THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Re-Thinking Indian Modernism

The Endogenous Aspects of Indian Modernism c. 1890-1947

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8/31/2012

Submitted in requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Art History and Theory.
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Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my paternal and maternal grandparents, Professor K.V. and Radha Ramanathan, and Dwarkadas and Sushila Shah.

Everyone listed has helped me produce this study by providing an intellectual, familial, financial, residential, or influential relationship. I thank everyone listed. My family: Durga and R. Vishwanathan, Aditi and Jerome Gouvernel, and Geeta Ramanathan. To my surrogate family in New Delhi: Poornima and Rajiv Jain, daughter Chandrika Behl and her husband Dhruv Behl. I thank my supervisor Professor John Clark for his intellectual support and friendship in Delhi, Mumbai, and Sydney, his generous wife Phaptawan Suwannakudt. The staff of Schaffer Library; John Spencer, Peter Wright, Anthony Green, and Nicholas Keyzer, staff of the National Library and West Bengal State Archives in Kolkata, National Archives in New Delhi, and British Library London. Below I thank everyone by cities I lived in or visited from 2008-2012.

Canberra: Sultan, Durga, Vishwanathan, Tina and Michael Brand, Judy Middlebrook, Nick Bessell, Tas Kartas, Martin Dobes, John Nikolic, Graham and Elispeth Humphries, Jane Hardy and Vytas Kappaciounas, the Kavanaghs, Mathew Abbott, Ghaik Khong. In Melbourne: Vivek and Chitra Tulpule. In Seoul: Hye-Jean Kim and James Kappaciounas; In the Japanese cities of Tokyo, Hitachi, and Izura-Ibaraki: Olivier Krischer. In London: James Radford, and Cambridge Andrew McGlashan and Alyson Ashe. In Paris: Marian Tubbs, and in Abu Dhabi Sam and Amy Robinson. In Mumbai: Jeetandra Wani and family, Shoba, Sahir Hidayatullah and family, Ashwin, Chandri, Mahul and Shewta Shah; Toral and Anju Kabra; Rajan and Kuran Khurana, Krishnendu and Dikshit Moitra. In New Delhi: Mad-Dog-Madhav Sehgal, Anirudha Jain, Peter and Jerome, Vidya Shivadas, and Kalidas Swaminathan.

In Kolkata: Ashish Brahma and extended family; Syed Taufik Riaz and family, Manas Acharya (for help in both Kal and Shantiniketan), Shrimoy and Tapati Chaudhury, Auritro Majumdar, Gulam Fakir, and Satyaki Banerjee. In Bardahman and Murshidabad: Sayn Das Gupta. In Shantiniketan (and Bangladesh) Shawon Akand. In Chennai: the rest of my family: Usha Ramamurthy, T.R. Ramamurthy, Ganesh, Raji, Babu, Madhav, and Rajagopalan Vaidyanathan. In Sydney: Christopher Humphries, Gerard Hussin, Pal Gupta and Ramona Hewitt, Michael Kavanagh and Jaya Myler, Lucy Neville and Ricardo, Julie

Clark and Richard Neville; Aaron Nyerges, Glenn Levine, Nicholas, Kylie and William Radford; Thomas Berghuis and Jenny Wong, and their daughter Anouk.

This dissertation was a trans-national project requiring me to stay in several cities in different countries. Generous financial assistance was required to complete this work and was provided by an Australian Postgraduate Award (2008-2011), a PhD travel grant, variations in employment over time, as well as privately sourced finances.

Introduction.

Indian modernism is an endogenous structural causality that has used and continues to use exogenous discourses for its development.[1] Linked to the Independence movement, it became a part of the project for national self-determination, and the artists and art historians asserted the endogenous cultural system over the Raj's imposed cultural system on philosophical, historiographical, aesthetic, religious, and social grounds. The artists reached into India's society, traditions, past, and folk and tribal practices to find their endogenous subject matter and to define their way of seeing. The tools and arguments contained in the exogenous discourses supplied by the Raj's cultural systems and European modernism provided the discourses that combined with endogenous discourses and created Indian modern art. The study considers in detail the ways in which endogenous and exogenous discourses have been combined and translated (*relativised*) over half a century.

The study's focus is c.1890 to c.1947, though to provide a framing context it considers the breakdown of the arts under the autonomous Mughal courts after Aurangzeb (c.1700 onwards), and also considers Indian modern art of the 1960s. The study demonstrates that the course of Indian modernism was such that a period of domination by an art school was followed by a rupture, the rupture leading to a period of domination by another, which in turn was ruptured and re-ordered, the process repeating and bifurcating in time, and across the geographical regions of India. A ruptured school did not mean its elimination, often it continued. It is important to see the periods of domination, the nodes of rupture, and subsequent bifurcations and domination as occurring in parallel in space and time. The rupture and subsequent domination was due to a combination of endogenous and exogenous discourses. This discourse relativisation was an invariant aspect of the process. The manner in which the discourses relativised each other along the multiple dimensions (philosophical, social, political, cultural, aesthetic, historiographical) was different at different times and locations leading to differences, but the process of relativisation was a constant.

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[1] Althusser, Louis and Balibar, Etienne, *Reading Capital,* translated by Ben Brewster, Verso, London, 1997. Pg 97, 186-88, 310. In Althusser's theory, structural causality means that every element of the productive process constituting a historical moment is determined by all the others that have led to that moment's origination. Also, each element is part of a *complex* whole identified with the processes of production of cultural-system in the gestaltian sense. Pg 176. Also see Althusser, Louis, "Contradiction and overdetermination," *New Left Review*, I/41, January-February, 1967, pp 15-35, Pg 25. For a critique of Althusser's thought as expressive of a "structural unity," and therefore containing imprints of historicism see: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2007, Pg 12.

The first rupture in the period of the study was caused by the arrival of academy realism and naturalism as part of the colonizer's discourse, which accelerated the decline of Mughal painting. The exogenous discourse of academy realism was absorbed into endogenous mythological and religious narratives, and the Ravi Varma approach appealing to Hindu darshanic cognition became dominant. This was fundamentally incongruent with the mental cultural codes of the Bengali nationalist avant-garde such as the Tagores who (with Europeans) were exploring indigenous arts and crafts and European and Indian art and philosophy. Abanindranath Tagore's philosophical emphasis on interiorization of vision ruptured the Varma approach and created a period of dominance for the Bengal School, whose pedagogy became dominant in many of the art schools around the country. Rabindranath Tagore ruptured his nephew's approach criticising it as stagnant and not connected to social life. He brought Chinese and Japanese artists to India and the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition. Inspired by the unity between life and art that he found in Japan he romantically connected art to the villages and the life-praxis of the villagers. The Shantiniketan artists, under his influence, painted the villagers and the Santhals and created an Image of the People. This approach became dominant. It was ruptured by Amrita Sher-Gil and her European post-impressionistic discourses. Sher-Gil opened Indian art to western discourses, in which she was followed by artists across India and by the Bombay Progressives and the Progressive Artists Group (PAG), who became dominant later. Jamini Roy created a bifurcation with the Shantiniketan artists and created a folk approach, which coalesced high and low art and incorporated darshanic elements. Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, using the exogenous discourses of Communist ideology, Käethe Kollwitz's linocuts and woodcuts, as well as the Chinese left-wing cultural movement's woodcuts, ruptured Shantiniketan artists' way of seeing and created Social Realism and Socialist Realism during the freedom struggle and the Bengal famine, before turning to endogenous folk idioms after independence. Artists such as Jagdish Swaminathan, critiquing Euroamerican art, especially abstract expressionism, ruptured those styles by reaching into Indian philosophy and creating endogenous abstract forms that resonated with the tantric and other abstract images that were endemic to India.

This study considers in detail the overview presented above. Broadly speaking the study examines the individuals, and their roles as key rupturers: Abanindranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Sher-Gil, and Chittaprosad Bhattacharya. The contributions of E.B. Havell, James Cousins, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Jamini Roy, and others to these

ruptures and subsequent periods of discourse dominance are studied in detail. The variations in the dimensions of Occidental and Oriental philosophy, history, aesthetics, and politics that led the main rupturers to their specific relativisation are analysed. The darshanic aspects that are present in high and low art, the philosophical considerations that shaped modern Indian art, the interplay between endogenous and exogenous discourses underpinning each rupture and discourse domination, the role of Pan-Asianism, and the role of foreign interlocutors such as Kramrisch, Cousins, Okakura, and Agnes Smedley are also examined. The influence of the art schools in various parts India are analysed, and the possible paths of diffusion through which the discourses on social realism and socialist realism were likely to have reached India are identified. The Arts and Crafts movement and the recognition of the importance of rural life to the course of modern Indian art, which provided a foundation force to the development of modern Indian art, are examined in detail. The differences between Indian and European modern arts are examined by analysing the causes and development of modernism with reference to each system's own cultural system and processes, and the way both systems relativised endogenous and exogenous discourses under different political, philosophical, and historical conditions and viewpoints. The observation that the cultural spheres "outside of British dominion" and untouched by "European ideas"[2] were harnessed for modern Indian art is examined in depth.

This study, following Ranajit Guha, understands Indian colonial modernity as a "dominance without hegemony."[3] In doing so it studies colonized India's socio-cultural, philosophical, political, and aesthetic responses to colonial capitalist dominance and the universalizing tendency of capital over its cultural-systems. Guha wrote, "There were vast areas in the life and consciousness of the people which were never integrated into their [the Raj's and the urban Indian bourgeoisie's] hegemony."[4] The 'never integrated' cultural spheres such as those occupied by the villagers and the tribals were the spaces that nationalists and artists used to create an endogenous Image of the People that ruptured previous approaches to art. It was used by the independence movement to mobilise the rural populace. An endogenous Image of the People was also created as an essential aspect of

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[2] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Modern Indian Art," *Rupam* No. 11 July 1922. Emphasis added, Pg 109.
[3] See Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997.
[4] Ibid, Pg xii.

European modernism.[5] This aspect of representing rural populaces in global modernity was, however, created by different internal processes because "the history of global capitalism" (in global modernity) does not create the same "universalist histories of capital,"[6] and does not produce "the same history of power" in India or Europe.[7] A "...hegemonic capitalist culture"[8] prevailed in Europe (due to the bourgeois revolution) and created the European representation. The representation in India was created in the spaces where hegemony did not operate. These and related key ideas pervade this study. Indeed, this study believes that the understanding of Indian modern art requires the work of Guha and the subaltern scholars. The systematic use of their concepts is integral to this study.

The use of subaltern historiography to understand Indian modern art is also a key difference because it allows Indian modernism to be understood in relation to its own internal dynamics. Partha Mitter's *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-47* (2007), seeks to decenter European modernism without the use of subaltern historiography.[9] This study considers Indian modernism from the inside out. Mitter's goal of decentering Euroamerican modernism and its associated hold over art historiography's inability to understand other modernisms (peripheral or parallel) is not the aim of this study. Mitter explores "structural affinities."[10] In contradistinction to Mitter this study explores the phenomena of structural affinities, isomorphisms and homologies in European and Indian modernism, and its basis within the mechanism of relativisation, where endogenous and exogenous discourses interact along multiple dimensions to produce cultural artefacts. This approach allows for structural affinities (e.g., Image of the People, primitivism) to be understood as caused by the underlying structural processes (e.g., structural causalities), which may have different economic and historical origins and interactions (fully elaborated in Part 2). This study, from a different perspective, covers the area of Mitter's study; Mitter's work informs this study, and points of similarity and contradiction are detailed in Parts 2, 3 and 4.

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[5] Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, and London Thames and Hudson, 1982.
[6] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2002, Pg 8.
[7] Ibid, Pg 13.
[8] Ibid, Pg 14.
[9] See Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol, 90 No. 4, December 2008, pp. 531-48
[10] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 13.

Part 1 pays close attention to areas covered by Mitter and Guha-Thakurta,[11] but emphasises the philosophical and cultural critiques of colonial culture by the Tagores and the Bengal School, the rejuvenation of the arts and crafts movement, the denigration of Raja Ravi Varma, and the recreation of an endogenous cultural-system. The frameworks provided by Guha, the processes of relativisation, and the analyses of processes such as darshan as well as the analyses of the philosophical and art historiographical critiques enables this study to understand the events covered by Mitter and Guha-Thakurta in a different light. Guha-Thakurta's works, like this study, engages with, in a T.J. Clarkian sense[12], the broader social history that was influential to the rise of the Bengal School of painting. Guha-Thakurta's work is referenced throughout this study.

Geeta Kapur has stated that Indian art has no "disjunctures".[13] This study emphasises *disjunctures*, otherwise known as ruptures. From the "vantage-point of the periphery,"[14] she has written, "the modern never properly belongs to us as Indians, or we to it."[15] This study treats the category of the modern not as a western category whose presence or absence is to be observed, or which needs to de-peripherised, but as a category that is intrinsic to the cultural system and its mental views, independent of internal or external political or philosophical viewpoints that may label certain constructs as modern. The global circulation of Western and Indian thought has been instrumental in the creation of global modernity for centuries, as will be discussed in Part 1. It is the view of this study that the sophistication of thought exhibited in the philosophical and other discourse have allowed Indians to claim their own modernity for a long time, and that due to the global circulation of these ideas the idea of the modern itself, in a sense, has freed itself from the nation. Kapur's views are discussed in Part 2 of this study.

The dissertation is structured as a narrative in 5 Parts. The contents of each Part is summarised below.

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[11] See Mitter, Partha *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

[12] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 1. Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, and London Thames and Hudson, 1982, Pg 10-14.

[13] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 287-88.

[14] Ibid, Pg 297.

[15] Ibid, Pg 146.

Part 1 starts from the breakdown of the Mughal polity and introduction of the Raj's cultural system, which created the first rupture. The Indian ruling classes were integrated into the Raj's cultural system, subsequently critiqued by the Tagores. The harnessing of the sacral and non-sacral aspects of darshan by high and low art, and darshanic cognition played a role in the domination of Raja Ravi Varma's paintings and reproductions. Abanindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy and others critiqued the use of Academy Realism. The philosophical and historical analyses by Abanindranath, Coomaraswamy and others helped in the dominance of the Bengal School's definition of an endogenous art. The philosophical critiques have to be understood in relation to global modernity, and associated modernisms (e.g., Indian and European) and are fundamental to understanding the genealogy of Modern Indian Art as it demonstrates how it had a theoretical basis that had similarities to the European modern movement (such as interiorization and an effacement/transcendence of objective reality) but was a nationalist reaction and different to the philosophical and art historical tradition of the west. The philosophical analyses reconstructed a tradition for Indian modern art to grow from. These discourses helped form a new pedagogy, which Abanindranath, as the Vice Principal of a Raj institution (Government School of Art, Calcutta) was able to institutionalise and spread throughout the country. The arts and craft movement is examined. The critique of the degradation of Indian Arts and Crafts led to the resuscitation of Indian Arts and Crafts. The areas not affected by the Raj's cultural-system were harnessed by the nationalist Hindu Mela, swadeshi's emphasis on home industries, Club Bichitra, Shantiniketan, Gandhi and the Indian national Congress for the creation of an endogenous art connected with the habitual cultural praxis of rural life. The revival of an arts and craft tradition became linked to a critique of bourgeois modernity and capitalism.

The Bengal School's mythological and romantic art discourses achieved a dominant position throughout India by the 1920s. Part 2 covers the ascension of the Bengal School into an institutionalised dominant position throughout India. The spread of Abanindranath's pedagogy throughout the country is tracked. The integration of the Bengal School into the ruling classes of India is explored. This Part examines the Indian Society of Oriental Art's funding of the Bengal School. It discusses the disruption by Benoy Kumar Sarkar who called for a relativisation of exogenous discourses into the Bengal School. He called for an end to the spiritualist and orientalist nationalist art historical and theoretical approaches of the Bengal School. The narrative discusses the effects and influences of the 1922 Bauhaus Exhibition in Calcutta and the subsequent rupture.

In Part 3 I examine Rabindranath Tagore's international travel to Europe, America, Asia, especially Japan, and his own forays into painting, and art theories came to provide a new model, and break, from the autonomy of art that the Bengal School had established. Rabindranath Tagore fundamentally critiqued western modernity and modernism, and the Western Nation-Form's universal applicability across differing cultural-systems. Rabindranath's 1916 trip to Japan was influential in his understanding of the unity of art with life practices and whilst there he critiqued western modernism, nationalism and the structure of the Nation. He also critiqued Club Bichitra and the Bengal School and brought the Japanese interconnection with art and life-praxis to Visva Bharati. He appealed for a universal modernism. This critique was the first critique of modernism in relation to Indian modernism. The growth of endogenous modernism continued with the establishment of Rabindranath Tagore's Visva Bharati (Shantiniketan) art school where the Abanindranath led Bengal School was ruptured and a different modernism created. The art school artists continued in the reconstruction of Indian art, but relativised exogenous European discourses such as realism in the construction of the Image of the People.

Part 4: The artistic production at Shantiniketan became linked with the Indian National Congress, Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), as well as Rabindranath's art ideology and pedagogy, Gandhi's Hind Swaraj (1908-9), and the populist nationalist appropriation and mobilization of the peasantry into the wider orbit of pan-India nationalism. The artists constructed an Image of the People (images of people such as the peasantry left outside, and uncontaminated, by the hegemony of the Raj's state and cultural-system), by appropriating them into a high national art, transcending the mythological romantic period of the Bengal School paintings. Artists such as Ram Kinkar Vaij, Binode Bihari Mukherjee, Nandalal Bose, and Jamini Roy reflected this paradigm. Amrita Sher-Gil, however, changed the dominant paradigm of the Bengal School by critiquing the Bengal School and Shantiniketan artists. Rupturing Indian modernism with newly created discourses, Sher-Gil relativised both exogenous and endogenous discourses re-creating another Image of the people, which was connected to anti-colonial nationalism. Sher-Gil opened up the possibilities for relativisation of Indian endogenous modernism with exogenous European discourses for post-independence artists, superseding the Bengal School's dominant position in art discourse.

In Part 5 the study returns to Calcutta in the 1940s, and demonstrates how artists moved into exogenous European discourses, which included anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, heightened anti-colonial nationalism, Communist agitation, and the global left revolutionary movement. Attention is paid to the cosmopolitan behaviour and ideological and political strategies of M.N. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Agnes Smedley, Virendranath Chattopadhayha, and the influence of the Chinese Communist Party, such as Mao's 1942 Yan'an Rectification Movement. Artists were connected with the Communist Party of India (CPI), and left movements such as the Indian People's Theatre Association and the Progressive Writers Association, which promoted the peasantry's and the proletariat's cultural-system, in opposition to the bourgeois-nationalist appropriation of the peasantry into high art discourse. Artists like Chittaprosad Bhattacharya were ideologically aligned with the CPI, and trenchantly critiqued Shantiniketan, Bengal School, and Academy Art artists. His opposition to, and rupturing of these discourses, marks Chittaprosad as a critical avant-garde in Indian modernism. Chittaprosad was influenced by the Bengal Famine (1943) and the Tebhaga Movement (1946), and used social realism to spread knowledge about the affects of the famine whilst creating agitation propaganda. Chittaprosad created another path for a relativisation between endogenous and exogenous forms, providing yet another example of endogenous Indian modernism on the eve of India's Independence.

Part 1. The Origins of Indian Modernism.

1.1 The Breakdown of the Mughal System and the Introduction of the British Cultural-System.

In north India, when Allahabad was the provincial capital during Akbar's (1542-1605) reign (1556-1605), Mughal cities such as Kara were already in decline. The decline was due to the interruption of river traffic above Allahabad and, as C.A. Bayly notes, "...the collapse of Mughal control on the Grand Trunk Road in the mid-eighteenth century."[1] The decline was also notable in cities such as Jaunpur (which is near Varanasi) and Murshidabad. The loss of patronage of the Mughal and Nawabi courts created the loss of privileged artists and artisans, causing a decline in Mughal and Rajput portrait and miniature painting. Indeed, the decline of Mughal painting lead to the condition for the revival of elements of Rajput painting. The loss of patronage created a migration towards British cantonment areas. Over time the artisans became *bazaar* artists in the British cantonments, and migrated along the Gangetic plains into burgeoning Calcutta to earn a living,[2] a process that resulted in the Battala and Kalighat paintings that were completed by bazaar artists for urban Calcuttan consumption,[3] and in the Company styled paintings of the Karraya area of Calcutta, an area that adopted the Company painting style and the western linear perspective.

The eighteenth century, and the first decade of the nineteenth, witnessed large-scale socio-economic and political changes in several northern Indian towns. Patronage of art and architecture changed under Aurangzeb's successors' suzerainty, due to the British gaining control of north India and the trade route of the Grand Trunk Road. By the end of Aurangzeb's fifty-year reign (r. 1658-1707; b. 1618-1707), the core of the Mughal Empire had been damaged due to Sikh uprisings, rebellions in modern Rajasthan, and continuous warfare in the Deccan. The turmoil led to financial losses; causing Aurangzeb to reduce expenditure on the arts; he was unable to maintain the hierarchal balance in the Mughal administrative system that incorporated *mansabadari* (rank), and landholdings.[4] However, the

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[1] Bayly, C.A., Rulers, *Townsmen and Bazaars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, Pg 112.

[2] Mishra, T.N, *Westernisation of Indian Art*, Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1996, Pg 10-19. Chaterjee Ratnabali, *From the Karkhana to the Studio: a study in the changing social role of patron and artist in Bengal*, New Delhi: Books and Books, 1990. Also See Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[3] See Jain, Jyotindra, *Kalighat Painting: Images from a Changing World*, Ahmedabad India, Mapin Publishing, 1999.

[4] Rizvi, S.A.A, *The Wonder that was India Volume II – A survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent from the coming of the Muslims to the British conquest 1200-1700*, Picador India, 2005, Pg 176.

jajmani system of ritual patronage continued.[5] For these reasons factionalism erupted amongst the nobility—Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Muslim alike. Aurangzeb was unable to keep the *zamindars* (officials employed by the Mughal Empire to collect taxes) within the Mughal government, estranging an India-wide group, which the British later co-opted within their system of land dominance.

British suzerainty took place (after the Battle of Plassey 1757) by their ascension to Diwani in 1765 through Robert Clive's Treaty of Allahabad, which gave control to the British East India Company in areas such as Oudh, Bengal, Bihar, and segments of the Grand Trunk Road, making the British the chief collector of revenues in north India. Further, the changing of land relations in the Permanent Settlement of 1793, and the way the British made Mughal command in Delhi a vassal to their new bourgeois state, aided the fall of courtly-feudal artistic patronage, and created a movement toward the adoption of the British bourgeois cultural-system by the indigenous comprador aristocrats, who were being assimilated into the power structures of the Raj.[6]

The British ascension to the *Diwani* and the functions of their created institutions forced changes in land relations. They exploited "the primary produce of the land" which became the "very basis of the colonial economy."[7] The breakup of the Mughal Empire created three political systems: the Mughal (at a pan-Indian level), the regional and the local.[8] These systems were at times interrelated and hierarchical, as well as existing side by side—they were "heteroglossic"—they could not be defined as a "logical whole"[9] because of the way the systems broke down and new classes emerged alongside British dominance.[10] Sectors of the Indian population were never integrated. They were dispersed, heterogeneous, and separated by patterns of kinship, caste, capital, and/or differing social relations, as well as the disparate positions they occupied under British dominance. This became important for Indian modernism as the rural populace (the peasantry, and their non-bourgeois cultural-

[5] Bayly, Rulers, *Townsmen and Bazaars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, Pg 111.
[6] Thompson, E.P., *Customs in Common*, New York: The New York Press, 1991, Pg 159-175. See: Guha, Ranajit, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement,* Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1982, Pg 170-73.Also See Hamza Alavi, "India: Transition from Feudalism to Colonial Capitalism", *Contemporary Asia*, x 1980, pp. 359-98
[7] Ibid, Pg 156.
[8] Cohn, Bernard, S. "The Initial British Impact on India: A Case Study of the Benaras Region," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, August., 1960, pp. 418-431, Pg 418.
[9] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002, Pg 13.
[10] Cohn, Bernard, S. "The Initial British Impact on India: A Case Study of the Benaras Region," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, August, 1960, pp. 418-431, Pg 419.

system), were not integrated into the British cultural-system and dominance. This specific absence of integration was later harnessed by bourgeois nationalists to create a movement, return, and appropriation to what they perceived as an authentic Indian mental-image and, in a Husserlian cognitive-phenomenological sense, life-world[11] and cultural-system (folk and tribal cultures untouched and outside of the Raj and Indian bourgeoisies hegemony), which became a paramount function in endogenous modernism from the 1920s onward. The concept of life-world and the surrounding ideological-material practices that the bourgeois nationalists appropriated for nationalism was, in a sense, analogous to the social-communicative Habermasian theory of a life-world, as a background collection of mental-images, competencies, actions, and ideologies inside of a groups or individual's cognitive-cultural horizon.[12] Simply put, these elements constitute the conditioning ideological-cultural ideas that structure and influence a person's world-view, or ethos, and being-in-the-world. The bourgeois nationalists use of the Indian peasantries life-worlds in visual art and anti-colonial nationalism was used in the construction of the Image of the People, discussed in Part 4.

The collectivization of indigenous elite and aristocratic groups necessary for the rise of the British enabled them to further assimilate the aristocratic class and the zamindars. This dominant Indian group's aesthetic and cultural tastes had been disrupted by the fall of the Mughals and the Southern courts, and, following the path of capital (as the Indian aristocrats' European bourgeois predecessors did), they adopted the tastes of the ruling class English, an example of which can be seen in the art collection of Gopi Mohun Tagore.[13] A bourgeois category of high art emerged in India,[14] clearly delineated from the sacral and courtly arts of the Southern, Mughal, and Rajput courts. This was the first rupture in the development of Indian modern art.

The mode of art production changed to the bourgeois mode, whilst feudal/courtly and sacral modes stayed extant. The reasons can be traced to Aurangzeb's lack of centralized

[11] Husserl, Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated David Carr, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970, Pg 108-9.

[12] Habermas, Jürgen, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol 2. Boston Beacon Press, 1987, Pg 355.

[13] Gopi Mohun Tagore (died 1818) was the head of the Tagore family (and "also the leader the *dalapati* or leader of the Tagore "party" or *dal...*") when Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), who was Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather, was a youth. Pg 17, Blair B. Klin, *Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India*, University of California Press, 1976. See Catalogue of the Pictures and Sculptures in the Collection of the Maharaja Tagore: With Short Notices of Some of the Eminent Painters, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1905.

[14] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal,* c. 1850-1920, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 46-77.

administration and control of style throughout his empire. (However, European painting had been part of the Mughal court and functioned as a display of worldliness from the sixteenth century onward).[15] Court artists trained in Mughal miniature and Pahari styles left Delhi to the provincial courts at Awadh, Benaras, Murshidabad, and finally, Calcutta. Subsequently, the previous styles disintegrated to suit the provincial courts demands, which by this stage had come under the influence of the British East India Company and Company School paintings. This situation was seen in the Gangetic plains from, as Bernard Cohn writes, "[at] Ballia, Benares, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Mirzapur" all of the existing nobility, such as those in West Bengal (for instance in Murshidabad) came strongly under the "economic conditions" of the British. Thus a "new class was...born in Indian society."[16] It is this class that became the "respectable natives" and started mimicking the lifestyles of the Raj's ruling class.[17] This mimicry and adoption of aristocratic and bourgeois ideology took place after the "respectable natives" had settled down as landlords (zamindars).[18] The respectable elite started taking on the cultural habits such as painting, decoration, architecture and refinement reflective of their ruling class position within society. There was a transformation from "feudal" to the "bourgeois form of landed property."[19] The "...land*lord* became land*owner*. Land was now 'bourgeois landed property."[20] Consequently there was a transformation and adaptation to the Raj's cultural-system.

The new art adopted elements of the British cultural system and produced art that suited the modalities of the Company, its colonial administrators, and the Empire. Naturalism, academy realism, and Company paintings were adopted by local artisans who, searching for funds to support themselves, created artworks that the indigenous aristocrats and bourgeoisie demanded, creating the conditions for the transfer of academy art into the bourgeois art institutions set up by the Raj.

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[15] See: Verma, Som Prakash, *Interpreting Mughal Painting – Essays on Art, Society and Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2009. Especially see Chapter 6, "Humanism in Mughal Painting" pp. 92 – 120. See, Verma, Som Prakash, "The Impact of Renaissance Art" in *Painting the Mughal Experience*, Oxford University Press, 2005, Pgs 131-45. See: Beach, Milo-Cleveland, *The New Cambridge History of India 1:3 Mughal and Rajput Painting*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 76, 86-88.

[16] Cohn, Bernard, S. "The Initial British Impact on India: A Case Study of the Benaras Region," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, August, 1960, pp. 418-431, Pg 418.

[17] Ibid, Pg 418.

[18] Ibid, Pg 418.

[19] Chatterjee, Partha, "The Colonial State and Peasant Resistance in Bengal 1920-1947", *Past and Present*, No. 110 (Feb., 1986), pp. 169-204, Pg 169.

[20] Alavi, Hamza, "India: Transition from Feudalism to Colonial Capitalism", *Contemporary Asia*, x (1980), pp. 359-98, Pg 371.

The artisans, artists, and the Indian bourgeoisie co-opted the forms of British painting rather than returning to their cultural systems, which had been partially severed for the ruling classes with the fall of patronage of the Mughal Courts. This created a siding, a group with dominance but without hegemony, of the ruling classes and the aristocratic families and the zamindars, who followed the cultural production of a dominating cultural-system. This study of Indian modernism sees this situation as critical because the existing non-ruling classes' cultural systems survived, though the adoption by the Indian ruling classes of the dominating British cultural system meant an overhaul in the systems of production and cultural values. Wealthy merchants such as the Tagores aided the overhaul that took place in Bengal.

