life in the scenes of hunting portrayed by them. In the old paintings, both of the East and the West, we similarly find evidence of a religious spirit

moulded in the environment of religious restrictions. In Europe to-day, an extraordinary type of art has appeared due to the hold that science and philosophy have taken on the human mind. Now-a-days when the artist carves a stone-figure, he thinks more of the natural shape and variety of the medium itself, and his subject of course has to suffer thereby. If the carving has to be done on hard granite, for instance, the sculptor would design the shape of his figure in such a way as would express the special characteristics of granite stone. The expression of the figure itself would occupy only a second place. So also in painting, the artist takes pains to find out the inner structure of matter as conceived by scientists and moulds the subject of his painting accordingly. Thus, the prism form in cubism is in reality an attempt at a crystalline representation of things in their first state. The modern architect designs the outer shape of the house on scientific principles by means of straight lines, with a view to keeping out dust, smoke, etc. Such changes in the mentality of man take place at every age and art also keeps pace with them. Even in an ordinary painting, by observing the scheme of lines and colours one can say how much of the wakeful spirit is behind it and how much of the sleeping state.

A third way in which we can see the artist's mind working is in the sphere of technique. For example, take the question of the clarity that the lines and colours have imparted to the

subject represented. In this matter, the artist seeks to know the observer; he finds out how he should arrange his lines so that the intrinsic beauty of the picture would be best noticed. Again, from his experience he knows that if his picture is just a mass of lines, it becomes like a reservoir of dynamic forces and consequently comes to be static itself. In colouring also he knows that just as if we put the sky below and the earth above the balance is lost, even so in painting one cannot put a dark colour above and a lighter one below. Thus, every artist has to keep his mind prepared by his experiences beforehand. Fourthly, the material, race, social or the economic mind often works through the artist's mind and reflects itself in the artist's work.

The question of individual likes and dislikes is also involved in it. All may not perhaps be to the strict approval of the artist himself. With reference to particular colours, for instance, one says, "I don't like white," another, "I don't like red" and so on; and the work of the artist suffers in consequence. Modern Europe is giving up one by one all the ideals of the Victorian age. Unlike the artists of those days, they are now almost completely ignoring the subject-matter of their paintings. This treatment is very similar to that of a picture on a carpet or a curtain, in which we do not take any notice of the subject, but only see if the design is good and properly executed; the picture itself

is only the background here, on which one attempts to arrange certain lines and colours. Such special points of view with regard to art are the outcome of the commercial bent of mind of the present day. For, if the picture is not made to suit some pattern of craft, the latter can have no novelty : and these pictures, drawn without adequate thought behind them, supply the want of that novelty.

Again, if a painter at work keeps his mind scientifically awake, and attaches more importance to what he knows than what he sees in nature, then the perspective style of painting will have to be sacrificed to it, for objects farther away look to our eyes smaller than nearer ones, though in our minds we may be fully aware that the former is much larger than the latter. For this reason, the ultra-modern sur-realists in art do not bother any more about perspective. In art we find the artist's mind, and if we judge it by our own mind only, we shall for ever fall to grasp it. Through the artist's work we get a glimpse of his psychology.

The artist also has sometimes to think of means as to how he should bring his work within easy reach of everybody's mind. But in doing so, he has generally to go far away from what he himself has to give. That is why many artists draw or carve in a detached way without bothering whether others would like their work or not. Wherever the artist has had to follow certain religious conventions, we notice their restrictions manifested in his work ; as for instance, in the pictures

of Byzantine art, as also in our ancient Jain Mss. There we find that the work of the artist has been shaped by the psychology of the priest. On the other hand, in the Ajanta paintings, the Buddhist artists, by their free and easy grace of execution, have left a living form of art. Here the artist had an open mind and consequently his work also showed an unfettered freedom. Even in that art of Europe, known so long as Romantic art, a dogma was apparent; and it is from this that the modern artists are trying to free themselves by seeking to bring in some novelty in their work by means of various experiments outside the recognized styles.

Man's mind cannot remain fixed for ever on one idea alone for its support. One can easily observe what great changes take place in one man's mind in the course of his life. So also in the history of art we find how dynamic the minds of artists are. It is an interesting thing to note how one style springs out of another in a new form. In Europe, Byzantine art; which, following Oriental art, became a great support of religion, showed one aspect of art, then the realists came and broke all the chains of their predecessors. A change came over these realists when Cezanne first attempted to express so much in so little by his easy skill with the brush. But the artist's mind did not stop here. The scientifically-minded artists, who followed next, tried to see art from the point of view of psychology. They found hints in crude

paintings by children or images made by barbarous people, and began to make experiments on those lines. In this way, the active mind of the artist is leading art into so many channels, and will do so in the future to an inconceivable extent.

It has been pointed out before that the mind of the artist undergoes changes according to his environment. This can be tested very well in the drawings of children, because impressions are much deeper on their simple minds. I know of a five year old girl who is fond of drawing pictures. Her especial liking is for the picture of beasts, and the cat is a particular favourite of hers. So when she draws a human being, very often is it seen that its limbs resemble those of the cat or some other beast. Similarly, the drawing of a boy who likes railway trains will bear their stamp to some extent. With the growth of the mind, the style and subject of painting would change. It has been found with some great actors that owing to the fact that their childhood was spent in the country they could not altogether get over a rusticity in their speech and manners. So it can be observed in the works of artists and sculptors how far their tastes have been cultivated by the development of their mind.

Thus, in order to understand the artist, one should try to know him through his mind ; it is not possible to judge him by the width or variety of his technique. The technique an artist can learn from outside sources, but the imaginative

or creative faculty can develop only through the refinement of his mind. That is why if art is judged in terms of this mental outlook, one can always form an estimate of the wealth or poverty of the artist's conception. In the present commercialised world, people attempt to pass abstract patterns as pictures. There is a limit to that, whereas there is no limit to art so far as it is inspired by imagination. Thus, we find that the spirit of Kalidasa's "Meghduta" has been expressed in an immortal way by Shallendra Nath Dey, that of the Vaishnava poets by Kshitindra Nath Mazumdar and that again of our mythologies by Nandalal Bose. But even above the historical spirit we find that Abanindra Nath has invested imagination with its own real power

So, we find that Romantic art, which developed in Europe with ideas as well as subjects which gave rise to them, has not altogether ceased to exist and can never do so. They hold that the expression of motherhood in the Madonna pictures or the beauty of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," has on the European mind even to this day will remain so in future. For, in these one can find an approach to the mind of the artist. All those abstract patterns in vogue consisting of just lines and colours will have their fulfilment in designs for cloths and carpets, but above that they have no place.

THE RENAISSANCE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS IN INDIA.

THERE are many who would not like to place crafts in the category of arts. They seem to think that by arts are meant only paintings and sculpture and that crafts are no better than productions of skilled workmen. It is of general experience that whenever crafts are to be taught a skilled work-man is ordinarily supposed to be a better teacher than an artist is. Consequently, the craft works have become monotonously mechanical, and their fit place is either the toy-shops or the houses of people, ill-educated and devoid of all aesthetic sense. They are also sent abroad as typical Indian art products.

We seem to think that in crafts the hand is better employed than the head, but a cursory peep into the history of arts of India, Egypt and Europe will at once convince us that the artists who painted wonderful pictures and produced

fine works of sculpture also took great pains in exercising their skill in beautifying the objects of ordinary use such as furniture, utensils, vases, carpets, tapestries and articles of jewellery.

Art is not confined only to the brush and paints. An artist takes equal care in painting the face of a girl as well as the ornaments which embellish her, and the artist's knowledge of the intricacies of shapes and forms is commensurate with that of the setting of ornaments. It is no less than the skilled workmanship of a professional jeweller. A true artist has his eye on every beautiful object and it is folly to divide the artistic activities into watertight compartments. On the other hand, a mere craftsman is not competent to easily create things of beauty, and as long as he is not an artist he is a machine multiplying the work of his forefathers. If crafts are not to form part of the arts, they will suffer and degenerate. The artist, therefore, should find pleasure in handling the hammer and chisel as well as his palette and brush.

In talking about the arts we first come to the subject of good taste. Although the primary object of an artist is not to infuse good taste into the society, one of his chief works is, however, to so improve by his art-work the aesthetic sense of the people among whom he lives, that they may recognise and appreciate things of beauty. We are here not talking about that utilitarian sense which always tries to find a moral in arts. By the standard of morality

art cannot be judged. An artist can only be distinguished from the multitude of men by his creation, the selection of subjects, their treatment and the fine sensibilities his works evoke in the heart of men. By creation he shares his joy and sorrow with his fellow-beings. Every artist has a world of his own and his work should primarily be measured by the standard of that world. The artist worships the sun and not the electric lamp ; he seeks the flowing spring and not the marble fountain to quench his thirst. The world of the artist is not the world as we see or feel it with our material senses. Therefore, the scale by which art should be weighed is not the scale of ordinary morals.

In this world one can always go on existing somehow, but cannot always live a life of beauty. And here we require the help of the artist. We want him to beautify our homes and make the articles we daily use comelier and shaplier. A question however may be pertinently asked : what is the use of the artist's hand in such things ? An aerograph or stencil will serve the purpose equally well. But what the artist draws with the tip of his little finger becomes 'Alpona,' and what the aerograph or stencil produces is mere fret-work without imagination. In it there is no room for giving a personal touch and distinction, but it is the same thing over and over again.

In art man finds means of satisfying his sense of beauty and in industry he can only satisfy his lust of bare living. An artist is required to give Industry that touch of the imagination which,

like a magic wand, can, in a moment, turn the ugly and unshapely demon into a sprightly nymph.

The excellence of the culture of a particular nation is known by its artistic, literary, religious and scientific achievements. Thus, the Greek civilization which is the standard of the modern European civilization owes almost all to the artistic activities of ancient Greece which brought forth not only unique sculpture but also vases, plates and urns. Similarly, the height of the ancient Indian civilization can be estimated by the temples and the brass-lamps which used to burn in the poorest homes. But for the artistic traditions modern Europe and modern India could not be distinguished from the wild dwellers of forests and caves.

Evolution does not run straight. In the childhood of art we find that the artists are building grand temples and churches and decorating them with frescoes according to their ideas which were based on pure artistic impulse. Later on, we find the artist busy in copying Nature without representing or interpreting her. At this period utility was given a higher seat than beauty. But time has again come when the artist has learnt to combine utility with beauty, and a renaissance has dawned upon the art-world.

This new spirit of art has also its foundation on traditions. Without traditions all art-products will be like a rootless tree. Extension without depth is indeed death. But the expression of this spirit must vary from time to time. If we

merely copy the ancient works of art it will again be a work of multiplication instead of creation. A blind attachment to traditions, however, will lead to disastrous results. In the course of civilization tastes have differed, knowledge has grown wider, and the geographical barriers have been surpassed. The whole world of man has become like one family. Hence we must use our discretion and intelligence and pay due regard to modern ideas in investing our heritage.

Balance and restraint are the two chief elements of art. In following out the artistic traditions artists must be very careful to avoid repetitions of designs and styles prevalent in ancient times. They must create for themselves new styles of expression, novel designs which, however, must not absolutely depart from the traditions inherited. Want of this new movement has resulted in an overcrowding of the same designs and styles. To take but a few examples, this may be well illustrated by Moradabad and Benares brass-wares, Mirzapur and Shahjahanpore carpets, Murshidabad and Delhi ivory, Lucknow and Krishnanagore clay figures. Another important reason for this lack of novelty and variety is the lack of taste of the foreign tourists in the purchase of Indian things as curios and mementos. These curio-hunters little think that what they get are only pseudo-Indian articles.

The regrettable lack of patronage and utter indifference of our rich men to the arts are responsible for gradual dying out of high class

artistic productions. These rich men would sooner buy worthless foreign oleographs and prints half-clad foreign fairies to hang on the wall of their palaces. Their gardens and houses are decorated with disgusting marble figures and fountain-heads imported from Europe. Their thrones, coronets, dress and jewellery remind us of a comic theatrical performance. In former times the Rajahs and Maharajahs thought it was their duty to gather together renowned artists, musicians, craftsmen, and poets round their courts, and they used to take pride in excelling one another with the display of the work of men attached to them. While now-a-days if things do not smack of foreign glamour or are not admired by foreigners even the poorest of the poor of our people will see no merit in our own indigenous things. Silk handkerchiefs of Murshidabad, when they found a place in the pocket of the late Lord Charmichael, began to be appreciated by our men as Charmichael handkerchiefs. Tagore's books written in Bengali used to be eaten by worms in Calcutta book-stalls before he was awarded the Nobel Prize. The real artists in these times somehow eke out a living by catering to a few interested in the things of the spirit. Otherwise, the beautiful specimens of art-work live a dead life in the glass-cases of museums.

In spite of all these, a new awakening has recently come over the art-world and has at last come to stay. Men with any claim to intelligence are regretting the degenerate state of the arts and are willing to lend a helping hand to

remove the conditions which prevent the growth of the arts. We are glad now to see our ladies taking more interest in shawls than Chesterfields and jumpers. Our men also take more delight in Indian silk and cotton 'koortas' than in open jackets. More trouble is also being taken in selecting beautiful indigenous furniture, plates and carpets and little knick-knacks for homes. All this indeed goes a great way in reviving the lost arts.

In concluding this chapter we suggest certain methods by which better results from the artistic activities of the country can be gained. Art Societies should be formed in every important centre of learning and culture. Exhibitions and lectures should be periodically arranged. Clubs of artists and craftsmen on the line of co-operative societies should also be founded in every city. Guilds of artisans should be organised in every village. Art schools, museums and art galleries should be opened everywhere with workshops attached where artists, craftsmen and artisans, and the citizens alike may see fine specimens of art-work and draw from them fresh inspiration.

If anyone has the real good of India in his heart he should direct all his care and energies towards the revival of learning and true artistic spirit. By her artists, philosophers, religious men and men of learning India will be best known to the world and will hold her own place among the assembly of nations.

ARTS AND CRAFTS OF INDIA

LET me, first of all, try to remove a few misunderstandings about art that prevail in the minds of our people. I shall then proceed to analyse the causes which were responsible for the spread of our art-culture among our people in earlier times and the reasons for its decay in modern times. The first confusion is about the words "arts and crafts." There is very little difference in the significance of the words "arts" and "arts and crafts." "Arts and crafts" is a phrase which includes the arts of design and of handicrafts—all those arts which go to the making of the house beautiful. The phrase had its origin in the revival of arts and handicrafts which began about 1875 in Europe. In England specially, the growth of the factory system with its specialized functions for each workman had almost destroyed the feeling for art among workmen. Hence, the movement was started by William Morris to rescue the public taste from cheap imitation of foreign models, to

encourage handicrafts and to raise them to their rightful position in the category of fine arts. It was in his hand that plastic art revived in its former glory. His conviction may thus be quoted in his own language :

“What I mean by art is some creation of man which appeals to his emotions and his intellect by means of his senses.

