ABSTRACT

This research paper is based on the modern art scenario independence. The aim of this research paper is to trace analyses various in development of modern Indian art pre-independence Indian painting and painters. The present text is at best a brush up to refresh the account of modern art during the most crucial phase when India was approaching Independence from the colonial rule. Tracing back to Mughal period the article tries to re-locate the story of modern art pregnant with discontinuities, conflicts and high points. Beginnings, be it art or science, have often been a matter of contestation. There is no brief history still that could establish the beginning of time. Same is the case with the beginnings of modernism in art whether it is East or the West. In India we can notice how Rajput painting deviates from Mughal realistic/naturalism and assumes a more idealized and mannered outlook. At a certain point it may also seem a matter of discontinuity to see Rajput painting closer to Safavid (which was the main point of departure for Mughal painting) in its love for pure lines and color. The shifting positions of revivalist and anti-revivalist stands shared by the artists of Bengal School further enhanced the complexity of the evolution of art. In its early phase the urgency of finding an indigenous alternative to the Victorian academic realism assumed a nationalist ‘revivalist’ tempo, which was subject to serious criticism. And later the students of Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), the founder of Bengal School, in Santinekatan preferred the immediate and empirical over the historicist oriental sense of Indian modern. The story of art as a non-linear and considerably conflicting historical discourse becomes more complex in the failures or myths of modernism deliberated in the postmodern theories.

Keywords: Modern Art

INTRODUCTION

Around the mid18th century, with the disintegration of Mughal Empire, Mughal and Rajput styles were on the wane. Painters who had enjoyed court patronage scattered around the country. Tanjore, Lucknow, Patna, Murshidabad, Nepal and the Punjab Hills became their main area of patronage. At that time a few European painters, such as J. Zoffany, Tilly Kettle, T. Daniell, W. Daniell and others came to settle in India. These were the artists who introduced a romanticized Indian landscape through the medium of Indian oil painting. With the introduction of this academic idiom the art of anonymous Indian Company Painters evolved, uniquely merging Eastern and Western themes and techniques. Indian thoughts and expressions had been suppressed for a long time under the British Empire. Indian indigenous art had registered quite retardation. Whatever little remained in the name of painting was made to order for the British, catering exclusively to the British taste. At that time indigenous traditions had reached practically at the lowest ebb. “In the world of art, colonial vision was to create a people modern in technique but archaic in outlook. The colonial artist was to be adept at drawing, at using oil on canvas, painting in an academic style, but merely bringing our ancient epic of life in the nineteenth century costumes and poses”1 “The eventual fragmenting of traditional Indian arts was
mainly the result of a cultural imperialistic infrastructure entrenching itself, bringing a change in sources of patronage, among other factors, and hence a change in the style of art and attitudes. The conflict between notions of individuality, rooted in the dominance of subjective reason, against attitudes of artistic anonymity, rooted in the dominance of joy and its intuitive faith, became one such transition.

DEVELOPMENTS OF ART IN BOMBAY AND YOUNG TURKS

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

Gladstone Solomon was appointed as principal of the Sir. J.J.School of Art in 1919. He admired the traditional Indian art and started taking initiative to propagate the structure and aesthetics of Indian art. Under the supervision of Gladstone Solomon, Sir J.J.School of Art executed the ‘The Indian Room’ in 1923 for the British Empire Exhibition at the Wembley. “The Objective was to show that the true work of the modern Indian artists is to revive and national methods of artistic expressions and revitalize and restore them.

In 1936. Charles Gerrard comes to Sir J.J.School of Art as a new principal. He introduces modern techniques of pictorial design and manner of representation to the various kinds of textural surfaces. As well as technique and application of colorswere concerned, students at J.J. School were inspired to work in the modernist notions.In1937,Synthesizing the European modernist notion of painting and intermingled it with the Indian design values, a group of young painters came into existence, called themselves to be ‘Young Turks’. The group included P.T.Ready, M.T, M.T Bhople, A.A. Majeed, M.Y. Kulkarni, and C.B. Bapista. The group opens the new fronts for modernism in Indian art. Later 1941 the group held their first exhibition with the name of ‘The Bombay Group of Contemporary Artists’. Charles Gerrard wrote in the foreword of catalogue: “The exhibition represent the woks of five young artists who have banded themselves together in a group, to place before the public their individual expression in painting, each approaching the subject from his own particular angle of vision… The group, for all its brave beginnings, was notable to form a cohesive front that could leave an indelible mark on the art world. Their work, however, showed the first tentative signs of modernism where the flourish of the brushstrokes and the emotional use of colors, rather than the subject itself, dominated the canvas.”23 The group was come to the end with the Quit India movement in 1942, but in spite of its short life it had significant influence on the several upcoming artists.