Dwarkanath Tagore made his fortune in association with the East India Company, and started to adopt the British culture. The adoption of their paintings meant a movement toward their systems of knowledge and culture. But later Dwarkanath's family members started to critique the imposition of the British cultural system. Dwarkanath's Belgatchia Villa, and many other villas and palaces belonging to the Indian aristocrats and the wealthy, held objects of Victorian aesthetics and Baroque decoration, and also housed extensive collections of European oil paintings.[21] The two greatest examples of European art collections were those of Maharaja Jatindra Mohun Tagore, and the Maharaja of Burdwan, who were the greatest local art patrons of the nineteenth century. Both imbibed Victorian tastes and completely absorbed British aesthetics, thereby influencing the creation of the aesthetic of wealthy Indians, which graduating Art School artists adopted. Guha-Thakurta has noted that the early nineteenth century collection of Jatindra Mohun Tagore was started with the help of George Chinnery, who was in India from 1802-1825.[22] The catalogue contains numerous examples of the new western style of painting: naturalism, neo-classicism, as well as academicism. The collection included Chinnery's "Old View of Calcutta", several pictures by Thomas Daniel, and Thomas Gainsborough's "Flower Girl." W.H. Jobbins, Principal of the Calcutta School of Art 1887-96, and James Archer, of the Royal Society of Arts, also helped with the collection.[23] Prodyot Coomar Tagore (the great grandson of Gopi Mohun Tagore and whose grand uncle was Dwarkanath Tagore) has written that when Havell's sale of the Calcutta Art

[21] Examples include: the Tagore castle of Pathuriaghata Tagores, the Marble Palace of Raja Rajendra Mullick at Chorebagan; Raja Manmathanath Mitra's house on Shampukar Road; and the "palaces of the Burdwan Maharajas," See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 51.
[22] Ibid, Pg 51.
[23] Catalogue of the Pictures and Sculptures in the collection of the Maharaja Tagore, K.C.S.I with short notices of some of the eminent painters. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1905, Pg I.

Gallery's collection went through in 1905 it was bought by the Jatindra Mohun Tagore collection.[24]

Dwarkanath's Belgatchia Villa was full of European oil paintings and Victorian furnishings. Emily Eden, sister of George Eden (Lord Auckland), Governor-General of India (1836-42), observed:

> Dwarka Nath Tagore, a very rich native, has asked us to go and see his villa. He is a follower of Rammohun Roy, speaks excellent English, has built a regular English villa, with billiard room, etc., and fitted it up with statues and pictures, and Copley Fieldings, and Prouts, and French China, etc., and he asked us to name a day on which to see it...and there were elephants on the lawn and boats on the tank, and ices in the summer-house, and quantities of beautiful pictures and books...[25]

She also made some observations about pollution rules (indicating Dwarkanath's modernity as well as his adherence to tradition):

> ...and Dwarkanath is one of the very few that would even sit by while we were eating...we [went home] to have dinner. But we hear that he gives remarkably good dinners to everybody else.

The following sections of this Part will examine how Dwarkanath's descendants went about changing the Raj's cultural system by disposing of the oil paintings, redefining Indian aesthetics, and re-creating a tradition that was connected with nationalism.[26]

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[24] Ibid, Pg iii.

[25] Ibid, Pg I.

[26] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 52. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *Monuments, Objects, Histories – Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, India, Permanent Black, 2004, Pg 140-71.

1.2. The Tagores

The Tagores were at the intersection of the British and the Indian cultural-systems. Rabindranath Tagore wrote about his family's heritage:

> My ancestors came floating to Calcutta upon the earliest tide of the fluctuating fortune of the East India Company. The unconventional code of life for our family has been a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mohammedan and British... I came to a world in which the modern city-bred spirit of progress had just triumphed over the lush green life of our ancient village community. Though the trampling process was almost complete...something of the past lingered over the wreckage.[27]

The past lingered; the Tagores accessed it, and through their privileged aristocratic position, which connected them to the world they helped redefine Indian modernism.

The Tagores had been critiquing and assimilating western liberalist value systems and integrating them in their home, and their life as practicing members of Brahmo Samaj ("a religious group that had rejected the idolatrous side of Hinduism early in the nineteenth century"[28]). Debashish Banerji (great-grandson of Abanindranath, who was Rabindranath Tagore's nephew[29]) wrote that the Tagores' extended household of Jorasanko in Calcutta was "a mixed community of diverse modern and pre-modern cultures", and that it was "located between the communitarian pre-modernity of Bengal village sociality and the modernity of urban colonial culture, bhadralok society in late 19th to early 20th century Calcutta wore a variety of appearances in between these two poles."[30]

Lord Ronaldshay Governor of Bengal and a frequent visitor to the Tagore's Jorasanko household from 1917-22[31], wrote:

> In the family residence of the Tagore's at Dwarkanath Tagore Lane in Calcutta, they gathered round them a group of artists, many of whom Nandalal Bose, O.C. Ganguly, Kshitindra Nath Mazumdar, Asit Kumar Haldar, Surendre 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 and taste, for the

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[27] Dutta, Krishna and Robinson, Andrew, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1996, Pg 17.

[28] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press Second Edition, 2007, Pg 173.

[29] In general the study will use only the first names of well known Tagores.

[30] Banerji, Debashish, *The Alternate Nation of Abanindranath Tagore*, Sage Publications, India, 2010, Pg 56.

[31] See Ronaldshay, *My Bengal Diary Volume 1, 21st 1917 to November 11th 1919*, MSS EUR D 609/1, I.O.R. British Library.

cultivation of a sense of beauty, a love of beautiful things, especially such beautiful things as are expressive of the mind of India in its evolution.[32]

The diverse discourses in Jorasanko, the framework offered by the reformist ideas of Brahmo Samaj, and the Tagores' aristocratic position, placed them at the ideological and creative forefront of Calcuttan Society.

Tagores' views were informed not only by their privileged positions but also by the cultural-system, which was, and is, important to Bengalis. Vaishnavism formed a major component of this cultural-system, and the changes it underwent in Bengal were influential to the Tagores, requiring some elaboration. The syncretism that Bengali Vaishnavism achieved by the modern period[33] was a combination of different strands of humanistic hybridized religious belief systems, such as Hindu, Buddhist, Tantric, Vedantic and Islamic/Sufi. Hybridity allowed a diverse field of philosophical and devotional literature as well as theosophical inquiry that was related to the medieval diffusions of Bhakti devotion.[34] Bhakti became ubiquitous. The diffusion into Bengal had taken place from the 12-16th century but achieved a formation with a north Indian modernity in its nascence from the death of Aurangzeb 1707 onward, a modernity arising from and in combination with colonial juridical political modernity.[35] Due to the breakdown of the Mughal Polity and the various revolts that happened throughout northern India the notion of brotherhood intrinsic to Vaishnava culture developed. The heterodox Vaishnava cults that spread with the breakdown of the Mughal Polity were under the guise of feudalism, entering into the formation of early colonial capitalism. The various groups such as Satnamis, Sikhs, Fakirs, and Sanyassis, as well as the Jats and Marathas, the untouchable movements, and finally the 1857 revolt could be seen as a modernity in its nascence[36] (similar to 16th and 17th century Europe where the various socio-

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[32] Haldar, Kumar, Asit, *Art and Tradition*, Universal Publishers, India, 1952, Pg 67.
[33] See Chakrabarty, Ramakanta, *Vaishnavism in Bengal*, Calcutta, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1985.
[34] Sanyal, Hitesranjan, "Trends of Change in the Bhakti Movement in Bengal", Occasional Paper 76, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1985.
[35] Banerjee, Sumanto, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta, Calcutta*, 1998, Pg 99. See: Bayly C.A., *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge, 1983, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire, Cambridge*, 1987. See: Bayly, Susan, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge University Press, 1999. Also see: Marshall, P.J., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History. Evolution or Revolution?* Oxford University Press, 2003.
[36] Banerjee, Milinda, "The Trail of Derozio, or the scandal of reason", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 37, No. 7/8 Jul-Aug., 2009, pp. 60-88, Pg 68.

political revolts brought the peasantry, underclasses, as well as middle classes closer toward socio-political life[37]).

The Tagores embodied several currents: they broke from idolatry via the Brahmo Samaj, adopted European liberalism, and adopted its bourgeois structures and cultural tastes as designators of (European) class status. The artistic consequence can be seen in the art collections of Dwarkanath Tagore and Gopi Mohun Tagore. And it must be remembered that the Tagores came from a Jessore Vaishnav Brahmin family of Kusharis, who were "outcast from Hindu society in the 15th century" due to "an apocryphal incident in a Muslim court." The Tagores became known as Pirali quasi-Muslim Brahmins.[38] The Jorasanko Tagores were a sub-branch of the outcast family and claimed possession of the family divinity, which was an aniconic stone (*shalagram*)—a form of Vishnu/Krishna.[39] Vaishnavism formed an integral part of their habitus.

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[37] See Hobsbawm, Eric, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Norton and Company, London, 1965.
[38] Ibid, Pg 9.
[39] Ibid, Pg 9.

1.3. Darshan

This section analyses the role of *darshan* in Indian public and private life as well as in visual culture. It analyses how *darshan* functions at the philosophical, habitual, and structural levels in Indian society. By doing so it demonstrates how *darshan* operates throughout Indian society and how *darshan* is operational in sacral and non-sacral visual culture. It also analyses *darshans* influence on the development of Indian modern art. Other sections throughout the study also pay attention to concepts and practices surrounding *darshan*. Indeed, due to the structural nature of *darshan* it has direct relevance to the (re)interpretation of Indian art by the Tagore family, especially Abanindranath Tagore. *Darshan* is endemic to sacral Indian art.[40] As the Tagores were in the process of redefining Indian art, *darshan* appears as an implicit category in aesthetic and cultural discourses. As already mentioned the Tagores had broken from idolatry, and to a certain extent did not practice *darshanic* devotion.[41] Yet they were very much aware of *darshan*; it's cultural practice in sacred and everyday life, as well as its aesthetic, personal, and philosophical function throughout Indian cultural history. The Tagores' aesthetically, philosophically, and critically used *darshan* in their writings, consequently *darshan* merits elaboration.

Abanindranath Tagore understood the reinvention of culture as linked to "spiritual consciousness" in the Indian artist:[42]

> If any one wants to feel the force of spiritual conception in art...visit one of the Bengal temples in the month of Asvin when the sacred incense burns, the conch-shell sounds and the bell rings in the evenings, and through the smoke the sacred *Dhupa* and the lights held up by the priests for *Arati*, the gorgeous image of Durga conspicuously shines forth.[43]

The image of Durga has to be "look[ed] upon...with reverence..." which depends upon the "grace of the goddess."[44] Abanindranath has described a devotee's *darshan*.

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[40] See Eck, Diana L, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Chambersburg, Pa, 1981

[41] Reputedly Abanindranath Tagore's wife, Suhasini Tagore, practiced daily *puja*, where *darshan* in both, or either eye-to-eye ceremonial contact between god and devotee, or the internalized transcendental form was present. Private Conversation with Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty at Australian National University, Thursday 18th August 2011.

[42] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 397.

[43] Ibid, Pg 397.

[44] Upendrakisor Ray[44], criticising Abanindranath ("Some people's idea of nationality includes an acquiescence in the tenets of idol-worship"[44]), quoted Abanindranath as having said that the image of Durga has to be "look[ed] upon...with reverence..." which depends upon the "grace of the goddess."[44] Ray, Upendrakisor, "The Study of Pictorial Art in India," *The Modern Review*, April-June, 1907, Pg 548.

Darshan belongs to the codified aspects of society in which cultural habits are structurally engrained into commonly found practices.[45] Darshan belongs to the complex of Hindu habits relating to prayer and worship (*puja*). The circumambulation of the deity (*pradakshina)* and the buildings housing the deity following a puja in a temple is another habit belonging to this complex. Puja, or prayer, usually accompanies, or causes, darshan. A devotee visiting a temple would perform a puja and receive darshan. Darshan means to receive the god's sight, power, and blessings during informal prayer or during more formal puja sessions. (The word darshan is also used when going to see a famous television, sports, film or political personality.[46])

A central component in this form of worship is a quest to see, and be seen, in an extromissive[47] sense, by the deity. There is an exchange of visuality between the god and the devotee.[48] A devotee, while praying, or taking darshan, is connecting with god (as seen by the photograph of a Calcutta man praying to Hanuman on his way to work).

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[45] See Levi-Strauss, Claude, *Structural Anthropology*, Translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1977-78. See Eck, Diana L., *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Chambersburg, pa, 1981.

[46] Chatterjee, Partha, "Critique of Popular Culture," *Public Culture* 20:2, 2008, pp. 321-44, Pg 328-29.
See Rajadhyaksha, Ashish, "The Phalke Era," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 14-15, July-December, 1987.

[47] Gell sites Eck who sites Kramrisch:

> Seeing...is a going forth of the sight towards the object. Sight touches it and acquires its form. Touch is the ultimate connection by which the visible yields to being grasped. While the eye touches the object the vitality that pulsates in it is communicated...

Gell continues:
The remarks of Kramrisch are informed by her knowledge of Sanskrit philosophical writings. Ancient Indian philosophers held views similar to those of the Platonists, that sight was an 'extromissive' sense the eye sending out invisible beams or rays through the air, which touched the objects of sight at their surfaces.
See: Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency –An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, Pg 116-117.

[48] Eck, Diana L, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Chambersburg, Pa, 1981, Pg 5.

Man Praying in Calcutta (Photograph Kedar Vishwanathan, 2009).

At a philosophical level the sacral/ritual practice of darshan means that the devotee's self (*atma*) meets ultimate reality (*paramatma* or *brahman)*. (Indeed, it is not uncommon to see a devotee doing pradakshina to *self* (*atma pradakshina*) by (going around oneself in a spinning action)). Because paramatma or brahman is *everywhere*—it pervades the universe—it is also within oneself. In the sense that paramatma or brahman or god lives within us, god dwells in the atma, or the atma is a fragment of the paramatma, or the atma is a fractal image of the paramatma. The atma and paramatma are in union. The aspect of god dwelling in *everything* is ingrained in tradition. In the Bhagavat Gita (Chapter 11, verse 7), Krishna, showing the vishwarupadarshan (literally, the darshan of/in the universal form) says:

> *You can see all entities of the universe in this form*
>
> *Whatever else you desire to see you will be able to see in this form*[49]

The association of puja and darshan is cultural, personal, and endemic. Atma puja is also a practice that is current. It does not need a temple or an idol or an image or a sign or a symbol. The interior act of prayer can be used to evoke an interiorized darshan. The union between atma and paramatma or brahman, the belief that god or that union is *everywhere* around one, means that this practice can occur within the person as an interiorized practice of

[49] This is translated from the Hindi by the author. The transliteration of the Hindi is:
is deh mein ekatra sāra jag caracar dékh le
jo aur cahé dékhna ismein barabar dékh lé
Bhargav, Dinanath *Bhagavat Gita*, translated from the Sanskrit to Hindi, Manavdharm Karyalay, New Delhi, Savant 2037, Pg 184-5.

imagining god through the self's (atma) connection with god or ultimate reality (*paramatma*). *Darshan* can be of an external agency, or be interiorized. For instance, Radhakrishnan provides the upanishadic theistic view of atma and Brahman, demonstrating how *darshan* can be interiorized; providing the structural philosophical component of *darshan* that the Tagores were familiar with.

He writes:

> The Upanisads ... hold the view that the world we know, whether outward or inward, does not possess intrinsic reality. Intrinsic reality belongs to the knower, the Atman, the self of all selves. Brahman and Atman are one.[50]

And,

> The Upanisads insist on vidya, or wisdom, or insight into reality, accompanied by control of desire and detachment from earthly ties and interests. Vidya is not learning, but rapt contemplation; it is a realization of one's unity with the Supreme Spirit, in the light of which all material attachments and fetters fall away.[51]

Babb writes about worship: [52]

> ...it is evident that an important theme in Hindu worship is that of 'closure' between deity and worshipper; the devotee surrenders through intimacy, and establishes identification with the deity by taking something of the deity into himself...In the Hindu world 'seeing' is clearly not conceived as a passive product of sensory data originating in the outer world, but rather, seems to be imagined as an extrusive and acquisitive 'seeing flow' that emanates from the inner person, outward through the eyes, to engage directly with objects seen, and to bring something of those objects back to the seer. One comes in contact with, and in a sense becomes, what one sees.

The act of Hindu worship integrates a Hindu community. *Bhakti*[53] and worship became ubiquitous in India during and after the 9th and12th centuries. Puja and darshan, everyday occurrences across the country, provided an integrative feature through the shared religious grammar and structural meanings present within the darshanic efficacy of the idol or its image. Prayer and darshan created potency, and potentiality for the image(s) in the puja

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[50] Radhakrishnan, S, Ed, *The Dhammapada*, Oxford University Press, 1950, Pg 29.
Some authors may find the connection between Upanishadic theistic views of *darshan* connected with everyday cultural practices to be problematic. But in this study the correspondences between aesthetic, everyday, sacral, and philosophical practices of *darshan* were very important for the Tagores, as they could adapt from any and all, aforementioned categories in myriad ways combining *darshan* in ways they thought fit.

[51] Ibid, Pg 28.

[52] Babb, Lawrence A., Glancing: Visual Interaction in Hinduism, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter, 1981, pp. 387-401, Pg 396-397.

[53] Bhakti can be defined as an "emotional involvement between God and the devotee, in which the devotee is prepared to sacrifice everything for the love of God." Dallapiccola, I., Anna, *Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2002, Pg 38.

rooms to become ideological apparatuses.[54] Potentiality means efficacy, and agency, in the sense of Alfred Gell who demonstrated how an image or artwork can become "a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it." [55] Gell implies that darshan can cause "art-like situations [which] can be discriminated as those in which the material "index" (the visible, physical "thing" [images of gods][56]) permits a particular cognitive operation which I identify as *the abduction of agency*."[57] The abduction of agency is a strategic component of what Christopher Pinney has called "corpothetics", "opposed" to "'disinterested' representation, which over-cerebralizes and textualizes the image."[58] By corpothetics, Pinney means "the sensory embrace of images, the bodily engagement that most people (except Kantians and modernists) have with artworks."[59] And, "the *darshanic* relationship that devotees cultivate engages vision as part of unified sensorium. The eye in *darshan* is best thought of as an organ of tactility, an organ that connects with others."[60]

Darshan also has implications in world-historical thought and psychological universalism. Therefore, whilst darshan is an endemic Hindu concept it also has universal historical resonance. For instance, Julian Jaynes[61], in *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976), speculates that idols in pre-history had agency. In a section entitled 'Idols That Speak', and referring to 5600 B.C. he describes, "flat standing female effigies, made of baked clay or stone with incised eyes, nose, hair and chin ... found in each house" (excavated at Hacilar in southwest Turkey). Jaynes suggests, "they were its occupant's hallucinatory controls." He concedes that "the function of all these figurines ... is as mysterious as anything in anthropology." He doubts "if the majority of figurines occasioned auditory hallucinations ... some indeed may have been mnemonic devices ...

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[54] Kosambi, D.D. *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, Pg 32. See: Agamben, Giorgio, *What is an Apparatus and other essays*, translated David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2009.

[55] Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency –An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, Pg 6.

[56] Ibid, Pg 117.

[57] Ibid, Pg 13.

[58] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 8. See: Pinney, Christopher, "Piercing the Skin of the Idol," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, Ed, Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas, Berg, Oxford, New York, 2001, Pg 157-180.

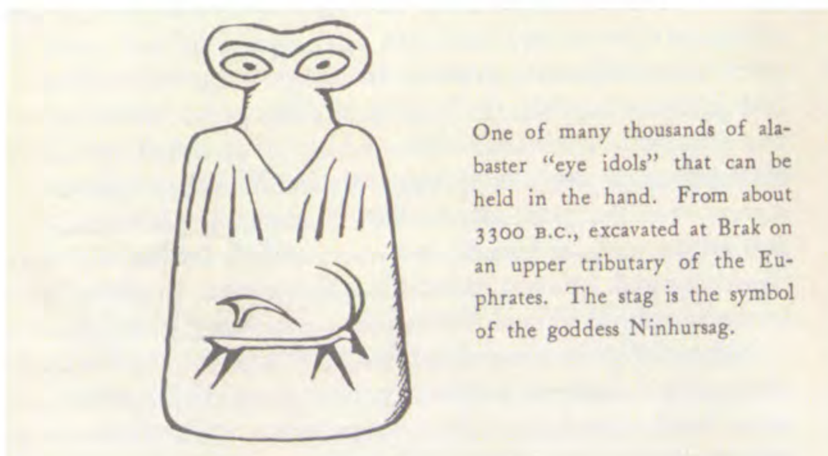
[59] Pinney, Christopher, "Piercing the Skin of the Idol," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, Ed: C Pinney and N. Thomas, Berg, Oxford, New York, 2001, Pg 158.

[60] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg9 193.

[61] Jaynes, Julian, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1982, Pg 165-75.

perhaps functioning like the *quipu* or knot-string literature of the Incas or the beads of rosaries of our own culture." He continues:

> Consider the eye-idols in black and white alabaster, thin cracker-like bodies surmounted by eyes once tinted with malachite paint, which have been found in the thousands, particularly at Brak on one of the upper branches of the Euphrates, that date about 3000 B.C. Like the earlier Amatrian and Gerzean tusk idols of Egypt, they are suitable to be held in the hand. Most have one pair of eyes, but some have two; some wear crowns and some have markings clearly indicating gods.[62]



An Alabaster Eye-Idol, c. 3300 B.C.[63]

Jaynes "psychologizes" these idols. He writes:

> *Eye-to-eye contact in primates is extremely important.* Below humans, it is indicative of the hierarchal position of the animal, the submissive animal turning away grinning in many primate species. But in humans, perhaps because of the much longer juvenile period, *eye-to-eye contact has evolved into a social interaction of great importance.* An infant child, when its mother speaks to it looks at the mother's eyes, not her lips. *This response is automatic and universal.*[64]

Jaynes has developed an eye index to express efficacy. He writes:

> The eyes become a prominent feature ... The diameter of the human eye is about 10 percent of the height of the head, this proportion being what I shall call the eye index of an idol. The famous group of twelve statues discovered in the favissa of the temple of Abu at Tell Asmar, the symbols carved on their bases indicating that they are gods, have eye indices of as high as 18 percent—huge globular eyes...staring[65]

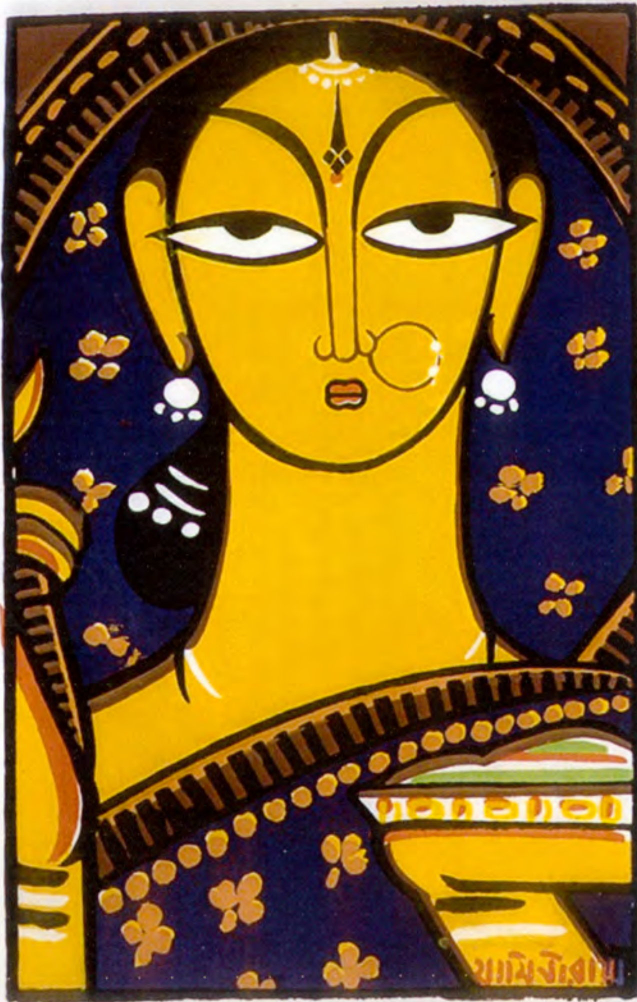
The impact of the high index in the sculpture of god Abu from Tell Asmar is visible below:

[62] Ibid, Pg 168.
[63] Ibid, Pg 168.
[64] Ibid, Pg 169, Emphasis added.
[65] Ibid, Pg 169.

The Sculpture of the God Abu from Tell Asmar c. 2600 B.C.

The higher the eye index, the greater the efficacy, the greater 'it becomes an organ that connects with others.' The kitsch reproduction (bumper-sticker) of the Jagannath idol from Puri, Orissa, shows the endemic nature of darshan (sacral and low-art). Many of Jamini Roy's folk inspired paintings of secular subjects have high eye indices, showing traces of their origin in sacral tribal and folk art, but appropriated into non-sacral high art. This can be seen, for example, in Roy's *Lady in Blue*. Parts of the mechanism that activates darshan (eye indices) have been retained, though the total phenomenon of sacral darshan is absent. The second painting *Three Vashnavis Krishna Devotees* supposedly by Jamini Roy contains sacral elements. The last in the sequence of four paintings is a Jain sacral painting.

Hare Krishna Bumper Sticker



Jamini Roy *Lady in Blue* (c. 1930)

Supposedly a contemporary reproduction of Jamini Roy *Three Vashnavis Krishna Devotees* (c.2010)[66]

Detail of a Manuscript of the Birth of Mahavira (C. 15th Century, opaque watercolour and gold on Paper)

[66] See website <http://www.dollsofindia.com/product/folk-art-paintings/three-vaishnavis-krishna-devotees-jamini-roy-painting-reproduction-on-cloth-PF61.html> Last Accessed 29th July, 2012.

Darshanic cognition (trance-like states to less possessive manifestations) may have been present in pre-history. Darshanic cognition pre-dates the Raj. It was, and is, endemic. It was present in India, in religious and secular manifestations. Dipesh Chakrabarty, noting that Rabindranath and his family were Brahmos, discusses Rabindranath Tagore's darshan of a non-substantial *murati* (form, idol, statue) of Mother Bengal on an autumn morning.[67] Chakrabarty concludes:

> One does not have to be a believer to have *darshan*. As I have already said, when Tagore sees the "lovely *murati*" of Mother Bengal, his language refers to *darshan* almost as an unconscious habit. *Darshan* belongs here to the history of practice and habitus.[68]

Cultural habits such as Darshan need to be opened up and understood as aesthetic practices of Indians being-in, and dwelling-in, modernity.[69] The arrival of mechanical reproductions (from the Ravi Varma Press, Chitrashala Press, and Calcutta Art Studio) flooded the market with images of the gods. Ubiquitous Bhakti had helped create an all-India market. The reproduced images became paramount in imagining a national body.[70] The puja room and the walls of Indian homes displayed these reproductions. The images, from which the devotee received darshan in the puja room, operated in the spiritual space, a space that the Raj did not control (except when the Raj thought the images incited communal tendencies and invoked the 1910 Press Act[71]). Reproduced chromolithographic, lithographic, and calendar prints of gods and goddesses made it easy to imagine a community via visual means—visual means that used the techniques of a dominating cultural system—as opposed to languages, which were diverse, and not unificatory, and required a level of literacy across India. The pictures allowed the nation to be imagined *horizontally* rather than vertically. They were sold in bazaars and stalls that surrounded the temples all across India.[72] They became separated from

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[67] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Revised Edition, 2007, Pg 172.
[68] Ibid, Pg 175.
[69] Ibid, Pg 151-72.
[70] See Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London New York, 2006.
[71] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 109-16.
The growing communal tension has also been recorded by Ronaldshay. He wrote on October 30th 1917:
The Mohurrum and Durga Puja have clashed this year and as a result of recent Hindu Mohammeden riots in Behar, Calcutta has been in a state of great nervousness. I satisfied myself that every possible precaution was taken and waited results without serious apprehension. No disturbances took place…
Ronaldshay, *My Bengal Diary Volume 1, 21st 1917 to November 11th 1919*, MSS EUR D 609/1, I.O.R. British Library, Pg 89.
[72] Jain, Kajri, "More than meets the eye: The circulation of images and the embodiment of value," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 200, 36:33, Sage, pp. 33-70.

the domain of high art. By containing the potential of *darshan*, which was a cultural habit, low art helped in the imagining of the nation.

Darshan has a religious and non-religious aspect. From the religious viewpoint, darshan has not become hidden or disenchanted. It is current, and active. Its practice is widespread and resists questions on whether it is modern or pre-modern. It is an endogenous endemic practice which universal modernity, capitalism and mechanical modernisation have not been able to disenchant or sublate. Darshan, as a practice under conditions of Indian secular modernity, continues to give meaning individually and within the community.[73] To see darshan as "pre-modern" (as Karin Zitzewitz[74] and Rachel Dwyer[75] do), is a blinkered, "Western post-enlightenment"[76] view, and, as Chatterjee asserts, an "inadequate ... theoretical apparatus."[77] Darshan is linguistically current. Darshan is also linguistically endemic in the non-religious non-sacral viewpoint (as said earlier one could have a darshan of a politician or a film star). Guha writes about Gandhi's response to the masses wanting to receive his darshan (providing the viewpoint of a darshan-giver rather than a darshan-receiver):

> [Gandhi] wrote with annoyance bordering on anger about "an unmanageable crowd on the Kanpur platform, yelling the national cries, pressing towards my compartment," about the "painful" experience of having his feet touched as a mark of reverence ("an uncontrollable performance causing much waste of time"), about their insistence on having his darsan ("they had come many miles to have darsan and darsan they must have") ... [78]

Chakrabarty recounts two stories of non-sacral darshan. The first is that of the Bengali writer S. Wajed Ali, a Muslim (to be mentioned because darshan is predominantly discussed in the Hindu context) had a darshan of tradition (not a darshan of an idol or an image), when, returning to the same shop after 25 years in his mid-thirties he saw a man reading the same story from Ramayana to a group of children, and found that the man was the son of the earlier reader, who had inherited the Ramayana from his father, and also learnt that grandfather, son,

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[73] This includes under conditions of secular modernity. For more on secular modernity, see Bhargava, Rajeev, ed, *Secularism and its Critics*, Delhi, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998. See Bilgrami, Akeel *Belief and Meaning The Unity and Locality of Mental Content*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992.