“We have two kinds of art : one of them would exist even if men had no needs, but such as are essentially spiritual, and only accidentally material or bodily. The other kind, called into existence by material needs, is bound no less to recognise the aspirations of the soul and receive the impress of its striving towards perfection.

“Not only is it possible to make the matters needful to our daily life works of art, but there is something wrong in the civilisation which does not do this ; if our houses, our clothes, our household furniture and utensils are not works of art, they are either wretched makeshifts, or what is worse, degrading shams of better things.”

The truth underlying his conviction is not to be understood with reference to William Morris's country only. It might equally be applied to any other country's art, particularly to India, where for very many reasons the artistic conscience of the people has degenerated. Thus, the word “art” in a broad sense of the term now refers to anything which is not an immediate product of nature, but artificial and made by the aid of human dexterity. By “arts” we also

mean those phases of human activity which result from human skill. Thus it is only for the sake of convenience that art is classified into useful or applied arts on the one hand and fine arts on the other. The latter embrace painting, sculpture, architecture and music, and, according to some, even poetry. Pottery, brasswork, silverwork are classified as useful or applied arts. These latter could be practised by anyone who had hereditary skill and acquired the necessary talents or the requisite training. In handicraft, however clever the craftsman may be, it is absolutely impossible for him to manufacture two articles identically alike. This is one of the reasons why artistic handicraft is also classed as fine art by connoisseurs.

Be it noted that in India aesthetic arts embrace four kinds of human skill and aesthetic achievements, including weaving, wood work, metal work and the like. But these are the products of manual crafts and not of mechanical devices for the simple reason that they were not then invented. In the present condition of this machine-ridden world, handicrafts are fast losing their ground in India and abroad.

Art, as has already been said, can be aesthetically divided into groups, but it has been usually partitioned as graphic art, *i. e.*, fine art and plastic art, *i. e.*, arts and crafts. But it is not possible even then to think of them apart. A piece of work should have design and aesthetic appeal, without which it can have commercial

value, but no intrinsic value as art. If the design and aesthetic appeal are taken out of it, the term art-ware cannot be applied. And design and aesthetic appeal are the very essence of fine art. Similarly an artist who has devoted his life to only painting pictures cannot be blind to the beauties of objects of high craftsmanship. Moreover, no artist would care to see his work placed in such material surroundings as do not frame the picture properly. Even a picture or a sculpture must needs be supported by crafts.

This close dependence between crafts and fine arts is as old as society. In the pre-historic ages, the primitives had also thought of beautifying their surroundings and house-hold objects. Primitive people dwelling in caves and natural surroundings had to struggle hard for their existence, and they found recreation in beautifying their cave-dwellings by painting, on their walls, scenes of their daily search for food and shelter. That is why we find in ancient caves in Spain and in India wild hunting scenes. They even used to tattoo their body to decorate themselves. The human instinct for self-adornment was responsible for discovering ornaments in crude forms of beads and stones which developed into fine jewelleries of the day. Later on, probably, these primitive men attached other significance to these ornaments and used them as symbols in their rituals. But, originally, it may be asserted that these crafts-objects were vehicles of aesthetic satisfaction. The sense of beauty thus achieved in the bygone days can

be traced in the works of art found in Egypt, Babylonia, and Mahenjo-Daro and Harappa in India. In such practical objects as ancient flints we notice all kinds of decorations, and the difficulty of engraving them on hard stone in those days can better be imagined than described. In Mahenjo-Daro we find well-cut beads and ornaments the workmanship of which still puzzle the modern man. Those ancient art-relics reveal to us the real urge for creation and dynamic rhythm, which is sadly lacking in so-called great achievements of art. Those primitives had no civilization worth speaking of, and yet we find expressions of art-culture in their crude handiwork. No distinction between Fine Art and Arts and Crafts was then thought of.

The process of the development of the human mind can be traced through these relics of ancient arts and crafts. Thus a broken pitcher found in an ancient site would tell a long tale of the ancient thought and culture of a people. For instance, pottery is one of the most ancient handicrafts in the world and its evolution traces the evolution or the progress of the whole human civilization. The crude beginning of earthen jars which we find among the primitives gradually took shape as glazed ones in Egypt, Persia, and finally reached its perfection as fine porcelain in China which can be rightly classed as fine art-ware. Originally porcelain was made in China and then it found its way through Persia to the different parts of the world. It was a great

discipline for other peoples to copy them and many devoted their lives to achieve perfection in that art, with the result that porcelain-ware became so cheap as to find itself in every household. Thus the natural evolution of only a useful object, *i. e.*, a craft-product ended in a perfect Fine Art.

The second confusion is about the origins of our indigenous art-forms. There is an idea current among our people that all such origins are native to the soil. But this is falsified by the history of India. Many nations were attracted by the magnificence and wealth of India; Huns, Greeks and other foreigners attacked India several times with the result that there was a constant intermixture of foreign culture, tradition and ideas. India imbibed various cultures particularly new ideas about arts and crafts. So the history of Indian arts and crafts is a history of the intermixture of artistic achievements of various countries. Exchange of foreign art-ware with India had become so common that it is now difficult to distinguish the peculiarly Indian elements in any ancient art work. It is widely held that from very ancient times foreigners came from Asia Minor to India for trade and commerce and used to exchange goods and commodities in Egypt and Persia. The origins of inlay work on ivory, gold, silver, etc., or Damascene work of Northern India are still in the dark. It is difficult to state whether they were invented in India in ancient times or in the mediaeval period

or whether we got them as a result of association with foreigners in some distant prehistoric times. Similar is the case with the art of printing on cloths or filigree works.

Such exchange of art culture has happened practically in all countries all over the world. Early European art was obviously influenced by the Egyptian, and Persian and European scholars themselves acknowledge the debt. To-day also we find Chinese and Japanese influence in the decoration of houses in Europe. The easy and simple house decoration and furniture of Japan is easily traceable in a modern style of European home. Similarly in the period when Buddhism was expanding beyond the frontiers of India we clearly find traces of Indian culture and art in Central Asia, China and Japan. Chinese contribution in Persian art is similarly traceable. It is thus very difficult to estimate a nation's contribution to another in the development and gradual evolution of its civilization, art and culture. One can never say to what extent one nation is indebted to another.

Yet we must not think of intermixture of traditions as the only process of development in Indian art. It is certain that a piece of artwork for a particular branch of art might have come from any country, but finally it must needs take to the native forms. Thus it is through adaptation by the native talents to the local motifs and designs that culture and art are nationalized. This association with foreign culture, tradition and interchange of ideas since time

immemorial seems to be a plausible reason for the wonderful variety in Indian arts and crafts. Art cannot be confined within the boundaries of a country.

Apart from traditions and motifs which can be foreign or national, Nature to which the artist refers is certainly indigenous, and the artist and the designer must take clue from the nature of their own native soil.

One may try to examine the conditions which rendered it possible for art to be appreciated by our people even when they were not educated in the present sense of the term. Machinery and quick transport were unknown in olden times. This led to limited markets. The famous muslin, brocade, ivory work, etc., of India thus retained their appeal and were thus appreciated both in India and abroad. We know from history that European statesmen and economists were alarmed by the enormous transshipment of their gold to India in exchange for Indian art-wares. India's geographical situation was not clearly known to the Western world in those days and it was these art-wares that offered them a glimpse of India thousands of miles away.

Moreover, the Indian village organization was highly favourable to the development of arts and crafts. Before the advent of machine-made products each Indian village was a self-sufficient economic unit. The villagers produced everything that they had need of, according to the economic organization of such villages; each

worker received remuneration in grain. Naturally the village artists and craftsmen had no anxieties for their living, for the village system made sufficient provision for it. In exchange for their art-ware and commodities of general requirement, they enjoyed rent-free lands or other remunerations from their peasant customers. The design and shape of commodities produced by these people depended not only upon the social customs and traditions of the village, but were also determined by religious conventions. Copper, brass and silver pots for marriage gifts were designed and executed according to the standard models definitely laid down by religious dogmas for such occasions. In rural areas there were different localities for different kinds of artists and craftsmen, for example, copper-smiths, braziers, weavers, etc. Similar was the organization in towns and cities.

It was also the custom among the rich to call the craftsmen and artists in their own houses and to get their artistic wares executed under their own supervision. Sometimes such patrons would even suggest changes to the artists in standard models and designs. Thus the artisans were supplied with delicate and beautiful designs and so deviation from the usual course was possible.

It is well known that Akbar directed the whole construction of his palace and adjoining garden to the minutest details. He took great delight in spending his leisure hours with the

artists, while they were at work. Shah Jehan had the famous Taj Mahal executed under his direct supervision. It was this great interest in arts of the Moguls which excited the admiration of the foreign merchants and ambassadors. We know much about Indian arts and artists of the Mogul period from contemporary European travellers. Bernier's account of 1656 throws much light on the subject. There was a particular day when the Emperor used to sit in *Dewan-i-Khas* with his lords and Umrahs for the selection of the best foreign art-wares. Various kinds of articles from various parts of the worlds were brought before him. If perchance he took fancy to a certain piece of art-ware, he would ask the local artists to make a similar one. Thus there was a constant flow and intermixture of foreign art with Indian art during the Mogul period. In a fusion of culture like this much that was bad was also copied. Moreover, every year there used to be a *Nau-Roz* fair to celebrate the new year festival in which craftsmen and artists used to bring their art-wares for sale before the Emperor. There was thus an active royal interest in the progress of arts and crafts which naturally helped and stimulated the artists. It has become proverbial to speak of the exquisitely fine workmanship of Shah Jehan's Peacock Throne. An artist if he could attract royal notice for his works, would get *Jagirs* and monthly allowances for his family which would be transmitted from generation to generation.

Thus the hereditary and class artists were patronized as in Hindu times. The system was very helpful to the growth of arts and crafts as it became a family profession for generations, with the result that such artists attained a very high degree of specialization and perfection.

Apart from direct patronage and other kinds of support, the artists primarily get inspiration for their design from Nature and secondarily from national culture and tradition. Nature, indeed, supplies the inspiration for the conception of design, for an artist always tries to imbibe all that is beautiful, grand and noble in Nature, he makes them his very own, and then reshapes and remodels their expression in his own creation. This is the joy of creation, which is another explanation for the transformation in the artist's imagination of natural objects sometimes beyond recognition.

I shall now give certain illustrations which will show the diffusion of motifs among nations, their dependence upon local environment and traditions. They will also indicate the transformation that occurs in their process of operation. In ancient India people conceived the world in terms of a lotus. Artists have given different interpretations of this lotus motif and have given expression to it in innumerable modes and fashions in their creation. The numerous forms and designs of the lotus have found their way into places like Java, Bali, Cambodia, Siam, where Indian culture and art have found admission. Even now in the pottery

of the above mentioned places we find a variety of lotus designs. Similarly we find an abundant variety in the shape and design of the lily in Egypt. All these artistic designs of lily and lotus do not actually coincide with the real lotus or lily. Artists of both countries have only taken the internal outline and beauty of these flowers as their basis and given expression to their various artistic conceptions thereof.

In China the dragon figure is abundantly found in commodities of daily use. We find ornamental dragons in their dress and livery, in their everyday utensils. The theme has been heavily worked—so much so that when designed for a royal article the dragon claws have five nails, in the case of royal representatives they have four, and for the commons three nails only.

Many motifs of design are inspired in Bengal from corn seeds, "courie," myrobalans, fish, etc., and such other local commodities. Every country has its traditional art-symbol handed down from generation to generation. Sometimes, owing excessive use of these art symbols in works of arts and crafts, the work becomes cumbersome. For ages Persian carpets have been bearing their characteristic symbols in like the cypress. Similarly we recognize a piece of Indian art by the peculiarity of its own treatment of symbols and the general artistic conception. Thus we can distinguish between the works of various places by their special features and symbols.

The predominating feature of all such craft

designs is the sense of dynamic rhythm. From very early times in Bengal, in ritual ceremonies, a particular kind of floor decoration, *Alpanā*-design done with rice-paste by the ladies, has been used. These *Alpanā* decoration convey a rich rhythmic sense. The rhythm in fine art though not clearly tangible as in poetry, can still be felt. A flow of a stream or of a fountain if looked at too closely would yield a rhythmic grace to one who has got one's sense of rhythm developed. A group of trees sometimes spread their branches in such a manner as would suggest rhythm and balance to the poets and artists, though the spreading might have been due to a certain physical situation of the grove. The artists, however, is not immediately concerned with them. His primary interest is rhythm. This rhythm is the essence of creative force and the imagination of an artist. This sense of rhythm is the source of delight to the artist and its absence brings discord. There is energy and force dormant in things which apparently seem static. Man's creation is never striving for perfection. Man's continual struggle for the attainment of perfection is a quality which demarcates him from the rest of creatures and is the cause of his superiority. Therefore Art, which best expresses this striving is the most distinguishing human quality.

If art is a human quality, what is the relation between the artist and other human beings? An artist's creation is not meant for public recreation alone, but is the expression of an inter-

nal urge for creation. To quote Clive Bell, "Art should not come to the people, but people should come to Art or leave it alone." Artists and art connoisseurs can discriminate, perceive and appreciate a work of Art better than ordinary people who have hardly or rarely a requisite technical training. There is no royal road to understand and appreciate a work of art but it can only be perceived by one who has cultivated an aesthetic sense. No doubt, art is a universal language and has an appeal for all. But it makes special demands from its likely devotees. Unfortunately, in our country, the art-sense is diminishing. The reasons, in my opinion, are, first handi-work stands in competition with machine-made products. Secondly, the education we receive in homes, schools, colleges and in the Universities sadly fails in developing the true Indian culture and that is the reason why we cannot understand the inner significance of our art. People rush towards cheap machine-made trifles, which come to India from abroad as so-called objects of art. Consequently the hereditary craftsmen are left unemployed and find their living in mills and large-scale factories, totally abandoning their professions which once found favour in the country and abroad. People have little regard for the dignity of labour of our artists and craftsmen. Naturally they are inclined to go in for general education for attaining position and respect in the new social order. Those who are still persisting in their respective hereditary handicrafts care more for

the increased demand of the market rather than for quality. These handicrafts do not find favour in the Indian market, for they have lost their former quality and fineness but have attained only a "curio" value in foreign lands. That is the reason why the manufacturer only looks to the demand of the foreign market for their production. Consequently we notice a rapid degradation of our arts and crafts. As our craftsmen and manufacturers have to depend to a very large extent on the demands of foreign markets, naturally they have to design and shape according to foreign tastes. This is also one of the reasons for the deterioration of the quality of design. Unless a taste for a country's art is developed among her people, nothing solid can be achieved in the way of a revival. The example of Japan in this connection is very appropriate and full of significance. They have preserved their indigenous art through cottage industries in their own homes, and for foreign export they manufacture cheap, shoddy articles in large-scales factories with the aid of machinery. The result is that even from the economic point of view they are not losers but gainers.