EMERGENCE OF INDIAN MODERNISM: THE BANGAL SCHOOL

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

Abanindranath Tagore was the first significant artist of Modern Indian Art. He was a major exponent of indigenous values in Indian art. “He founded the movement called Bengal school of art, which led to the development of Indian 83 painting in the Modern period.” 8 Abanindranath Tagore opted out of his formal training in academic art methods and rejected all realistic replication. He developed the romantic ideal of the artist as a creative genius, placing inspiration over taught expertise, feeling over form, free of ambition for material gain. Abanindranath Tagore redefined the meaning of modernity and Indian-ness locating them in the creativity and orientalises imagery

**EARLY INSTANCE OF ABSTRACTION IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE**

Indian Art Early instance of abstraction in modern Indian art comes with semi-cubist style paintings by Gaganendranath Tagore. “The earliest artist to create paintings without a specific or clear subject matter was probably Gaganendranath Tagore whose strange black and white compositions were precursors of the art of today. He was much aware of what was going in the western world of art. His paintings in derivative cubist style reveal a rare genius, and his later paintings entirely in black ink of the 20's are really mysterious. “In which, instead of representing likeness of objects in nature; a pictorial space is produced through a mixture of contrast of black and white. He was clearly responding to diverse stylistic sources like Japanese brush techniques, wash paintings, Sumi-e (black ink) and possibly Chinese ink paintings as well. In the period of nationalism, Gaganendranath Tagore’s paintings were significant in the context of developments of international trends in Indian art.

**INDIVISUAL PIONEERS**

However, not all artists were prepared to sub serve the demands of the prevailing isms. Jamini Roy, taking a more individualized stance, turned his gaze onto the immediate reality around him. “Jamini Roy was one of the first in Bengal to turn back on Ajanta and the classical tradition, and start afresh with a Neoprimitivism, basing his design on live Bengal folk painting. His highly formalized style opened a breach, through which poured sizable avant-garde of young artists, quite determined to break with the past, to be modern and to explore with the same experimental processes that have led to some of the modern styles in the West. Roy turned towards his roots of folk traditions and rituals and made a deep study of the folk paintings of Santhal tribals. He creates a style out of sharp angular lines and bold colours, which indicated the possible direction that must be taken to 87 discover an indigenous idiom and sensibility. “Jamini Roy made use of the Pat traditions for quite different purpose. It was not the spirit and the social-religious functions of the Bengal folk art, but the formal aspects that he imbibed to devise his style of decorative arabesques and bright colours….In his artistic sojourn he moved from the reality expressed by the quality of line and colour.

Jamini Roy gives a new consciousness to Indian art. Some of his landscapes and his portraits definitely reveal impressionist tendencies. But Later, His use of 88 colours as he experimented with flatness to produce the simplicity that was very new in Indian art. His simplified forms with bold colour strokes create interest in the picture space. Roy’s fascination for the geometrical forms and abstract design motifs are also manifested in most of his paintings such as ‘Gopi’ and ‘Alpana’. “In Jamini Roy’s painting, a figure, an animal, or an ornamental motif cannot be understood at its face value. He transforms his objects and figures with the intension of uncovering a stream of experience shared by community…. And whenever it came to painting of the immediate daily events it assumed decorative qualities, giving shape to abstract forms.
Amrita Shergil was really, an important artist in pre-independence Indian art. She comes with the Post-Impressionistic European imagery in her paintings. She was highly inspired by the fresco paintings of Ajanta, which also had a great impact on her style and composition. Amrita Shergil was the first artist to address the need of incorporating international aesthetics within the Indian sensibility in an attempt to nudge Indian art forward. She was trained at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she was taught by Lucien Simon. She lived and practiced art at her home in Amritsar and Shimla. She was not averse to the idea of creating a dialogue between her Indian and European heritage. “In Amrita Shergil’s six brief years of pictorial activity in India, her work created a new and vital artistic significance. The blood both of the east and west running in her veins, made it natural for her to want to bridge the artistic vision of the West and that of India. In fusing the traditional and the modern she became a milestone in the history of modern Indian painting. Her vision was heightened by vibrant colors and her themes came to focus around the rural people in villages, which are apparent in her paintings ‚Bride’s Toilet’ and The Hill Men. ‘Her paintings presented the other picture of Indian life and led to increased interaction with orthodox aspects of European modernism. Her last painting ‘The Red Varanda’ was a significant work in the context of abstraction, in which her complete withdrawal of human forms shows her intimation towards nonrepresentational form.

CONCLUSION

A major philosophical trend in modern painting, this research study encompasses the strategy of Indian artists effectively keep an eye on ‘modernism’ in painting, one of the primary disciplines of visual arts during pre-Independence period. All through this period many of the Indian artists interpret the meaning of the term ‘modern’ related with image making, representation, content, idea, concept and its application projected by philosophical claims and metaphysical implications. The word ‘modern’ stand for a period span in a relative sense, but the term has been applied for definite features and deviations in approaches and attitudes, which occurred for a while with a global impact that is still predominant. It also has adopted fluctuations in philosophical attitude in intellectual and creative expressions of artists throughout the world and India is no exception. This stretch of modern period was packed with social, political, and cultural disorders in the history of India, which turns into a means of provoking the creative artists and stimulating the convenient fury of the society. Both natural and manufactured tragedies have given rise to fury, desperateness, desolation and absurdity of social aspirations to such elevations that it has entirely transformed the perception and expression of all artists rationally. In due course, this anger, despair and absurdity had become the subject matter of creative arts like painting, sculpture and literature.

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