[74] Zitzewitz, Karin, *The Aesthetics of Secularism: Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2006, Pg 29.

[75] Dwyer, Rachel, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, Oxon Abingdon, Routledge, 2006, Pg 19.

[76] Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency –An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, Pg 97.

[77] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 169.

[78] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 138.

and grandson have been reading the Ramayana to children from the same copy of the Ramayana. The other was from Nehru, who would question peasants about Bharat Mata. A puzzled reply was that Bharat Mata meant the good earth of India. But when Nehru would explain (with rhetorical flourish) that apart from the rivers and the fields and the mountains, "Bharat Mata, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people... [A]s this idea soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery."[79]

Returning to the topic of darshan with sacral roots, Abanindranath, who was studying Shilpa Shastras as a nationalist subversion of academy realism (Raj's cultural system), used the sacral art discourses to create a nationalist modernist endogenous discourse: "Images should conform to prescribed types when they are to be contemplated in the spirit of worship". He added, "Does that not imply that the artist is to adhere *sastric* formulae only when producing images intended for worship and that he is free, in all other cases, to follow his own artistic instinct?"[80]—making it clear that the artist should take from the endogenous cultural system whilst being free to create and pursue his imagination and *shak* (whim).[81] Darshan was used by Abanindranath and others because it was part of the cultural system, was a unifying force (among Hindus), and related "to 'insight', knowledge' and 'philosophy,'"[82] of their cultural system.

Varma was the first Indian artist who unified three separate spaces of patronage: the British and Indian urban elite space; the art collection of aristocrats and princes[83] and the bazaars and puja rooms and walls of Indian homes which came to be filled with his popular prints.[84] Varma's prints, as well as those from the Chitrashala Press and the Calcutta Art Studio were popular; their themes were mythological, their subjects were Indian, and the paintings could be used for nationalism and to imagine a nation[85] (by delegitimizing the

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[79] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Revised Edition, 2007, Pg 175-177.
[80] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy" in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Golden Jubilee Number, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, 1961, Pg 30.
[81] Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Permanent Black, 2004, Pg 157-58.
[82] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 9.
[83] Sheikh, Gulammohammed, "The Backdrop," *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, ed., Gulammohammed Sheikh, Delhi: Tulika Press, 1997, Pg 35-38.
[84] See Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004. See Jain, Kajri, *Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian Calendar Art*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007. Also see: Zitzewitz, Karin, *The Aesthetics of Secularism: Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2006.
[85] See Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004.

Raj's dominance through religious imagery); but the style was academic realism, a style divorced from the endogenous cultural system. Using the low-art prints a pan-Indian community could be constructed using indigenous narratalogical systems. Hence, and in ideological opposition to the flooding of the market in what they believed to be kitsch[86] (the academic realism style), Ramananda Chatterjee publicized the Bengal School through images published in the *Modern Review*, and the journal *Bharati* (published from Jorasanko). These helped Ramananda Chatterjee and his avant-garde coterie re-establish tradition against mass disseminated kitsch painted in what they regarded to be a debased academic manner.

As Christopher Pinney writes, the images were a 'strategic mimicry' of the techniques the colonial schools taught to Indian students. Pinney, following Michael Fried, notes that the "driving forces of change in European art—from French eighteenth-century history painting to modernism are strategies that deny the presence of the beholder through strategies of 'absorption'." The denial of the beholder meant a breakdown in the relationship of direct eye contact between the "picture's subject and the beholder..."[87] It was this relationship and "...absorption, indirectness and history painting..." that became "...part of the package exported by the colonial state into its Government Art schools in the nineteenth century."[88] Yet for popular Indian art this was a contradiction because reproduced images of gods were first produced using 'strategic mimicry', which represented a negation of the subject to beholder, but changed (suiting consumer demands) from a negation to a "direct sign of desire"[89]. This is seen in the *darshanic* aspects such as the frontal nature of the deity with specific emphasis on the eyes, which do not negate but rather ocularly celebrate the presence of the beholder. The contradiction used the colonizers' visual discourse, and adapted it to imagine a nation-form. Thus this low art was embedded in a contradictory relationship to nationalist thought.[90]

Also See Vishwanathan, Kedar, "Aesthetics, Nationalism, and the Image of Woman in Modern Indian Art," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12.2 (2010): http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss2/4

[86] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Modern Indian Art," *Rupam* No. 11 July 1922, Pg 22.

[87] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 22.

[88] Pinney, Christopher, "Piercing the Skin of the Idol" in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, Eds., Pinney, C and Thomas, N, Oxford and New York and Berg, 2001, Pg 159.

[89] Mitchell, W.J.T, "What do Pictures *Really* Want?", October, 77 1996, Pg, 79.

[90] Chatterjee, Partha, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society" in *Subaltern Studies III*, Ed. Ranajit Guha, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, Pg 155-56.

In contrast to Ravi Varma's popular paintings and reproductions Abanindranath created Bharata Mata (1905, Mother India; originally Banga Mata[91]).

Abanindranath Tagore, *Bharata Mata (Mother India* Wash on tempera, Rabindra Bharti Society, Kolkata 1905)

Abanindranath, in the prevailing milieu of *swadeshi* anti-colonial nationalism, used the circulating discourses of the mother as nation, woman, and nation as *Shakti*, and created the icon.[92] Abanindranath's *Mother India*, used as placards during the *swadeshi* processions,[93] was used to imagine a nation. These nationalist processions would use the deity as a sacred referent that would communicate the power of the nation, which was symbolically embedded

[91] Bose, Sugata and Jalal, Ayesha eds, *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, Pg 50–75.

[92] See for instance a polemical manifesto authored by an anonymous person under the nom de plume of Swadeshi, "Save your women" *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, Aug, 1907, pp. 177-79.
For the deification of the female/mother as nation see: Borthwick, Meredith. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984. Chatterjee, Partha. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question." *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, Ed. Gregory Castle. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 152-65. Garimella, Annapurna. "Engendering Indian Art," *Representing the Body Gender Issues in Indian Art*, Ed. Vidya Dehejia. Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997, Pg 22-41. Sinha, Mrinalini "Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and Nationalism in Late-Colonial India," *Feminist Studies*, 26.3, 2000, 623-44. Sen, Samita "Motherhood and Mothercraft: Gender and Nationalism in Bengal," *Gender and History*, 1993, Pg 231-43.

[93] Caillois, Roger, *Man and the Sacred*, translated by Meyer Barash, University of Illinois, 2001, Pg 253.

in the Hindu imaginary. These processions were similar to the annual *Durga puja* processions, and other processions of deities of Shakti devi around the country. As Richard Davis writes, "A processional image presents itself to its audience seated high upon a palanquin carried on the shoulders of temple servants or riding in a large wooden vehicle pulled by ropes. It appears dressed in silk clothing and elaborately decorated with necklaces, bracelets, belts, rings, and a crown of gold and jewels."[94]

Abanindranath's painting needs to be seen in contrast to Varma's. Abanindranath was creating a new vision of the nation. He was not painting a known deity; he was creating a new one. Like Varma he was embedding darshanic-worshippable elements in it (though Abanindranath also created art works in the Mughal, Buddhist and other styles). Abanindranath's painting was inspired by his close affiliation with Sister Nivedita and her love for the goddess Kali[95] imbibed via her guru Vivekananda (whose guru, Ramakrishna worshipped the Mother goddess). Abanindranath was acutely aware of *devi* and *kali* worship, which was part of Bengali heritage. *Bharata Mata*, however, does not carry martial elements (Kali carries a sword and a bleeding head in two of her four arms, and Durga carries weapons). Bharata Mata, a nation to be achieved through peaceful means, a goddess whose darshan can be obtained by following the peaceful path, is clad in a saffron coloured robe. She is holding homespun *swadeshi* white cloth, a bunch of twigs, *rudraksha mala*, and a book.[96] Abanindranath had moved the discourse away from nascent militant communalist nationalism to articulating a nationalism based on Indian education and spiritual devotions to the motherland. He was also imagining the nation in an endogenous idiom.

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[94] Davis, Richard, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton University Press, 1999, Pg 20.
[95] See Sister Nivedita, *Kali the Mother*, London, 1900
[96] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. "Visualizing the Nation – The Iconography of a "National Art" in Modern India, *Journal of Art and Ideas*, no. 27-28. New Delhi, March 1995, Pg 26.

1.4. The Havellian Revolution

Ernest Binfield Havell (1861 -1934), Principal, Government School of Art, Calcutta, is a key figure in Indian modernism. His contribution has been thoroughly studied.[97] Consequently, and without diminishing his importance, he appears minimally in this study, for narrative continuity, and to ensure that his critical role in development of endogenous modernism is understood.

Havell sold off almost all the western paintings in the collection of the Government Art Gallery in 1904-05. The collection had been built up since 1876, and the sale created a political disturbance resulting in student protests. O.C. Ganguly observed: Havell "held the view that...ordinary standard European paintings should not be studied by students." But the students found this "view not acceptable," and "organized a one-day strike to protest against this decision of Havell, and tried to mobilize opinion through a meeting held at Maidan." However, "Havell won" the issue, "as the government extended all cooperation and support to him."[98]

Havell's act has to be seen as the first rebellion in the creation of an endogenous modernism. Additionally, before the sale of the paintings, Havell started reforming the method of instruction.[99] He wanted to stop South Kensington academy realism from being taught in India. He wanted the Raj's art ideology, and its art apparatus, to be dismantled, because they were inimical, cognitively, to the Indian students, and was not part of the Indian cultural-system.[100] His reformation of art pedagogy was an 'orientalist' nationalist drive (exhibiting sustained opposition to British economic importation policy[101]), which, in

[97] See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. See Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[98] Bose, Sudha, *Rupa-Ikshana – Development of Indian Art and Culture (Autobiography of O C Ganguly)*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1991, Pg 95.

[99] Ibid; Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 151-159. Banerji, Debashish, "The Orientalism of EB Havell", *Third Text*, 16:1, pp 41-56, 2002. Jamal, Osman, "EB Havell and Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, Modernity and Art," *Third Text*, 14:53, Winter 2000-01, pp, 19-30.

[100] Geertz, Clifford, "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Fontana Press, 1993, Pg 55-86.

[101] Bayly, C.A. "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry)" in *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, Pg 198.

accordance with *swadeshi* nationalism, wanted Indian artists to comprehend and integrate their past aesthetic structures and cultural systems.[102]

In 1897 Havell wrote:

> It is in my opinion a most radical error that an Art School in India should ignore the real living art, which exists at the present day in this country. That the *modern art in oriental countries more real and alive than it is in European countries should be taken advantage of to the utmost, instead of being ignored.* In the school of art buildings at the present moment (beyond a few casts and pen-and-ink drawings of ornaments from Orissa temples which are hung in the walls) there is not the slightest attempt made to show the students that there is any art except European, and in the whole teaching the existence of oriental art (the fountain head of European art) is ignored entirely. It is entirely wrong to suppose that all the essentials of art cannot be taught just as well (and even better) from the best types of native art and from a reference to nature as from casts of the antique and European school copies.[103]

Havell saw the main "aim" of the "Art Gallery" as an educational one."[104] Havell thought that "...too much importance has been given to the question of technique in painting, and too much attention devoted to modern [European] phases of art."[105] He declared:

> ...no systematic attempt has even been made to rouse the student's interest in their own surroundings by making original illustrations of Indian life or by studying and illustrating, for the benefit of mofussil schools and European students, the great stories of Indian art and antiquity in the museum next door.[106]

Havell wanted Indian students to examine their endogenous cultural-system rather than the European cultural-system. In 1907 Ananda Coomaraswamy understood Havell's reforms: "... the whole decadence of Indian art in modern times is due to the influence of the schools of art." However the decadence "may have been in the past, the influence of schools such as those of Lahore and Calcutta at the present day cannot be other than good ... those in charge are...in sympathy with the best Indian art." In Calcutta, "work of the utmost importance has been done ... Indian aims and Indian methods find their due place."[107] In 1912 Havell suggested that for art to survive in India "Art must become a part of your life and religion, as

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[102] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 244.

[103] Nos. 49-50, May 1897, File 3-S/10—1 General Department Education, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta. Havell's letter No. 2314, dated 27th August, 1896. Emphasis Added.

[104] Nos. 52-53, File 3-s/10 – 3, No 2315, dated Calcutta, the 27th August, 1896. Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Nos. 49-50, May 1897, File 3-S/10—1General Department Education, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta. Havell's letter No. 2314, dated 27th August, 1896.

[107] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, August, 1907, pp. 105-110, Pg 107.

it has been before; and in this work European science can give you help—but that science must be made Indian, and a part of Indian religion, before it can fulfil its artistic purpose and make the people glad."[108]

Abanindranath met Havell around 1895-96. In 1896, when Abanindranath first exhibited his paintings, O.C. Ganguly wrote, with nationalistic bias, that they were "...new attempts to revive and recreate Indian Art."[109] Havell chose Abanindranath to become his Vice Principal, because he had found in Abanindranath his Indian art correlate and avant-garde pioneer. Abanindranath called Havell his guru[110] and forced pedagogical changes. Abanindranath condemned colonial education, wanting Indian artists to be free to pursue their whims and fancy (shak) above education (shiksa)[111], and placing a contradictory role of an artistic educator within the colonial system. He created a space for a new discourse rooted in an artistic mode of inquisition based on inspiration and whimsicality, rather than arts and crafts rote learning and mere academic copying of objects from a rational recording of external reality.

Havell and the Tagores influenced each other. Due to Havell's ideological underpinnings (traced to William Morris (1834-96) and the Arts and Crafts Movement (1860-1910)) it can be said that it was Havell who first sought the return of art to the habitual praxis of Indian cultural systems, rather than using a foreign imposed cultural system and apparatus to create a visual culture in opposition to that culture's view of reality.

Havell's actions had direct roots in the Hindu Mela founded in 1867 by Ganendranath Tagore (1841-69), Dwijendranath Tagore (1840-1926), Rajnarayan Basu (1826-99), and Nabagopal Mitra (1840-94); and in the Bengali art historical treatises and practices

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[108] Havell, E.B, *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras, India, 1912, Pg 17.

[109] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual*, Ed., Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 1936-37, Pg 19.

[110] Following Havell's departure from the India Society, Abanindranath wrote to William Rothenstein stating:
...perhaps I owe an apology and explanation to you and my other friends in England for giving up the 'India Society' so suddenly. Mr. Havell my 'guru' has left the society under most unfortunate circumstances and as his 'Chela' I have no other way left open but to follow my 'guru' in this affair. Perhaps many will laugh at this exhibition of childish devotion of a 'chela' to his 'guru', but you my friend who knows India and the Indian better than anyone else will I hope understand my feeling and excuse me for committing this...
Letter sent to William Rothenstien from Abanindranath Tagore dated 3/7/1913 MssEurb213 213/214 IOL British Library, London.

[111] Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Permanent Black, 2004, Pg 157-58.

eventuating from Nabagopal Mitra's National School (1872).[112] The Hindu Mela was a nascent nationalist foundation predating the *swadeshi* movement's promotion of home industry; it was an organization promoting home industries and reliance on Indian created goods. Havell's reforms also have to be seen in light of a sustained opposition to British imports. C.A. Bayly writes about *swadeshi:*

> ...first peak was the swadeshi campaign in Bengal from 1905-1910, which was a concerted effort to boost home industry through a boycott of British goods. ... *Swadeshi was also heir to a movement of artistic revival,* which sought to protect the values of indigenous craft traditions against the impersonality of all mill production and the drab uniformity of chemical dyes. British officials such as E.B. Havell, long-time proponent of Indian crafts and champion of the fly shuttle, had been stimulating interest in handloom weaving since the 1880s. Havell and others like him saw a growing market for Indian hand-made exotica in an England where urbanization and industrialization had brought about an 'Arcadian reaction' associated with the work of artists such as William Morris...[113]

Havell's critique of industrial capitalism as well as the drive towards artistic revival of Indian-made goods forced both the sale of the paintings and the pedagogical reforms. Nabagopal Mitra's National School had, by 1880, started the pedagogical reforms. Havell's sale of paintings was a counter establishment move against the colonial government. He was an art educator seeking reforms to resuscitate and, as part of the colonizer's mission, get Indian art back to being a fundamental component of the non-Raj contaminated cultural system, their 'real living art.'[114]

E.B. Havell's battle for the 'right' pedagogy for Indian students paralleled the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Havell wanted the students to engage with representations and designs they could identify with 'the real living art' of India. . Abanindranath understood that living culture was connected with the rural populaces, those who had kept their cultural systems intact and had not come into contact with colonial pedagogical systems. There was a turn toward habitual practice. Abanindranath found this in people whose caste-tasks in villages was to "...make images of gods—to sketch their pictures on canvass—to make wonderful flowers out of a piece of gold—to turn a shell into an elegant bracelet of

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[112] Ibid, Pg 140-171.

[113] Bayly, C.A. "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry)" in *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009. Emphasis added, Pg 198.

[114] Mitter, Partha, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977, Pg 238-40.

remarkable design—to weave forest-flowers into beautiful crowns and ornaments for decorating gods..."[115]

Havell established the artistic break from academic realism and colonial knowledge with the Tagore family, and institutionalized it through Abanindranath Tagore. The break from naturalism, realism, and academy art, and the drive towards an exploration of traditional art to rebuild an Indian cultural-system was the prime moment—an *Indian art historical rupture*—that allowed for the creation of an endogenous modernism. Havell was its key subverter. Havell's privileged position as principal of the art school; one of bureaucratic power and structural authority, strongly helped the pedagogical and institutional changes take place. His privileged position, role as art educator, friend of the Tagores, and close proximity to the endorsing colonial regime, all facilitated his role in establishing Abanindranath's Bengal School.

Havell's sale of the paintings created a bifurcation. The bifurcation led to two branches: the Bengal School, and academy art practitioners. The academy art branch of the bifurcation was represented by a new organisation under Ranad Prasad Gupta, the Jubilee Art Academy, which was formed in reaction to the sale. Havell, Abanindranath, represented the Bengal School branch and like-minded artists who wanted to create an endogenous discourse. Interestingly, the academy art branch later originated an endogenous modernist stream of painters such as Atul Bose, Hemenendranath Majumdar, and Jamini Roy.

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[115] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art" *The Modern Review* Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 397.

1.5 Abanindranath's Pedagogy

Lord Ronaldshay has recorded (c. 1917-22)

> It is interesting to recall the fact that these two artists (Dr A. N. Tagore and Mr G.N. Tagore)...were...ignorant, so they have informed me, of the tradition and formula embodied in the Silpa Shastra, the Indian Classics of 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 down 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.[116]

The Tagores' lack of knowledge of the Shilpa Shastras is telling. It shows that Abanindranath did not blindly believe in the sastric formulations. The reinterpretations were based on a nationalistic drive to connect the past art to the present. But this was difficult to introduce into the syllabus of the Art Schools, because the curriculum reiterated a technical code that the artist could put to ready use, instead of training the artist to formulate expressions cognate with their cultural-system. The endogenous cultural system was not being taught to be used as sources of inspiration and freedom. No student of merit came from the art schools because, according to Abanindranath, "students slog within strict rules and do not get a chance to enjoy their work; in training to be painters and sculptors their hands get mechanically adept, but their minds starve and fret."[117]

Abanindranath re-discovered the Shilpa Shastras and reinterpreted them as a guide using which the artist could train his mind, and understand that "Art is not made to justify the Silpa Shastras, but the Shastras are made to elucidate art ... a great part of our treatises on sculpture, painting, architecture and the like is an account of what has been built or painted or written...without recourse to them." He added, "books centuries old cannot contain today's facts. To call them Shastras is itself a mistake; it is like calling encyclopaedias gospels."[118] In 1911, expecting Coomaraswamy's arrival in Jorasanko, Abanindranath wrote to Havell: "[with Coomaraswamy's] help I hope to get some good workmen who will be willing to

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[116] Haldar, Kumar, Asit, *Art and Tradition*, Universal Publishers, India, 1952, Pg 67.

[117] Subramanyan, K.G, *Moving Focus – Essays on Indian Art*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 80.
See: Tagore, Abanindranath, "Shilper Kriya Prakriyar Bhalo Mando", *Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali*, Calcutta, Rupa, 1962, Pg 148.

[118] Ibid, Pg 134.

come and settle around me."[119] But in 1918 he exclaimed: "...Have you seen Coomaraswamy's translation of Vidyapati?" Abanindranath, who had seen a copy sent to Rabindranath, wrote: "Coomaraswamy has...murdered Vidyapati's beautiful poems... [He] has given to the world a vulgar book which will have a wrong impression in the minds of our generations..." Abanindranath wanted to "give a good scolding to Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy" telling him "that it is much easier to write and write than catch the true nature of a thing."[120]

Abanindranath was upset with Coomaraswamy because of Abanindranath's deep connection to Vidyapati and his language. Bengali literature had developed from folk languages such as Maithili and its literary variant, Brajbuli. Abanindranath was deeply familiar with Vidyapati, having used the Vaishnav poems for his *Krishna-Lila* paintings.

Abanindranath Tagore *Krishna Lila – Ras* (1896/7, Watercolour on paper, Rabindra Bharti Society Kolkata)

[119] Letter from Abanindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell, 8th June 1911, MssEur D736/2, I.O.L British Library, London, Pg 7.
[120] Letter to E.B. Havell from Abanindranth Tagore MssEurD736/2, dated 17/03/1918, IOL, British Library. Emphasis Original.

Abanindranath Tagore *Krishna Lila – Akrvud Samvad* (1896/7, Watercolour on paper, Rabindra Bharti Society, Kolkata)

Abanindranath wrote in the letter to Havell, "when I was doing the Krishna set I used these Vaishnava poems and I found them to be absolutely devoid of any vulgarity whereas A.K.C's translation — well I will not say what pictures it brought to me of the divine love and sports of Krishna and Radha."[121] Abanindranath's paintings were due to his (and Tagores'[122]) deep assimilation of Vaishnavism[123] (in the *Bhakti* mode). The Krishna Lila narratives was a paramount part of cultural system; it should be used with sensitivity and understanding, in harmony with the cultural system from which it sprang, and should not be misrepresented by translation (or any other means).

Sumanta Banerjee observed: "a Bengali *bhadralok* critic towards the end of the nineteenth century admitted: 'In the obscene verses which we today discover in Vidyapati

[121] Letter to E.B. Havell from Abanindranth Tagore MssEurD736/2, dated 17/03/1918, IOL, British Library. Emphasis Original.

[122] Vidyapati's poems also inspired Rabindranath. He wrote, "Vidyapati's quaint and corrupt Maithili language attracted me all the more because of its unintelligibility. I tried to make out his sense without the help of the compiler's notes, jotting down in my own notebook all the more obscure words with their context as many times as they occurred." Tagore, Rabindranath, *My Reminiscences*, Macmillan and Co., Limited, St Martin's Street, London, 1917, Pg 116.

[123] Vidyapati devoted many poems to Shiva.

and Chandidas[124], the common folks of the past could not perceive any obscenity..."[125] This was despite the fact that "...the accepted themes of the poems of those days were all related to the description of the human body and its functions. The ideal of love in those days was based on physical attraction..."[126] Bhakti allowed the devotee to see the lila (divine play) of the Gods in a different light. The Krishna Lila, popularized by the mystic Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) and others, was part of the Bhakti movement, which swept over India, under the condition of feudalism, regardless of caste.[127]

Abanindranath's letter went on:

> Tell Coomaraswamy that his [translation] will be another weapon in the hands of the Church mission societies here, it will have a large sale with all read gentleman writing about the debasing influence of Vaishnavism on Indians with special influence to Bengalis as a literary class people. Writing books are becoming as common as sports but it is dealing death to many things. This maxim I aim at A.K.C for his *unpardonable sin.*[128]

Abanindranath did not only use Hindu religious discourses (examples of his paintings in the Mughal style have been discussed earlier in the study, for which it can be assumed that Abanindranath had used Coomaraswamy's art historical research into both Mughal and Rajput paintings[129]). By 1918, Coomaraswamy had grown critical of Abanindranath's work and the Bengal School. He criticised them as static, in need of becoming more open. Coomaraswamy, writing about his forthcoming book on Buddha and Buddhism of the Harappan civilization to William Rothenstein (with whom Abanindranath was also in private correspondence[130]), noted in relation to his book, "I regret some of Tagore's Buddhist pictures (which I think are really bad) will be used again in this; however, it can't be helped."[131] Abanindranath attempted to create a nationalized aesthetic essence that included

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[124] The fifteenth century Vaishnavite poets who sang about the loves of Radha and Krishna.
[125] Banerjee, Sumanta, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989, Pg 141.
[126] Ibid, Pg 141.
[127] Kosambi, D.D., "The Avatāra Syncretism and possible sources of the Bhagavad Gītā", JBBRAS, 1948-9, xxiv-xxv, pp. 121-34, "Social and Economic Aspects of the Bhagavad Gītā", in *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 12ff. See: Banerji, Debashish, *The Alternate Nation of Abanindranath Tagore*, Sage Publications, India, 2010, Pg 19.
[128] Letter to E.B. Havell from Abanindranath Tagore MssEurD736/2, dated 17/03/1918, IOL, British Library. Emphasis Original; Italics emphasis added.
[129] See Coomaraswamy, A.K, Rajput painting: being an account of the Hindu paintings of Rajasthan and the Panjab Himalayas from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, London, Oxford University Press, 1916.
[130] See collection of Rothenstien letters, Mss EUR B 213 IOL, British Library.
[131] Letter dated December 29th, 1914 Pg 374-75, *Selected Letters of Ananda K Coomaraswamy*, Eds., Alvin Moore, and Rama Poonambulam Coomaraswamy, Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988.

Krishna bhakti, Buddhist, and Mughal art. It was a type of aesthetic nationalism[132] that, through the religious mode of the cultural-system, was attempting to create a historical cultural essence that would feed its way into a pan-Indian construct indebted to Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Islamic Mughal miniatures, and folk traditions.

Abanindranath had wanted to go with Rabindranath on his trip to Japan in 1916 but didn't because Abanindranath's wife wouldn't travel with him, because if she left the home for the world crossing the seas neither she nor Abanindranath would be able to perform *puja* and make offerings to their home god Vishnu.[133] Despite this conservative act, in the Bageshwari lectures he spoke of the need to reach out[134]:

> [It] may be true that there can be no art without its yesterdays but it is equally true that no art can survive out of contact with the present...In the history of art we observe that when a people or a group hold on to something as a traditional deal their aesthetic experience gets impaired and art declines in quality.[135]

However, rejuvenation need not disrupt tradition:

> On the string of time [on which hang] today's society with yesterday's society on the same string hangs our ancient culture, with its wealth of literature, music, science, and philosophy, as a priceless jewel. The greatest responsibility of our present society will be to add to it something that will hold comparison with what has gone before, by way of virtue, learning or intelligence. But our contribution however paltry or inconsequential, be it like a sliver of glass, a lump of clay or a blemish on the face of the moon – will be there, irretrievably, in the series. Maybe someone in posterity will write a favourable treatise on it or expound on it a university lecture; maybe someone else will criticize it, along with the present-day life and culture, in the most stringent terms and call it an excrescence.[136]

In 1915, Abanindranath published sadanga or the Six Limbs of Indian Painting in *Modern Review,* which was subsequently reprinted in Rupam (1921). His views were widely disseminated. This was the text that his pupil Nandalal Bose used for his recodification of Indian forms in his publication *Rupavali*, which became a text for Shantiniketan artists. Abanindranath also demonstrates an intellectual debt to Aurobindo's 1909-10 publication in

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[132] Clark, John, "Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism," *East Asian History* 29, June, 2005, pp. 1-38, Pg 3.

[133] Private Conversation with Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty at Australian National University, Thursday 18th August, 2011.

[134] Delivered at the University of Calcutta (first published in 1941).

[135] Tagore, Abanindranath, *Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhabali*, Rupa, Calcutta, 1962, Pg 125.

[136] Subramanyan, K.G., *Moving Focus – Essays on Indian Art*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2006, Pg 71.