If we could realize the above points and wish to popularize Indian handicrafts in India we might work it up in the following ways :—

(1) arranging for the Exhibition of Old Indian handicrafts and keeping them in our Museums, (2) awarding prizes in annual exhibitions to encourage new ideas in the designs of the

handicrafts, (3) giving lantern lectures based on comparative study of Indian and foreign handicrafts with slides or cinema shows, (4) establishing handicrafts associations in various provinces which would give orders to the craftsmen for beautiful designs and which would help to popularise those products, (5) making catalogues of new designs of various handicrafts, (6) publishing illustrated articles about handicrafts in various magazines in different languages in order to create a taste for these articles.

Lord Eustace Percy, M. P., President of the Board of Education in a recent address to the members of the National Society of Art Masters deplored the tragedy of Art Education in England at the present time. He said, "If we were to meet the demand which was increasingly being made by industry for a higher standard of industrial art, we could only do so by improving first of all our education for the Fine Arts. Education for commerce and industry was not the end from which to approach the problem of art education. One of the dangers was that art education might be regarded too much as the hand-maid of industry." He suggested that "the only direction from which we could usefully approach the problem was the direction of education in fine arts."

"Broadly speaking, the nation would have a higher standard of industrial art if it had a great school in the fine arts. If we had a national school of painting, sculpture, and architecture, its influence would be felt throughout all

the Art schools and in every branch of industry.”

The influence of fine art in life is very great. Even the grotesque and capricious works of modern European artists such as Picasso, Paul Klee, Gris and others have exerted their influence over the manufactures of carpet and furniture of Europe. Their creations lose their grotesqueness when their applications are seen in handicrafts. Artists of Bengal have already exerted their influence in the matter of ladies' dress in other provinces. Since the incoming of European merchants and traders there has been a gradual change in the house-hold decorations and furniture, etc., of our country.

The primary aim of manufacturing modern conveyances such as motor cars, aeroplanes, railway, ships, etc., is their great utility. But to-day we perceive that even in such things of utility there is a craving for art in design and shape. Manufacturers are ever striving for an improvement in design and shape. There is a school of people who think that art has no place in the modern scientific world, but that opinion is no longer tenable.

Man has a constant craving for change and that is why man's civilization is dynamic. The world would have remained static for ages if the art-urge had been absent. This art-urge is the chief agency for development of civilization and culture.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PAINTING

IT is with some reluctance that I have undertaken this survey of the last twenty-five years of contemporary Indian painting. No doubt it is too early for a critical review, yet I feel that there is every likelihood of its being misunderstood unless we sift the art productions so that no confusion may arise as to which are the works of artists who are generally following the Indian tradition. There are many heterodox schools following western methods. India has happily a legacy—a tradition of its own, and it is therefore natural that an Indian artist should seek to follow art expression native to the soil of India. This is the reason why we are here trying to give a correct picture of the Renaissance of Indian Art which has been going on in Bengal, within the last three decades instead of trying to embrace all the so-called art activities of India which came through sheer apathy and ignorance of our country's inheritance and tradition.

The Fine Arts, according to the educational authorities in India, who got their views from the European Head Masters of the Provincial Art Schools, never existed in India. It was only a few archeologists and Indologists who had any knowledge of the existence of the treasures of ancient Buddhist and Moghul art scattered all over the country ; but they were quite unsympathetic as to the claim of India in the sphere of the Fine Arts. It is, indeed, surprising that though the Bombay School of Arts had a first hand knowledge of the art of Ajanta, long before the artists of Bengal knew of the existence of these hidden treasures, yet they were the last to enter into the spirit of these glorious creations of the past. It remained for the sons of Bengal to open and enter the temple door of their own Goddess of Art, Kalalakshmi, when they visited Ajanta as late as 1909, long after the Bombay expedition had been there to copy the famous frescoes. In the Indian Programme, Broadcast announcement in the *Radio Times*, London, January 1929, which was introduced by Lord Ronaldshay now Marquis of Zetland the following remarks were made by Mr. Edward Thomson of the University regarding cultural activities in India : "It so happens that the various items of our programme have been associated chiefly with one part of India—namely, Bengal. That has been partly accidental and partly due to the fact, that the people of Bengal figure so largely in the cultural history of India" (vide A. T.—5.

Indian Art and Letters, Vol. III No. I, 1929). Many enthusiasts are to be found in Bombay who are now trying to revive the art traditions of India in their own way, independent of the Bengal school and we are looking forward for their contribution to the revival of Indian Art. Ornamental mannerisms of the ancient mural decorations of Ajanta, however, if combined with the modern realistic representation of natural forms, would, it seems to me, form a curious incoherent mixture, more in the nature of a caricature than a serious piece of art. We still hope that the present mixed style will vanish when the neo-Bombay School will realise the tremendous hypnotic influence of Western art under which they slumbered without having the least understanding of the true spirit of the glorious ancient art of their own country.

With the advent of the Renaissance of Indian painting, the taste for the realistic representation of natural objects in art amongst the Indian intelligentsia is diminishing, and they have now begun to understand the value of the indigenous art traditions which had come to be regarded as crude under the influence of Western culture. The Pre-Renaissance antipathy toward Indian art and culture is no longer possible amongst a people who advocate national culture and national movements in general. National consciousness has, indeed, stimulated to a certain extent the love and better understanding of Indian art, though it is

not quite in the nature of the purely aesthetic valuation which is essential if the highest standards of art culture are to be maintained. Though unsympathetic criticism is not yet extinct it can be safely said that the rough weather of hostile public opinion which both Messrs. Havell and Tagore had to face will never have to be encountered by any of the future exponents of Indian art. Both the press and the public were furious at their attempts to bring about a Renaissance in Indian art. We feel sad, indeed, to recall those days of controversy, and are ashamed of the colossal ignorance about Indian art which prevailed at that time.

In considering this hostility we must remember that our tastes have greatly changed since the old days. It is not possible for us to appreciate fully the descriptions of beauty found in the ancient scriptures and poetical works of India. Our thoughts and tastes have been modified according to the western culture we have imbibed. We should certainly be shocked by the apparition of a certain type of beauty as described by the ancient poet Kalidasas with almond or lotus shaped eyes, and heavy hips do not appeal to us today. Our fashions are changing daily in almost blind imitation of the changes of fashion in Europe. It is, therefore, essential that we should first have a knowledge of the ideals of beauty prevalent in the olden days so that we may understand the significance of our ancient art. It would not be wise to think that the artists of Ajanta or of the Moghul school

lacked in that knowledge of proportion, rhythm and balance which might be evident in the art of Europe. It is interesting to note that some of the famous contemporary artists of Europe are finding inspiration from the East and that the art of Whistler and Van Gogh came to a turning point, when they came in touch with some Japanese and Chinese colour prints. In the contemporary European plastic art also we find evidence of Sino-Japanese influence. It should not be considered a drawback, therefore, that we find a constant exchange of ideas and ideals between the two different continents. The easy access and communication of the modern world cannot be ignored and the growing tendency for mutual understanding through art and culture is inevitable. It is, therefore, all the more essential that we should interest ourselves more keenly in the art traditions of our own country. With the closing of the chapter of Moghul history, the history of Indian art came to an end and the Fine Arts remained unhonoured and undiscovered only in the handicrafts of the country; and therefore, the natural Anglo-Indian misunderstanding characteristic till as late as the time of Birdwood that there was no indigenous school of real art in India prevailed. He has explained the Fine Arts of India in the following lines: "The spirit of the Fine arts is indeed everywhere latent in India, but it has yet to be quickened into creative operation. It has slept ever since the Aryan genius of the people exhausted itself in the production of the

Ramayana and Mahabharata." The nineteenth century was the age of the supremacy of the European art, and artists of other nationalities were very keen in competing with Europe ; the disaster courted by these was only timely averted by men like Count Okakura in Japan and Messrs. Havell and Tagore in India.

It is not possible to write casually about Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore's work, and the inspiration through which he brought about the regeneration of the art life of the country. The source of art traditions having almost dried up, the ancient art of India was a subject for the specialist to speculate upon ; hence at the outset Dr. Tagore had to do a lot of spade work to guide the revivalist school in the right path. His enthusiasm and energy made almost "a dry bone live." Paintings at Ajanta, Bagh, Ramgarh, Sigiria etc., remained hidden for centuries and the plastic art of India was sometimes admired only by the tourists and taken away as mementoes. Artists used to fanfaronade with all kinds of artistic jargons taught to them by Head Masters recruited for the Provincial Art Schools in India. Some catchwords which were in vogue amongst artists were "perspective," "light and shade" and "anatomy"—though they themselves were not well-versed in these subjects. The names of the artists of Europe, specially of Italy were on everybody's lips. We are not ashamed to admit the fact that we were quite in the dark about the glory of ancient Indian art and were sharing with others the dream of

master artists like Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Rosetti.

The art of the then famous artist of India, Raja Ravi Varma was full of anachronism due to his imperfect knowledge of the classical art of the country. Dr. Coomarswamy in his "National Idealism" explained the quality of his work fully. Raja Ravi Varma's painting adorned the houses of the rich and the lowly alike and in Bengal the cheap reproductions of the Bowbazar Art Studio were regarded as Bengal's masterpieces. Such was the critical moment when Dr. Tagore came out with the torch of India's true heritage in Art and dazzled the eyes of many. He was then only about 30 or 31 years of age. This was the opportune moment when Dr. Tagore was invited by the great art educationist Mr. E. B. Havell to join the School of Arts as his assistant. Thus when the art education of India was seeking for an ideal these two benefactors came forward to build up the solid foundation of art. This was the day when the history of national art began afresh in India. These two pioneers joined together in making the art history of India possible. Their efforts were, however, not taken at first in the proper spirit. The immense significance of the new movement was not appreciated. It was rumoured by interested parties that the Government was trying to impoverish the art education in India by diverting attention to the national art which according to them made a very poor show, and by supressing true art

education which should be based on Western ideals.

These rumours spread like wild-fire. Further mischief was done when faulty reproductions appeared in the "Prabashi" for the half-tone process of printing was in its infancy. Thus much prejudice was caused against Abanindra Nath and his instruction even in the minds of those who were open to conviction. Most people took this art movement however as a new craze and either took up a patronising attitude in falstafian fashion or criticized it in no measured terms. The "Sahitya" gave in the finishing touch to the unpopularity of the new school by its unsympathetic, almost hostile criticism.

The special class started by Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore in the School of Arts, Calcutta was named the "Advanced Design Class" and embraced in addition to painting, lacquer-work, stained-glass design, wood carving etc. Mr. Havell gave every facility to foster this new section of his school and the students of this class were admitted free and some special scholarships were awarded to them. Dr. Tagore himself used his own purse freely to help his pupils. For sometime at the outset all these encouragements failed to attract pupils to his class and there was a dearth of students. It was Mr. Gaganendra Nath Tagore, brother of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore who popularised the work of the new school, by organizing an Art Society in 1907 with Lord Kitchner as its President. The Indian Society of Oriental Art,

Calcutta was started with little over thirty members. In view of the keen sympathy felt to-day it is interesting to note the apathy towards our national art which was at first experienced. There were only five Indian members who joined this art movement, the rest were Europeans. The first art Exhibition organized in 1908 by the Society at the School of Art premises was, however, an eye opener and we find that as a result more Indian came forward to enlist themselves as members. The first exhibition contained the works of Dr. A. N. Tagore, Mr. G. N. Tagore, N. L. Bose, late S. N. Ganguly, Venkatappa and the author himself. The number of exhibitors increased as the exhibition was repeated annually. The contemporary Indian artists of the new revivalist school chiefly owe their popularity to the Society's activities, and also to the organisers who established it with earnest endeavour, not the least whom were Dr. Tagore and his brother. We cannot but name the following gentlemen who helped the Society in every way they could and without whose support and encouragement the artists of the neo-Indian School of Painting would not have been able to pioneer. Sir John Woodroffe, N. Blount, Scott O'Connor, O. C. Ganguly, Percy Brown, Thornton, J. P. Muller were the backbone of the movement. Thus was ordained a national awakening of art and culture and the individual efforts of these men combined in making the work of the Society a success.

Dr. Tagore's early life was spent leisurely as is the way with youngmen in comfortable circumstances. He had however, unique opportunity of studying music, art and literature for the home of the Tagores, where he lived, was surcharged with the atmosphere. Dr. Rabindra-Nath Tagore, his uncle as well as Rabindranath's gifted brothers were infusing the culture of Bengal with streams of rich new blood. Art requires a congenial atmosphere to thrive in and we find it did luckily find a good home in the Tagore family of Calcutta. Abanindranath took up painting as a hobby and developed it into a serious pastime but he never wished to make it a business proposition. In his early days none of his relatives knew of his artistic creations. It was the Poet Rabindranath alone who first discovered and appreciated his talents and encouraged him in his artistic enterprise. His early attempts to illustrate his uncle's *Chitrangada* show the latent talent in him. Illustrations of his early works could be seen in the old numbers of *Bharati-O-Balak* then edited by Mr. Dwijendranath Tagore. During this period amongst his relatives the poet had two special favourites, one was a nephew, the late Balendranath, a student of literature and the other was Abanindranath, a student of the Fine Arts. Amongst the other painters of the family we may mention here the names of Messrs. Satyaprosad Ganguly, Hitendranath Tagore and the two elder brothers of Dr. Rabindranath, Dwijendranath and Jyotirindranath. Jyotir-

indranath's pencil portraits were admired by many artists in India and abroad and a portfolio was published by the India Society, London, with Sir William Rothenstien's appreciative preface.

We can recall here an incident in connection with Raja Ravi Varma's visit to Dr. Abanindranath Tagore's house in Calcutta when the latter was merely a child. The Raja expressed his admiration for some illustrations done by young Tagore from mythological subjects. Just before his death the Raja was also very much impressed by the novelty of style and the delicacy of brush with which Dr. Tagore painted the "Last days of Shahjehan."

It cannot be said with certainty when Dr. Tagore began painting in Indian style, or what prompted him to do so. In fact he was not conscious that he was instituting a great revolution in art till he came in contact with Mr. Havell and was eulogised by Coomarswamy at the Delhi Durbar Exhibition organized by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon. He painted a set of illustrations from *Gitagovinda* in the style of Moghul miniatures. These were however no more imitations, but new creations and full of individuality and emotional depth. Imitation in any form is a thing unknown to Abanindra Nath and he took great care to see that his pupils were not slaves to his style or mannerisms. He has always tried to develop in his students individuality of expression.