Karmayogin entitled *The National Value of Art.*[137] Abanindranath wrote about external and internal forms and techniques that the Indian artist was aware of, and applied in contradistinction to merely taking from the western rational viewpoint of representing reality as reality. Coomaraswamy saw that Indian artists had never been divorced from nature, as Cecil Burns had suggested, but instead they should internally transform nature within their art.[138] Coomaraswamy saw transformations of nature in Hindu philosophy and two essentialist Hindu categories *sakti* (divine female energy) and *maya* (illusion). Coomaraswamy elaborated:

> Indian religious philosophy as a whole, and regard the extent to which its highest conceptions have passed as dogmas into the currency of daily life, we shall have to define Hindu civilization as one of the least superstitious in the world has known. *Maya* is not properly *de*lusion, but strictly speaking creative power, *sakti*, the principle of manifestation; *de*lusion, *moha*, is to conceive of appearances as things in themselves, and to be attached to them as such without regard to their procession.[139]

Abanindranath promulgated the view that the Indian artist processed external reality, nature and the real material world internally via *drishyam* and *sadrishyam.*[140] *Sadrishyam* was "said to be the chief aim of Indian Painting," and is "derived from the word *Drishyam*,"[141] which according to Maitra meant, "...an impression in the form of a vision resulting from a visible or imaginary object." Maitra argued:

> Painting in India aspired to produce an effective substitute of this, and not of any object in any case....[which] .was the chief aim of Indian Painting... [giving] ...a visible form to the invisible spirit which underlies the seen and the unseen objects of art...[It was]...essentially a creation, a realism in which mere form was regarded as immaterial.[142]

This realism was an idealized depiction, interiorized, of the actual perceived object[143], and was seen by Charles Mariott of London as the difference between the purely Indian school of painting and the Mughal Schools. The Mughal Schools contained the imprint of realism due

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[137] Aurobindo, "The National Value of Art," in *Karmayogin*, First Published in 1909-10. Revised Edition Sri Aurbindo Ashram – Pondicherry, 6th Edition, Third Impression 1999, Pg 17.
[138] Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 63.
[139] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1934, Pg 158.
[140] Clark John, Modern Indian Art Some Literature and Problematics, Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, NSW, Sydney, 1994, Pg 15.
[141] Maitra, Akshay, Kumar, "Aims and Methods of Painting in Ancient India," *Rupam* No. 13, June, 1923, Pg 27.
[142] Ibid, Pg 27.
[143] Ibid, Pg 27.

to integration and diffusion of European renaissance art into the Mughal courts.[144] Yet Abanindranath's School held congruence with modern German Expressionism, specifically Kandinsky (discussed in Part 2).[145] Maitra wanted Indian painting to be pure of other influences. Abanindranath thought otherwise: "I see no sense in leading Indian art that way."[146]

Abanindranath, indebted to Aurobindo[147], explained that there is an inner domain, something beyond the realm, and reality, of external appearances that the Indian artist tries to penetrate—the eternal truth of objects' may not be our mundane representation of them, in this sense the 'traditional' Indian artist/artisan tries to penetrate the very metaphysical nature of the objects ontological circumstance and this comes through a type of inner essential viewing, or *darshan*, as removed from a rational—European—depiction of them. Such transcendence from the objects' ontology within the mind of the artist allows us to understand the Bengal School and traditional Indian painting as an activity that gave rise to variations due to the interiorized understanding of the object by the artists. This approach can be seen in his earlier painting *Uttarayan (Transcendence) Garden* (c. 1895) as well his later painting of urban Calcutta life, *Actors of Bengal—Rati Vilap* (1914). *Uttarayan (Transcendence) Garden* from the title represents Abanindranath's mental internalized transcendence from painting the external world rationally. Rather Abanindranath uses the wash technique as a method to provide a hazy, or an impression of his feeling in the image. In both paintings *Uttarayan (Transcendence) Garden* and *Actors of Bengal—Rati Vilap* he achieves the aforementioned by using the wash technique together with an internalization of the remembered image, depicting his impression of the garden—now transcended—and the Calcutta actor *Rati Vilap*.

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[144] And 86-88, Beach, Milo-Cleveland, *The New Cambridge History of India 1:3 Mughal and Rajput Painting*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 76.
[145] Marriott, Charles, "Exhibition of Indian Paintings At the British Museum," *Rupam* No. 12, August, 1922, Pg 125.
[146] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Shilper Kriya Prakriyar Bhalo Mando," *Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali*, Rupa, Calcutta, 1962, Pg 151.
[147] Aurobindo wrote:
According to our own [Indian Hindu] philosophy the whole world came out of *ananda* [joy or bliss] and returns to *ananda*, and the triple term in which *ananda* may be stated is Joy, Love, Beauty. To see divine beauty in the whole world, man, life, nature, to love that which we have seen and to have pure unalloyed bliss in that love and that beauty is the appointed road by which mankind as a race must climb to God. That is the reaching to *vidya* [knowledge] through *avidya* [negation of knowledge], to the One Pure and Divine through the manifold manifestation of him, of which the Upanishad repeatedly speaks.
See Aurobindo, "The National value of Art" in *Karmayogin*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, Sixth Edition, 1994, Pg 9-10.

Uttaryan Garden (c. 1895, watercolour on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Abanindranath Tagore *Actors of Bengal Rati-Vilap*, (1914, watercolour on paper, Rabindra Bharti Society, Kolkata)

The Bengal School should be viewed as a distinctly varied tradition. Abanindranath's text should be seen in the wider discourse of the Indianisation of painting in Calcutta as well as the reformist movement of pedagogical instruction and nationalist discourses on Indian

art.[148] Abanindranath, having been exposed to tenets of Chinese painting through contact with Okakura, in his excitement sent a letter to Havell on the 29th of January 1914 about the six limbs of Indian painting, or *sadanga*[149], explaining:

> ...it is practically the same as the six canons of the Chinese ...(1) *rupabheda* (2) *pramanani* – (1) knowing the difference between the living forms and the dead forms (2) and correct-perception....Those are the two most important things in our canons and you will see that they are in one sense convey the same meaning, as the 'Rhythmic vitality' and The Limbs of Bones of the Chinese, you will find the reference of our six canons or sadanga in the Chapter III of the kamasutra by Vatsyayana but you must not tell anything about this to Coomaraswamy, or others until my book is out.[150]

Abanindranath discusses *rupa* (visual and mental form) and *bheda* (difference between things); he discusses *rupabheda* (the knowledge of appearances) that enables "...us to see and depict things as they are and as they appear visually."[151]

> Endless and varied are the forms, which our senses feel, perceive and observe. *Rupabheda* means the analysis and synthesis of forms given to us by our five senses and our soul, or mind.[152]

Abanindranath viewed that truth in form (*rupa*) arrives through an internalized thought process: "The difference that exists between outer forms gives us only the variety, and not the verity which underlies all *rupa*."[153] He went further: "Only the knowledge of appearances gained through our inner sight will enable us to see and show the real difference of forms."[154] The true nature of an artist was to internalize the perceived reality. He wrote:

> It is true that deep emotional impulse is the source from which creative art springs...In painting, the true artist does not depict precisely what he sees. He looks at an object, stores away the impression in his memory, and after a long time, perhaps, gives expression to it. The period that intervenes between seeing and expressing is peculiarly favourable to artistic activity. In photography we see an object and

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[148] See Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. See Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

[149] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 205-07. See Pillai, Krishna Govinda, *The Way of the Silpis or Hindu approach to Art and Science*, The Indian Press Allahabad, 1948.

[150] Letter to E.B. Havell from Abanindranath Tagore dated 29/1/1914, MssEurD736/2 IOL British Library

[151] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Sadanga, Or the Six Limbs of Indian Painting" Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1921, Pg 1.

[152] Ibid, Pg 1.

[153] Ibid, Pg 3.

[154] Ibid, Pg 3.

> reproduce it perfectly by just pressing the button, but mere reproduction does not achieve that great purpose which we call art.[155]

Sadanga as well as *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy* became key discourses in the advancement of endogenous modernism in Shantiniketan, especially through Nandalal Bose. Bose subsequently reformed these discourses in his publication *Rupavali*, a book on form and rhythm for students. He dedicated the book to "Abanindranath Tagore", calling him "my guru."[156] In *Rupavali*—String of forms—Bose articulated the traditional *talamana* and *pramana* ideal proportions for sacral figures as demonstrated in the Shilpa Shastras but re-worked them by adding his variations to the form of bodies making them less static, and enabling them to move with Ajanta influenced line and bold figure contouring. *Rupavali* received attention. An anonymous author writing in *Rupam* thought that it should be "introduced in all drawing classes of local schools." It "strongly recommend[ed] the publication to the Directors of Public Instruction in all [Indian] provinces."[157] Abanindranath's pedagogy had gone to the next generation of Bengali artists, having withstood the rupture that was caused by Rabindranath between the earlier Bengal School's and the Shantiniketan approach.

Abanindranath's treatise was the first modernist treatise by an Indian artist on Indian art. Abanindranath was an educator (Vice Principal in the Government School of Art); his aim was to enhance the country's indigenous artistic developments. His approach was steeped in tradition because he wanted Indian artists to understand all aspects of Indian art, much of which had been lost through colonial pedagogy, capitalist change, and the breakdown of the Mughal Polity. But artists must not follow tradition blindly. "... they may not take these aesthetic canons and form-analyses of our art treatises, with all the rigors of their standards and their demonstrations, as representing absolute and inviolable laws, nor deprive their art-endeavours of their sustaining breath of freedom, by confining themselves and their works within the limits of *sastric* demonstrations.'[158]

Abanindranath created the first endogenous Indian impressionism by sustained discourses on self-determination: of technique; vision; art history; historiography and art

[155] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Creative Art" in *The Four Arts Annual 1936-37* Editorial Board, A. Coomarswamy and O.C. Gangoly, Corporation Street, Calcutta, No Date, Pg 4.
[156] Bose, Nandalal, *Rupavali 3*, Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan Published for Visva-Bharati by Pulinbihari Sen, India, 1953, Pg 2.
[157] "Reviews," *Rupam*, No. 10, April 1922, Pg 67-8.
[158] Tagore, Abanindranth, "Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy" in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Golden Jubilee Number, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, 1961, Pg 29.

philosophy. He conducted discourses in each of these dimensions. By considering all the dimensions deeply, he created a *total endogenous discourse*—of technique, vision, history, historiography, and philosophy—all of which were related to an endogenous philosophy of a civilization, a philosophy that was extant and did not belong to the colonizer (which despite its Indian influences in the past had a predominantly aggressive, possessive gaze that was contrary to the internal, spiritual gaze)—His was a philosophy that functioned in the spaces where the colonizer's hegemony was not dominant. He used the lack of hegemony in those spaces and promoted an interiorized art discourse and helped create an endogenous Indian impressionism.

However, exogenous influences were relevant. Havell was 'his guru'. Lord Ronaldshay was a frequent visitor to his home—his milieu had deep relationships with the ruling classes. He learnt oil painting from Ghilardi, but he wanted the Shilpa Shastras to be a 'weapon.' Despite the emphasis on endogeny, he did not want art to be confined in the past: He did not see sense in leading Indian art that way.[159] He wrote that the "confinement of Indian art within the rules of tradition will preserve it from hybridization; but the senile and deathly hideousness this outrage will force it into will be beyond remedy."[160]

[159] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Shilper Kriya Prakriyar Bhalo Mando," *Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali*, Rupa, Calcutta, 1962, Pg 151.
[160] Ibid, Pg 80 &152
Sıbramanyan, K.G, *Moving Focus – Essays on Indian Art*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 80-83.

1.6 The Philosophical discussions of Coomaraswamy and Abanindranath, and their impact on endogenous modernism

The philosophical bases of the art of the Bengal School are discussed in this section. Coomaraswamy and Abanindranath modernised sacral-ritual art discourses. Their work and thought, as well as the art historiographical and philosophical analyses by others show how both endogenous and exogenous concepts are simultaneously occupying nationalist consciousness and participating in the construction of endogenous Indian modernity.

In order to stop the process of the universalisation of the Raj's cultural-system the Tagores and Coomaraswamy and others constructed philosophical discourses against the Raj's cultural-system. Indeed, these discourses used both exogenous and endogenous components and integrated them together creating a nationalist philosophical thought based on global discourses. Guha-Thakurta and Mitter have elaborated on how the Bengal School was able to create an idealist *swadeshi* ideology in opposition to the Academy Realism of the colonial schools.[161] Their studies have also shown that the construction of a nationalist cultural-system and identity required re-writing the national art history by demonstrating purely Indian links, whilst accepting exogenous discourses and European influences when and where necessary. According to Coomaraswamy, Indian nationalism should "seek self fulfilment in art."[162] An aspect of the philosophy that was being constructed by the nationalists was that art shaped nationality, and that interiorization of vision in art was a key component of Indian nationality[163] (because these concepts arose from structural causalities embedded in their cultural system[164]). At a meta-level the new discourses were reactions against global capitalism and European modernity's universalism.

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[161] See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994

[162] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 163.

[163] See Aurobindo, "The National Value of Art," in *Karmayogin*, First Published in 1909-10. Revised Edition Sri Aurbindo Ashram – Pondicherry, 6th Edition, Third Impression 1999. See: Sister Nivedita, "The Function of Art in Shaping Nationality," *The Modern Review*, January 1907, February 1907.

[164] Althusser, Louis and Balibar, Etienne, *Reading Capital,* translated by Ben Brewster, Verso, London, 1997. Cf. the important early essays, 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' and 'On the Materialist Dialectic', pp. 87–128, 161–218 in Althusser Louis, *For Marx,* translated. Ben Brewster, London 1969, Pg 97.
Althusser, Louis, "Contradiction and overdetermination," *New Left Review*, I/41, January-February, 1967, pp 15-35, Pg 25. Also See Osborne, Peter, "Modernity is a Qualitative, Not a chronological category," *New Left Review*, 1992, pp. 65-84.

These discourses influenced the course of Indian art. The Bengal School gained paramountcy (shown in Part 2), and its philosophies were disseminated throughout India. The discourses became relativised by the Tagores, specifically Abanindranath; they were ruptured and reworked at Shantiniketan, and later disavowed by Amrita Sher-Gil. The Bengal School's emphasis on endogeny and folk idioms (and the folk-tribal habitus/*life-worlds*, which was not subject to colonial or the nationalist-bourgeoisies hegemony) can be seen to have continued to Jagdish Swaminathan, and S.H.Raza, and to the artists from the 1970s onwards.

Idealism played a major role in global art history. Simply put, idealism is based on mental constructs. Reality, which is associated with mental constructs, is pervaded by the spirit (*geist*). This was part of European enlightenment thought of German idealists such as Kant and Hegel, Fichte and Schelling.[165] Idealism was harnessed by the nationalists as antithetical to rationalized and disenchanted[166] cognitive reality centred within the colonizing constructs of global modernity, which were driven by mercantile and bourgeois capitalism and capitalism's universalizing tendency. Naturalism, following Ernst Gombrich, was a distinctly rational relationship to the outside world.[167] Realist works of art have objective relationships to the world. Coomaraswamy, writing in his 1909 article 'The Message of the East', understood realism to be a discourse which had its ideological roots in the success of the Western nations that needed, through naturalistic and material concerns, investigations of "...the concrete world..."[168] The discourse of realism extended to the materialist "conquest of nature, and the adaption of mechanical contrivances to the material ends of life." The materialist conquest of nature was "...approaching in every department a certain critical period."[169] The process was due to western materialism, rationality, disenchantment, and bourgeois modernity attempting to gain a universal hegemonic position, which was a consequence of "capital" that creates "the bourgeois society," which allowed for, according to Marx, "the universal appropriation of nature as well as the social bond itself by the

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[165] See: *The Philosophy of German Idealism*, Ed, Ernest Behler, Continum, 1987. Also see: Said, Edward, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Exile and other history and cultural essays*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2001, Pg 202-3.
[166] *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Oxford University Press, New York, 1956, Pg 51 & 148.
[167] See Gombrich, E.H., *Art and Illusion a Study in the psychology of pictorial representation*, 6th edition Phaidon, London, 2002.
[168] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East," *The Modern Review*, May 1909, Pg 427.
[169] Ibid, Pg 437.

members of society."[170] Coomaraswamy thought the development of the West's dominance in rationalist vigour had "almost extinguished creative power." [171]

Scientific rationality[172] was seen to have "corrupted [Indian] art" whilst the "the old religious formulas" were "rapidly losing their hold on the best and most sincere minds."[173] However, realism was a necessary "stage in a return from artificiality [romanticism] to truth", and, "India…cannot remain untouched by the necessity for a similar tradition period."[174] Yet Indian students and artists needed to be careful not to become "…absorbed in the concrete and phenomenal as to wholly forget the abstract and ideal." What was 'concrete' and 'phenomenal' was western; Coomaraswamy warned, "…satisfaction in the development and exercise of the imitative powers, carried to excess, precludes the evolution of the creative...the essential limitation of this realistic presentation of natural beauty lies in the *restriction to a definite point in space and time* and in the *mingling of desire with emotion*."[175] Coomaraswamy wanted a careful grafting of the Eastern and the Western, the endogenous and exogenous, and appealed to Kantian idealist methodology. The Kantian approach to aesthetic appreciation was a harmonious unity, reciprocally joined between the imagination and desires that makes the "…impression of the beautiful" disappear through cognition "in proportion" to "the desires of the subject" whilst the impression, creating desires, enters the subject's "consciousness."[176] Imagination was not constrained by understanding. Objects are viewed, argued Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, in a non-conceptual state of free play, creating "disinterested exaltation".[177]

Coomaraswamy thought that the Kantian "element of the sensuous ... tends to prevail over ... emotional delight and there is a degradation from an attitude of disinterested exaltation, to that of desire to experience pleasure associated in the mind with the objects

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[170] Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* Trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, reprint, 1993, Pg 409.
[171] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East," *The Modern Review*, May 1909, Pg 437.
[172] See *Histories of Scientific Observation*, ed., Daston, Lorraine, and Lunbeck, Elizabeth, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011.
[173] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East," *The Modern Review*, May 1909, Pg 427.
[174] Ibid, Pg 429.
[175] Ibid, Pg 429.
[176] Ibid Pg 429. Also, Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Edited and Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998, and Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by James Creed Meredith, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1952, printing 1980.
[177] See Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by James Creed Meredith, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1952, printing 1980.

represented."[178] This did "not belong to the best that art can give us."[179] The externalized representation of the world that, through the posture of 'disinterested exaltation,' created 'pleasure' in the consciousness of the viewer was not the goal of the Indian artist. Instead, the goal of the Indian artist was to use an endogenous imagination to harness *internalized non-sacral (dis)enchanted darshan.* Art theoretically this was an endogenous impressionism.

The Indian artists, represented and adhering to *dharma* and traditional religious-codes, "present[ed] to us [a] timeless vision of the universe,"[180]—"the demiurge of the real"—where the "spirit (*geist*) wanders into" what Hegel called "the Hindu Dream-World," where "the highest state is annihilation."[181] The timeless vision of the universe was a reality separate from the materially objective perceived world, echoing Hindu philosophical concepts of *maya* and the 'abnegation' of the material world. The neo-platonic aspect of this has been discussed by Coomaraswamy[182], and commented upon by Partha Mitter and Guha-Thakurta.[183] This exogenous idealism and romanticism was translated and relativised in the Bengal School's orientalist and romantic approach to painting and the reconstruction of their cultural-system. Art moved into an endogenous Indian romanticism.

According to Coomaraswamy, the embodiment of "...the essential philosophy of Indian art" (following Shukracharya) was that the "Imager...should attain to images of gods by contemplation only."[184] Realism proceeded from "a natural form; rather than the idea of it..."[185], whilst the Indian artist through the contemplation of the image transforms the view of reality. Reality and its internalized cognition were based on the idealistic nature of the artistic race-consciousness, and driven by the religious-cultural system.[186] This allowed "the imagined form" to come forth via "self identification with it."[187] This concept was "the *samyama* of yoga philosophy, and is expressly enjoined in many Mahayana Buddhist Silpa

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[178] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East," *The Modern Review*, May 1909. Emphasis original. Pg 429.
[179] Ibid, Pg 429.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Hegel, G.W.F., *Philosophy of History*, Trans, J. Sibree, Batoche Books, Kitchener, 2001, Pg 165.
[182] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "Recollection, Indian and Platonic, and on the one and only transmigrant," *American Oriental Society*, 1944
[183] See Mitter, Partha, "A man of our time: Ananda Coomaraswamy, the west and Indian nationalism," *Asian Studies Review*, 1984, pp. 48-51.See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 178. Also See: Mitter, Partha, *Much Maligned Monsters: European Reactions to Indian Art*, Oxford, 1977, Pg 272-73.
[184] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East," *The Modern Review*, June, 1909. Pg 509
[185] Ibid, Pg 508.
[186] Ibid, Pg 507.
[187] Ibid, Pg 509.

Shastras, and implied in Shukracharya,"[188] and finding itself in "the most un-human forms of image belonging to the living period of Indian sculpture."[189] Traditional art was the art "of a race."[190] The art of the race could create an Indian universal art by relativizing itself with the Kantian conception. Coomaraswamy relativised the Kantian and the Indian paradigms stating, "In a disinterested and selfless contemplation of the sublime," one was "freed from individual desire or fear,' and "attain a momentary *Samadhi*, from which we again awaken to the 'hard facts' of the 'real' world." He wrote:

> But we can never forget these moments in which our self has been forgotten, when we have stood for a moment apart from the empirical and unreal things of time and space. It is by these experiences that our self is realized and widened; praising what is beautiful, we receive it into our souls and are nourished by it...[191]

Coomaraswamy's writings indicate that Kant and Hegel and their idealism (primacy of cognition, geist) resonated in the Indian mind that was used to maya, Brahman, atma, paramatma, shunyata and similar categories. According to Althusser the Orient had "dominated [Occidental] thought since the sixteenth century"[192] when Oriental knowledge that was brought back to Europe "overthrew all the received truths."[193] *Idealism, which appears exogenous from the Indian point of view, is actually endogenous-exogenous, having come full circle; and both endogenous and exogenous concepts are simultaneously occupying nationalist consciousness,*[194] *and participating in the construction of endogenous Indian modernity.* Max Weber remarked it was "perhaps from India" that the "abnegation of the world" in "ascetic and contemplative manipulations," by prophets, sadhus, and sanyassis, first developed such "rationalization," which "set out on its historical way throughout the world at large."[195] This ascetic abnegation of the world created the pre-conditions for disenchantment and rational modernity in Europe which "have released the world from magic

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[188] Ibid, Pg 509.
[189] Ibid, Pg 509.
[190] Ibid, Pg 509.
[191] Ibid, Pg 510.
[192] Ibid, Pg 19.
[193] Althusser, Louis, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx*, translated *by* Ben Brewster, London, New Left, Books, 1972, Pg 19.
[194] Chatterjee, Partha *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivate Discourse?* Zed Books, London, Second Impression, 1993. See: Nandy, Ashish, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Oxford University, Pg xvii.
[195] Weber, Max, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Oxford University Press, New York, 1956, Pg 323.

and in doing so have created the basis for our modern science and technology and for capitalism."[196]

The global economic and philosophical forces, capitalism and idealism respectively, operating in a localised manner in India, shaped India's endogenous modernism. In the European metropolitan Anglo-bourgeois states, capitalism operated with bourgeois hegemony. In India it was a colonial-capitalist dominance without bourgeois hegemony.[197] In India, motivated by independence, idealism took on a nationalist search for endogeny, and operated in the spaces that the Raj could not universalise. The spaces included local arts and crafts, folk and peasant cultures, and cultural histories and mythologies.

Idealism was connected to European romanticism, which was a reaction to bourgeois hegemony and the industrial revolution. The European critique of modernity was a "romantic critique of the world." [198] "Orientalism," Romila Thapar writes, "fuelled the fantasy and the freedom sought by European Romanticism, particularly in its opposition to the more disciplined Neo-Classicism."[199] The orientalist discourses brought to European modernity a new "cultural paradigm."[200] The discourses provided the exogenous component to European modernism; in the same way the European discourses were providing the exogenous component of Indian modernism.

Guha, discussing *Aufhebung* (sublation[201]; Guha quotes Marx's description of *Aufhebung* as ""the act of superseding" whereby "denial and preservation, i.e., affirmation are bound together,""[202] and also as the "transcending of a conceptual entity"[203]) in Hegel's conceptual "World-History", states, "World-History came to be synonymous with [the Hegelian endowment of] "Reason in History." "This is a view of history", Guha writes, "that allows all the concreteness to be drained out of the phenomena which constitute the world"

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[196] Weber, Max, *General Economic History*, New York, 1961, Pg 265.
[197] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, London, 1997, Pg xii-iii. See: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, London, 2002, Pg 13-4.
[198] Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*, New American Library, New York and Toronto, 1962, Pg 310-11.
[199] Thapar, Romila, *The Penguin history of India: Early India, From the Origins to AD 1300*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004, Pg 4.
[200] Ibid, Pg 4.
[201] Taylor, Charles, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, Pg xi.
[202] Guha Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 2-3.
[203] Ibid, Pg 3.

and also the true historical existence of man-in-the-world (historicality). This abstraction was brought about by the logic of *Aufhebung.*[204]

Guha quotes Marx on his critical commentaries of Hegelian texts. Marx wrote in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*[205]:

> *Civil law* superseded equals *morality*, morality, superseded equals the *family*, the family superseded equals *civil society*, civil society superseded equals the *state* the state superseded equals *world history*.

Aufhebung "displaces these entities from "their actual existence" and sublates them individually, Guha writes, "into a philosophical concept so that, says Marx,

> ...my true religious existence is my existence in the *philosophy of religion*; my true political existence is my existence in the *philosophy of law*; my true natural existence, my existence in the *philosophy of nature*; my true artistic existence, existence in the *philosophy of art*; my true *human* existence, my *existence in philosophy*. Likewise the true existence of religion, the state, nature, art, is the *philosophy of* religion, of nature, of the state and of art...[206]

The freedom struggle, as well as Abanindranath's, the Bengal School's, and the subsequent Bengal artists' emphasis and search for endogeny can be seen as the Indian reaction to the Raj's cultural system. However, the tools and arguments supplied by the Raj's cultural-system in the form of Enlightenment knowledge, and philosophical discourse, provided the relativising discourses to enable the invention and reform of tradition. Heterodoxy also powered the project of self-determination.[207] From the viewpoint of the Indian artist: My true *human* existence is *my existence in Indian Philosophy*; my religious, political, natural and artistic existence is my existence in the Indian philosophies of religion, law (dharma), nature, and art.

Abanindranath, endogenously reformulating Indian aesthetic and art history, and (following Guha's conception) reclaiming art philosophy and historiography, went back to Shukracharya to understand the functions of an Indian artist. Writing in 1907, he understood the Greek, Japanese, and Indian traditions to have one thing in common when it came to

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[204] Ibid, Pg 2.
[205] Ibid, Pg 2. Guha's citation of Marx is: Marx, Karl, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975. 3:330
[206] Ibid, Pg 3.
[207] In another context Amartya Sen writes about the power of Indian heterodoxy. See Sen, Amartya, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, Picador, London, 2006.

representation of nature: "They all realise that the great aim of art is to draw from the mind and that it is the inner conception that should furnish inspiration to the artist."[208]

Abanindranath regarded the Greek, Indian, and Japanese art heritages as connected. They were linked through the universal spirit (the *geist* of the European idealists). The influence, and diffusion, of Greek sculpture in the production of the image of the Buddha[209], was seen by Abanindranath as part of the guiding spirit, and an aspect of pan-civilizational union. Abanindranath thought that "...images formed in the soul of the sculptors by spiritual vision,"[210] and it is the "mind that forms images" rather than "...employing ... hand to copy."[211] Copying was the academy realist position, which, according to Abanindranath, was a contagion introduced into the cultural system, an "evil genius."[212]

In an article in *The Modern Review*, entitled "The Three Forms of Art," Abanindranath brought to light the three epochs of the Indian tradition: the Brahmanic, Buddhist, and the Moghul. He wrote that in each of the three stages naturalism had been extirpated, and reality had been *transcendentally* transformed in the mind of the artist.[213] He explained:

> ...art capriciously cuts itself off from all ties with the visible material world ... The Hindu artist severed all connection with the visible world of the senses and by rising to a higher spiritual plane employed his chisel or brush to represent images realized in contemplation alone—in absolute disregard of the forms of the material world.[214]

Deploying Hindu philosophical discourse to analyse the production of the image, Abanindranath, by recourse to Shukracharya, was able to dismiss naturalism as a concept embedded within the 'material world.' This 'material world' in the Hindu religious-cultural system was philosophically different, as seen in nationalist writings, which were in opposition to the colonizing (Other) cultural forms invading the dominated cultural system. The writings were an attempt to rupture the art philosophy of the colonizer. They were striking a blow for the self-determination of art philosophy and historiography. They attempted to move beyond the materialist sphere of capitalism by demarcating an anti-

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[208] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907. Translated by Dinesh Chandra Sen, Pg 392.
[209] Ibid, Pg 392.
[210] Ibid, Pg 396.
[211] Ibid, Pg 393.
[212] Ibid, Pg 393.
[213] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1934, Pg 158.
[214] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 394 & 392.

materialist philosophy to art production during colonial capitalist dominance. Partha Chatterjee observes that nationalist thought saw a difference between the material and spiritual spheres.[215] The Raj could affect the material but not the spiritual. The sphere that the Raj could not affect could be used to create the Indian cultural discourses in opposition to the British, which were seen as materialistic, rational, and disenchanted.

Personal experiences bolstered Abanindranath's philosophies. Finding a portrait of his grandfather in the Burdwan Palace Abanindranath noted, "I was disappointed when I saw the picture. It was so very different from the grandfather of imagination! Gone were the soft and plump body, the face full of health and smiles…but this correct material likeness failed to replace the picture I had stored up in my imagination as something vitally real and true."[216] Abanindranath's *Mask self portrait* (1930) exemplifies this position.

Abanindranath Tagore *'Mask' Self Portrait* (1930, Rabindra Bharati, Kolkata).

Not everyone agreed with Abanindranath. Upendrakisor Ray, who wanted mimetic realism,[217] critiqued Abanindranath's position writing (1907): "Mr Abanindranath Tagore has been saying things that might lead one to suppose 'that nature study is bad, and gods and

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[215] See: Chatterjee, Partha *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivate Discourse?* Zed Books, London, Second Impression, 1993. See: Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993.

[216] Tagore, Abanindranth, "Abanindranath Tagore: The Man and his Art", *The Modern Review*, May, 1922, Pg 588-89.

[217] The film-maker Satyajit Ray's great-grandfather, and the father of Sukumar Ray, the avant-gardist Bengali poet.

even goblins and monsters are higher sources of artistic inspiration'."[218] Abanindranath responded: "the evil spirit" of modern European art, was "smelling of traders' greed" and "selling at a fixed price."[219] Others have studied the debate.[220] Though the positions can be (simplistically) viewed as an argument on the relative merits of the influences of exogenous and endogenous thought (the aesthetic approach and art philosophy of the colonizer versus the aesthetics and art philosophy of Hindu India with its long tradition), it should be noted that Abanindranath had painted in western and Mughal styles. In the historical Mughal styled painting, executed in the neo-traditional wash manner, *The Emperor's March to Kashmir*, Abanindranath has moved away from naturalism, and academy realism, that were the ruling classes' and Ravi Varma's aesthetic structures, whilst bringing back Indian history in a type of endogenous neo-classicism.

Abanindranath Tagore, *The Emperor's March to Kashmir* (Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

O.C Ganguly continued the debate with Ray arguing that Ray had misunderstood Sister Nivedita's article *On the Function of Art in Shaping Nationality*, thus missing the

[218] Ray, Upendrakisor, "The Study of Pictorial Art in India," *The Modern Review*, April-June, 1907, Pg 544.
[219] Ibid, Pg 548.
[220] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 216-25. See: Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 122.

national temperament as a perfected idealism. Ganguly argued that for an artist with an Indian temperament the study of nature breaks the true system of national representation.[221] Such an art becomes non-national and does not have intrinsic qualities of the race such as its internalized spirit evoking the inward nature of national style. The right approach was exemplified by Abanindranath, who has

> Establish[ed] a genuine school of Indian painting and...pick[ed] up the threads of the ancient art traditions of India wherewith to weave the fabric of a *truly vernacular art* of India, having a grammar and rhetoric of its own...He has been alone in the field, and the school...is now represented by a single personality. If the old art of India is decrepit and out-of-date, we may invoke the advent of a new form of art transformed like the serpent from its old coat and bejewelled with rubies gathered from foreign shores...but dipped in the holy waters of oriental consciousness.[222]

Ganguly continued, "All that Indian art can...borrow from her western sister is the mechanical skill...of draughtsmanship, but the work in which this skill is to be utilized must come from her inner self." Indian art finds expression through "the national temperament" creating "...good art [as] the natural utterance of the soul of a people in a voice peculiarly its own."

Abanindranath wrote in the same issue of *The Modern Review* as Ray. "...the Indian artist works out the image realized in his soul...What he reads in his scriptures about these divinities, he realizes in his mind by contemplation..."[223] Ganguly (indebted to Nivedita's aggressive Hindu nationalism, a vulgarized Hegelianism, of which both Ganguly, Abanindranath, Havell and Nivedita were part of, and another reason why Okakura appealed so greatly to them[224] (discussed in part 3)) wrote: "One can imitate the voice, but cannot body forth the soul," and an Indian, "by assimilating European methods and aims in art can never turn out to be an artist,"[225] due to art being produced in a language in which it is couched."[226] Ganguly positioned himself within the framework of developing a paramount nationalist tradition for Indian visual-cultural identity, a tradition shaped by an internal and traditional view rather than collecting exogenous discourses from a cultural Other, that was demarcated

[221] Ganguly, O.C, "The Study of Indian Pictorial Art—A Rejoinder", *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, August, 1907, Pg 304-07.
[222] Ibid, Pg 307.
[223] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 393.
[224] Clark, John, "Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism," *East Asian History* 29, June, 2005, pp. 1-38, Pg 11-12 & 32.
[225] Ganguly, O.C., "The Study of Indian Pictorial Art—A Rejoinder," *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, August, 1907, Pg 302.
[226] Ibid, Pg 302.

in the *swadeshi* nationalist struggle as materialist, and external to the soul of the nation, which was internal and spiritual. This national-traditional framework needed reconnecting with the endogenous cultural-system for a national identity to find shape and gravitas.

Ganguly wrote, "Each nation has its own art as it has its own language and national character."[227] He continued:

> The Indians of today, busied as they are with an alien culture and system of thought, have fallen off from the ideal of their own nationality, to the extent that they have set at naught their own traditions, thought inheritance and manner of expression in the process of assimilating the "*naba jnan*" (new knowledge) of other climes and regions...[228]

An example of the assimilation of new knowledge can be seen in the Calcutta based Society for Translating European Sciences, founded by Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Rabindranath Tagore's father, who started the periodical *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, which was used by Rajendralal Mitra[229], India's first Indian archaeologist and indologist (1823-91), to promulgate scientific ideas.[230]

By 1907, Varma was better known in India than Abanindranath, Coomaraswamy realized, though Abanindranath had achieved fame in England for his painting *The Passing of Shah Jahan.*[231] Abanindranath was not, as K.G. Subramanyan wrote, an "objective realist" but found a "poetic vision of reality." Abanindranath started his painting career with a "naturalist attitude," wanting a vision based on nature but one that was "poetic and personal"[232] that came from the Indian tradition. This allowed Abanindranath to create an endogenous modernism that had its basis in traditional texts and the artist's mental impression as an interiorized art transposed onto the world, which had similarities to western modernism such as impressionism. But his art emphasised the inner eye of cognition of the artist to externalization of outward forms, rather than using outward reality, then effacing it, as seen

[227] Ibid, Pg 303.
[228] Ibid, Pg 303.
[229] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *Monuments, Objects, Histories – Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, India, Permanent Black, 2004, Pg 108.
[230] Lourdusamy, J., *Science and National Consciousness in Bengal: 1870-1930*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2004, Pg 45.
[231] Ibid, Pg 108.
[232] Subramanyan, K.G., *Moving Focus: Essays on Indian Art*, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 75.

in European art from realism to modernism, even impressionism. However, art should not be stifled by conscious alignments to old formulas and styles.[233]

Following Hindu and nationalist modes of thinking he opened up Indian art, giving to it an endogenous modernism in the nationalist milieu, a modernism that would be comprehensible to Indians using their own aesthetic structures. Portraying their past history using their own aesthetic means, he created a recontextualised national(ist) art historiography of India, for Indians. These are exemplified by his two Mughal styled paintings *The Building of the Taj Mahal* (1901), the zenith of Mughal art, and *The Passing of Shah Jahan* (1902), the start of the fall of the Mughal empire.

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[233] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Saundaryer Sandhan" in *Bageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali*, Rupa, Calcutta, 1962, Pg 70. See: Ibid.

Abanindranath Tagore, *The Building of the Taj* (1901, Watercolour on paper, Rabindra Bharti Society, Kolkata)

Abanindranath Tagore, *The Passing of Shah Jahan* (1902, Watercolour on paper, Rabindra Bharti Society, Kolkata)

These paintings have correlations with Havell's promotion of Mughal art, especially that of Akbar's, which he regarded as the perfect synthesis of Indian cultures (Shah Jahan was Akbar's grandson) that made "Indo-Aryan traditions the central pillar of the Empire."[234]

Abanindranath preferred a syncretic approach.[235] This was partly due to his training with O. Ghilardi[236] (who was Vice Principal of the Calcutta School of Art 1891-92), and due to the private tutoring he received in Jorasanko in oil painting from C.L. Palmer (from South Kensington).[237] Binode Behari Mukherjee, a later artist from Shantiniketan, stated that Abanindranath's art was more western than traditional.[238] "In 1895 Abanindranath received some English illuminations from a European lady and at the same time an album of Indian paintings of the Lucknow Qalam from one of his relatives..."[239] Abanindranath "revive[d] the source of his style through studying the ancient Buddhist pictures, old Rajasthani paintings and from line drawing style of Mughal art." He discovered this style in an album of Mughal paintings, whilst collecting materials "of his new style from the paintings of China and Japan. Though he got his first art lessons in European form, with his own effort and initiative he discovered the content of national art. He had no *guru* or teacher on it."[240]

Abanindranath's paintings, although moving into a negation of western discourses, need to be seen as an integration Japanese, Indian and Western idioms. Folkish modernism, the wash technique, and western realism are visible in his *Spring Flower* (No date).

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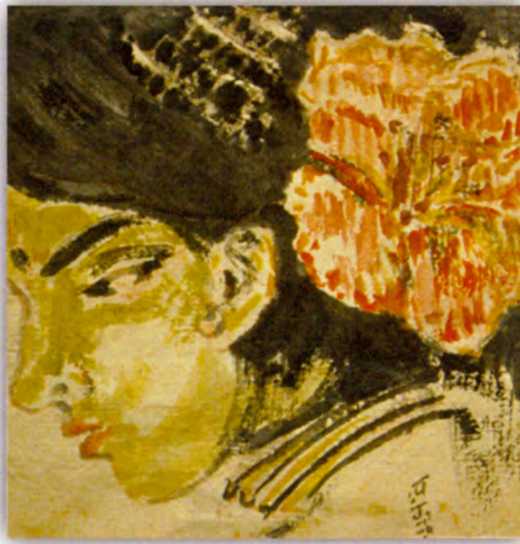
[234] Havell, E.B., *The History of Aryan Rule in India from Earliest Times to the Death of Akbar*, London: Harrap, G.G, 1918, Pg ix.
[235] Nandi, Kumar, Sudhir, *Art and Aesthetics of Abanindranath Tagore*, Rabindra Bharati University, First Edition 1983, Pg 25-30.
[236] Though Ghilardi had taught oil painting to Abanindranath, he emphasised watercolours and pastels. Abanindranath steered to his own position relativizing past Mughal and pictorial arrangements using wash forms. The use of shading and pastel use can be seen in Abanindranath's sketch of his 'guru' Havell: Untitled Sketch of E.B. Havell (c. 1899, Pastel on Paper, Rabindra Society Jorsanko, Kolkata).
[237] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 230-231.
[238] Mukherjee, Binode Behari, "Art of Abanindranath Tagore", *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May–October, 1942, pp, 105 – 118.
[239] Mukherjee, Binode Behari, "A Chronology of Abanindranath's Paintings," *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May, 1942, Pg 124.
[240] Compiled by Bose, *Sudha, Rupa-Ikshana – Development of Indian Art and Culture (Autobiography of O C Ganguly)*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1991, Pg 91-2.



(*Spring Flower*, Abanindranath Tagore, Water Colour on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, No Date)

When Abanindranath was training with Ghilardi and Palmer, J.P. Gangoly, Palmer told Abanindranath's nephew, who also trained with him:

> I had noticed that all along that your uncle could not pull on with "life study" and the European principles of light and shade…It is a good sign that the artist's temperament revolts against all rigid rules and beaten tracks. Independence leads to personality in art.[241]

[241] Gangooly, J.P, "Early Reminiscences", *Visva Bharati Quarterly, Abanindra Number*, Shantinketan, 1942, Pg 20.

1.7 The Hindu Mela, Club Bichitra, Arts and Crafts, and Pan Asianism

The Hindu Mela

The Hindu Mela, the Tagore's Jorasanko household, and the Club Bichitra organisation were the three key institutions that served as prototypes and influenced the Tagores' art ideologies and Shantiniketan. As noted earlier, placed in the pre-*Swadeshi* nationalist milieu, the nationalists were creating an endogenous space where the formation of Indian modernism was exploring indigenous and folk forms and techniques, as well as a return to traditional arts and crafts, in order to, following Hobsbawm, (re)invent tradition.[242,243]

The Tagores were a central part of the Hindu Mela, which in 1867 "...demonstrated the first awareness of local handicrafts among the bhadralok; its earnest claim was that it would forge Hindu unity by uplifting the Hindu community from its 'fallen' state."[244] As Sumanta Banerjee observed[245], the Hindu Mela:

> ...was an effort by the Bengali bhadraloks to rally members of their own class into a coherent social organization...[,that]...was paralleled by attempts to organize themselves into an effective political pressure group to persuade the English rulers to bring about reforms in the administration that would open up newer and better opportunities for the educated Bengalis.[246]

Hindu Mela was the first return to an endogenous cultural-system within the urban bourgeois setting of Calcutta. In 1873 at the Hindu Mela there was a *sawng* procession, which was accompanied by songs and concurrently there were clay models of comical characters prepared by "...the *kumors* (clay-modellers) of Kumortuli and other colonies."[247] In 1867 a reporter noted:

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[242] See Ed. Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Canto Edition, 1992.
[243] Indeed, Hindu Mela, Club Bichitra, and Jorasanko were the precursor for the experiments on the rural-folk-urban divide carried out in Shantiniketan, and continued on to J. Swaminathan's tenure as head of Roopankar, Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal in the 1980s. The Tagore family have to be seen as the discourse innovators in the creation of a new 'modern' Indian discourse on primitivism.
[244] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 222.
[245] Banerjee, Sumanta, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989, Pg 74. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. See Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994
[246] Banerjee, Sumanta, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989, Pg 75.
[247] Ibid, Pg 127.

> We who are bearers of an ancient civilization should not use foreign goods. It would be far better to improve indigenous products. Foreign manufactures can only be tolerated if they are useful or improve taste. Self-reliance is all we may learn from foreigners. Therefore the purpose of the fair should be to revive ancient arts, not merely to improve present ones.[248]

The 1870 Hindu Mela, as Mitter notes, contained an early example of an ancient Indian art, lent by Rajendralal Mitra, which was a black stone. Dwijendranath Tagore Rabindranath's elder brother, who read his poems at the Hindu Mela, noted:

> When Nabagopal [Mitra] broached the subject of a national fair that would display local handicrafts, I said to him – these products are known to all and sundry. But can you show me a genuine indigenous painting? Whereupon he commissioned a painter to produce one. When I got to the fair I found my horror a large painting prominently displayed, depicting the people of India in an act of supplication before the figure of Britannia. I remonstrated with him: turn it around; turn it around at once, so that people cannot see it! Is this your indigenous painting and is this the sort of work you show at a national fair?[249]

The Hindu Mela and the call for a rejuvenation of an Indian arts and crafts was connected to the nationalist writings of the time. For instance Shyamacharan Srimani's *Suksa Shilper Utpatti o Aryajatir Shilpa-chaturi* (1874) was the first Bengali book on the fine arts of ancient India. Srimani's text understood India's cultural past, as Guha-Thakurta notes, "symbol of the nation's autonomous history and civilizational lineage."[250] It set out to disseminate a modernized knowledge in Bengali about India's great art tradition. Srimani was a Hindu Mela activist and became the organizer and chief teacher of the art curriculum in Nabagopal Mitra's National School, established in 1872.[251]

In 1868, the Hindu Mela was criticized for not contributing and displaying artefacts and crafts that were of benefit in everyday use.[252] This meant that the objects were being separated from their habitual use-function; they were becoming disassociated from their cultural-system. The Hindu Mela was becoming an aristocratic projection of the nationalization of endogenous culture; it was failing to attract Calcutta's poorer classes.[253]

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[248] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 222.
[249] Ibid, Pg 222.
[250] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *Monuments, Objects, Histories–Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India,* India, Permanent Black, 2004, Pg 140.
[251] Ibid, Pg 143.
[252] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 222.
[253] Banerjee, Sumanta, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century* Calcutta, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989, Pg 74.

Arts and Crafts objects were becoming bourgeois objects for contemplation, not use. The aristocratic nationalists had imbibed the habits of the Raj's cultural-system: art was getting separated from life, and the Tagores and other nationalists sought to change it.

Club Bichitra, and Arts and Crafts

Club Bichitra was an artistic studio that usually operated out of Jorasanko. It was set up as an offshoot from the Indian Society of Oriental Art (b. 1907) where plays, performances, poetry readings, art classes, exhibitions and discussions were held, and where both Indians and Europeans participated. It was of strategic importance that the new culture created in Jorasanko and Bichitra could be demonstrated to the Raj's ruling classes including the Governor. Their patronage and funding helped the growth of an endogenous modernism that connected high art and the Bengal School to village arts and crafts. For these reasons Bichitra must be viewed as a place and an organisation where an avant-garde of artists and intellectuals both British and Indian, met to advance aesthetic discourses and redevelop Indian arts and crafts.

The Bichitra studio was formed around 1909, and formalised in 1916. Nandalal Bose painted a seal for Club Bichitra, which was the name Vichitra in the shape of a rural cottage.[254] The Tagores were involved in collecting and exhibiting folk and rural arts and crafts. These exhibitions would take place at Club Bichitra. Club Bichitra was where Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Rabindranath, as well as Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, and Mukul Dey worked between 1912-1918, exploring international, indigenous and folk arts in order to arrive at a 'new' aesthetic category that combined high and low art forms.

Writing in 1907 Coomaraswamy stated, "Swadeshi often ignores the things which India has from time immemorial made perfectly, to seek to manufacture things which it would be better to do without altogether, or to frankly buy from other nations more able to make them easily."[255] Coomaraswamy writing from Broad Campden, following the final ebb of the Arts and Crafts Movement, England, stated, "...we have adopted an ideal of

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[254] Rathindranath Tagore, "Cousin Gaganendra" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 17.
[255] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art", *The Modern Review*, Vol II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 411.

Nationalism, not merely as a birth-right, but as a duty that we owe to other nations..."[256] For both Coomaraswamy and the Tagores, the "Swadeshi impulse is now a too purely commercial one, too unimaginative, too solely based on an ideal of dull prosperity to greatly help the cause of Indian art."[257] Coomaraswamy wrote of "the regeneration of India through art and not by economics and politics alone." For Coomaraswamy the "vulgarization of modern India with its caricature of European dress," along with "cut glass and china dogs," was evidence of the bourgeoisie and ruling classes acceptance of a foreign cultural system that proved "some mighty evil in our soul." Swadeshi was "a religious and artistic ideal."[258]

A central activity at Jorasanko and Bichitra was the restoration and rejuvenation of arts and crafts. The activities were influenced by John Ruskin (1819-1900) and followed William Morris' (1834-96) Arts and Crafts Movement (1860-1910), in the Indian context, and to counter the situation described by Sir George Watt:

> ...the unavoidable influence of European dominance and civilization is being felt in every direction and is operating often very injuriously on the arts and crafts of the country.[259]

Western critiques of the deterioration of Indian arts and crafts had been circulating in India after the Hindu Mela. An 1879 address to Sir George Birdwood, subsequently signed by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Monier Williams, J.E. Millais, Edwin Arnold, and Walter Crane, spoke of:

> ...the rapid deterioration that has of late befallen the great historical arts of India...goods which ought to be common in the market are now becoming rare treasures for museums, or the cabinets of rich men.[260]

Dissatisfied with the situation and the ruling classes' tastes (for example the paintings by Ravi Varma) the Tagores and like-minded people in Club Bichitra and elsewhere attempted to resuscitate the traditional arts and crafts.

Abanindranath wanted Club Bichitra and Indian art to connect with other non-urban cultural spheres. In a letter to E.B. Havell he wrote:

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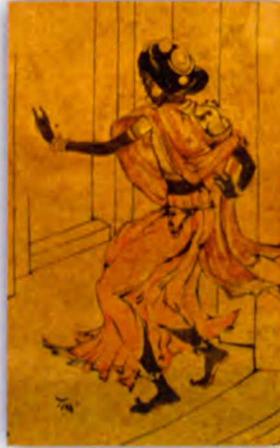
[256] Ibid, Pg 409.
[257] Ibid, Pg 411.
[258] Bayly, C.A. "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry)," in *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, Pg 198.
[259] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art", *The Modern Review*, Vol II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 405.
[260] Ibid.

> We are now having another small exhibition of village arts in our 'Bichitra'. We have collected many beautiful things. Lord Carmichael visited the other day. I hope to write soon some monographs on our village arts especially on wall and door painting done by our girls. They are beautifully decorated I will send some photographs of these drawings.[261]

Abanindranath also wanted to make the villagers and peasantry central to the narrative. Abanindranath's students like Nandalal Bose would send original work on (inexpensive) postcards from rural India. An example of this is the postcard *Dancer*, a female Nulia tribal dancer from Puri, Orissa, sent by Nandalal Bose to Abanindranath Tagore.



Nandalal Bose *Dancer* (1917, Ink and watercolour on postcard, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

In the post-*swadeshi* milieu it was thought that things (following Coomaraswamy), "...are bettering as the national consciousness develops." The Tagores, at the forefront of artistic consciousness, followed the paradigm of linking artistic revival with "traditional craftsmen."[262] It was a movement to help the professions of the traditional Indian craftspeople who had been adversely affected by colonial capitalism and Empire's economic policy.

These critiques were part of the broader critique of mechanized industrial colonial capitalism that were degrading Indian decorative arts and crafts, and making the Indian cultural-system similar to the British and the European ones, and changing the Indians' sense of place. Club Bichitra and the Tagores were opposed to and critical of capitalism's

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[261] See letter Abanindranath Tagore to Ernest Binfield Havell, Letters of E.B. Havell, Mss Eur D. 736/2 [no date] India Office Records, British Library, London.
[262] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art" *The Modern Review*, Vol II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 411.

universalizing tendency. At Club Bichitra they sought to restore arts and crafts, attempting to rejuvenate an endogenous aesthetic sense found outside the bourgeoisies' hegemony, one within the traditional Indian village's praxis of life. The degradation of arts and crafts due to colonial capitalism affected all classes. Coomaraswamy noted "...the depressing aspect of...the universal decline of taste in India, from the Raja, whose palace, built by the London upholsterer or imitated from some European building is furnished with vulgar superfluity and uncomfortable grandeur..."[263] and the "...peasant clothed in Manchester cottons of appalling hue and meaningless design."[264] Indeed, this critique and the Hindu Mela were the first steps to include the rural populace in the restoration of a cultural system.

Turning to the Arts and Crafts Movement in England, William Morris used a socialist-Marxist paradigm to denounce the "reduction of the creative worker [artisan] into a mere 'operative' by capitalist industry."[265] However, Morris' main purpose was not the creation of singular works of art to be distributed among bourgeois institutions and homes and contemplated in bourgeois isolation, but the creation of artworks connected with daily life, such as homes and gardens connecting with the living cultural system of society. This followed the Ruskinian position—it must be noted that Gandhi was a follower of John Ruskin[266]—Ruskin wrote: "the arts, as regards teachableness, differ form the sciences in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created."[267] Ironically, the avenues that these works found themselves in turned out to be that of the adventuring bourgeoisie, and in India that of the aristocrats and the upper classes. Morris, influenced by the pre-Raphaelites (and John Ruskin), was in turn influential on Gandhi, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Rabindranath Tagore. The returning of artworks to daily life was the task set forward by Club Bichitra and the Tagores in Jorasanko. Havell condemned the "...millionaire who invests his...wealth in pictures...and furniture so that his taste may be admired."[268] He admired the "humble peasant" who, with patience and skill, weaves flowers into a garland "for the village shrine."

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[263] Ibid, Pg 405

[264] Ibid, Pg 405.

[265] Hobsbawm, Eric, *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx and Marxism*, Yale University Press, 2011, Pg 249. See Morris, William, *William Morris on Art and Socialism*, Ed., Norman Kelvin, Minneola, New York, Dover Publications, 1999.See: Henderson, Philip, *William Morris: his Life Work and Friends*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1967, Pg 273-300.

[266] Gandhi, M.K, *Gandhis Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans, Mahadev Desai, Washington, D.C., 1960, Pg 364-5. See Bratlinger, Patrick, "A Postindustrial prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris, and Gandhism," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Spring, 1996, pp. 466-485.

[267] Havell, E.B *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras, India, 1912, Pg 15.

[268] Ibid, Pg 1.

He understood the "cunning of [a craftsman's] hand [who] with no thought of extra profit for himself, puts into his work the best that his knowledge and skill can produce", and the satisfaction of functioning within habitual codes to produce art from a basis of "true art instinct."[269] Such a 'true art instinct', according to the Tagores, Coomaraswamy, and Havell, would never eventuate if art was concerned with "the particular requirements of peoples entirely out of real touch with its producers." This would make the art, and art instinct "slavish and artificial." Indian art, Coomaraswamy wrote, "can only revive and flourish if it is beloved by Indians themselves."[270]

Havell understood the degradation of Arts and Crafts as an aspect of English importations, the Indian education system, and understood the broader *swadeshi* discourses against British made goods finding their way into Indian made products with foreign materials. The degradation was an aspect of the universalizing tendency of capital. This was the first dominance that in this story of Indian modernism the artists and ideologues needed to battle. For instance, in 1880, George Birdwood wrote that the carpets of Masulipatanam were "corrupted by the European, chiefly the English, demand for them."[271] Birdwood stated, "The English importers insisted on supplying the weavers with cheaper materials, and we now find that these carpets are invariably backed with English twine. The spell of the tradition thus broken, one innovation after another was introduced into manufacture,"[272] and the designs of old, which were "beautiful" in "detail," had become, due to the "necessity for cheap and speedily executed carpets for the English market", "crude inharmonious masses of unmeaning form." The export market, and the necessity for them, created the "abandonment of...detail in all Indian ornamentation."[273] Sir George Watt commented on the "...monstrous degeneration...in the Benares *kinkhabs* (cloth)." The degeneration was, he writes:

> ...throughout India...the fine old art designs that have been attained after centuries of evolution are being abandoned and models utterly unsuited and far inferior artistically are being substituted.[274]

Coomaraswamy noted, "...the West is responsible...for much of the degradation of Indian art, Indians themselves are almost equally so."[275] Coomaraswamy's criticism spoke of the

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[269] Ibid, Pg 2.
[270] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art" *The Modern Review*, Vol II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 412.
[271] Ibid, Pg 406.
[272] Ibid, Pg 406.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.

Indian ruling classes' turn toward the British cultural-system, which saw them buying "gramophones" and "the building of palaces by English upholsterers."[276] Both the Indians and the British were accountable. "...[T]he present Indian blindness to Indian beauty is costing the country" economically. It also represents an "intellectual and spiritual loss...[due to]...her present attitude to art."[277] Sir George Birdwood in a highly orientalist attitude had already written (c. 1873):

> Indian native gentlemen and ladies should make it a point of culture never to wear any clothing or ornaments but of native manufacture and strictly native design, constantly purified by comparison with the best examples and the models furnished by the sculptors of Amravati, Sanchi and Bharhut.[278]

Birdwood's comments presage nationalist critiques, *swadeshi*, and also Tagores and Havell's views. Havell thought that Gandhi's critique of the bourgeois colonial state and culture in his manifesto *hinḍ swaraj* (1909) would stifle artistic creation.[279] The sagacity of Havell should not be ignored as he presaged Gandhi's loom weaving thesis, having understood all the pre and post-*swadeshi* critiques on the English, Indian and Bengali fronts. He also saw that the spaces where colonial capitalist dominance had not removed traditional habitual aesthetic practice were the spaces from which a truer arts and craft would spring.[280] Gandhi's vision of returning to village industries had clear correlations with the endogenous avant-gardist movement away from bourgeois production and inward towards the villages. Gandhi's movement toward the handloom, of taking Indian cloth manufacture back to the villages to stop the economic exploitation by the Raj, had its causes in the opposition to British textile exports and the importation of cheap dye into India. Coomaraswamy noted, "...the imports of aniline and cheap alizarine dyes in 1903-04 were valued at 82.7 lakhs." This was "sixteen times the value imported in 1876-7; and printed and dyed cotton goods valued at 8 crores were imported in 1903-4, as against 2.8 crores in 1876-7."[281] Sir George Watt argued that this successfully contested the stronghold of the village-based markets, held

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[275] Ibid, Pg 407.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid, Pg 407.
[278] Ibid, Pg 412.
[279] Havell. E.B, "Art, Economics and Politics," An address to the Oxford Majlis on May 31st 1925. In Havel Files – Mss.Eur.D.736/5, Indian Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 350. Also See "Art, Economics and Politics," *The Modern Review*, September 1925.
[280] See: Havell, E.B *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras, India, 1912.
[281] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art" *The Modern Review*, Vol II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 407.

for centuries by the village dyer and the calico printer.[282] The imperialist flooding of the Indian clothing market, resulting in India (in 1876-7) exporting goods worth rupees 1,659,438 was an indictment of England by her own officials.[283] Penning wrote, "The quite recent story of the imposition of an excise duty on Indian goods which did not compete at all with any Lancashire goods and yet affected seriously the rival mills of India, is a disgrace to Lancashire as well as to the English Government."[284] J.N. Bhattacharya wrote about the stranglehold on the localized production in India:

> The weavers of India were until recently, a very prosperous class, but the importation of a machine made piece goods from Manchester has, of late, thrown many thousands of them out of employ. These dragged on a life of poverty for some years, and at last either died of semi-starvation, or were forced by necessity to become menial servants or tillers of the soil.[285]

The Charkha (spinning wheel), as K.G. Subramanyan notes, "was to [Gandhi] a symbol in which he saw a certain vision of India's future. In a world where rapid industrialization was dehumanizing people and leading to exploitation and internecine conflicts, [Gandhi] wanted to build a man-friendly production system as a *counterforce*."[286]

At Club Bichitra, there was a drive to create a counterforce. They collected *alpana* designs, embroidery, pottery and basketwork from villages.[287] (*Alpana* designs became important to Jamini Roy's art when he moved into folk discourses, which was due to Abanindranath, who suggested to Roy to look at folk forms, and also due to Abanindranath's *Banglar Brata Katha*, a study of folk forms and rituals related to courtly forms.[288])

To re-connect art to the habitus, the Tagores continued the process that connected Hindu Mela to Havell's revolution. Abanindranath reminisced about an Indian Society of Oriental Art exhibition in Calcutta on Corporation Street in 1916. He noted that taxi-drivers

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[282] Ibid, Pg 407.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid, Pg 408.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Subramanyan, K.G, "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 237. See: Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 107.
[287] Rathindranath Tagore, "Cousin Gaganendra" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 18.
[288] Purohit, Vinayak, *Arts of Transitional India Twentieth Century Volume 1*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, Pg 738. See: Mitra, Asok, "Three Painters in Search of Coherent Vision" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 6. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 199, Pg 203.

and people outside of the middle and elite classes had come to the exhibition. He questioned taxi drivers about the paintings, which were from the Japanese and Indian Schools. Their selection of the best painting was recognizably from their cultural system. Abanindranath thought that this spelt an awareness of 'Indianized' aesthetic structures that the urban 'common man' understood.[289]

In 1916 Gaganendranath Tagore established an emporium for cottage industries under the name of The Bengal Home Industries Association in Calcutta, creating (a precursor to the Cottage industry emporia that is present in many cities in India), as Asit Kumar Haldar noted, "an aesthetic sense, which found expression [within Jorasanko and Club Bichitra] in the beautifying of even the common household utensils..."[290] Gaganendranath made original designs for Indian furniture and, as Gangoly stated, was "the pioneer of modern Indian furniture making." The furniture was designed by Gaganendranath and crafted with the help of an *achary* from Madras—Dhanuskody Achary.[291] The Bauhaus School inspired Gaganendranath. The hiring of traditional craftsmen was a direct action returning Indian art to Indian cultural systems as there was no "...possibility of Indian craftsmen...de-Indianizing themselves as to be able to understand and inspire with life an imitation of other art."[292] The traditional craftsmen (who had not been under the spell of bourgeois hegemony and thus had not adopted the tastes of the urban-Indian bourgeoisie) was unable to "grasp the principles governing the decoration or furnishing of a kind of house which has been suddenly copied from a foreign type, and not gradually evolved to meet their own requirements."[293] The Indian artisan (and artist) who had not become heterodox, and had not rejected their own cultural-system, were harnessed in the renewal of Indian arts and crafts.