Later on Abanindra Nath came into contact with another great art critic of the East, Count Okakura of Japan who encouraged him not a little, in his uphill work. Okakura's severe criticism of the artists who followed Western schools, his insistence that it was the rival of Indian art by Tagore which would in the long run be the goal of Indian artists had a most salutary effect and was greatly responsible for the turn of public opinion in favour of Tagore and his school. One must, however, acknowledge that the training in Western art which Abanindranath had in his youth from distinguished artists of the West gave him a broad outlook. Though the Western technique he had been trained in, never intruded in his productions, yet it gave him the vision which deterred him from basing his art on any particular school of Indian art. The art of the Buddhist, Mohamedan and medieval periods were all studied by him, and he drew his inspiration from them all without trying to imitate them blindly. He gained first-hand knowledge of Eastern art, specially that of Persia, Tibet, China, Japan, Java, Siam and Cambodia. Three famous artists of the Far East came to him and stayed with him for over two years; one of them Mr. Tai Kwan has now become the foremost modern painter of Japan. At this period a change occurred in Dr. Tagore's technique and he developed a new expression which was severely criticised. Yet the mode of expression of each artist varies and we think that it should take its

individual shape according to the personal experience and energy of the conception of the individual artist himself.

The nucleus of the art movement founded at the School of Art, Calcutta by Messrs. Havell and Tagore in 1905 was in no way a return to ancient styles of Indian painting, but rather a regeneration was and a revivification of the past history of Indian art. This significant and dynamic upheaval of art became so spontaneous that it captured the imagination of artists who have subsequently become famous. Mr. Nandalal Bose who was a student of engineering abandoned his studies and against the wish of his parents came and joined the class opened by Dr. Tagore. Soon after Surendra Nath Ganguly and the writer followed and gradually other young and promising pupils viz., Venkattappa of Mysore, Shailendra Nath De of Allahabad, Samarendra Nath Gupta of Lahore. Hakim Mohammed Khan of Lucknow and Nagahawatha of Ceylon also joined. Except the two last mentioned all the others have become well known artists and art educators in their later life. We shall try to give some account of the work of these artists and their pupils leaving aside those (*petit-maitres*) and dilattantes who have subsequently filled the horizon of the art world in these days, for it was they, who formed the cohesive force that kept the art movement going.

Dr. Tagore's mode of teaching is not what we generally expect from an ordinary teacher.

His own creative work inspired others to develop taste and confidence. Moreover, he believes in lifelong studentship for artists and never tried to impose his personality or any stereotyped form upon his pupils. Besides at their tune he was himself trying to chalk out a path for his expression through his creations so that for a few years it was really a period of parallel development both for himself and his first batch of students. This accounts for the distinct individual style which marks the work of his disciples which showed no traces of blind imitation. Dr. Tagore however, was always ready to lend a helping hand to his pupils and to give full scope to the development of their talents. Thus we find that he took the first opportunity to send Ajanta to help Lady Herringham to copy the famous frescoes. Mr. Nandalal Bose and the writer were first sent and were later on joined by Messrs. S. N. Gupta and Venkattappa. They worked in both the expeditions of 1909 and 1910, the account of which may be found in the Lady Herringham's portfolio of the Ajanta paintings published by the India Society, London. The copies of the frescoes are to be found at the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum as also in the Tagore collection at Calcutta.

Tagore spent quite a fortune on the collection of old paintings and sculptures for the use of his pupils and liberally assisted them in their individual career in every possible manner. We remember, that while we were working under

him as students at the School of Arts, Calcutta, he spent a great deal of money on equipment for our use in school, instead of approaching Government for sanctioning money. He also tried to keep in touch with all the artists of India who were still pursuing the Indian tradition and sometimes brought them over to the school for giving demonstration of their work before his pupils. He even appointed for the benefit of his pupils, who were ignorant of the ancient tradition, a pandit to teach Sanskrit literature. An artist of the Patna School Babu Iswari Prasad was specially appointed to teach his pupils the best that he could give. In the same way some Jaipur fresco-painters were appointed to teach his pupils the process of their work. Tagore himself painted a fresco after the Jaipur style, called "Kacha and Devajani," which is still preserved in the Calcutta School of Arts. We get an account of the technique of Jaipur frescoes in one of Mr. Havell's earliest books on Indian art viz. "Indian Painting and Sculpture." The "Bengal Pat" and old painting book cover of the Vaishnava school also attracted his attention. His students were thus surrounded in an atmosphere of Indian art and culture under the congenial and kind guidance of their master. Experiments were carried on in all directions and Mr. Bose and the writer were his ardent followers in the experiments in different types of work. Painting on wood, on silk and in different mediums, such as wall painting etc., were carried on under his direc-

tions and the activities were generally lively. He never believed in any particular canon or dogma in art, and his style of work developed itself through study and experience rather than through conscious endeavour to evolve one. He was a sound practical teacher, never a visionary or a preacher and one who was temperamentally of a retiring disposition disliking advertisement. His one and only aim was to encourage his pupils to develop their aesthetic sense and to be faithful to their artistic insight in the pursuit of their career. The whole movement has been summed up in the following lines by Lord Ronaldshay in his book, "The heart of Aryavarta." "It is interesting to recall the fact that these two artists (Dr. A. N. Tagore and G. N. Tagore) now generally recognized as the founders of the modern Bengali school of painting, were at this time ignorant, so they have informed me, of the tradition and formula embodied in the Silpa Sastras, the Indian Classics on Fine Art, yet impelled by a curious spiritual *malaise* they embarked upon the work which was so soon to bear fruit. It was, though deep done in the subconscious regions of their being, the instinct of the old Indian masters striving to find expression. The atmosphere amid which they worked may be gathered from a description of them given by an acute observer, as aiming at the development of an indigenous school of imaginative painting stimulated by their own example and by the study of the legends of Sanskrit literature. In the family residence of

the Tagores at Dwarka Nath Tagore Lane in Calcutta, they gathered round them a group of artists, many of whom—Nandalal Bose, O. C. Ganguly, Kshtindra 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 schools 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 taste, for the cultivation of a sense a beauty, a love of beautiful things, especially such beautiful things as are expressive of the mind of India in its evolution”.

Apart from the activities at the Fine Arts Dr. Tagore's attention was also drawn to the indigenous artistic handicrafts of India. Through the zeal of Abanindra Nath that of his brother Gaganendra Nath an emporium for cottage industries was established under the name of the Bengal Home Industries' Association in Calcutta. In his own house he discarded the usual fashion of the Victorian furniture knick-nacs and other articles of use. He decorated and furnished it in pure oriental style which he himself designed. His drawing room was then a source of inspiration of other art lovers and we find that Mr. Rathindra Nath, the son of Rabindranath Tagore, while starting his Vichitra Club in his residence saw that the room was well fitted up in Indian style with objects of

artistic interest. Thus with the regeneration in the sphere of Fine Arts, an aesthetic sense was developed which found expression in the beautifying of even the common household utensils. True lovers of art could not for instance tolerate that sight of an empty kerosine tin being used to keep water and so the love for indigenous handicrafts grew simultaneously. There is an erroneous idea about art which is plastic and art which is graphic. According to this idea, it is not the business of the painter to do anything toward the improvement of the artistic crafts. On the contrary, the great master-artists of Europe like Michel Angelo etc., designed Church lamps, chandeliers and artistic accessories which are famous. Dr. Tagore has similarly stimulated the artizans by his designs of various artistic object viz., jewelry, furniture, trophy and other utensils etc. He revived the long-forgotten taste for these things and helped the industry to thrive once more in its own soil.

Dr. Tagore held the chair of Indian Art at the Calcutta University. His lectures instilled an understanding and appreciation of art and cultivate the aesthetic sense of the intelligentsia which is essential for the cultural growth of India. His articles on Indian art published in various magazines in Bengal did much to pave the way towards a sympathetic attitude toward indigenous art and craft. His books on "Bharat-Silpa," "Indian Artistic Anatomy,"

“Canons of Indian Art” and “Alpona” have become the foremost publications on art for the use of the students of Indian art and are often quoted from by authors writing on the subject. His lucid Bengali style with graphic colourful descriptions are admired by the learned literates of Bengal. He has been honoured by the Calcutta University for his Bengali. His Majesty’s Government gave credit to their aesthetic sense and understanding. It was a very happy omen that the government took the movement initiated by him in good part and tried to help it to thrive. Distinguished authors and artists have visited him from all parts of the world to see his works. The following are but a few of those interested in it. Lord Hardinge of Penhurst, Lord Carmichael, Lord Ronaldshay (now Marquis of Zetland), Mr. E. S. Montague, Count Okakura, Sir Michael Sadler, Hishida, Kampo Arai, Tai Kwan, Nicholas de Roerich, Kalmikoff, C. S. Hwang, Anna Pavlova, T. F. Lu, Sylvain Levi, M. Winternitz, M. Bogdanoff.

In conclusion I want to say that if Mr. Havell tilled and prepared the field for Indian art Dr. Tagore sowed the seed which has now grown up to be a luxuriant tree.

THE FUTURE OF INDIAN ART

NONE can say definitely how the art history of a country gradually builds itself up through the ages. The sweat of the artists' brow brings about changes in the cultural aspects of a nation. The old tradition is superseded by their inventive zeal and a new tradition is again established. The cultural activities began in different forms and through unexpected quarters. Religious reforms and various schemes of social reconstruction are very often carried by individual groupings, sometimes quite isolated from one another. The history of the Renaissance movement in European art shows how in Italy a set of prominent personalities with their profound knowledge and aesthetic exuberance had changed the general character of the older stereotyped and conventional works of art.

The above remarks about the part played by geniuses in the evolution of art-forms should

not mislead people into believing that other factors are insignificant. Very often, outbursts of artistic activity follow a wholesale national upheaval. The latter again may assume different shapes. In the middle ages, in Europe as well as in India, it was mainly religious. The influence of the Church, Christian or Buddhist made for anonymity in art and removed of the individual artist. It made the angularities and mannerism the artist sink his oddities in the pool of conformity. The result probably was not all to the good. Later on the religious interest declined the cultural interests centering in the individual's initiative came in its stead. Thus we find that the great Ajanta period with its nameless artists came to a close. When the Mughals came, there was a clash of cultures. The old traditions lying sheltered in the courts of Rajputana were rejuvenated by the magic touch of Iran. A procession of artists followed, who were Hindus or Muslims in private life, but showed in their creative work India in the greater richness of life and spirit.

Art movement is like a wave and has its rise and fall. So we find a great upheaval and then a gap where the old traditions almost come to an end. The first enthusiasm for Western culture and thought changed the general outlook in life and art. We began to breathe in Shelley, Keats and Byron, leaving aside our Kalidasa, Bana and Bhasa, admire nude Venuses and reject Natarajas bizarre. Our taste deteriorated and we never knew where we were going.

Then with the 20th century, there came another change in our thought. The national aspirations in life and culture became articulate. The movement in art started by late Mr. Havell and Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore became a welcome sign for the country. Though originated from quite different impulses, on the one hand from the self-preservative instincts of a nation and out of purely aesthetic curiosity on the other, it remained comparatively free from the partisans of the hour. The future of Indian art depends upon the personalities who will be thrown up by the critical situations of our national life.

An attempt in the meanwhile, is being made by a group of artists in Bombay and Bengal to blend Eastern technique with that of the West. Experiments are the symptoms of life indeed. Yet in as much as life itself is not discontinuous, such experiments, in order to be artistically effective must needs take into account the fact of the continuity of the Indian life viz., the traditions, along with the urgency of the changes in our modern social life. In other words, the line of experiments is to be suggested by our vital indigenous art-forms.

The recent attempts made in Bengal, which should never be understood as "Bengal School of Art" or as a provincial activity, but as a reconstruction of Indian art-forms in general, have fortunately captured the heart of the intelligentsia. Many avenues have been opened and experiments are being carried out there

already. They are neither mechanical representation of Ajanta nor academical products of aesthetes indulging in abstractions. They embrace all kinds of technique, ancient, medieval and modern, including cubism, etc. Yet the assimilation is by the Indian tradition and not the other way about.

The country which has got its own tradition to boast about can seldom go out of track for any indefinite period and is sure to come back to its right path. Those who believe in tradition will always act as a brake upon the people, who wish to go beyond it.

“स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः”

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF ART

CONSEQUENT on the revival of Indian Art there has arisen a question with regard to the subject-matter of the latter ; namely, whether the artist should resort for his inspiration and ideas to mythology or paint scenes from modern life. The answer is, perhaps, self-evident : the artist may do either or both. He may pick up his stones from any quarry he likes. None can circumscribe the sphere of his selection. Though the truth of this statement is obvious, yet not seldom it is lost sight of in argumentation on, or estimates of, art, with the result that opinion is divided on the question of eclecticism of the artist.

But it is often argued—and to me it seems, fallaciously—that selecting and executing an idea or a “story” from mythology or choosing a traditional theme, is imitation and that it does not lead to an original creation. This view is not right. It is the artist’s peculiar and personal

perception of the mystery or the being and the beauty of things which determines the quality or excellence of a picture. And in as much as that the artist gives expression to an aspect of truth, or beauty of the object he draws or paints, which has not been perceived before or expressed into beautiful form, he is original, no matter whatever be the source of his inspiration or the "text" of his picture. It is only excellent pictures which survive the shifting taste of people.

Let me illustrate my point : before Raphael painted his immortal Madonnas, there were several artists who had executed the same subject, but it is Raphael's work which is prized and remembered to this day, while that of others is nearly forgotten.* Again, thousands of images of the Buddha were carved in stone or wood and the relics thereof are scattered all over India, but it is Buddha's images discovered in Sarnath, Ceylon and Java which have a place of honour in our art gallery. Nor was there any question of imitation here, because this particular subject had been treated to the point of the thread-bare. The artist is always striving towards perfection, and so long as an artist can give a new turn to ideas and objects, which have existed or have been worked upon in the past or still exist, he will be reckoned as a true interpreter of his art.

*A critical appreciation of Italian Primitives has been a characteristic feature of recent connoisseurship in Europe and America.

It will not be out of place here to quote Mr. Dwijendranath Tagore's views on what is not imitation. Suppose, says he, there are two artists. One of them has painted an object; the other sees it and being inspired by a new idea, expresses it in line and colour and it turns out to be identical with the first picture. Now, shall we say that the second artist copied from the picture of the first? Not at all, because both were inspired by individual emotions raised by the object concerned. And I may add that, if an artist sees a thing and after some-time paints it with the result that his production is a likeness of the object observed, he cannot be charged with imitation. There will be as much difference between the two as there is between a photograph and a painting.