Shahid Suhrawardy was Bageswari Professor of Arts at Calcutta University and also wrote for Calcutta based paper *The Statesmen.* (He had been a reader in English in Moscow at the Imperial University and Women's University when the revolution broke in 1917; he had stayed back in Moscow without turning communist, and had returned to India in the 1930s). Suhrawardy was friends with Atul Bose the academy artist. Suhrawardy rejected the

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[289] Abanindranath Tagore, "Reminiscences", in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 47.

[290] Asit Kumar Haldar, *Art and Tradition*, Revised edition, The universal Publishers, 1952, Pg 68.

[291] Gangoly, O.C. "Gaganendranath Tagore" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, .

[292] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 412.

[293] Ibid, Pg 412.

Indian spiritual, metaphysical and aesthetic-religious claims that critics such as Coomaraswamy, Kramrisch, and Havell placed over the Bengal School paintings. Havell wrote, for example, "India's loss of spiritual power is the measure of the degradation of her art."[294] Suhrawardy was familiar with Spanish and French paintings completed prior to 1914. Suhrawardy discussed (at Calcutta University c. 1934) paintings in terms of European discourse rather than the Abanindranathian school discourse.[295] Suhrawardy, however, clearly delineated an endogenous modernist position against the use of the *English* Arts and Crafts Movement in India. He wrote:

> ...I would not like our handicraft to take on the colour of a revival such as that of the William Morris cult in England which has degenerated into snobbish products made in the workshops of Chelsea and Chipping Campden for the arty middle-class. We should be warned by the fate of an international revival nearer home, by the example of the Bengali School of Painting where, with the exception of a few outstanding creative talents, there is a straining after prettiness and the picturesque so utterly at variance with the bold, unassuming painting of our classical and folk art.[296]

Suhrawardy's position supports an endogenous modernism and creation of artistic products that are linked within the Indian cultural system rather than being art for the upper, and ruling classes, while at the same time critiquing the Bengal School. Suhrawardy foreshadowed the movement to the adoption of folk idioms by Indian artists such as Jamini Roy. Both positions, which Tagore witnessed in Japan in 1916, became part of the program at Shantiniketan. The praxis of village life and the creation of daily artistic patterns were seen to be traditional Indian life-values and habits. Bichitra used traditional arts and crafts and tried to create a connection between non-dominated indigenous cultural-system and the urban setting of the cultural-system. Bichitra stands as a distinct entity in the creation of an endogenous modernism, because it initiated the exploration of folk signs and symbols.

Pan-Asianism and the Bengal School

As Club Bichitra (and Jorasanko) was a centre for artistic activity, art dealers would come to meet with the artists and the Tagores bringing with them old miniatures and

[294] Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Second Edition, London, 1928, Pg 243.
[295] Roy, Samaren, *Calcutta: Society and Change 1690-1990*, iUniverse, New England, 2001, Pg 149.
[296] Suhrawardy, Shahid, *Prefaces, Lectures on Art Subjects*, University Press Calcutta May 1938, Printed in India, Pg 45.

illuminated manuscripts for sale and for expert opinion.[297] Several people came to learn art from Abanindranath. Club Bichitra had a heritage link to all the prevalent attitudes around Jorasanko (from the Brahmo Samaj days to Swadeshi nationalism, pan-Asian nationalism, aesthetic nationalism, as well as discourse diffusion from William Rothenstein, E.B. Havell, and Okakura Kakuzo). Jorasanko and Club Bichitra hosted many *addas* (informal discussions)—an exercise of dwelling in modernity.[298] The *adda* participants have to be seen as avant-garde in the traditional French utopian sense, as well as in the Rosenbergian sense, as part of an ideological community helping to redefine cultural modalities in the formation of modernism (further discussed in Part 2).[299,300]

In his memoirs *On the Edges of Time* (1958) Rabindranath Tagore's son Rathindranath Tagore described the atmosphere of the house. Rathindranath described the famous south veranda where Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Samarendranath emptied the house of all Victorian furnishing, and remodelled it, as Andrew Robinson notes, "creating a drawing-room, with the help of a south Indian master-carpenter that influenced many later Calcutta drawing rooms."[301] Rathindranath wrote that it was:

> ...a magnificent example of semi-oriental treatment – decorated with the choicest collection of paintings and Indian art-ware, a room that has been the envy of connoisseurs from the world over.[302]

The remodelling of the South Veranda (c. 1910) was influenced by Sister Nivedita and Okakura Kakuzo, who both visited Jorasanko in 1903, and by E.B. Havell. As Mitter notes, it was Okakura's "pan-Asianism, with India as the fountainhead, [which] became

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[297] Rathindranath Tagore, "Cousin Gaganendra," in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 14.

[298] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press Second Edition, 2007, Pg 195-208.

[299] Rosenberg, Harold, "Collective, Ideological, Combative" in Ed., Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbury, *The Avant-garde, Arts News Annual XXXIV*, MacMillian, New York, 1968, Pg 76. Emphasis Added. See: Nochlin, Linda, "The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France, 1830-80" *The Avant-Garde Art*, ed. Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery. New York: Collier-Art News, 1968, Pg 11-12.

[300] The Indian Society of Oriental Art had already made progressive movements with the help of two Bengal School teachers Nandalal Bose and Kshitindranath Mazumdar, by hiring traditional Indian sculptors like an sthapati from Orissa, called Giridharilal, who created several pieces out of wood and in plaster and was exhibited at the Society's annual exhibitions. Giridharilal could be seen to be an influence of modernist sculpting trends in Shantinketan under Ram Kinkar Vaij. See: O.C. Gangoly in "The Indian Society of Oriental Art: Its Early Days" in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 100.

[301] Robinson, Andrew, "A Poet's Vision – The Houses of Rabindranath Tagore" in ed., Pratapaditya Pal, *Something Old, Something New: Rabindranath Tagore 150th Birth Anniversary Volume*, Marg, Vol. 24, No. 2, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 72-73.

[302] Tagore, Rathindranath, *On the Edges of Time*, 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1981, Pg 78.

deeply etched in Abanindranath's mind.[303] Indeed, Okakura grilled Surendranath Tagore when he was in Calcutta by asking, "What are you thinking of doing for your country?" Surendranath recounted, "Having heard me out in silence, Okakura remarked that it saddened him to note the tone of despondency in our youth."[304] The encounter demonstrates a horizontal transaction between two Asian cultures responding to each other's nationalism. The re-modelling of Dwarkanath Tagore's western aesthetics to an Indian sensibility was influenced by the greater cultural nationalist milieu during the *swadeshi* nationalism. When Shunsô Hishidia, Sano Sen, Kawaguchi, and Yokoyama Taikan were in Calcutta in 1903 they frequented Jorasanko, and influenced Abanindranath's paintings.

From left top to right bottom: Gaganendranath Tagore, Katsuta, Rabindranath Tagore, Kawaguchi, Abanindranath Tagore, Sano Sen, and Samarendranath Tagore at Jorasanko (c. 1906), Photographer: Anonymous, Re-Photographed: Kedar Vishwanathan 2009, Courtesy: Rabindra Bharati Museum, Jorasanko, Calcutta.

After Okakura's first (1901-2) visit, when he was introduced to the Tagores by Sister Nivedita, in 1905, Abanindranath Tagore, who had become vice-principal, appointed *nihonga* artist Katsuta Yoshio (Shôkin) (1906) to the general staff of the Government Art School. This has to be seen as a process of pan-civilizational horizontal translation of artistic practice between India and Japan; as a ruse of cultural nationalism; as a distinct alternative to English pedagogical systems, and academy art; and as a part of the greater milieu of *swadeshi*

[303] Mitter, Partha, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 289.
[304] Photograph taken from wall plaque at the Rabindra Bharati Museum Calcutta, Jorasanko, by Kedar Vishwanathan 2009.

nationalism and mobilization. This was essential to create an art that functioned as a national embodiment of the spirit of "Asia as one." This connected the Indian Buddhist traditions to that of Japan as a civilizational connection, using a national art, and guided by a strong tradition that needed to be reconnected, cultural system to cultural system, in opposition to the British system. That is why the Ajanta murals and Japanese wash became popular amongst the Bengal School artists.[305] (Due to existing work by Guha-Thakurta and Mitter, this study will explore this topic in relation to nationalism, Buddhism, and Rabindranath in Part 3). One day when Taikan had visited Abanindranath at Jorasanko, Abanindranath asked him to paint a picture on the subject of the *ras-lila*. Taikan accepted the challenge. Taikan's painting was hung in an empty space where an old large western oil painting had hung, which Abanindranath, and Gaganendranath, had sold to Rajan Mallik.[306] We see here the removal of western furnishings, and turning their bourgeois display to products of Pan-Asian culture connected to their own aesthetics. The nation, and they, was in the grip of the nationalist fervour of the time. The Tagores and Bengal School discourse through the pedagogy of Taikan and Shunsô had imbibed the Japanese hazy style technique or mōrōtai. However, Rustom Bharucha notes:

> ...at no point, were these techniques duplicated, even at a purely mechanical level: while Taikan would periodically moisten the material of his painting with 'liberal splashes of water' even in the process of working on it, Abanindranath would dip the paper in water before painting on it.[307]

The wash technique used by Indian artists was different to Taikan's. K.G. Subramanyan said to Rustom Bharucha that Abanindranath's "so-called atmospheric effects could be more closely related to the European practices of glazing and 'scumbling.'[308] The Japaneseness of the Bengal School has to be seen, following Bharucha, as a "projection of foreignness on what is essentially the inner mutations of a native tradition."[309] The mutations of an endogenous tradition were caused (or enhanced) by the horizontal connections to Japan without reference to Euroamerican discourses. This was mediated by the shared traditions of Indian and Japanese Buddhist fresco painting reawakened by Okakura because, according to

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[305] "Indo-Japanese Painting," Rupam, No. 10, April, 1922, Pg 39-42.

[306] Abanindranath Tagore, "Reminiscences", in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 41.

[307] Bharucha, Rustom, *Another Asia, Rabindranath Tagore and Okaura Tenshin*, Oxford University Press, 2006, Pg 47. See: Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 291.

[308] Bharucha, Rustom, *Another Asia, Rabindranath Tagore and Okaura Tenshin*, Oxford University Press, 2006, Pg 47.

[309] Ibid, Pg 48.

Okakura in the past, for instance, the Japanese Fujiwara period (c. 894-1185), following the Buddhist Mahayana doctrine, "evolved a distinctly national Buddhist school with a technique and a method all its own... which was an...improvement on the Indian traditions."[310] The Tagores-Okakura pan-Asian nationalist actions reconnected with the earlier Buddhist tradition. This can be seen, perhaps in a nationalistic reconstruction of the part, in the story of the South Indian Brahmin Bodhisena who visited Japan on the 8th August, 736 A.D.[311] Bodhisena lived at the Dainiji Temple teaching Sanskrit to Japanese priests, whilst remodeling the Japanese alphabets on the basis of Sanskrit.[312] Then in 746 A.D, Bodhisena consecrated the image of Dai-bustu (Vairochana) on its completion, and "came to be one of the founders of the Todaji Temple."[313] Bodhisena also helped to establish the Ryosenji Temple and lived there until his death in 760 A.D. Indeed, there was an Indian sculptor named Gumporik, who helped at the Nara temples.[314] Prince Takaoka (Shinnyo) visited India when he was 80, and died in 881. When Japan re-opened to the world after the Meiji restoration, Mokurai Shimaji, in 1872 became the first pilgrim to visit Buddhist shrines in India.

The pan-Asian translation aligns to the concept of the artist as an inter-cultural, long distance specialist, who moves between cultures, creating hybrid visual discourses. As Clark notes:

> The artist moves like a kind of storyteller who learns to tell many stories in ways which the other discourses through which he or she moves can learn to decode, interpret and understand and their hierarchies of value be changed by. This is as much as they also thereby create an interstitial space for hybrid visual discourses between particular cultures.[315]

By 1908 Kawaguchi returned to Calcutta continuing the close relationship between the Tagores and himself. The Japanese connection was instrumental[316], as will be seen by Rabindranath's letters in Part 3. By 1916, Rabindranath, having returned from Japan, brought with him a life-size painting on silk of a blind beggar by a contemporary Japanese master,

[310] "Indo-Japanese Painting," *Rupam*, No. 10, April, 1922, Pg 39.
[311] See Ibid.
[312] Ibid, Pg 39.
[313] Ibid, Pg 39.
[314] Ibid, Pg 39.
[315] Clark, John, "Asian Artists as long distance cultural specialists in the formation of modernity's" In the Image of Asia: Moving across and between locations conference. Australian National University, April 2010.
[316] Tapati Guha-Thakurta describes the artistic nationalism between the Bengal School and Japanese artists: See "Dialogues in Artistic Nationalism" in *Art India: The Art news Magazine of India*, Volume XIV, Issue III, Quarter III, 2009, Pg 22-43.

most probably (completed by) Shimomura Kanzan.[317] This was hung on display in the centre of Bichitra hall in Jorasanko where the artists undergoing training would gather.[318]

When William Rothenstein came to India between 1910-11 he stayed in Jorasanko. Rothenstein wrote it was "a delightful house, full of lovely things, of paintings, bronzes, stuffs, and musical instruments," and the Indian paintings were the best he had seen.[319] Rothenstein had a close and warm relationship with Abanindranath, Rabindranath, and Gaganendranath, and visited Shantiniketan in January 1911.[320] Rothenstein was very interested in Rajput and Mughal painting, and the Tagores, especially Abanindranath, as well as E.B. Havell, elucidated on the topic.[321] Rothenstein sought to promote Indian art and sculpture in England and Europe.[322]

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[317] See Ibid.

[318] Abanindranath Tagore, "Reminiscenes", in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 47.

[319] Rothenstein, William, *Men and Memories: A History of the Arts 1872-1922*, London, 1932, Pg 249
Robinson, Andrew, "A Poet's Vision – The Houses of Rabindranath Tagore" in ed., Pratapaditya Pal, *Something Old, Something New: Rabindranath Tagore 150th Birth Anniversary Volume*, Marg, Vol. 24, No. 2, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 73.

[320] See letters to Rothenstein in Collection of Letters of William Rothenstein, Mss Eur B213, IOL, British Library, London.

[321] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 310-13.

[322] Due to Sir George Birdwood's paper about Indian art given to the Royal Scoety of the Arts, in *The Times* of 28th February 1910 appeared the following declaration with signatures of thirteen distinguished artists and critics who were: The signatories are (1) Fred Brown, 2. Walter Crane, 3. George Framption, 4. Laurence Housman, 5. E. Lanteri, 6. W.R. Lethaby, 7. Halsey Ricardo, 8. T.W. Rolleston, 9. W. Rothenstein, 10. George W. Russel (A.E.), 11. W. Reynolds Stephens, 12. Charles Waldstein, and 13. Emery Walker. The declaration was:
'We the undersigned artists, critics, and students of art...find in the best art of India a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and of their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine., We recognize in the Buddha type of sacred figure one of the great artistic inspirations of the world. We hold that the existence of a distinct, a potent, and a living tradition of art is a possession of priceless value to the Indian people, and one which they, and all who admire and respect their achievements in this field, ought to guard with the utmost reverence and love. While opposed to the mechanical stereotyping of particular traditional forms, we consider that it is only in organic development from the national art of the past that the part of true progress is to be found. Confident that we here speak for a very large body of qualified European opinion, we wish to assure our brother craftsmen and students in India that the school of national art in that country, which is still showing its vitality and its capacity for the interpretation of Indian life and thought, will never fail to command our admiration and sympathy so long as it remains true to itself. We trust that, while not disdaining to accept whatever can be wholesomely assimilated from foreign sources, it will jealously preserve the individual character which is an outgrowth of the history and physical conditions of the country, as well as of those ancient and profound religious conceptions of which are the glory of India and of all the Eastern world."
See Pg 3, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Vincent A. Smith, Second Edition, Revised by K. De B. Codrington, Third Edition Revised and Enlarged by Karl Khandalavala, D.B. Taraporevala Sons & co. Private ltd, Treasure House of Books, 210, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Fort, Bombay, 1.

Rothenstein gave books and journals on European modern art. He sent catalogues of his own drawings to the Tagore household.[323] Andrée Karpeles would send postcards of French impressionism (Toulouse-Lautrec and Monet) as well as the Japanese Ukiyo-e floating world images to the Tagores.[324] It is reputed that Gaganendranath Tagore had in his library books on European modernism, especially cubism and futurism. As Ratan Parimoo notes, "We are told that Stella Kramrisch had been pleasantly surprised to find Gaganbabu's library well-equipped with the latest books on modern art."[325] Rothenstein found that Jyotirindranath Tagore, Rabindranath's elder brother who was associated with the Hindu Mela, was the best living Indian artist who was not painting in the Bengal School style. Jyotirindranath was not influenced by Mughal and Rajput traditions like Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, and had been painting since the 1880s. Harinarayan Bose who taught Gaganendranath Tagore privately in Jorasanko was probably an influence to Jyotirindranath.[326] Rothenstein stated:

> [Jyotirindranath has] neither [a] preoccupation with Western models nor a conscious attempt to follow a Mogul tradition...one has almost to go back to Dürer and Holbein to find such frank and sincere portraits as these. Seeing the extraordinary variety and interest of the life about them, I have always wondered why the younger Indian painters adopt both the subjects and the formulas of the Mogol and Rajput traditions.[327]

Rothenstein secured a publication in 1914 of Jyotirindranath's pencil portraits of the Tagore family. Jyotirindranath's position in the Tagore family demonstrates different types of discourse relativisation in the creation of an art in India. It also demonstrates freedom of cultural opinion within Jorasanko. Jyotirindranath did not integrate art into the praxis of life within his paintings and drawings. But in his songs, historical plays, and farces he did so.[328]

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[323] See letters to Rothenstein in Collection of Letters of William Rothenstein, Mss Eur B213, IOL, British Library, London.

[324] Banerji, Debashish, *The Alternate Nation of Abanindranath Tagore*, Sage Publications India, 2010, Pg 58 & 82.

[325] Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindrnath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 101.

[326] Thakurta, Tapati, The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 89,

[327] See *Twenty-five Collotypes From the Original Drawings by Jyotindranath Tagore*, Printed by Emery Walker Limited, Hammersmith, Copy in the library of Rabindra Bhavan Archives, Santiniketan.

[328] Robinson, Andrew, "A Poet's Vision – The Houses of Rabindranath Tagore" in ed., Pratapaditya Pal, *Something Old, Something New: Rabindranath Tagore 150th Birth Anniversary Volume*, Marg, Vol. 24, No. 2, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 73.

Abanindranath's paintings were a synthesis of western visual tropes, such as realism.[329] Binode Behari Mukherjee stated that his art was more western than traditional.[330] He further stated: "In 1895 Abanindranath received some English illuminations from a European lady and at the same time an album of Indian paintings of the Lucknow Qalam from one of his relatives. ..."[331] When Abanindranath first met E.B. Havell in 1897 they examined and looked at Rajput and Mughal paintings, which then became important in their pedagogical program. Even though Abanindranath wrote aesthetic treatises indebted to traditional aesthetic structures such as his 1909 *Bharat-Silpa Paricya*, which pleaded for the Indian ideal indebted to the Shilpa Shastras, which Abanindranath told Havell was "weapon"[332]; he did not necessarily adhere to this.[333]

The Bengal School, by 1907, was flourishing as a revivalist school. The J.J. School of Art in Bombay and the Jaipur art school were deriving their pedagogical influences from South Kensington. As Coomaraswamy noted: "Bombay, which might be a London suburban drawing school translated wholesale to the East; every influence there is western and there is naturally little or nothing distinctively Indian in the work that has been produced by its students. It is the same at Jaipur, where in the class attached to the state Industrial school, drawing is taught from English natural history wall charts and drawing books."[334]

Club Bichitra also contributed to Bengali literature of the time. For instance, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chatterji, Pramatha Chaudhuri, and others would be read there. It was also the place where the *Sabuj Patra* movement, which advocated the removal of Sanskrit influence toward a purer Bengali language movement came from.[335] As will be seen in Part 3, Sabuj Patra influenced the Shantiniketan syllabus.

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329 Appasamy, Jaya, *Abanindranath Tagore and the Art of His Times*, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1968, Pg 15.

330 Binode Behari Mukherjee, "Art of Abanindranath Tagore", *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May – October, 1942, pp 105 – 118, Pg 105-18.

331 Binode Behari Mukherjee in "A Chronology of Abanindranath's Paintings," *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May, 1942, Pg 124.

332 Letter from MssDr.736 Collection of Havell, I.O.L, British Library, London, Pg 4.

333 Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art" *The Modern Review*, Vol. I, April June, 1907, Pg 392-97.

334 Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 5, November 1907, Pg 107.

335 Rathindranath Tagore, "Cousin Gaganendra" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 18.

1.8 The Dismissal of Raja Ravi Varma

Raja Ravi Varma's (1848-1906) fame[336] was due to the connection that the Indian ruling classes and the urban Indian bourgeoisie had to the promulgation of academy art as a ruling and bourgeois class art which, being an aspect of the universalizing tendency of capital, was a global phenomenon.[337] Ravi Varma's success was due to the fact that the ruling classes of India had accepted the Raj's cultural-system. Indeed, reproductions of his work and style, depictions in academy realist style of stories from Indian mythology, continue to be popular more than a century after they first became popular in India. And, as we shall see at the end of this section, the hold of Ravi Varma's paintings over the Indian ruling classes and urban bourgeoisie continues in today's India.

Varma was the first recognised Indian gentleman artist. He painted well-known mythological themes and figures from Hindu narratives such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He painted Indian themes in European idioms, adopting naturalism, neo-classicism, and academy realism. Varma had learnt by watching Theodore Jensen, a travelling British artist of Danish extraction in the Travancore court[338], who painted objective rational western representational forms. Varma also examined examples of Royal Academy paintings in the British art journal *Magazine of Art* of 1898.[339] The following two paintings *Sita Bhumipravesh* and *Rama Breaking the Sacred Bow Before his Marriage to Sita* depict in neo-classical and academy style key scenes from the Ramayana.

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[336] Varma won several awards; the governor's gold medal in 1873 Madras Exhibition, a gold certificate for a 1873 exhibition in Vienna the 1874 Madras Exhibition gold medal, the 1876 gold medal at the Madras Exhibition for *Shakutnala Patralekhan*, which as Kapur notes, "gives him his breakthrough at the iconographical level...recommending him to the educated elite of India—orientalists and nationalists alike." Varma also won two Gold Medals in 1893 at the Columbian World Fair Exhibition in Chicago. See: Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 149.

[337] Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* Trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, reprint, 1993, Pg 410.

[338] For a detailed examination of his heritage see: Script by E.M.J. Venniyoor. *Raja Ravi Varma*. Trivandrum: The Government of Kerala, 1981.

[339] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 148.

Raja Ravi Varma *Sita Bhumipravesh* (1880, Oil on Canvas, Collection of Maharaja Fatesingh Museum, Vadodara)

Raja Ravi Varma *Rama Breaking the Sacred Bow Before his Marriage to Sita*, (c.1900, Oil on canvas, Collection: Srikanta Datta Narasimharaja Wadiyar, The Palace, Mysore)

Varma painted Indian mythological subjects, referencing temple sculptures[340], in the naturalist style. Seen in Varma's oleograph *The Birth of Shakuntala* (1896) the female figure Menaka and the male Viswamitra, are expropriations from the classical natural figures on pillared enclosures in the Hindu temple of Thiruvanaikaaval, near Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) in Tamil Nadu.

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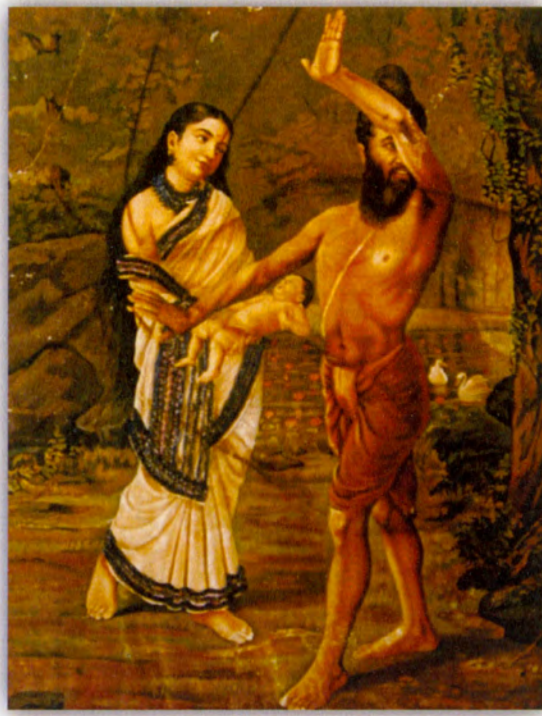
[340] Chawla, Rupika, *Raja Ravi Varma Painter of Colonial India*, Mapin Publications, Ahmedabad, India, 2010, Pg 254-56. Raja Ravi Varma along with his brother C. Raja Raja Varma, whilst travelling visited several temples. For instance Raja Raja Varma records seeing a Jain temple in Ahmedabad on Wednesday 23rd January, 1895. For more information See: Neumayer, Erwin and Schelberger, eds, Christine *Raja Ravi Varma Portrait of an Artist: The Diary of C. Raja Raja Varma*, Oxford University Press, 2005, Pg 31.



The Birth of Shakuntala (Oleograph authored by Raja Ravi Varma, 1896, Ravi Varma Printing Press)

Above Figure: *Figure of Menaka* Below Figure: *Figure of Viswamitra* (Pillared enclosures within the Hindu temple of Thiruvanaikaaval, near Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) in Tamil Nadu)

Abanindranath and the Bengal School critiqued, changed, and opposed Varma's painting style. Samarendranath Gupta, a student of Abanindranath, wrote in 1923 (the heyday of the Bengal School's dominance): "The greatest harm that the Eurasian School of Ravi Varma did was to remove and eliminate the older aspects of Indian painting."[341] According to the Bengal School, Varma's paintings showed "the gross absurdity of giving an art a national character through imitated idealism."[342] Gupta thought that Varma "…felt the desirability of bringing fresh ideals in Indian art...", but "failed" because "…he did not test and appraise the value of the entirely new and alien influences under which he worked."[343] His work "perverted the character of Indian painting..." due to the bourgeois and ruling class "craze for naturalism," shutting "him against the doors that led to inspiration, and independence."[344]

Despite their later dismissal of Varma, the Tagores at one stage promoted Varma and heralded him as a new national hero. Varma visited Jorasanko during visits to Calcutta (c. 1894-96 and 1904) and admired the young Abanindranath Tagore's pencil sketches. [345] These sketches were most probably published in Kalidas Pal's nationalist aesthetic journal *Shilpa-*

[341] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Indian Painting," *Rupam*, 1922, Pg 22.
[342] Ibid, Pg 22.
[343] Ibid, Pg 21.
[344] Ibid, Pg 21.
[345] Chawla, Rupika, *Raja Ravi Varma Painter of Colonial India*, Mapin Publications, Ahmedabad, India, 2010. Pg 63 & 85. However there is no evidence of these trips in Varma's brother's diary. For more information see: *Raja Ravi Varma Portrait of an Artist: The Diary of C. Raja Raja Varma*, Eds, Neumayer, Erwin and Schelberger, Christine, Oxford University Press, 2005.

pushpanjali (1885-86) that contained illustrations of the Ramayana and Mahabharata in academy realist style. The lithographs were printed in Jorasanko. Abanindranath by then had completed subjects in Varma's academic style.[346] Varma, before he died, expressed a liking for the brushwork in *The Passing of Shah Jehan*[347] (1902) (which had won for Abanindranath a Silver Medal at Curzon's Delhi Durbar Exhibition of Arts and Crafts, 1903, increasing his national importance[348]). Varma was first promoted by the Tagores[349], Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1834-94), Ramananda Chatterjee (1865-1943), and after independence was heralded as India's first modern artist.[350] However, the Tagores and others soon realized that using the Raj's cultural system was detrimental to their nationalist ambitions. This was consistent with the orientalist, nationalist, religious-cultural, and Pan Asian assertions of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Sister Nivedita (1867-1911), Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913), Havell, and the anti-British Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950).[351] Aurobindo Ghosh (whilst working with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda (1863-1939)) saw Varma's paintings in the Durbar Hall of the Laxmi Vilas Palace in 1893, and reputedly met Varma there in 1894. During *swadeshi* nationalism he described Varma as "...this grand debaser of Indian taste and artistic culture."[352]

In 1905 Varma was in the aristocratic retinue who received and travelled with the Prince of Wales, the future King George V. In 1904 he had received the Kaiser–I–Hind, awarded to people for advancement and service in the interests of the British Raj. Some of the final sketches of Varma's career were of the Khedda operation—the trapping of wild elephants

[346] Mukherjee, Binode Behari in "A Chronology of Abanindranath's Paintings," *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May, 1942, Pg 123.
[347] Haldar, Asit Kumar, *Art and Tradition*, The Universal Publishers ltd, 1952, Pg 61.
[348] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 285-89.
[349] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 128-32.
[350] See Chatterjee, Ramananda, 'Ravi Varma', in *The Modern Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1-6, January-June, 1909, pp. 88-90. See: Mitra, Asok, 'The Forces Behind the Modern Movement', in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 1, Delhi, 1961, Pg 16. See: "Ravi Varma", in *The Modern Review*, Vol 1 Jan – Feb, 1907, Pg. 84 – 176. Also see: Ed, Sharma, R.C. Associate Editor Chawla, Rupika. *Raja Ravi Varma – New Perspectives*. New Delhi, National Museum, 1993.
[351] Aurobindo Ghosh, whilst working with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda (1863-1939), saw Varma's paintings in the Durbar Hall of the Laxmi Vilas Palace in 1893, and reputedly met Varma there in 1894.
[352] Chawla, Rupika, *Raja Ravi Varma Painter of Colonial India*, Mapin Publications, Ahmedabad, India, 2010, Pgs 91-91 & 298-302.

that was staged for the Viceroy.[353] Varma, even though a nationalist artist, was a subject under colonial rule, and he created for the future king, in their style, representations of India in the colonial gaze, to become a part of the coloniser's knowledge, which helped in the ideological-cultural consolidation of the Raj's paramount bourgeois cultural-system.[354]

From 1888 to 1890, commissioned by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda (1863-1939), Varma produced fourteen mythological paintings from both the Ramayana and Mahabharata.[355] The commissioned paintings were destined for the Gaekwad's Durbar Hall of the newly built Laxmi Vilas Palace in Baroda. The Durbar Hall, Varma discovered, held a blend of modernity with the "...traditional values of a model kingdom analogical to the site posited in his paintings."[356] The Durbar Hall had a mosaic floor crafted by Italians, mythological paintings by Dutch and French artists, and marble statues of the Raja's family[357], a total disconnection between the endogenous Indian cultural system the Tagores were resuscitating, and the cultural-aesthetic design the Indian aristocrats and bourgeoisie valued. Yet it was not a disconnection in terms of the long history of European, East African, and Middle Eastern cultural diffusion, which had appeared in various cultural forms and were relativised, and translated, within regional South Asian courts; Keralan Hindus, the Mughals, and the courts of Bijapur. Varma had visually understood these cultural diffusions and subsequent relativisations of cultural forms in Kerala, and elsewhere in India.