Moreover, mythology will always appeal to the artist being full of inspiring ideas. The history of art in other countries as well as in our own bears ample testimony to this fact. In Greece, Egypt and India scores of artists had derived their inspiration from the mythologies of their respective races and countries. A glance at the past records of art reveals also another fact; namely, that the artist chose for his subject-matter lives of heroes, kings and religious teachers in order to perpetuate the ideals they embodied. For instance, in Italy there are many pictures which illustrate on the canvas the life and teaching of Christ. There is, in a word, something like hero-worship in art. And in a country like India, where certain associa-

tions and symbols, like Krishna's flute, the eternal love of Bharata for Rama, Sita's fidelity to her husband, and the symbolic representation of India by a lotus are ingrained in the culture of the people, it is difficult for the artist to cut himself off from mythology. Painting a bald or bare fact is quite different from painting the artist's sense of the same fact. The daily life of a common labourer may be faithfully depicted by an artist, but it will not appeal to the average man unless it is informed with the painter's perception of the spirit of the scene : the beauty in the brawns of the workman, the rhythm of his action, the harmony between nature and the labourer, all these will exercise and appeal to the imagination of the true artist. But the tendency nowadays is towards freedom in ideas and expression. It is because the art of a country changes with the variation in the outlook of the people on life and nature. There was a time when deities appealed to and evoked the admiration of the average man. We seem to have outgrown that now. We go to modern life with all its expansions and achievements. And as regards freedom in expression it is true that the artist cannot have his own way in it and that he is bound by certain principles of working, which are revealed to him by his intuition. Technique plays an important part in the production of a picture and there are no hard and fast rules governing it. But what is required is this : that the expression must be as beautiful as the idea and that colour and line

are employed with the sole purpose of developing the sense of the sight and conveying to the onlooker what the artist meant to say.

Pictures may be divided into two classes : Epic and Lyric or Classic and Romantic. Of course, the division is not exclusive ; one may overlap the other. All that depends on the fact whether the critic lays more stress on the idea than on the treatment of it, which may be quite new and original. This is by way of a digression.

The mission of the artist is noble indeed. It is he who has initiated his fellow creatures into the perception, admiration and enjoyment of the ultimate beauty in God's creation. He has spread "in the widest commonalty" the joy which is born of the understanding of the work of the Divine Artist. And to the artist the world is never old, it is to him a perennial spring of inspiration.

RABINDRANATH—THE PAINTER

ON my visit to Calcutta in 1932, I had the opportunity of seeing the Poet's paintings. The beauty and illusion which the spontaneity of the poet's pen creates is repeated when he takes up his brush, but one is the result of his lifelong *sadhana* and the other is the natural overflow of a teeming fancy. Here in the place of *sadhana* we have concentrated *Ananda*. If we wish to find in these paintings the lines and colours which from the secret depths of the poet's mind acquire such wonderful play in his poetry we shall be disappointed. But if we should seek the fountain from which his poetry springs and finds sustenance, then we shall see that these strange lines and colours have the same source and are only a different manifestation. Master-artists all the world over in their search for beauty show this natural spontaneity and simplicity.

All who know the poet are aware of the fact

that early in life the poet showed signs of a fine appreciation of art. If amongst the younger members of his family he noticed artistic capacity he did all in his powers to encourage it and to see that no obstacles prevented them from culturing it. Through his poetry and songs too he would inspire them. I myself owe a great deal of encouragement to him and it was he who introduced me to the early paintings of Abanindranath Tagore, the father of the modern revivalist School of Indian Art. Countless numbers of Indian artists owe their inspiration to him, and those who have not come into personal contact with him were greatly inspired by his songs and poems, for these have opened to them the gateway of imagination.

The poet is indeed a mighty teacher of pictorial effect, for though in his paintings we find more suggestiveness than actual accomplishment yet the pages of his poetry are strewn with the most delicate and exquisite pictorial gems which will be a store-house of inspiration for artists for ages to come. His pictures have not that perfect and finished harmony of form and colour which is the essence of all great art, but, they have in them a wonderful craft, a creative urge, which is something quite spontaneous and whose charm is indescribable. I do not think we can ever give a uniform and final judgment on a piece of art. Whether we like a picture or not depends on one's taste and cultural background. Those for instance, who care for the coarse commonplace characterisa-

tion of the Parsee Theatre can understand nothing more delicate and subtle. Again those who are admirers of Rabindranath's *Post Office* and *Cycle of Spring* draw their joy from the subtle forms of art. Thus it is while some people will term a piece of art fantastic, others will give it the highest praise.

To-day, however, we can see a new valuation of art at work. From the impatience with traditional forms which is so evident in Modern European Art, and which has even invaded our art by creating a contempt for old techniques, we can surmise that in art at least we can no longer be satisfied by following the beaten track. We must express our own individuality in many forms. It was Abanindranath Tagore who first taught us this and that it is his pictures which demonstrate the gospel of individuality in art most perfectly. Like a simple child dazzled by a painted toy we had stretched out our hand to take from the foreigner his gift of art. How disastrous this would have been I need not say to-day, for the danger is past and a strong indigenous school of art has been established which with its feet firmly fixed in the traditions of Indian art, is yet open to modern influences, as testified by Gogonendranath Tagore who has successfully introduced the Cubist and Futurist styles into Indian art. These experiments are interesting in as much as they inspire the Indian artist to try new forms while maintaining his own individuality, so that Indian art may not stagnate. Again the reversion to Primitive art

which is one of the tendencies of modern European art is now being introduced to us in the pictures of the Poet, though the poet's pictures have a childlike spontaneity and have not the laboured effort to imitate the simple characteristic of the Primitive School in Europe.

This movement, this destructive tendency, however distasteful to conservative artists wedded to traditional forms, is no doubt a great boon to us, for it does not allow art to stagnate and as such is desired by those who value progress. Just as terrible cyclones appear at intervals and turn everything upside-down, in their destructive force clearing away a great deal of the overflow of nature, so in art periodically there appear certain revolutionary artists who by crushing and entirely destroying old forms and ideals give rise to a new Era in art. In Europe, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Epstein, Picasso, Juan Gris, Andre Masson, Joan Mirs, Rous etc. and similar artists may be cited as examples of these revolutionary tendencies. In time, however, these artists will form their own schools giving rise to new traditions in art. In this respect I remember that when in 1909 I wrote an article on Ajanta in the *Bharati* in colloquial Bengali, critics were severe in their condemnation of my style, but to-day this style has become the ordinary vehicle of literary expression in Bengal.

The World to-day is full of revolutionary tendencies. Old ideals and forms are breaking up. In politics and social structure the estab-

lishment of communism in Russia is profoundly changing older valuations. The changes which are taking place plainly show that it will no longer be possible to tread the way chalked out by our ancestors. Conservative's caution must yield to the call of the new. So it will not be very difficult for us to appreciate these perhaps too modern productions of art which the Poet has painted for us.

Joy in the act of creation without any other motive force is indeed the test of the true artist, but it often happens that an artist will follow fashion rather than the inner urge, in order to gain a cheap popularity. These latter sell their art like grocers in the world's market and do not deserve the title of artists. It is, however, this unalloyed joy of the artist in creation, irrespective of and overflowing the boundaries of any particular medium, that we see in this attempt of the poet of seventy taking up the brush for the first time. In former days when correcting his poetry instead of putting his pen through a word he would in abstraction of mind go on scratching till the lines took the form of some fantastic figure or object. That his pictures too are born in the same spontaneous fashion without previous thought or premeditation can easily be seen. His strong sense of rhythm has this time expressed itself through his pictures. We can see the rhythmic urge that carries him along and is so clearly evident in the beauty of the lines which give form to his fancy.

Who has not seen the fantastic play which

goes on in nature ? Standing outlined against the evening sky-line shapes of darkness the trees are transformed into strange fantastic figures. One of them looks like a tall one-legged man with a peaked nose and long flowing beard. Another looks like some unknown bird with a big comb on its head. In like manner the clouds shape themselves into some mysterious land, with hills of massed gold and streams of glittering diamonds beckoning to us in their transitory glory.

All worshippers at the altar of beauty feel the charm of these ephemeral and fanciful form of nature, but it is Rabindranath who in his old age, with the enthusiasm of youth, finds for us in his painting key to this mystery of nature.

In old English Literature there came an age when freeing themselves from the bondage of Latin, English authors took their stand on colloquial English and created a new literature. So in the age of the renovation of art a movement for destruction and recreation is on foot. In India too it is no longer possible to enclose Literature within the pale of Sanskrit and Sanskritised words. In the sphere of language it was the Poet who first freed Bengal from the Puritanical shackles of Sanskrit forms. Now in the realm of art, too, the Poet is trying to open a new field for us.

It seems to be the special privilege of Rabindranath to be able to enter into the hearts of children. From his paintings we can see that

he has eschewed the necessity of learning and giving himself entirely to the joy of the child in drawing whatever his fancy dictated ; the Poet has created a unique style of art, the appreciation of which requires a child's heart and capacity for enjoyment. His pictures are not quite the same as what is called Primitive art in Europe. They are rather the expression of the fantastic imaginings of childhood. A sophisticated attempt to go back to the primitive differs from the attempt of the Poet who without knowing the technique of line and colour, creates for us some strange unknown world which may well compare with the productions of primitive man trying to give form to his fancies. The pictures puzzle us like some mysterious figures, yet they do not express any deep philosophical meaning, nor do they teach us a new art technique. Herein lies their distinction and so I shall end by quoting Coomaraswamy "The Poet's art is childlike but not childish."

In this one sentence he sums up all that has to be said of the Poet's pictures.

JOGIMARA CAVE PAINTINGS IN RAMGARH (C. P.)

IN the month of February 1914, my friend Mr. Samarendranath Gupta of the Lahore Mayo School of Art and myself were summoned by the Archaeological Survey Department to join an expedition to the Ramgarh Hills, situated in the Feudatory State of Sirgiya in the Central Provinces. We were commissioned to copy out the ancient fresco paintings on the ceilings of Jogimara caves supposed to be of 300 B. C. We arrived in due course at Pendra Road Station on the Bengal Nagpur Railway. This is also the station where pilgrims detrain for the sacred shrine of Amarnath and for the source of the Nerbudda.

We joined Mr. I. T. Blakiston, the Assistant Superintendent of the Archaeological Department* at the railway station and after a day's rest commenced the journey on an elephant. We had two elephants to ride on and 60 men to carry our tents and other equipments. The first

*Recently retired as the Director General of Archaeology.

day of the journey was really very pleasant ; but the prospect of a long six days' uncomfortable ride on the back of an elephant had a rather chilling effect on our minds. The scorching heat of the sun and the want of proper diet caused no little discomfort and inconvenience and towards the end of our tedious journey we were heartily sick of the whole business. The Ramgarh hills stand about 100 miles off from the Pendra Road Station.

The height of the main peak of the Ramgarh Hills is about 2000 feet above sea level. It is crested with an old ruined temple which serves to remind travellers of the glory of days that are past. We caught a distant glimpse of it as we passed along. We had to cross a plain and then to go partly through a forest on our elephant and thereafter to trudge along up-hill for some distance on foot. At last we reached an elevated tableland which we had to cross in order to get to the top of the peak. We saw on the tableland a spring which runs down a steep incline and forms the source of a river. Tradition has it that in the past age Sita, Rama and Lakshman once bathed at this very pool during the period of their banishment. Hindu pilgrims regard this spring as even more sacred than the Ganges itself.

On our way we found a ruined gate with its facade and ornamental work considerably mutilated. Then we came across some Sati stones lying about, the condition of these stones being no better than that of the gate. We passed by

a stone which resembles a high altar with a flight of steps carved out of the same stone. One can hardly make out of the use of so big a stone altar in such a place. As we climbed higher up we passed a bijou temple chiselled out of a single small piece of stone. It stands as a finger-post to guide pilgrims to the main shrine. Soon after we found one huge block of black stone with a small grotto carved out of it. The grotto is provided with a very narrow door which is accessible only to little children.

We now encountered the most difficult portion of the hill we had to climb. We found a steep, narrow track leading up to the temple. We had to crawl on all fours for long distance at a stretch and so we at last got quite tired. Our joy knew no bounds when the remains of a beautifully decorated gateway caught our view. We soon reached a balcony-like place from which we had a panoramic and bird's-eye view of the distant serrated hills and of the lakes and plains below. It was a fascinating landscape. The green plains below looked beautiful beyond description. The hills encircling the distant horizon looked like the great blue lotus petals of Vishnu. We gazed for a time in silent wonder at the view spread out before us. On either side of the gateway there are verandahs supported by rows of pillars and in one of them there sat a figure with folded hands with serpents coiled round them. The figure displays a remarkable degree of accuracy in anatomical proportions. There was also a

pretty ornamental lotus carved out in the arch over the entrance. We left these behind and rose higher up the hill. We soon reached the crest consisting of a piece of level ground which was 2000 feet above the plains below. There also we found the ruins of another gateway in a worse condition. Some stone figures lay scattered about the place. What with rain and the wear and tear of ages very little is left of their original perfection, but there was enough in these remains to give us a faint idea of their former glory. The temple is the Ramgarh temple, which is supposed to give its name to the Hills. The style seemed to us to resemble that of Bhubaneswar. It has been observed that the older the sculpture the less prominent would be the relief. Judged by this test the temple must be very ancient. Another proof of its age is that the arched ceiling was not built with any mortar but it was simply built up with stones placed one upon another. In ancient times mortar was not used in the construction of arches in the buildings. A few images of deities are placed inside the temple. There are Rama, Lakshman and Sita represented in one block of stone, which seemed to be of the 12th century work. There is a Jogini holding a sacred vessel of water, besides a figure of Vishnu and another single figure of Rama. These images are thought to be of later date. There was Sivalinga in the courtyard and a bronze bell suspended from a tree. It is needless to mention

that these have been recently introduced by the local priests. There are some other broken images under a newly built stone wall. Here also we found some Sati stones lying about.

We had to make a short descent from the top in order to see the Jogimara cave. The cave Jogimara contained the ancient paintings which formed the main object of our visit. We had to cross a natural tunnel about 180 feet in length to go to the cave. According to Dr. Bloch this tunnel was called *Hatipole i. e.*, a hole bored by elephants. The tunnel was so wide and dark that it might be taken to be the open mouth of a gigantic dragon ready to devour its prey. There, right away in a corner, the water from a spring was constantly dripping on a stone in which a cup-like hollow had been formed by the action of the water. The gentle dripping sound of the spring resounded between the caves and hill-sides and produced a loud roaring sound. We drank from the natural stone basin and found the water cool and refreshing. The spring was marked out by a chiselled line which seems to be the handiwork of the old cave dwellers.

We had to rise higher up again to some extent after passing through the tunnel and then we came to the two caves of Jogimara and Sita-bengra. We passed by another cave before we reached them but calls for no remarks, as it is only a crude type of an old cave-dwelling, Dr.

Bloch describes 'Sitabengra' as 'Sitabongra.' Bengra according to the local dialect is 'bungalow' and the correct form appears to be 'Sitabengra' and not 'Sitabongra.' The Sitabengra seemed at first sight to be a natural cave but when we entered it we were differently impressed. We found it had been carefully carved out to suit its ancient occupants. According to Dr. Bloch and others it was the only specimen of an amphitheatre after the Greek style left by the ancient Indians. There are four holes at the outlet entrance which are supposed by them to show the place for suspending the drop-scene by means of wooden poles. The semi-circular stair-case leading to the upper entrance to the cave was supposed by them to have been the gallery used by spectators. But the rows of the stairs are so arranged that it was impossible for one to have a view of the interior of the cave or to be able to see any performance; and the position would be such as to place the spectators with their back to the stage. There was moreover little space left in front outside the cave to accommodate a temporary wooden stage which might have been built at that time. The very steepness of the place rendered it unfit for a stage. It did not strike us as probable that this place was ever used as a stage.

Of course, Dr. Bloch does not mention any wooden stage, nor we find any indication of any such stage but some people suppose that it existed. All that we could make out was that this cave was used by the cave-dwellers as a

hall for musical entertainments. We think that the four holes at the outer entrance were used for suspending a screen to keep off wind and rain. The average height of the ceiling from the floor was only six feet. The ceiling was too close to our heads when we stood inside it. In the interior there is a raised platform running right round the cave. There is a wide drain in this cave passing through the wall. We noticed some carefully-made holes in the floor but we could not make out what these were meant for. Just at the back of the same hill, opposite the Sitabengra cave there are the Lachmanbengra and certain other small caves. In these caves also we found traces of human habitation. These caves contain many raised stone seats and stone beds. In the Lachmanbengra cave also there is a drain. The story goes that during Rama's exile while Lakshman was observing a fast Sita in order to quench his thirst used to pour out sherbet (a cold drink) made of the pulp of the leel fruit from her Bengra (cave) along this drain. There is a broken image of Rama and one representing Lakshman in full armour placed inside the cave. Outside, on the right wall looking towards the cave there is a strange impression of a foot-print with the portrait of a warrior chiselled on it. We could not make out what it actually signified but it looked very much like the impression of a man's foot on clay. The people here regard it as an impression of the scarlet foot of the great Rama.

After viewing these antiquities we proceeded to the cave Jogimara to see the paintings there. This cave is a natural one. It measures only ten feet by six. The pictures are drawn on the ceiling in panels which are divided from one another by red lines. The ceiling is much too low so that we could touch the pictures with our hands. The light is sufficient as the front door is wide open. There is also a hole right on top of the cave through which light is admitted. This hole seems to serve no other purpose but to let in light and air.

At the very first sight of the Jogimara cave the paintings seemed to be of as inferior a type and quite as crude as the lowest type of the old Bengal pictures. While engaged in copying these paintings we came across some clever lines of earlier drawings which had been evidently covered up by the later paintings. Thus we found that the cave very probably possessed drawings of a superior class at some unknown period in the past. In later times (undoubtedly far remote from the present day) some people appear to have covered up the former paintings with a thick coating of white colouring matter and left behind these clumsy daubs of their own.

The first part of the panel from the right side of the cave shows a few human figures, a figure of an elephant and a grotesque-looking shark which is shown by means of a few decorative dark lines indicating waves, to be floating in the river. The pictures are painted with

white, red and black pigments only. In the second part there are several figures seated underneath a tree. We could not make out what the subject of the painting really was. The trees are indicated by a thick trunk, a few branches, with only two or three leaves. The leaves and the trees are all entirely drawn in red. There is a garden drawn in black lines against a white background in this panel. The garden is represented only by some lilies painted in black lines. A dancing couple is painted over one of these flowers entirely in red. We could not find either the eyes or the noses of the dancers. The flowers are not shown in colour. The subject of the fourth panel is extremely curious. This panel contains a few lilliputian doll-like figures entirely without proportions and absolutely wanting in expression. These pictures are outlined in black. The pose of the figures is rather amusing. In one place there is only a bird's beak to be seen above a figure. There is no means of knowing what this is intended to represent. The mystery is likely to remain for ever unsolved. The fifth picture represents a lady squatting on the ground while some musicians are engaged in a dancing revelry. The lines of latter bear a striking resemblance to those of an inferior Ajanta painting. The picture, though not so well executed as the cave at Ajanta, appears to be identical in design. However that may be, this was the only picture which really interested us. In the 6th and 7th panels the pictures are

well-nigh undecipherable. Closer inspection would however reveal several pictures resembling those of the Chaitya temples and some of them are representations of Ancient Indian chariots. Old Indian chariots bear a marked resemblance to old Greek chariots. The fresco-ground here is not at all like that of Ajanta. At Ajanta the ground for the frescoes was prepared with a thick coating of earth and other materials but here the ground appears to be made of white paints laid over the rough surface of the ceiling. Only three colours are used for pictures, whereas those used at Ajanta are numerous. Besides red, white, and black we met with a yellowish colour but this seemed to us to be nothing but the red paint transformed by the action of wind and weather. I believe the white paints used in the paintings were prepared from the indigenous white clay to which I have already referred. This white clay is obtainable in abundance in the cave above the high hill near the temple and it is used in preparing an ointment which is applied by devout pilgrims to their forehead.

The red material does not appear to be very common here. Apparently black ink could be easily made by the old inhabitants as the fruits of *Terminalia Chibula* are found in abundance and good ink could be made by burning them. The forest here might indeed be called a forest of myrobalan trees. It is sufficiently clear that the Ramgarh artists were not so well-skilled as their congeners of Ajanta either in the art of painting or in mixing colours. But it must be

said that the relics inspected by us bear testimony to their spirit of enterprise and boldness of execution.

There are several other caves besides those already mentioned. Some were evidently chiselled out for dwelling purposes while others appeared to be natural grottos. Some were altogether inaccessible. There is a natural cave which is shaped much like a human eye. The Ramgarh caves are quite different in character from the finely carved Buddhist caves.

There are inscriptions deeply engraved on the stone walls of the Jogimara and Sitabengra caves. They record a love affair between a dancing girl and a sculptor. Dr. Bloch and others have attempted to prove that the characters are older even than those of Asoka's time. Dr. Bloch has narrated his travels and discoveries in the Journal of the Asiatic Society. He formed the opinion that the Sitabengra was an amphitheatre after the ancient Greek style as he found the name of a dancing girl there. It is much to be regretted that Dr. Bloch has not dealt with the Ramgarh temple in detail. We are of opinion that there was some connection between the cave-dwellers and the temple whatever the precise nature of that connection might have been. There was in ancient times a custom to maintain well-trained dancing girls to perform the sacred dance before the deities in temples during the hours of worship. Thus we still find 'devadasis' employed in the southern Indian temples. All

that can be safely said is that there was a 'devadasi' attached to this temple.

While we were in camp at Udaipur we had a pleasant view one day of a fleecy cloud overhanging two peaks and the scene reminded us of the following lines in the 'Cloud Messenger' of Kalidas :—

अद्रेः शृङ्ग हरति पवनः किंस्विदितुन्मुखीभिर
 दष्टोत् साहस्रकितचकितं मुग्धसिद्धाङ्गनाभिः ।
 स्थानादस्मात् सरसनिचुलादुत्पतोदङ् मुखः खं,
 दिङ् नागानां पथि परिहरन् स्थूलहस्तावलोपान् ॥

The sight of thee will derive to plain surprise
 The Siddha wives : in wonder face upturned,
 They will ask, if winds are tearing off the
 peak :

As leavest thou this Asram, cool and wet
 With Nichula woods, do thou avoid
 The moving Ding-naga's trunks, and shoot
 up high.*

The picture drawn by the poet seemed to stand before our eyes in all its reality.

The real mystery of these cave temples must be left to be unveiled by some future antiquary.

*From the "Cloud Messenger" translated by S. C. Sarcar, M. A. (Bengal Provincial Civil Service).

THE PAINTINGS OF THE BAGH CAVES

MURAL painting adorns its sister art architecture and it can be judged by its design and in its structural unity with its architectural environments. To understand Indian fresco it must be seen in the space which it occupies, but the fresco paintings of the Italian Renaissance can be quite as well understood when taken out of its architectural surroundings.

It has been ascertained that it was only at Pompeii that the art of painting had attained a high degree of perfection contemporaneously with those of Ajanta and Bagh. But the technique of those paintings has nothing in common with that of India. The paintings of Pompeii are defective in perspective. "In the Pompeian landscape piece of 'Paris on Mount Ida' there is no sense of the relative proportions of objects, and a cow in the foreground is much smaller than Paris, who is a long way back in the composition. There is a good deal of

resemblance between the pictures of India with those of China and Japan. It has been ascertained that Buddhist art spread to those countries along with Buddhist religion.

The mural paintings in the temple of Horiuji (708—715 A. D.) are quite Indian in character, recalling the frescoes of the cave-temples of Ajanta in their grand, strongly outlined figures and in the feeling for character and life which they reveal.* Besides those of Japan and China paintings of the old Buddhist Mahayana period have been discovered on the mud walls of houses in Central Asia and Turkestan ; as these paintings lay buried in the sands of the desert they have not suffered much damage. Some say that Mahayana Buddhism was introduced four hundred years after the birth of Buddha by Nagarjuna of Berar. Mahayana Buddhism assumed the aspect of Hinduism as it got mixed up with Tantric and idolatrous rites. This accounts for fact that in Khotan, Meeran, Turfan, and other places in Central Asia, (Chinese Turkestan) figures of Ganapati and other Hindu deities appear in the ancient paintings alongside the figure of Buddha. It appears that a curious amalgam was found in Central Asia by mixing up art forms of India across the Himalaya on the south with those of China on the east. It is said that in Egypt, long before its occupation by the Greeks, there prevailed a system of painting on a previously

*Painting in the Far East, 2nd Ed., P. 98.

prepared ground similar to the practice in vogue in ancient India. The European system of pictorial groundwork is entirely different from that of India. In India two kinds of groundwork are generally met with. Stone walls, in the first instance, made as smooth as possible and then a priming consisting of a well-prepared mixture of cowdung, earth husks of paddy or decomposed jute (in the Bagh frescoes decomposed fibres of wood have been found), is laid on the surface of the stone to the thickness of half an inch and sometimes, in order to remove any unevenness, to the extent of two to three inches. In painting the ceilings the walls were left uneven. Finally, the earthen priming was covered over with a thin layer of semi-liquid earth, strained through some fine linen. After all, on the surface thus prepared, a white paint (consisting not of lime, but probably of chalk or powdered conch shells) was applied very thinly two or three times. The second and subsequent coats were only applied after the first and other coats were perfectly dry. It appears that after the ground had been prepared in this manner it was left to dry perfectly and then rendered smooth by means of conch shells or a polished stone. In the other style of preparing the ground no earth was applied to stone walls. Two or three coats of thin white paint, appearing like the shell of an egg, were applied to stone walls to serve as groundwork for paintings. We have observed such plastering in A. T.—8.

Central India in paintings of the second century B. C., found in the Ramgarh caves in the State of Surguja. Fresco of this description is met with, in very rare instances, at Ajanta and Bagh. In the verandah of the Rangmahal cave and in cave No. III at Bagh the ground on which the pictures are painted is so brick-red in colour as to be mistaken for powdered brick, but we have seen the hill from which the red earth used for the purpose was obtained and is still available in immense quantity. On the surface of some broken columns in Bagh Cave No. IV and in other caves in which the ornamental work on the columns has been damaged we noticed the use of sand and lime plastering which appear to be very old. It may be inferred from this that the use of sand and lime plastering has been known in India since the eighth century. In Italy two kinds of ground painting were known—one was known as *Fresco Secco* and the other *Fresco Buono* or Pure Fresco. The first was a dry process and the second, a wet fresco process.

It is mentioned in an old Italian book regarding *Albaria-Opera* or the mode of preparing the ground for paintings that at first a *trullissattio* or rough cast was made of sand and lime and then well-strained lime and sand (powdered marble also was used) were applied on its surface. The successive coatings of sand and lime were, according to the practice, applied before the preceding ones had completely dried up. The sand and lime was strained through a fine medium before the application of *intonaco*,

the final coat of plaster. Cennino in his book mentions the proportions used in mixing sand with lime. According to him one part of lime should be mixed with two parts of sand. The German proportion of mixing was one part of lime with three parts of sand. As soon as the ground was completed a coat of work, resin and oil was anointed and driven in by heat and then polished till the surface shines like mirror. After the completion of the groundwork the surface was constantly kept moist by frequent application of lime water and then pictures were drawn with colours. It would be impossible to draw pictures if the surface was left unused and exposed to atmospheric influences for any length of time. On account of this the Italian painters used to prepare only as much ground as they could make use of in the course of a single day. This is why the separating lines of their daily work can be detected in the Italian frescoes under close examination.