But the Bengali nationalists saw Varma's work and approach to be a result of cultural hegemony, and debasing the national culture. The Tagores viewed naturalism, academy realism, and neo-classicism, as oppositional, and degrading to endogenous traditional Indian art and culture, which were necessary to reconstruct national communicative elements, leading to the imagining of a cultural system as nation[358], which is an elemental and intrinsic

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[353] *Raja Ravi Varma Portrait of an Artist: The Diary of C. Raja Raja Varma*, Eds, Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, Oxford University Press, 2005, Pg 199.
[354] Cohn, Bernard, "The Past and Present: India as A Museum of Mankind," *History and Anthropology*, 1988, 11:1, pp 1-38, Pg 20. See: Cohn, Bernard, *Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, Pg 7. Also see Cohn, Bernard, "Representing Authority in Colonial India" in Eds, Hobsbwam, Eric and Ranger, Terence, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Canto Edition, 2008. Pp.165-210.
[355] The paintings were Nala Damayanti, Radha and Madhava, Bharata and the Lion Club, Arjuna and Subhadra, Vishvamitra and Menaka, Shantanu and Ganga, Kamsa Maya, Disrobing of Draupadi. Harishchandra and Taramati, Keechak and Sairandhri (also titled Beauty and the Beast) Sita Swayamvaram, Birth of Krishna, Devaki and Krishna and Shantanu and Satyavati.
[356] Ed, Sheikh Gulammohammed, *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, Tulika, 1997, Pg 78.
[357] Desai, Rao Bahadur Govindbhai H. *Visitor's Guide to Baroda*. Baroda, 1916, Pg 43-44.
[358] Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London New York, 2006, Pg 11-12.

part of a civilization, and one that, as Kenneth Burke has stated, is 'equipment for [national] living.'[359]

Varma's paintings, reproduced images, and calendar art still hold sway in India; their mythological structures and darshanic elements (overt or covert) still *animate* the market. Pinney has written about the Ravi Varma state retrospective (National Art Gallery, New Delhi, May 1993). The Prime Minister of India Narasimha Rao inaugurated the exhibition. Pinney writes:

> In Ravi Varma's work ... [the Prime Minister said] ... there was a ... reflection of the 'nationalism that was all pervasive during the freedom struggle'. Doordharshan's television report concluded ... with the claim that 'Ravi Varma was the greatest artist of our time'.

Pinney continues:

> Three weeks latter a very different view was expressed in a letter to The Pioneer from the artists Bal Chabda, M.F. Husain, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta and Laxma Goud. They condemned the attempt to foist the philistinism of the bourgeois' upon 'a complex and pluralistic movement' and disputed in particular the oft made claim that Ravi Varma was the 'first modern artist' in India. Such claims were the work of 'crypto-art historians' intent on promulgating an evolutionary view of art that privileged the mastery of perspective and oils and constituted 'an act of cultural cloning highly damaging to the creative spirit of man'.[360]

The conflict that existed in the past between Ravi Varma's paintings and style and their endorsement from the ruling classes and the State(s), on the one hand, and the Tagores and the Bengal School and like-minded artists and thinkers on the other, was being repeated in 1993. It was a period of communal tension, following the Babri Masjid (1992) incident; it is interesting to note that the promotion of Ravi Varma's paintings, which are perhaps best known for their Hindu themes, were being criticized by the artists as 'philistine', and foisted upon 'a pluralistic movement' that created modern Indian art, and is, or should be, modern India itself.

[359] See Burke, Kenneth, *The Rhetoric of Literary Form*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1941. Text inserted authors own. Also see Geertz Clifford,, "Shifting aims, moving targets: on the anthropology of religion," in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 11 no. 1 (spring 2005), pp. 1-15.

[360] Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 60-61.

From the viewpoint of the modern artists, to regard Varma's mimicry of the European tradition as the first modern art in India is to accept colonial 'cultural cloning', after the independence struggle that gave India its freedom, and after 40 years of independence. Such an appreciation of Varma ignores both political history and the history of art in India, which is not only damaging to the artists, but also to 'the creative spirit of man'. Earlier, Jagdish Swaminathan has written about the Indian tendency to reproduce previous patterns and oppose reform:

> ...it is the pseudo-intelligentsia of our country reared in the Anglo-Saxon spirit that accepts and propagates the idea of progress in terms of approximation to the West. The narrow class which Macaulay professedly created to serve as a tool of the British Empire still holds sway over a country of five hundred million people with its enormously rich artistic heritage. Instead of a revolutionary and liberating revolt against this situation, unfortunately, we have, if at all, only been capable of atavistic and obscurantist reaction..."[361]

The rupture that Abanindranath and others created against Varma went on to create the first wave of modern Indian art. Its successors created subsequent ruptures and bifurcations. Yet, Varma's appeal, due to its use of endogenous mythological subjects and their appeal to darshanic structures embedded in the culture, continues, and his works circulate with velocity in the bazaars and art markets.

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[361] Swaminathan, J., "Art, Modern or Contemporary" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary.*, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 15.

Part 2. The ascension and dissolution of the Bengal School: Indian and European modernism and avant-gardism, and the 1922 Bauhaus Exhibition.

2.1 The Mobilization of Positions and the cycle(s) of Integration of the Bengal School.

The relationship between the Raj's colonial institutional power structure and the Bengal Schools' nationalist Indian art created an entangled relationship, causing problems in the narrative of Indian modernism. The relationship connected the Raj's cultural-system's institutional modalities (such as fine art societies, and institutional support networks) to the revived endogenous Indian cultural-system, creating contradictions in Indian modernism. These contradictions will be explored in this Part.

The above relationship was essential for the revival of Indian art. The relationship made the Bengal School discourse the dominant discourse in the revival of Indian artistic culture. Over time, Indian modern art became a set of discourses related to endogenous modernist expression from institutions such as the Bengal School and Shantiniketan in opposition to academy realism. The Shantiniketan discourses were aligned with the notion of moving away and freeing culture from the Raj's cultural-system. The Shantiniketan discourses entered and appropriated the life-worlds of the peasantry constructing an image of the people (further discussed in part 4). Their discourses included European and Pan-Asian exogenous discourses, folk idioms, mural art of Ajanta, as well as Mughal, Rajput, and Pahari miniatures. The relativisation of these discourses created Shantiniketan as the new Indian high art discourse(s).

However, the genealogy of these developments depended on the previous work at the Hindu Mela and Club Bichitra, which initially led to the creation of the 'Bengal School'. Colonial institutions became co-opted by the now powerful Bengal School tradition, whilst academy realism remained embedded within the colonial structure and a few commercial art academies. The Bengal School's tradition spread to other art schools in Calcutta such as The Albert Temple School of Science and School of Art, The Indian Art School, and the Jubilee Art Academy.[1] The diffusion of the Bengal School's discourses within the Raj's institutional structure created the Bengal School as high bourgeois art connected with, and operating along, the socio-cultural conditions created by the Raj's liberal-legal institutional framework, a framework that allowed for the procedure of both Academy art and the Bengal School to be

[1] Bagal, Chandra, Jogesh, "History of the Govt. School of Art and Craft" in *Centenary Government College of Art and Craft*, Calcutta, no publication date or details, Pg 38.

later displaced by the next counter-establishment wave, which resulted in a set of discourses institutionalized within both colonial and postcolonial governmental institutions.

The all-India Bengalisation of art positions and neo-traditional discourse[2] caused breakaway developments and deviations in styles. The Bengalisation of artistic positions caused artists and critics, who had become disenchanted with the mythological orthodoxy of the Bengal School, to privilege, translate and relativise exogenous European modernist discourses. By 1911, on the brink of the European avant-gardist modernist rupture, Coomaraswamy critiqued the Bengal School. He wrote, "it is not what the world has a right to expect from India." By 1923, he knew a relativisation between Bengal School and European discourses will eventuate, and lamented, "like Rabindranath Tagore, the modern Indian artists know what they ought to feel and to experience, but there is no evidence in their work that they have actually felt."[3] In 1924, he criticised: "Important as this movement has been, its main significance belongs to appreciation rather than production. It may be compared rather to the work of the Pre-Raphaelites than to that of the great post-impressionists; the time for these has not yet arrived."[4]

The spread of the Bengali Indian Civil Service to various official positions in India furthered Bengali chauvinism within institutions.[5] The British Government's Indian Councils Act of 1892 and the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 allowed increased participation of Indians, especially those associated with the Indian National Congress, in the official running of British India. Bengalis gained a greater number of allotted positions in the Indian Civil Service than other linguistic and ethnic regions of India. This Bengalisation shaped a bias in the institutionalization of culture toward the Bengal School.[6]

Later, breakaway movements from the Bengal School caused another counter establishment. The counter-establishment sought to relativize endogenous with exogenous

[2] My use of the term discourse is influenced by Foucault's view of the structure and power of discourse, and of the practical nature of its formation and implementation: i.e., power and its technologies. See Dreyfus, H. and Rabinow, P, *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. See Foucault, Michel, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Summer 1982, pp. 777-795.

[3] Lipsey, R, *Coomaraswamy: His Life and Work*, Princeton, Princeton University press, 1977, Pg 85.

[4] Coomaraswamy Ananda, *The Dance of Siva Essays on Indian Art and Culture*, General Publishing Company, Canada, Toronto, Ontario. Dover Reprint 1985 (Originally published New York: Sunwise Turn, 1924), Pg134

[5] For more information on this see John Clark's interview with Kekoo Gandhy in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney.

[6] For instance see Lalit Kala F.16-5/53-H.2 National Akademy of Art – Establishment of – Amendment of the Constitution. Ministry of Education Files, National Archive of India, New Delhi, 1954, Pg 33-8.

discourses. However, the pan-India Bengalisation of art teaching positions promoted the Abanindranathian branch of neo-traditional discourse. The art teachers promoted traditional structures of aesthetics through the Indian Society of Oriental Art and the neo-traditional theoretical discourses previously discussed. The promotion of Abanindranath's discourse set up an endogenous modernism that understood European avant-gardist discourses as the rupturing of realism and naturalism, and as having affinities with their local discourses. European modernism, for the Bengal School, was a drive toward abstracting the objective, rational, and scientific worlds that were solidified and represented by external academic representation and by the European post-Renaissance art historical tradition of objectively representing reality and nature. The Bengal School's tradition was a process of internalizing (contemplation) the external reality, and externalizing an impression of that as individual artistic expression. Indian endogenous modernism, prior to the development of internationalism in Indian art discourse, became linked to this movement. Breaks and relativisations of these discourses with realism and European discourses were modernist breaks and ruptures in an endogenous Indian modernism. These breaks were seen in Ram Kinkar Vaij, Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, and Amrita Sher-Gil, all of who are discussed later.

This Part demonstrates how the Bengal School gained a dominant autonomy of art, and outlines the positions of artists and critical commentaries during the period. The Part discusses the processes involved in the relativisation of the Bengal School tradition with European exogenous discourses. This Part also demonstrates the transitional nature of Indian modernity. The Bengal School restored a cultural tradition and understood their art cohort as an ideological avant-garde connected with the nationalist elites. They achieved dominance as an avant-garde counter establishment. Their position of dominance created room that allowed for the displacement and rupturing of their discourses by the next counter-institution.

The Bengal School artists and ideologues kept European modernism at a critical distance by asserting their tradition, assimilating what they wanted, when they were ready. The nationalist self regard the Bengal School artists held about their rejuvenation of Indian art and its historical pasts was a necessity in the creation of an Indian modernism. And, the self-regard helped make their discourse the dominant discourse in India. As Guha-Thakurta points out, these artists' "mission" was the "improvement and national regeneration" of art

"in replacement of the colonizer's mission."[7] Abanindranath Tagore, writing to E.B. Havell, presaged the movement into an endogenous modernism. He elaborated about the spread of Bengal School artists around India and declared: "The seed is becoming scattered—The fruit will be gathered not by us but our children—This much is my gain."[8]

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[7] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal*, c. 1850-1920, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 312.

[8] Letter from Abanindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell, 5th September, Havell Files, Mss.Eur D736/2, India Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 22.

2.2 The Bengal School's attempt at co-habitation, and hijacking, of the Raj's cultural-system; and the transition of the Bengal School to the modern, with reference to European modernity, modernism, and avant-gardism.

Asit Kumar Haldar, a student of Abanindranath, nationalistically stated, "The recent attempts made in Bengal, which should never be understood as a provincial "Bengal school of art", but as a reconstruction of Indian art-forms in general, have fortunately captured the heart of the intelligentsia."[9] The 'heart of the intelligentsia' was the nationalistically inclined Raj's and Indian ruling classes who backed the Bengal School revival of Indian painting as a restoration of their cultural-system and history. As Havell wrote "Lord Carmichael and Lord Ronaldshay gave the New School the most effective help."[10] The intelligentsia was the ruling elite and understood the Bengal School as intrinsic to cultural nationalism, images of whose art subsequently became filtered, through print dissemination within journals such as the Indian society of Oriental art journal *Rupam* and the nationalist journal the *Modern Review*, into the middle classes of India.[11] The Indian Society of Oriental Art was connected with the Bengal School, Club Bichitra, and the Tagore household, and helped in 'capturing the heart of the intelligentsia.' The Indian Society of Oriental Art was the organization that brought about, as an anonymous writer wrote, an "aesthetic unification" in an otherwise "heterogeneous" "Calcutta." The unification promised, "to bridge the gulf between the Indian and European."[12] The Society "offers through many social and aesthetic amenities an opportunity to all and sundry, to forget and sink their differences, be they racial, political or vocational."[13] The Bengal School helped gain its autonomy through Calcutta's "citizens" and the Society.[14] Several domestic and international exhibitions helped in this creation of autonomy and dominance of the Bengal School.

The Bengal School represented the first attempts by Indian artists to create a neo-traditional art. They had an exhibition in Paris (1914) at the Grand Palais. As Andrée Karpeles wrote, "The French public...went in crowds...to see the works of Abanindranath

[9] Asit Kumar Haldar, *Art and Tradition*, The Universal Publishers, revised edition, 1952, Pg 73.
[10] Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Second Edition, London, 1928, Pg 262.
[11] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922 Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 350.
[12] "The Indian Society of Oriental Art: Some Reflections," *Rupam* No 6, April 1921. Reprinted from the periodical *Englishman* 24th December, 1920, Pg 39.
[13] Ibid, Pg 39.
[14] Ibid, Pg 40.

Tagore and of his disciples...[and] baptized in a body this group of artists."[15] According to Karpeles, a friend of Abanindranath, the exhibition "was for most people a revelation" and an "astonishment."[16] The paintings did away with the "superficial idea about India," promoted in the paintings of European "Orientalist painters." The exhibition offered to the French public "a sacred and intimate life of India."[17]

The success encountered with the French, Indian and the British ruling elite was important to Haldar. The acceptance privileged the Bengal School artists and their discourses within the colonial institutions. The artists and the elite saw the discourses as rejuvenating Indian art. Haldar, who was part of the Jorasanko avant-garde, spread a "regional Bengali chauvinism" in his "idealist" claims for "Indian art."[18]

In the following we will see how the Bengal School's capture of the hearts of the intelligentsia in the creation of an Indian modernism has direct correlation with the transitions in European modernism. The Bengal School, with the help of their colonizer's institutional framework, destabilized the Raj's signs and symbols by returning to an endogenous cultural-system in the restoration of a high art. But high art in India only operated along the Raj's institutional framework. The connection between the Bengal School and the Raj intertwined the Raj's cultural-system with the endogenous cultural-system, whilst also creating a connection between traditional, contemporary, folk and high art practices. Indeed, in high art, the Raj's cultural-system, as well as its bourgeois and aristocratic patrons dominated the city. Ajanta, primitivism, folk, and mythological subjects were mobilized in destabilization of the Raj's aesthetic dominance and rule. These discourses of the Indian tradition were outside of direct colonial capitalist dominance and were harnessed as oppositional to the Raj's cultural-system, yet required the Raj's framework to operate. The discourses remained until the *narodnik* and communist artists of the 1940s used social realism. At Shantiniketan, from the 1920s, the countryside was depicted using a relativized endogenous realism incorporating non-Raj-dominated pan-Indian themes—the peasantry and their folk cultures—into the discourses of high art. These transitions de-stabilized the dominant symbols of the ruling

[15] Karpeles, Andrée, "The Calcutta School of Painting," *Rupam*, No. 13-14, January-June, 1923. Translated for the writer from the original French article by Mr. Gurudas Sirkar, Pg 2.
[16] Ibid, Pg 4.
[17] Ibid, Pg 4.
Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 210.

classes under the power of the Raj's cultural-system, and propelled them toward the endogenous cultural-system. To arrive at this stage, the Bengal School, which was the endogenous cultural-system that was installed alongside the Raj, became dominant through its attachment to the power relationships of nationalism and connections with institutions, which needed further redevelopment and criticisms with the arrival of exogenous discourses.

In the European setting, the avant-gardists (the term as used by French utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon in 1823 as a means to describe the citizens of the bourgeoisie at the forefront of science and arts[19]) criticized the *ancien regime*[20] becoming central figures in the functioning of their new (post-revolution) bourgeois state(s), and emerged as leaders of a pan-national cultural movement.[21] The artists in their promotion of new culture questioned the artwork by provocatively de-stabilizing (rupturing and re-ordering) the signs, symbols, and culture of the dominant ruling classes. Such provocation meant that the artists promoted what they felt were 'new' rather than the old iconographic symbols and signs of the ruling classes' traditions. T.J. Clark writes about the socio-political background prevailing at the start of avant-garde painting in Paris, "It seems that only when the city has been systematically occupied by the bourgeoisie, and made quite ruthlessly to represent that class's rule, can it be taken by painters to be an appropriate and purely visual subject for their art."[22] Clark infers that only when the bourgeoisie has gained hegemony (in Gramscian view of consent)[23] that the 'painters' can use that 'class's rule' as a 'visual subject for their art.'

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[19] "The term "avant-garde" was first used figuratively to designate radical or advanced activity in both the artistic and social realms. It was in this sense that it was first employed by the French Utopian Socialist, Henri de Saint-Simon, in the third decade of the nineteenth century, when he designated artists, scientists and industrialists as the elite leadership of the new social order:
"It is we artists who will serve you as avant-garde [Saint-Simon has his artist proclaim, in an imaginary dialogue between the latter and a scientist] ... the power of the arts is in fact most immediate and most rapid when we wish to spread new ideas among men, we inscribe them on marble or on canvas...what a magnificent destiny for the arts is that of exercising a positive power over society, a true priestly function, and of marching forcefully in the van of all the intellectual faculties...!" See: Nochlin, Linda, "The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France, 1830-80" *The Avant-Garde Art*, ed. Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery. New York: Collier-Art News, 1968, Pg 11-12. Also see: Egbert, D. Donald, "The Idea of "Avant-Garde" in Art and Politics," *The American Historical Review*, 73, No. 2, December, 1967, Pg 343.

[20] Calinescu, Matei, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1987, Pg 41-42.

[21] See Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London Thames and Hudson, 1982. Also see Clark, T.J., *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-1851*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973.

[22] Clark, T.J., *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his followers*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1985, Pg 23.

[23] *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed., David Forgacs, New York University Press, New York, 2000, Pg 422-23. See: Anderson, Perry, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review*, I/100, November-December 1976, pp. 5-78

In the development of European modernism, the emergent bourgeois class from the French Revolution understood, (due to the dominant ideology of liberalism[24]) that the previous feudal-aristocratic symbols had become "moribund."[25] Liberalism, and its concomitant historical-philosophical discourse of equality and rational ideology, allowed the self-criticism of society to occur, which meant the bourgeoisie was able to criticize the feudal aristocratic symbols.[26] But the bourgeoisie and the avant-gardists read the fading symbols as a "dominant" aspect of their cultural system. Therefore the "young" and "ascendant class" had been, as Ranajit Guha writes, "relentless[ly] critique[ing]...the *ancien regime* for decades before the French Revolution and anticipating it in effect."[27] After the revolution the avant-garde artists kept reinterpreting the signs of the bourgeoisie who had "established its domination of the state and industry, science and culture."[28]

The symbols of the bourgeoisie gained a hegemonic dominance, and again required criticizing (subverting and reordering) by the twentieth century historical avant-garde.[29] The artists in the revolutionary period, when the 'city has been occupied by the bourgeoisie,' adapted to that classes' dominant culture and represented it either for the bourgeois order or in criticism of it.[30] However, the bourgeoisie and avant-garde were "true to the real contradictions of the epoch in seizing on the feudal mode of production and its power relations as the object of its criticism..." The critique of the dominance that the liberalist

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[24] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 12-13. See: Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 23.
[25] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 12-13.
[26] Ibid, Pg 11-12. See: Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 23.
[27] Guha, Ranajit, Ibid, Pg 13.
[28] Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass-Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, Pg 5. See: Calinescu, Matei, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch*, Postmodernism, Duke University Press, Durham, 1987, Pg 41-46. See: Lefebvre, Georges, *The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793*, translated by Evanson, Elizabeth Moss, Routledge, London and New York, 2007.
[29] See Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
[30] This takes from the idea of two modernities operating for and against each other. Such as the bourgeois idea of modernity, progress and Reason and the negation of rationality and the attack against bourgeois dominance, Calinescu, Matei, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1987, Pg 41-46.See Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, and London Thames and Hudson, 1982. Also see Boime, Albert, Art and the French Commune Imagining Paris after War and Revolution, Princeton University Press, 1995. Clark, T.J., "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 1, The Politics of Interpretation, Sept, 1982, Pg 140. Fried, Michael, "How Modernism Works: A Response to T.J. Clark," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 9, Vol. 1, The Politics of Interpretation, Sept, 1982, Pg 228-9.
Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 276.

bourgeoisie conducted during the revolution became superseded. And a critique against the bourgeoisie arose from the subordinated class due to the dominance the bourgeoisie had attained—"the critique of the dominant bourgeois culture...arises from the real contradictions of capitalism and anticipates its dissolution."[31]

The Marxist logic and its critique of liberalism as the "ruling ideas" [32] of (neo) colonial expansion must be applied to the study of endogenous Indian modern art.[33] By attaching Marxist logic and criticism to the nationalist avant-garde we can understand the Tagores and the Bengal School (who, like Saint-Simon's avant-gardists, were at the forefront of the society's cultural rejuvenation) to be an "historic [religious-cultural] opposition,"—an opposition that possessed "ideals, values and ways of the interpreting the world" that were heterodox and became a threat and posed a challenge to the Raj's dominant cultural-system, and liberalism, and other characteristics of European modernity and modernism.[34] The Raj's state and institutional frameworks did not speak for the national consciousness at large, and were inimical to the endogenous cultural-system's rejuvenation and thus an Indian mentality.[35] Liberalism, as Bayly suggests, "came to be widely employed as a language of colonial domination and of elite command within the subcontinent."[36] The Indian avant-garde nationalists and ideologues, like Gandhi, had strategically harnessed liberalism (and other exogenous discourses), making it fundamentally endogenous, achieving the indigeneity of the discourse by constant subversion of the "colonial and elite interpretations of liberalism."[37] Gandhi "systematized" civil disobedience as a set of "tactics of struggle," Balibar writes, "aiming to lead the state to the point [of] contradiction of its constitutional principles, in order to compel their reform."[38] Such an appropriation of western exogenous discourses and their relativisation took place even though the nationalist avant-garde were liberalist-heterodox

[31] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 13.
[32] See Marx, Karl, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1965.
[33] Frantz Fanon suggests that all the categories of Marxism need to be stretched when applied to the colonially subjugated, for instance see: Fanon, Frantz, *The wretched of the earth*, Trans C. Farrington. New York, Grove Press, 1966.
[34] See: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "Marx after Marxism A Subaltern Historians' Perspective," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 22, May 29, 1993, p. 1094-96.
[35] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg xii.
[36] Bayly, C.A., *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, Pg 4.
[37] Ibid, Pg 4. See Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's integrity: The philosophy behind the politics" *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, pp. 79-93. Also see: Tidrick, Kathyrn, *Gandhi: A Political and Spiritual Life*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2006
[38] Balibar, Étienne, "Lenin and Gandhi: A missed encounter?" *Radical Philosophy*, March/April 172, 2012, pp. 9-17, Pg 11-12.

with deep, and bridgeable, relationships with the Raj's bourgeoisie. The critiques advanced by the subordinated endogenous cultural-system, which functioned thanks to the Raj's institutions, mobilized itself by increasingly attacking the dominant cultural-system, and seeking its dissolution. [39] Gandhi and Rabindranath strategically used relativized exogenous discourses to harness the nation. The process of appropriation of exogenous discourses and their relativisation became essential to Indian modernism.

A central contradiction in capitalism caused this complex relationship between the cultural-systems. The contradiction was found in the universalizing tendency of capital in the creation of a "world market" using "natural and human qualities" as a "system of general utility" that was inclusive of "science" and "physical and mental qualities." Marx sums up:

> ...capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices ... and ... old ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it... [40]

The Bengal School understood the ruling artistic position of academy realism to be a contradiction and they sought to change it by disseminating their neo-traditional discourse across the country. And when they succeeded the once avant-garde Bengal School became the establishment. The once avant-garde, the once counter-establishment, profoundly critiqued the colonial existing legacy system "prefiguring its own demise,"[41] by moving into a Romantic tradition like the European, especially like the German romanticism and its concomitant nationalism of the preceding century.[42]

However, following John Clark:

> Where one finds all the panoply of instruments of an art establishment, there is ...room for a counter establishment, that is an establishment-in-waiting, and also for an avant-garde. This tripartite relation is not... a copy of the relations, which existed in Paris in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is ...a function of the critical position of modern art with regard to both reinterpretations of traditional form and technique and different styles of Euroamerican art, which find favor with the new or newly restructured ruling elite. Here it becomes apparent that the avant-garde, often identified with the introduction of styles, which were only recently avant-garde in Euramerica, continually functions to undercut established positions in both the

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[39] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 13.

[40] Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* Trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, reprint, 1993, Pg 410.

[41] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 13.

[42] See Redfield, Marc, *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism*, Stanford University Press, California, 2003.

discourses of works and interpretation, and of artists and critics associated with them.[43]

The Bengal School's dissemination across the country created the re-emergence of artistic autonomy in India, which, rather than toppling the religious cultural iconographic tradition, or de-stabilizing it, or provoking new conventions, inserted beside them another discourse that would rupture and negate realism. This created other sets of discourses to draw from. The discourses were modernist, and they were endogenous representations of past Indian art.

The Bengalisation of Abanindranath's school achieved a nation-wide autonomy of Indian art, the first time after the fall of the Mughal courts and the arrival of the Raj. Though the Bengal School were avant-garde in the Saint Simon sense they were not avant-garde in the Burgerian sense because there was no pre-existing national-cultural aristocratic form that had to be toppled. In a T.J. Clarkian sense, European modernism moved into an autonomous era due to the dismantling of aristocratic art and forms of expression that all social groups engaged with. This was due to the creation of an inclusive national market (containing capitalist hierarchies), which created the ability for the bourgeoisie to fabricate a hegemonic ideology. T.J. Clark, in response to Clement Greenberg, understands modernism as a response to kitsch whose production was co-opted by the lower-middle classes through market nationalization, one where modernism moved away from kitsch to an aesthetic utopia.[44] In India, Abanindranath's group, still trying to connect art with life praxis, became separated from the desires that other artists possessed, who wanted to fulfil modernist art discourses within their art. By disavowing academy art, the Bengal School created a new Indian art propelling an autonomous function for it within colonial institutions and art schools, and created an aestheticism of their discourse that would need amending.