The process of drawing pictures while the fresco was wet called *Fresco Buono* or wet process. The process of drawing pictures after the completion of the ground and application of lime water on the thoroughly dried surface was called *Fresco Secco* or dry process. It is the characteristic of the European ground for painting that work is rendered impossible if the fresco dries up completely. As the ancient Indian ground for painting was made of earth it required no preliminary drenching process for painting work. Herein lies the real difference

between the European and Indian methods of fresco paintings. In Europe, colours were made chiefly with three kinds of adhesive substances—size tempera or colour made of gum from size, egg tempera or colour mixed with yolk of an egg; and wax-tempera or colour made with wax—were in constant use. In Indian painting the gum or mucilage from *Bel* and *Neem* trees and mucilage from the tamarind seed are used as adhesive substance with paints. It is difficult to find out the exact kind of mucilaginous substance actually used in the Bagh paintings. There are pictures in the verandah of cave No. IV (Rangmahal), the roof of which has completely given way. These paintings have withstood the inclemencies of the seasons for nearly a thousand years. Sir W. Richmond has experimented with a painting done with the yolk of an egg by exposing it to atmospheric influences for a period of six months, with the result that the picture did not suffer any damage. (Encyclopædia Britannica, Painting.) We have heard from the local painters of Bengal and Orissa that the use of gum prepared from tamarind seeds makes the paintings improve with age. These painters have been practising their craft from generation to generation for three or four hundred years and the pictures drawn and handed down by their forefathers testify to their statements. Nowhere were animal or vegetable colours used in fresco painting. Colours produced from stone, mineral substance and earth were, however, constantly

used for that purpose. In the Indian fresco paintings at Bagh and Ajanta, etc., yellow ochre, chalk, various kinds of red ochre, terraverte or green earth, black earth of grey and many other colours and sapphires (lapis lazuli) are found to have been used. In the paintings at Bagh traces of lac-dye are often met with. In the ancient Sinhalese paintings blue colours are absent and yellow colours are rare. Some colours were obtained by mixing different colours. The composition of the Bagh paintings consists like that of the Ajanta paintings of a close combination of different objects and yet it is very attractive. The composition of a *Nautch* (dancing) picture in Bagh is circular. The movements of the dance have been vividly depicted by the inclination of the heads of the dancing girls each in opposite directions. The thickness of the crowd in a procession of elephants and horses has been intensified by drawing them very close together. There is a picture of a *Mahout* in repose showing the man while driving the elephant in a procession lying leaning towards the animal's head with his head resting on his hands. It would seem that if the *Mahout* had been shown in a sitting posture his head could not be represented in the picture which was drawn close to the ceiling. This defect in the pose has been so cleverly manipulated as to defy detection except on very close scrutiny. There is no doubt that the Bagh painters were quite conscious of the rhythmic balance in the composition of their paintings. The fragments surviving

on the walls of the verandah of Cave No. IV (Rangmahal) were drawn in two different styles. Besides these there are paintings inside the same cave and in Cave No. III which disclose somewhat different style and treatment. The pictures on some portion of the verandah in Cave No. IV seem to be the handiwork of master artists, while those in another part of the same verandah seem to belong to different, of less skilled hand. In the Ajanta paintings, too, there are ample indications that they are the works of different in each cave. The paintings of the Rangmahal in Bagh, which are still in a comparatively good state of preservation, are works of a markedly high order as regards their composition and style. The painters' skill which characterises the Ajanta frescoes is wanting in the Bagh paintings. These latter with their light and shade and thin colour contrasts remind us of the later famous Italian paintings of the fifteenth century. It is not yet known if there was any painting in Europe or in any other part of the world (Pompeii excepted) coeval with that of Bagh, so far advanced in technique. The folds in elephant's trunk and soft portions of its neck have been so skilfully stippled that it is difficult to imagine an artist, at such an early period, producing such works. The shading of the legs, the body and the muscles of horses is rendered with such delicacy as to stand comparison with the comparatively recent works of Rambrandt. In short, a closer examination of the works of the old

Indian Artists would go to show that they were fully acquainted with the technique of paintings for which credit is usually given to modern painters. The decorative painting in Cave No. IV bears testimony to the skill of the painters in drawing lines of the utmost firmness and delicacy. Out of the nine caves in Bagh that can be inspected two have decayed through the effects of time and are likely in the course of a few hundred years to be wiped out of existence. Of the remaining seven caves remnants of damaged frescoes exist only in Caves Nos. III and IV. In one or two of the caves the plastering for ground-work and traces of colouring matter on the columns are only visible here and there. In the centre and side of the ceiling of the wall of Cave No. II decorative work in the form of panels of lotus flowers are painted. At present the whole place has been darkened by smoke from the incense-pots of the *Sanyasis* who have made it their abode. Some decorative designs exist on the ceiling of the verandah adjoining the hall of Cave No. III. On one side there is the figure of a girl in a stooping posture engaged fanning with a fly whisk on one side of the door-way, on another side only the face of a girl is visible. Within the room there existed at one time a representation of the Buddha in the posture known as *Padmasana* and with an umbrella overhead encircled by an aureole. All that remains now are portions of the feet of the Buddha, a portion of the aureole and umbrella. The other portions have all worn away. A

disciple of the Buddha is represented with an incense carrier beside one of the figures of the Buddha. There was, in the central wall of the room, a gigantic representation of the Buddha standing, with figures on either side of lions riding on elephants to represent a throne. Grounds had been evidently prepared in some of the rooms adjoining this room of Cave No. III, but we found no paintings worth speaking of.

In front of the entrance to the Rangmahal (in Cave No. IV) there are thirty-five pictures of Buddha in meditation (each about five inches in height) in seven rows five in each row. Lotus petals in the shape of aureoles adorn these very much in the style of the background against which the temporary images of gods and goddesses in Bengal are set. These are apparently the handiwork of one and the same artist. This kind of images painted daily by the lay worshippers are still in vogue in Japan, China and Tibet.

There is a coloured ornamental scroll round the hall of the *Rangmahal* about six feet in width. It consists principally of black, white, yellow and green colours. On a column in the hall there are figures which look as if seated on boats. The raised portions of these boats look like human arms, so that figures have the appearance of being four armed. These figures are drawn in black and white. They are now in a state of utter decay. Beneath the ceiling, ornamental paintings of flowers, fruits and birds appear on separate panels. The roof has completely

given way. The ceiling of this cave was at one time adorned with decorative designs. More skill in drawing than the colouring is evidenced by the pictures inside the caves. Just above the first entrance there is a picture of a man squatting on the ground inside a walled enclosure with his hand resting on one of his knees which is raised while the other leg lies stretched on the ground. Close by there stands the figure of a girl in a bannana garden looking backward with one arm akimbo, and the other hand supporting her chin. Just above this is the figure of a man lying prostrate. Only a portion of the face of a queer looking man appears in another picture. On one side of this on the wall close to a door there are rounded representations of hills in yellow and red, surmounted by a garden. Two or three men appear in the garden at the foot of the hills ; there are faces of girls ; the other parts of whose figures are completely obliterated. There is another wall close by. Near this wall there is a slightly raised ground, with a man wearing coat (apparently a common person) squatting with his head resting on his cheek in an attitude of contemplation. Alongside this there is the figure of a man who looks like an ascetic seated on a bench with his hands clasped together. The expression is serious and devotional. At the feet of this man there sits a pigmy who is apparently a valet. On the top of the next door-way there is a figure of a dark girl seated on a striped cushion with another figure in front of her seated on a bench apparently

discussing some serious topic. The loveliness of the dark girl's colour is indescribable. This picture sets forth as nothing else can the exquisite beauty which may be associated with a swarthy skin. On another side of the door there is a girl in the act of plucking something from a tree. Close to her are visible portions of the face and hand of another girl. The background of this picture has been represented somewhat in the shape of hills and clouds. The hills are arranged like so many brick-kilns just as in the case of the Ajanta paintings. Two or three black faced monkeys appear on the top of the hills. In the space at the middle of two doorways amongst the pictures already mentioned there is a colossal figure of a divine Dwarapala or heavenly porter wearing a coronet. This figure seems to have been drawn very much in the style of the two heavenly porters in the cave-paintings on either side of the walls in Ajanta Cave No. 1. The two Ajanta pictures have been supposed to represent Buddha's great renunciation. Although this figure at Bagh can only be indistinctly seen on wetting the surface with water there can be no manner of doubt as to its being there. The size of the heavenly porter (Divine Dwarapala) as at Ajanta, is nearly twice the size of ordinary men. Close to this figure there is a royal personage lost in deep meditation and close to it there are figures of two peacocks amidst clouds on a hill. It is probable that this is intended to convey an idea of paradise. Just on top of the head of the porter there are

kinnaris or celestial choristers with bird-like feet, playing on an instrument like the *setar*. It may be inferred from all this that it was intended to show that the caves were under the protection of the gods and angelic beings.

We could only decipher the pictures mentioned above after we had been in the Bagh caves for a month constantly engaged in the examination of pictures (while copying) after moistening them with water. A reference to my article on the Bagh caves in the *Prabasi* for (Beng.) 1324 will show the difficulty that is experienced in deciphering the paintings. I could not at that time adequately describe the pictures although I had personally inspected them.

These are in existence on a space about fifty by seven feet in a part of the verandah between Cave No. IV *Rangmahal* and the door of Cave No. V. The manner and sequence of events as depicted in the closely connected paintings leave no room for doubt that these paintings are intended to describe some particular historical event. We have compared them with Buddhist Jatakas and we found that they may agree in part only but not completely with some of those stories. We were able to copy pictures in this block. The first scene in it is that of a sorrowing queen and her chamber maid, the next is a meeting between two princes and two visitors, the next picture represents some flying Buddhist monks, then follow two pictures showing some

dancing girls, dancing along with two dancers wearing Persian costume. The next shows a procession of royal personages and soldiers mounted on horses and elephants and lastly there is a monk squatting under an *Asoka* tree in a garden or a park (ârâm). The whole is, in this manner, worked out as a panorama.* Although the old Sinhalese book called the *Mahavamsa* is full of impossible legends, it undoubtedly gives some impression of the manners and customs and the mode of worship prevalent in the ancient period. The references contained in the *Mahavamsa* to the traditions, customs and other matters relating to the Buddhist period in India agree in various points with the pictures at Ajanta, Bagh and other places. On festive occasions, when the Buddhist kings used to go out in State procession with their full retinue, it was customary for bands of well-dressed dancing girls and troops of musicians to go with them. The dancing women had their hair bedecked with costly ornaments and flowers. In the Bagh and Ajanta paintings dancing girls are shown with their heads similarly decked out. The royal procession depicted in the Bagh paintings show stylishly dressed women with drums slung from their necks mounted on elephants, corresponding to the accounts contained in the *Mahavamsa*.

*The original copies executed by Mr. N. L. Bose, Mr. S. N. Kar and Mr. A. K. Halder (in Jan. Feb. 1921) can be seen at the Gwalior Darbar and the—replicas are at the Kalabhavana, Santiniketan.

The Bagh paintings contained representations of monks or holy men flying in the midst of clouds. According to the *Mahavamsa* Arhants or Buddhist monks used to fly through the air in order to display their superhuman powers. The picture at Bagh of a holy man in a garden would appear to represent a picture of some Raj Guru or Preceptor of Royalty in the Royal aram or park as mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*. Among the pictures representing singing and dancing the two figures of men in Persian dress seem to be wearing wigs and they do not appear to be dancing in harmony with the soft steps of the dancing girls, but to be indulging in a wild unrythmic-caper much in the style of the Afghan hill-men of the present day. There are allusions in the *Mahavamsa* to such mimic dancers in connection with royal festivities. In the pictures of processions at Bagh men are represented as having their hair tied in a knot behind and wrapped with chintz cloth. I have not come across in the other paintings at Bagh or elsewhere any similar figure of men with feminine coiffure. The figures on the railing at Sanchi represent men with their knot of hair wrapped with cloth, but these are not in the same style. At Sanchi the knots of plaited hair are tied in a knot on the top of the head in Sikh fashion. While describing a Stupa there are references to sukhâkâma or plasterwork, *Kankuthaka* or gold and silver painting and *Pacangulika-patika* or a kind of ornamental design. We did not find in the paintings of Ajanta such perfect and spirited

representation of horse as those in the pictures of processions at Bagh. These are such as to remind one of the life-like animals drawn by the great modern artist Landseer. The pictures of elephants are drawn as boldly as those at Ajanta. There are pictures of ducks among the decorative avian pictures on the ceiling. Besides these there are pictures of the common blue local pigeons and of peacocks exquisitely drawn. The picture of the peacock has been damaged. The colour effect displayed in painting local pigeons is exquisite. Prototypes of these pigeons are still to be found nesting in the caves. It is not unlikely that they were there even in those far away times. Amongst articles of furniture and other articles, saddlery, bows, decorated scabbards, howdas with striped frills of pearls, various kinds of musical instruments and chintz coats are all represented in the Bagh painting. In the Ajanta painting too there are pictures of men with chintz coats. A kind of cloth with a design of ducks bears resemblances to a specimen existing at Ajanta. Floral decoration for the head, varieties of bangles, necklaces of round pearls set with gems are to be seen. The royal diadems with ornamental frills of pearls, necklaces worn by royalty and ornaments resembling the Bramhanical thread like those to be seen at Ajanta abound in the Bagh caves. The royal cushions and bolsters are also drawn in the fashion of the Ajanta paintings. From the fragment of an inscription found in one of the caves, as read by Mr. R. D. Banerjee,

it appears that a certain Buddhist lay worshipper or Upasaka, named Harideva, drew these paintings or decorated the caves with these paintings with the help of painters in order to earn spiritual merit.

It would appear from the accounts left by earlier visitors to these caves that they regarded the task of copying these pictures as an impossibility (See Major C. E. Luard's account of the Bagh caves, *Indian Antiquary*, August 1910). The paintings can be seen only by constantly saturating them with water. It is a task which calls for the exercise of patience. The people about the place are utterly ignorant of the significance of these paintings and many of them have thought of acquiring merit by scribbling their names on the paintings on the shrine of "Panch Pandu" (as they have named the Bagh caves), while some have scraped out from time to time portion of the colouring matter from the walls of the shrine. We examined a small broken portion of the paintings by applying paddy starch and we were glad to find that this method rendered the paintings more clear to the eye and gave them a sort of polish without producing any injurious effect. It is desirable that further experiments should be made by some expert with this process. Although the paintings of the Bagh caves are not earlier than the late works at Ajanta, the nature and style of the paintings very intimately follow those at Ajanta. This will be apparent if we compare the drawing here reproduced in the plate opposite with many

similar figures at Ajanta. The languid grace and the general type of the pose of the figure easily recall the conventions of the artists of Ajanta. The Bagh paintings are the direct descendants of the School of Ajanta. They are supposed to have been executed between the middle of the sixth and that of the seventh century.

STRAY THOUGHTS ON ARTS

WHEN we look at pictures, our vision is always qualified by the surroundings amidst which we may happen to be placed at that particular time, our mental moods also lending their own colouring to it, and for this reason a work of art which may touch the heart of one spectator with immediate directness, may fail to please the other altogether. It may, perhaps, be due to the same psychological truth which applies to that proverbial mistake—the mistake one makes, sometimes, of taking a rope for a serpent, or a serpent for a rope in a dark night. In fact, it is only the impress of the artist's mental state that is left on the picture he draws, and to realize that mental state in all its reality the spectator requires greater depth of thought than the artist himself.

x

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2. Just as without a proper unfoldment of certain faculties of perception one cannot fully realize the inner spirit and beauty of Nature, so it is in the case of paintings also, nay, to appreciate works of art even a greater degree of

development and training are required in the aesthetic sensibilities of the mind. It is not possible, of course, to represent in pictures the quivering restlessness of the breeze or the harmonious blendings of light and shade that we find in the world of Nature, but the artist can give exact expression in his paintings to that thrilling softness of touch in the breeze, or that tremulous dancing of light on the leaves which gained instant access to his heart in the flash of a fleeting moment, and these he can invest with immortality and preserve for all eternity in his pictures. For this reason if we happen to see the portrait of a young man on a canvas we may be sure that he will never attain the old age which is brought about by the ceaseless change and flow of the material world, but remain there for evermore crowned in the spring-time splendour of undying youth. So it is that pictures are silent, are reticent.

x x x x

3. The artist does not create with the help of his hands or his eyes only ; his picture is the product of his mind ; so, in judging pictures, instead of trying to find out the exact quantity of paint or the particular methods that the painter has used, it is far more essential to make sure as to how much of the artists's mind the work of arts contain.

x x x x

4. All artists are self-forgetful. The more conscious an artist is of himself, the cruder and uglier his works are bound to become. The

finer feelings and delicate sensibilities do not co-exist with an acute consciousness of self, they fold up their petals in fright, like the bashful mimosa, at the slightest possible touch.

x x x x

5. Nature holds up before us the finite which dwells in Infinity; but the artist represents the Infinite in terms of the finite within the bounds of colour and form. So Nature brings the endless blue sky, the boundless expanse of the sombre seas within the finite range of our vision, while the artist preaches the glory of the Infinite by enshrining in his works of art the eternal ideas suggested by Nature.

x x x x

6. An artist's creative works cannot be expected to effect an immediate reformation in the country or in the minds of the people by arousing inspiring thoughts as soon as they are finished; it is the steady and permanent influence which they exert on the people by instilling into their minds a sensitiveness for beauty and a habit of thoughtfulness which make them so invaluable for the country. And so it is that the older a picture grows the more precious it becomes. This value has nothing to do with the price of painter's brush or his colours—its value is that of its depth.

x x x x

7. The flowers look quite beautiful as they blossom on the tree, but man can never feel satisfied till he has culled them and trimmed

them and arranged them in the flower-vase and thus brought his own artistic instincts into play. Nature in its beauty and variety is beyond description, but so long as he has not been able to represent it to the public by creating it anew through his own mental process and given it the particular colouring of his own vision in works of art or literature, man can have no rest. So "Nature" and "Art" are united together by the same inner thread ; the external difference which they may appear to possess is not anything real or essential.

x x x x

8. Everyone is looking at things, but how many are those who can really see? Innumerable are the plays of light and shade, sunshine and storm going on in this world of Nature, but how many are there who are given the opportunity of observing them with the inner sight which alone counts? This deeper message of Nature reaches the artists, who in their works of art, give expression to truths which lie beyond the range of vision or the reach of ordinary perception. (But this they do not do, of course, by trying to give exact photographic representation of Nature).

x x x x

9. One cannot, in works of art, just say—"This person said this" or "That person did that and sat down there"—as they may do in literature, and go on explaining the statements of facts with ample and detailed foot notes. In this respect all pictures are still. They express

their ideas definitely enough, though they may suggest many different kinds of thoughts in the minds of different spectators, but this they do mainly through the medium of suggestion. Pictures do not care for critical commentaries, nor do they require any external help to express themselves.

x x x x

10. Not less than ninety per cent. of our people educated and uneducated, show a sort of blind partiality for western art—our own art seems to be an eyesore to them. But as a matter of fact, the greatest thing that we have to learn from the western artists is that they busy themselves with the western, that is, their own art, and do not, like us, dabble in matters which lie beyond one's sphere.

x x x x

11. Just as to be an efficient jeweller one needs a sound training about the detection of false stones from good ones, and a great deal of patience besides, so to understand work of arts, also, one must possess a previous education, equally, if not more, thorough. Many people seem to think that works of art should be of such a kind as to charm the eyes of the beholder at first sight, but that this is a mistaken notion needs no telling. The vulgar eye is delighted with a gaudy display of colours, like children, who want nothing but coloured things; but as a matter of fact, works of art, the main aim of which is to attract attention, may be anything but they are not artistic. It is only the work

which passes the test of the jewel-expert in the realm of art—the art-critic, and survives the test, that can claim the name of art.

× × × ×

12. When does a picture begin to live and move?—When the real connoisseur evokes the *Rasa* of his mind and brings to bear his whole faculty of thought and imagination in looking at a picture. Then the picture does not any more appear to be a mere collocation of lines and colours, he then realises the inner music, as it were, lying deep beyond the reach of all colours and forms, and the picture is understood at once, not as a particular grouping of external shapes and figures, but as an impress of a mood or an emotion expressed in a moment of inspiration.

× × × ×

13. It is not possible to cling to the art of any particular place or periods as the ultimate standard or the final perfection of all artistic effort—because art can never arrive at an end; by the blessings of God, human creations like divine ones go on developing themselves in ways eternally new, and by indicating a final end to them, we simply take their life away.

× × × ×

14. The artist crystallizes in his art a particular mood of his mind by taking it away from the flowing stream of his thought, and his moment's mood thus enshrined in art never fails to inspire new emotions in the minds of spectators even after centuries have rolled away. The conception of building the Taj Mahal

which, in some unremembered auspicious moment, first glimmered across the mind of the Emperor Shahjehan like a dream in a moonlit night, resulted in the creation of a beauty that even to-day, after hundreds of years, never fails to bring fresh visions of delight to thousands of peoples from all parts of the world. It is here that art is eternal and universal.

x x x x

15. Some think that the creation of forms is the only aim of art, because paintings are naturally associated in our minds with the idea of forms; while others are of opinion that the chief function of paintings should be the expression of ideas. But the truth is, in pictures *Rasas* and ideas find their dwelling in forms,—thought and shape, like body and mind live in complete unity and co-operate in the production of an organic whole. It must be said, however, that the object of art is mainly in the representation of ideas, and not in the grouping of forms or figures.

x x x x

16. Art like literature is liable to degenerate into a mere riddle revelling in its incomprehensible complexity, if too many ideas are packed indiscriminately into it. So we find in the art-histories of the world that true artists from the oldest time have always attempted to express some one fundamental idea in their paintings or pieces of sculpture, and this idea has come out beautiful in its simplicity and completeness. But now-a-days, in the centres of modern Euro-

pean culture and civilization, forms and external shapes have attained such a degree of vagueness and complexity in the art of the new schools of painting, that really to get at the idea behind the pictures one requires prodigious powers of patience which are taxed to the utmost before one can possibly thread one's way through the labyrinths of ambiguous complexity spread out before one's eyes. Here it is the technique which has overpowered and submerged the creative aspect of art. For this reason one has seldom the chance, in the present age, of coming across anything so genuine, easy, and inspiring as the sculptures of Egypt or the paintings of old Italy.

x x x x

17. It is a fact that no real connection can be found between the personal life of the artist, and his art. The real essence of his personality finds its eternal expression in his pictures, and any attempted analysis of his personal affairs, for this purpose, is bound to be futile. The art of an artist is the most intimate introduction to his real life, the petty details of his daily doings can have no particular significance in this connection. There are many pieces of artistic creation renowned all over the world which give constant pleasure to millions of spectators, while the names of the artists who created them are hidden deep in the abyss of obscurity.

x x x x

18. Rhythm comes into play spontaneously when the human heart comes to be connected

with Nature by an inner bond of intimate appreciation—it is then that the creations of man can possibly represent the finer spirit and beauty of God's own creation.

x x x x

19. Before the process of creation is complete, and so long as the artistic idea dwells within the mind of the artist, he can claim it as a personal possession, but directly it gains expression in a picture or a poem it becomes as much the property of the public as of the producer himself.

x x x x

20. The art of an artist reveals not only the essence of his own personality but that of the country or nation to which he belongs. So we find that whether it is because the primitive barbarian tribes worshipped ghosts, or whether it is due to their living amidst the many terrors and surprises of dense dark forests, it is the feeling of fear and wonderment which finds more frequent expression in their art than anything else. Their art was not mainly for religion or the creation of beauty, but gave shape chiefly to the many formless superstitions and other peculiarities of mental outlook which characterized them. For this reason monstrous figures and uncouth shapes, and the stripes and colour-combinations as on the skins of animals like tigers, recur pretty constantly in their schemes of artistic creation. These fit in well with their non-human propensities, and the jungle-life amidst which they passed their days.

x x x x

21. Grace and beauty are everywhere in the world of Nature appearing wherever we may happen to turn our eyes—in fruit and flower, sky and wind, or in the manifold play of light and shade ; and the only aim of the true artist is to realize this beauty intimately and reveal it anew through his own creation. He does not attempt to collect it from all possible quarters, as it were, and give a detailed record of the same with accurate statistical figures like an official surveyor, he gives expression to it in the light of his own emotional experiences.

x

x

x

x

22. The artist or the poet, though they may not have always proclaimed it in so many words, have been constantly expressing through their creative work the sentiment of universal love. It is because universal ideas spontaneously blossom out in their minds that they cannot bring themselves to create anything with the special object of pleasing a particular country or a group of people,—their message is meant for the audience-hall of the whole world. Raphael's painting, or Shakespeare's dramas are, for this reason being received with affectionate appreciation and fervent adoration, even to-day, by millions of all nations. Their creation has no ulterior end except the joy of creating itself, their work is not like that of the man of business whose aim it is to accumulate things for future use ; it is rather the repayment to the world of the debt of happiness which it gave them so bountifully. Of course, there are those who

produce humorous sketches or satires solely with the object of opening the eyes of the people to particular truths, but owing to the very fact that they are born with a specific purpose, and are the outcome of some current cause of excitement, these productions exhaust themselves within the narrow sphere of a particular place or period, and consequently have no more life-force left to them for any further activity.

× × × ×

23. Rabindranath Tagore before he was honoured by the Nobel Prize once remarked to us that the language of the fine arts is a universal one, and also pointed out that there can be no real obstacle to people of any part of the world understanding it. It seems, otherwise in the case of literature where a poet can be appreciated only by people who know the language in which he writes, a fact that naturally makes many people miss the opportunity of appreciating him altogether. His creations are, therefore, obliged to remain confined within the bounds of the language and literature of his own motherland. In this respect the fine arts have a wider appeal. This is true, but still we find that in the case of our own poet, his ideas, even through translations, have inspired millions of people all over the world, a fact which goes to prove that like truth, or like fire which can never be kept hidden under the cover of ashes, genuine creative work also can never remain buried in the narrow limits of a particular language or land, but transcends all confines sooner or later,

and shines resplendent in its original splendour before the enchanted eyes of the whole world.

× × × ×

24. Artists are popularly described as worshippers of beauty. But if this is intended to indicate that they are concerned only with external figures and forms, then we must protest against this presumption; for artists worship that beauty only which they perceive in the light of their own inner vision, and this has hardly anything to do with things that generally attract the popular eye. To put it accurately, artists are not so much the worshippers of beauty as of *Rasa*, or the inner pervading spirit in an object.

× × × ×

25. Wakefulness is the sign of life, while slumber signifies death. It is the poet and the artist, who in this world give the best evidence of this wakefulness. Their works of art and literary creation bear eternal testimony to the truth of their having opened their eyes anew each day with the rising of the morning sun, and this the people of all ages are given the chance to test for themselves. The play of the seasons, spring and summer and monsoon—nothing is ever wasted for them, and as the song goes,* they would fain “fill their baskets with the fruits and flowers of all the seasons as they come and go,” and keep an ever-awake receptiveness for all that life has to offer to us.

*From a song by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore.

As for the others, their days also pass, of course, but they pass mainly in counting them from day to day.

x x x x

26. "I like this" or "I do not like this at all"—it is the tendency of modern critics to utter either of these emphatic assertions immediately after looking at a picture. But this is, indeed, no real test for a picture, for the first sight may not be the auspicious one after all. There are paintings which appear attractive at first but fail to leave any abiding impression on the mind, while there are others which gradually grow into one's mind and thoughts the more one sees them, in spite of their inability to interest the eye instantaneously. On the whole, one of the best tests of the real worth of a picture is in the durability of the interest it produces, indeed, that indicates the idea of its real worth more than anything else. And this impression may settle in the mind not directly after one has seen a picture for the first time, but little by little, after one has looked at it many times and tried to understand its underlying motive.

x x x x

27. It does not do, merely, to carve a figure out of a block of stone, the spirit of life has to be infused therein to make it live. This infusion of life the artist effects by making the piece of sculpture radiate the glow of liveliness through the delicate contours of the face and the body. It is quite possible for a figure to seem rigid and motionless in spite of its

possessing nicely designed wings, but the true artist can quite easily fashion a figure and make it fly or move without the necessity of endowing it with wings or even special gestures indicative of movement.

x

x

x

x

28. Like all others, the artist also has world of his own. Anyone can master after undergoing some course of memory-training the faculty of remembering the things that he sees, and of reproducing them in pictures with photographic accuracy; but the rare gift which distinguishes the real artist is the gift of recreating a thing in the atmosphere of his own personality, and giving it a permanent and artistic shape. Every artist has his own inner world whence he observes and where he receives the various manifestations and messages of life around him, and it is the difference which every artist possesses in his world of personality that makes it possible for art to preserve its inexhaustible variety and originality—otherwise all pictures would drive one crazy with the maddening monotony of photographic representations.

x

x

x

x

29. Whence does the artist get the world which he creates by himself? He gets the necessary materials for it from the realm of matter which finds entrance into his consciousness through his sense-experiences in the shape of sound and smell and sight. It would not be true to say that he is only receiving, or only giving away,—it is more like the negative and

positive currents which in their unity give expression to one wholeness. The harmony of sounds which is eternally coming out from the heart of Nature becomes audible only when the artist's finger touches the strings. For this reason neither Nature nor the artist can create *Rasa* alone; for its production their mutual sympathy and co-operation is necessary.

× × × ×

30. Having come to the seashore I realize to-day that land is not limited by its own boundary-line, but preserves itself by its union with water, which is no less elemental and true than land. There the water flies as a piece of cloud, ruffled by the wings of the birds which beat their way through it, fringed with the manifold melting colours of light,—it is out to cross the sea! And now its friendship with the land commences. Now it goes on giving itself in rivers and streams, passing through meadow and woodland, and touching the skirt of vale and hill on its onward way. Plants, trees, beasts and birds, men and women, all are filled with the surge of new life and saved as they come into contact with this vitalising nectar-like fluid. Men give themselves up to songs, birds begin their hymns of joy upon the leafy branches of green-trees. In the human habitations, and in the forests and glades this call of new life brings out hidden resources of joy, and the shine of happiness begins to gleam and glitter all around. Land is like the limiting lines of a picture, and

the water its inner fluid-like idea, and it is the union of these two that fills the world of life with *Rasa* with the spirit of beauty and harmony. And so it is that a picture which gives undue emphasis and prominence to its form and frame only, remains barren and lifeless like a desert, deserving every other name except that of art.