The German avant-garde art critic Max Osborn wrote (in the catalogue of the Indian art exhibition (c. 1921-22) held in Berlin's Crown Prince Palace) that the "cultural movement in India must remind the Germans of the fact that more than a century ago Germany, too,

[43] Clark, John, "Open and Closed Discourse of Modernity in Asian Art" (1991) in *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, Eds,. Mellissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 2011, Pg 37.
[44] Clark, T.J. "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 9. No. 1, Sept, 1982, pp. 139-56, Pg 145- 54. See Greenberg, Clement, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, 1939.

witnessed a national and romantic longing for a revival and insight into her own past."[45] The shared romantic nationalist longing between these countries allowed Osborn and the German public to understand the Bengal School's art as a necessity in the Indian cultural restoration of their tradition. The lavish praise the Indian artists received from the German public allowed the Bengal School artists to understand that they were at the forefront of reviving a national tradition without being under the spell of, or influenced by, European modernism, realism, or academicism.[46] Yet there were comparisons between the Bengal School and European modernism. "The tendency to grasp," Osborne wrote, "everywhere the essence of things, connects them [the Bengal School] with Edvard Munch."[47] However the notion that the Indian endogenous tradition was comparable to European modernism, especially to the art of Paul Klee, both praticising the "...inner nature of the essential..." created another dominance of the Bengal School who understood themselves mistakenly at the theoretical level to have affinities with the latest developments of European modern art.[48]

But the Bengal School delineated their art as different to their western counterpart due to their interiorizing the impression of an observed reality. The Indian artistic reality did not start, as they thought the European did, from the dichotomous (dialectical) subject-object relationship toward reality, which then moved towards a subsequent effacement of the object. Klee's paintings were a gradual movement toward the Indian understanding of depicting reality. The Indian understanding had transcended rationalist objective realism toward an abstraction of reality and nature. In India this was an *endogenous impressionism.* O.C. Ganguly promoted this at a gathering held at Government House, Calcutta on December 4th, 1919—"It was the avowed intention of [the Bengal School] masters...to escape from

> ...the photographic vision and to secure an introspective outlook on things which takes one away from the material objectives of life to a rarefied atmosphere of beauty and romance."[49]

[45] Osborn, Max, "The Indian Art Exhibition in Berlin," *Rupam*, No, 15 and 16, July-December 1923, Pg 76.
[46] Ibid. Pg 77-8.
[47] Ibid. Pg 78.
[48] Ibid. Pg 80.
[49] Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Second Edition, London, 1928, Pg 262.

2.3 Geeta Kapur, Avant-Gardism, and Indian Modernism.

This sub-section elaborates on Geeta Kapur's thoughts on Indian modernism, demonstrating several differences between her thought and positions taken in this study.

Geeta Kapur has seriously questioned if there has been an avant-garde in Peter Bürger's Euramerican sense. She has also questioned the inherent Eurocentrism of Bürger's theory. It is not apparent that Kapur sees an endogenous avant-garde in Indian modernism.[50] Bürger's theory is based on European socio-political modernity and economic processes (bourgeois revolution), which eventuated in the bourgeois hegemony and disenchantment of social life, and led (through market nationalization) to 19th century aestheticism, which separated habitual cultural production from the use-value of art in bourgeois society.[51] Bürger's view was that the self-criticism of the social sub-system of religion[52] that the historical avant-gardes (dada and surrealism) practiced was possible due to the falling away of "religious world pictures" that "legitimate dominion."[53] The social conditions aesthetically critiqued by the historical avant-gardes were institutionalized in the domain of art institutions, creating the complicity of capitalism with avant-garde culture.[54] These processes did not take place in India because of the absence of a bourgeois revolution and capitalist hierarchies. As Chakrabarty describes, colonial India was "irreducibly plural in its structure, interlocking within itself strands of different types of relationships that did not make up a *logical whole*."[55] Indian tradition was, according to Ranajit Guha, "paramount in the superstructure."[56] In Indian endogenous modernism, there was a reaction (from the 1920s) that relativized exogenous discourses against the extant discourses (of the Bengal School, Shantiniketan and Academy Art) and created an endogenous avant-garde. It should be noted there are aesthetic and philosophical similarities (i.e., critique of bourgeois modernity) between the historical avant-gardes and the endogenous Indian avant-garde, which is discussed throughout this study. In opposition to Kapur's view that Indian modernism

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[50] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 374.
[51] Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 23.
[52] Ibid, Pg 21-3.
[53] Ibid, Pg 23. See: Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* Trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, reprint, 1993, Pg 106.
[54] Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 10-23. See: Habermas, Jurgen, *Legitimation Crisis*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1975, Pg, 25-26.
[55] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2002, Pg 13.
[56] Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1999, Pg 6.

developed without an avant-garde[57], this study argues that Indian modernism during the anti-colonial struggle developed with an endogenous avant-garde. An avant-garde that is different from the European experience due to, the already mentioned, different structural processes (i.e., Indian absence of bourgeois hegemony), and also due to the historical-ideological variances embedded in India's freedom struggle; where differing ideological and aesthetic movements were created constituting a variety of discourse positions, some of which battle for dominance and others that rupture this dominance in an endogenous avant-garde sense. Chittaprosad Bhattacharya's best articulates a uniquely Indian avant-garde Communist Party of India affiliated social realist images of the peasantry, which subverted both the Bengal School's mythological imagery and the Shantiniketan artists' romantic appropriation of the peasantry for the Image of the People, during the 1940s—discussed in Part 4 and 5.

According to Kapur, Indian modernism and "African and Asian" avant-gardism are linked with internationalism. In India, modernism re-asserted itself endogenously in the 1960s, especially around Group 1890 (1963), where Indian artists became part of an avant-garde. Kapur correctly understands this as Indian modernist discourses that enhanced global modernism. For instance, the work of artists like Jagdish Swaminathan, K.G. Subramanyan, Himmat Shah, Gulamhohmmed Sheikh, and Nasreen Mohamedi (not a member of Group 1890), and the narrative art starting in the 1970s, used both endogenous and exogenous discourses.[58] Kapur calls for peripheral modernisms to unite against European cultural hegemony and their avant-gardes. She envisions an international, discourse-sharing avant-garde that will break down Euramerican cultural dominance. African and Asian avant-gardes will come into being if there is a move that "dismantles the hegemonic and conservative features of the national culture itself."[59] The breakdown of state conservatism will allow discourse sharing and will stop the state's (and in India's case, potentially Hindu nationalist) control over vanguard discourses within endogenous milieus. She imagines a dismantling of the "burdensome aspect of western art including its endemic vanguardism."[60] She imagines an avant-garde that would

[57] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 287-88.
[58] Ibid, Pg 305-313.
[59] Ibid, Pg 374-76.
[60] Ibid, Pg 375.

treat the avant-garde principal itself as an institutionalized phenomenon, recognizing the assimilative capacity of the (western) museums, galleries, critical apparatuses, curators and media.[61]

Kapur states: "Indian modernism has developed without an avant-garde. A modernism without *disjunctures* is at best a reformist modernism".[62] Kapur's activist post-colonial position is based on the dismissal of Clement Greenberg's valorization of ruptures, and European modernism's inherent ability for "disjunctures"[63] creating movements away from dominant discourse positions.[64]

Kapur views the lack of disjunctures in Indian modernism as due to the Nehruvian state's "passive revolution" and the subsequent institutionalization of culture.[65] The passive revolution did not overthrow existing cultural discourses attached with the ruling classes' tradition. A critique against the elements of the superstructure and the dominant classes' culture did not occur because there was not a Jacobinian revolution.[66] The bourgeois revolution was an essential condition in European modernism. The passive revolution came about due to the inability of the nationalist-bourgeoisie—"the moderates"[67]—to fabricate the whole populace into ideological dominance. Therefore "the permanent hegemony of the urban class over the whole population" which "permanently organize[s] consent," continues to be absent.[68] The hegemonic bourgeois revolution was paramount for the construction of realism in European art history, and the subsequent ruptures(s) into different forms of abstraction by the historical avant-gardes, which helped create European modernism. In a section entitled "Politics of Modernism," Kapur, discussing the "postcolonial dialectic of modernity," refers to the above as "the debate on realism/modernism." [69] This debate, as shown in Part 1, was intrinsic to the development of an endogenous modernism in the restoration of a cultural-system antithetical to the Raj's. Realism was antithetical to the Bengal School who created an endogenous interiorizing discourse (transcendental) in their art

[61] Ibid, Pg 375.
[62] Ibid, Pg 287-88. Emphasis added.
[63] Ibid, Pg 111.
[64] Chopra, Suneet, "Debating Modernism," *Frontline*, Vol 18, 25, December 8-21, 2001 < http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1825/18250760.htm> last accessed 23rd May, 2012.
[65] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 202.
[66] *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed., David Forgacs, New York University Press, New York, 2000, Pg 246-49.
[67] Ibid, Pg 247.
[68] Ibid, Pg 260. See: Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1997, Pg xiii.
[69] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 300.

history and theory in opposition to the Raj's. Realism was a discourse that was later relativized by Indian artists, to move away from the dominance of the Bengal School. This relativisation and the movements it caused created a rupture. The relativisation constructed the *Image of the People* (shown in Part 4). And, further *re*-relativisations of realism took place after independence, (by artists such as N.S. Bendre, K.H Hebbar, Shiavax Chavda, Avinash Chandra, Ram Kumar, Sudhir Patwardhan, and Bhupen Khakhar), possibly belonging to multiple ruptural periods. Disjunctures and ruptures are an integral aspect of Indian modernism.

The Nehruvian passive revolution installed all endogenous ruptures of art, except the IPTA and CPI artists, into the nation-state's institutions such as the Lalit Kala Akademi.[70] The passive revolution situated the Indian National Congress's nationalist thought within the domain of state ideology.[71] By the 1950s The Lalit Kala Akademi promoted establishment artists and the reproduction of their paintings for widespread dissemination via postcards, and other publications throughout India. The paintings were Nandalal Bose's *Radha's Viraha*, Amrita Sher-Gil's *Bramacharis*, Jamini Roy's *Three Ladies*, Sarada Ukil's *Sivaji Receiving Blessings from his Mother*, Kshitin Majumdar's *Raslila*, D.P. Roy Chowdhury's *The Festival*, Rabindranath Tagore's *Head and Bust of a Woman*, Gaganendranath Tagore's *Dwaraka on the Eve of Destruction* and Abanindranath Tagore's *Sindbad Recounting Tales*.[72]

In Nehru's *Discovery of India* (first published 1946) his nationalist thought rebounded between "economic progress" and "socialism." Nehru, Rebecca Brown observes, "asserts that control over knowledge about India resides in knowing India's past, and in part his text attempts to overcome colonial knowledge production in favour of a new view of India's heritage and of its trajectory into the modern era."[73] Nehru promoted a relativisation of tradition with the modern, and combined the endogenous with the exogenous.[74] "National progress," wrote Nehru, "neither lie[s] in a repetition of the past nor in its denial." "New patterns" become "adopted", explained Nehru, "but they must be integrated with the old."

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[70] On the story of the establishment of the Lalit Kala Akadmi see: Lalit Kala F.16-5/53-H.2 National Akademy of Art – Establishment of – Amendment of the Constitution
See: Ministry of Education Progress Report Progress Report, D 6534/54-H2, 1954, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

[71] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 201.

[72] Ministry of Education Progress Report, D 6534/54-H2, 1954, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Pg 3.

[73] Brown, Rebecca, *Art for a Modern India*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2009, Pg 76.

[74] Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, Zed Books, London, 1986, Pg 131-166.

Nehru felt "the new, though very different, appears in terms of pre-existing patterns." This "create[s] a feeling of a continuous development from the past, a link in the long chain of the history of the race."[75] "The present," he wrote "was an odd mixture of medievalism, appalling poverty and misery and a somewhat superficial modernism of the middle classes."[76] Nehru's modernism is highly indebted to Rabindranath Tagore's relativisation of tradition with the modern.[77]

In the post-independence era, this meant that, Kapur writes, "culture was sought to be institutionalized precisely in order to carry out the overall mandate of modernization." The "institutionalizing process was conceived of as a way of disentangling the modern from the nationalist polemic."[78] The state's "liberalism," "absolves the left of confrontational initiatives on the cultural front."[79] Nehru's state became the institutional mechanism of progress and advancement in the arts. Nehru's modern state, as Partha Chatterjee writes, "explicitly recognize[ed] a central, autonomous and directing role of the state and legitimizing it by a specifically nationalist marriage between the ideas of progress and social justice."[80] The nationalist marriage is why, argues Sanjay Seth, the Indian nation-state had "concepts" "borrowed from Marxism," but "the manner of their combination was nationalist and statist, and far from 'revolutionary', in the Marxist sense."[81] All critical ideological and cultural positions were absorbed into the state and the progressive left attacking the state, for Kapur, has been subsumed within its structure, meaning there cannot be an avant-garde in India.

Kapur understands that the passive revolution as having created no ruptures as the dominant signs and symbols of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie were not overthrown or de-stabilized in painting.[82] Kapur sees modernism in India as having "no fixed canonical

[75] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Penguin Books India, 2004, Pg 576.
[76] Ibid, Pg 49.
[77] Both Nehru's and Rabindranth's relativized modernism could be the reason for, as Guha-Thakurta's observation about the "contradictory nature of India's modernity," where "modern artistic identities" have "roots in the nation's pasts." See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *Monuments, Objects, Histories—Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Permanent Black, Indian Edition, 2004, Pg 253.
[78] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 202.
[79] Ibid, Pg 202.
[80] Ibid, Pg 132.
[81] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995, Pg 217.
[82] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 302.

position."[83] She correctly understands it was the left-movements of the 1940s associated with the IPTA, and CPI, which gave a clear disavowal of the ruling class culture of the Bengal School, and Shantiniketan discourses.[84] But Kapur does not view an artist like Chittaprosad as a subverter and rupturer in Indian modernism. He attacked the dominance of the Bengal School, Shantiniketan and Academy Art discourses. He attacked the bourgeois-nationalists' romanticized appropriation of the peasantry into the visual discourses. He created a rupture; he created an endogenous avant-garde that overturned the pre-existing counter-establishment and avant-garde of the earlier Bengal School and Shantiniketan nationalists.

Kapur does not see the Bengal School's autonomy and dominant position as situated at the juncture of a radically transitioning endogenous modernism.[85] Nihar Ranjan Ray wrote in 1936:

> [The Bengal School had become] idealistic [containing a] sentimental approach, [becoming an] "Aestheticism"[86] that needed changing to keep up with the movement and transitional character of India...[allowing] the naïve representation of the actual... the recent attitude of some of our painters, is still in an initial and promising stage.[87]

The break from the Bengal School's paramountcy, first by Amrita Sher-Gil, and then from the Bengal School and Amrita Sher-Gil by the Bombay Progressives, included M.F.Husain, whom Kapur notes as the pioneer of Indian modernism, and whose one precedent, according to her, was Amrita Sher-Gil.[88] The Bombay Progressives were under the influence of European modernism due to related subjects being taught by the principal of the Bombay Art School Charles Gerrard (from 1936). The Bombay artists turned their back on W.E.G Solomon (later discussed in Part 4). Charles Gerrard, Walter Langhammer, R.V. Leyden, and E Schlesinger influenced the Bombay Progressives. (Langhammer won the Bombay Art Society's Gold Medal in 1939).[89]

Other artists also used Sher-Gil as a breakaway. According to the artist Krishen Khanna, artists such as B.C. Sanyal, who frequented her studio in Lahore, "...were greatly

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[83] Ibid, Pg 292.
[84] Ibid, Pg 271-72.
[85] Ibid, Pg 302.
[86] Ray, Nihar Ranjan, "The Bengal School of Painting Today," *Rupam*, Vol. IV, No. 2, December 1936, Pg 127.
[87] Ibid, Pg 129.
[88] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 6.
[89] Pg xxi, Sadwelkar, Baburao, *Story of a Hundred Years the Bombay Art Society 1888-1988*, The Retrospective Exhibtion Old Masters Associated with the Bombay Art Society, Vakil and Sons, Bombay, 1989.

influenced by [Amrita Sher-Gil]."[90] These artists, as discourse innovators, reacted to the Bengal School's dominance across India (including Delhi), and, as Krishen Khanna has said, "... the rather moribund British art school traditions of the J.J. School."[91] He goes on to say, "...it was precisely against this kind of influence that the progressive painters came into existence. This is what they were kicking against. I don't think—also what happens is that then there's a wholesale rejection because—simply because the volume becomes so big, and you feel you're becoming inundated with this stuff. And you then have to throw everything out."[92] Khanna adds "...being very young, one was always revolting against that which one felt was anaemic..."[93] Ram Kumar thought the Bengalisation of art in Delhi was "...sentimental sort of stuff..."[94] and in need of change. However, the relativisation of discourses that the Delhi Shilpi Chakra, Bombay Progressives, and the Calcutta Group undertook in the late 1940s to late 1950s, although modernist, were largely using exogenous discourses. This placed Indian modern art in a subsidiary position to Euramerican modernism. Later artists from the 1960s such as the artist-ideologue Jagdish Swaminathan wanted to break this and add to a universal modernism using the endogenous cultural-system, which rearticulated the Bengal School's and Rabindranath Tagore's position of creating a universal modernism. Therefore there was another rupture in the 1960s toward neo-tantric and indigenous forms to add to a universal modernism.[95] Indeed, Swaminathan saw the Bengal School style as "an epidemic" which "spread...all over the country once but now lives only in the nooks and corners of backwater aestheticism ... [and] revelled in mawkishly sentimental line borrowed from the Ajanta frescoes, wallowing in themes of pastoral tranquillity while life was anything but peaceful around."[96] (Swaminathan lived through the Bengal famine). Swaminathan critiqued the Progressive Artists Group whom he called the "modern-expressionists."[97] He said, "...these painters evolved personal styles which logically flowed out of the needs of their imagery," but, "they were steeped in the ideologies of the West, their art, howsoever individual, remains only an extension of the Western mind,

[90] Krishen Khanna interviewed by John Clark, 20th December 1991, in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney, Pg 170.
[91] Ibid, Pg 173.
[92] Ibid, Pg 177.
[93] Ibid, Pg 170.
[94] Ibid, Pg 193.
[95] Some scholars question the links between Swaminathan and the 1960s neo-tantra painting movement. Indeed, part of Swaminathan's concern was with what indigenous foms could do if freed of the dominantion of Euramerican modernism, which can be argued was best articulated during the 1960s neo-tantra movement.
[96] Swaminathan, Jagdish, "The New Promise" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary.*, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 19.
[97] Ibid, Pg 19.

individual as variation, but broadly falling into categories of the movement in the West."[98] This kept Indian modernism in a subordinate position to Euramerican modernism, and Swaminathan and other artists like K.G. Subramanyan critiqued this position. Their critiques allowed Indian artists to return to indigenous motifs, the Indian art tradition, and the living cultural-system whilst relativizing them with exogenous discourses. By the 1960s-70s artists returned to the endogenous cultural-system, whilst using exogenous discourses when necessary. This was the completion of an endogenous Indian modernism.

Kapur does not see the flooding of the visual market with Varma's reproduced images, for instance lithographic images (in various media) disseminated from his Raja Ravi Varma Printing Press, as a saturation of kitsch taste in academy realism. The Bengali nationalists denigrated Varma's reproduced images.[99] As Samarendranath Gupta, an artist of the Bengal School, states, Raja Ravi Varma's Printing Press (1894) disseminated "...the publication of cheap and clumsy oleographs of most of his paintings," which made "...bad [copies] of...indifferent pictures ... [became] the ideal of many an artist."[100] Kapur does not acknowledge the Bengal School's retaliation against the mass reproduced images in the style of mimetic realism. This and the later reaction against the Bengal School itself are aspects of an Indian avant-garde rather than a critical avant-garde in a Burgerian sense. These modernist ventures took place at Shantiniketan, then with Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil and the IPTA of the 1940s. These processes "catapult" Indian modernism "into internationalism." Kapur links modernism as an international style because it was the weaning of the nationalist invented culture that became important for post-Independence artists. These artists like M.F. Husain, K.H. Ara, F.N. Souza, Paritosh Sen, and S.H. Raza connected with international currents and appealed to internationalism.[101] This study, agreeing with this aspect of Kapur's reasoning, shows that endogenous modernism is the deep structure that underlies these phenomena.

Kapur's position discounts the chronological operation of the relativisation of exogenous discourses in the reconstruction of a cultural-system and high art. These operations were key to the 'internationalism' in Indian modernism. In addition to their art, the

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[98] Ibid, Pg 19.
[99] Cousins, James, "The Future of Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 17, January 1924, Pg 46. See: Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 297-304. See: Coomaraswamy, Ananda "The Modern School of Indian Painting," *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XV, October, 1912, No 120, pp. 67 – 69, Pg 67.
[100] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Modern Indian Art," *Rupam* No. 11 July 1922, Pg 22.
[101] See Zitzewitz, Karin, *Aesthetics of Secularism: Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Thesis Columbia University, 2006.

artists created a structure. They created a structure of endogenous modernism that could use any endogenous discourse, and *life-world* condition, and situate that discourse in relation to a relativized global discourse. As John Clark points out "...modernity often means reformulating the habitual cultural forms through their relativisation by reference to a cultural other."[102] Asian Modernism in this sense takes place when there is an exogenous movement outside of the neo-tradition.[103] The movement away from the neo-tradition occurred in India when the Bengal School created a dominant discourse. This can be seen to be an avant-garde and counter establishment in Indian modernism, one that is related to the Bengal School acting as a counter establishment. Subsequently, the breaking of the Bengal School establishment can be seen as another avant-garde, and counter-establishment. The radicalism involved in gaining a cultural-system back during an anti-colonial struggle subsumed culture into the praxis of nationalist political rebellion. The ruptures in cultural production during the independence movement, and after it, account for several competing and differing ideologies constituting a nationalist avant-garde. And the ruptures, even though they may be competing with each other, added to the result of a uniquely endogenous modernism, linked to the meta-critique of capitalist dominance and global modernity, where instances of the critique engaged specific instances of dominance and modernity, starting with the Raj's cultural system, and moving on to Euramerican thought in its various manifestations over time.

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[102] Clark, John, "Open and Closed Discourse of Modernity in Asian Art" in *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, Eds,. Mellissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 2011, Pg 38.
[103] See Clark, John, *Modern Asian Art*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1998.

2.4 Paramountcy of the Bengal School

The Bengalisation of art into a hegemonic[104] autonomy over Indian art occurred when Abanindranath's movement had already been disseminated throughout India. This was, as Guha-Thakurta says, "the cultivation of a 'higher' aesthetic sense was seen as indispensable to the larger project of 'nation-building'."[105] Abanindranath's students became teachers, and had broken away from the status of artisans to artists teaching transcendental discourses at various institutions at a pan-Indian level. Abanindranath's *Six Limbs of Indian Painting* was published by the Indian Society of Oriental Art to rave reviews.[106] The nationalist drive further spread Bengal School discourse around India. Abanindranath stated in an interview (1924), "We Indians do not paint things as they are, we paint from the feelings which possess us and we paint ourselves."[107] This was connected with the imagination, an interiorized aesthetic *darshan*, which was for Indian artists "the most powerful pair of eyes…"[108] Juel Madsen asked Abanindranath, "you have only one school of art that paints entirely in Indian style—this one of yours? Do all your pupils paint in your style?" Abanindranath replied:

> No, I don't force them. I try to direct the individuality of every pupil. You cannot force an art pupil to do anything, not even accept Western culture. We do not understand the West. It is possible to have schools for drawing but not schools of art. Art is not to copy, and nobody can give Indian art European clothes; but it is as if it is getting lighter for us now…People are beginning to understand how necessary it is to have art.[109]

Important here is Abanindranath thought that Indians were becoming acquainted with art, especially Indian art. They were beginning to understand both endogenous and exogenous art discourses through Abanindranath's pedagogy. Consequently it was Abanindranath's pupils that nationalized the discourse throughout the country.

One may follow this train of thought through Guha-Thakurta and Ratnabali Chaterjee, continuing with Iftikhar Dadi:

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[104] Dadi, Iftikhar, *Modernism and the art of Muslim South Asia*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2010, Pg 53-55.
[105] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 210.
[106] No Author, "Principles of Indian Painting: A Review," *Rupam*, No. 19, July, 1924, Pg 130-33.
[107] Madsen, Juel, "Abanindranath Tagore," *Rupam*, No. 19, July, 1924, Pg 115.
[108] Ibid, Pg 116.
[109] Ibid, Pg 116.

> The Bengal School inaugurated a new paradigm of artistic subjectivity, marking an important break from roles the makers of art and crafts had occupied earlier. The higher role of the artist was now fully separated from that of the artisan. The artist was now viewed as autonomous from base patronage and invested with transcendent ideals.[110]

The Indian Society of Oriental Art continued, and Abanindranath looked for a government grant whilst Club Bichitra slowly came to a halt. In 1919 Abanindranath needed money and wrote to Havell hoping that Havell knew of someone who was "willing to make a collection of Indian pictures." The Tagores needed to raise money and were willing to "sell [their] whole collection" for a "good price of...five lacks."[111]

By the 1920s the Bengal School and Shantiniketan emerged as the institutions endorsed by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Even though the J.J. School of Art, in Bombay (under W.E.G. Solomon), led a revival in Indian art in a new direction of painting murals inspired by Ajanta, it was under the auspices of an English teacher, who the Bengali nationalists thought, had not imbibed the true essence of Indian art (later discussed). In Calcutta, Abanindranath Tagore resigned in 1915 from the Government School of Art, owing to differences in disciplinary actions taken against students (with the more relaxed art educator and historian Percy Brown) who had become principal after Havell.[112] The replacement for Abanindranath was his nephew Jamini Prakash Gangoly who became Vice-Principal at the Government School of Art, where artists painting in the academy style came to study under him. Abanindranath focused his energies on Club Bichitra. Gangoly, however, reinforced Academy realism in the teaching syllabus in the Government School as his chosen discourse (as seen by his portrait *Untitled* of his wife Sunila Devi).

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[110] Dadi, Iftikhar, *Modernism and the art of Muslim South Asia*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2010, Pg 55. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal*, c. 1850-1920, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 267. Also see: Chaterjee Ratnabali, From the Karkhana to the Studio: a study in the changing social role of patron and artist in Bengal, New Delhi: Books and Books, 1990, Pg 104.

[111] Letter from Abanindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell 3rd September 1919, MssEu D736/2, E.B. Havell Collection, India Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 18.

[112] Bagal, Chandra, Jogesh, "History of the Govt. School of Art and Craft" in *Centenary Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta*, no publication date or details, Pg 37.

Jamini Prakash Gangoly, *Untitled Portrait of the artist's wife Sunila Devi* (no date, oil on canvas, courtesy Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi)

Gangoly taught academy art at the school. Percy Brown, on the other hand, who had been nationalizing the curriculum since leaving the Mayo School of Industrial Art in Lahore as principal and the curator of the central museum where he was in charge from 1899, had taken charge from Havell in 1909 and continued the post until 1927 in Calcutta. Gangoly further developed the two schools in the School's curriculum; he developed the Indian and Academy sections. These two sections during the 1920s and 1930s became the Indian (Bengal School) and Academy (European) schools of Indian art. Brown held an exhibition (funded by the Indian Society of Oriental Art) of 250 pictures by Indian artists from various parts of India at the Government Art School. The exhibition consisted of academy painters exhibited alongside Bengal School artists, such as J.P. Ganguly and A.K. Chowdhury.[113] It was this faction of modern Indian painting, not following the Bengal School discourse, which used academic realism as the second counter-establishment to break away from the Bengal School.

However, the South Kensington pedagogy was never fully taught, as Agastya wrote in a review of the exhibition, "…the many progressive ideas and the new movements which

[113] Agastya, "Exhibition at the Government Art School, Calcutta," *Rupam*, No. 11, June, 1922, Pg 71.

saved European Art from too narrow a conception of nature never filtered down to the curriculum of the Schools of Art in India."[114] Agastya thought that the art schools and the colonial administration shortsighted and had not enlisted South Kensington pedagogy correctly. This 'shortsightedness' did not allow for the cognitive instilment of "Reynolds' "notion of nature."[115] Reynolds argued that his notion of nature comprehended not only "the forms which nature produces but also the nature and internal fabric of the human mind and imagination."[116] Abanindranath's school, by internalizing the impression of nature within the mind of the artist and externalizing nature in an endogenously impressionistic manner as a "heritage of Eastern painting," kept "abreast of the latest [impressionism] movement in the West."[117] The academy realist Fine Art department of the Government School followed the South Kensington pedagogy using the Kantian conception of art, as previously discussed in relation to Ananda Coomaraswamy.[118]

The academy camp were, Agastya wrote, "...unhampered by "old canons" and not dominated by "old masterpieces."[119] This implied an "advantage...as it afforded a clear and fresh atmosphere free from the deadening effects of an historical past, the barriers of which, the so-called Bolshevists of modern art [the avant-garde] are today busily engaged in demolishing in Europe."[120] This "...freedom from the domination of old and out-worn ideals, undoubtedly afforded opportunities," argued Agastya "...for the birth of a new form of art in India."[121] However, the academy school artists were unable to re-invent or break from the codes instilled in them at the Art Schools. Abanindranath's discourse opened up possibilities of the two to interact with each other and relativize each other's discourse, using habitual cultural protocols in reference 'to a cultural other.' Agastya wrote, "they have influenced each other in a very peculiar though somewhat indirect way,"[122] whereby both schools have "welcomed...the abstract and synthetic appeal of the new art of their brethren in the dissentient camp," conceding "that the true aim of the artist should be the expression of something profounder than a rendering of correct details by correct drawing and

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[114] Ibid. Pg 77
[115] See Reynolds, Joshua, *Discourses on Art*, San Marino California, 1959
[116] Agastya, "Exhibition At the Government School of Art, Calcutta," *Rupam* No. 11, June, 1922. Pg 77
[117] Ibid. Pg 77
[118] For a further discussion on academy painters use of the Kantian notion of art see: Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 130-33. See Sarkar, Kamal "Fifty Years of the Academy of Fine Arts" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 62-3.
[119] "Exhibition At the Government School of Art, Calcutta," *Rupam* No 11, June, 1922, Pg 77.
[120] Ibid. Pg 77 [Text inserted].
[121] Ibid. Pg 77.
[122] Ibid. Pg 78.

composition."[123] The Bengal School, Agastya observed, "realized that the mere adoption of Ajantan manners and Mughal methods could not carry them very far." On the other hand the Academy school felt that "worship of chiaroscuro and perspective has not brought aesthetic salvation..."[124]

After Percy Brown left the Government School of Art in Calcutta, the Vice-Principal Gangoly temporarily took over the reigns, whilst the authorities searched for a new principal. Mukul Chandra Dey took up the position of principal on 11th July 1928. Dey created another counter-establishment in the school. Dey, after initially studying at Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan ashram Brahmacharya Vidyalaya, matriculated from the Indian Society of Oriental Art under Abanindranath Tagore, and had travelled with Rabindranath Tagore to Japan and America in 1916, enrolling in the Art Academy at Chicago where he studied etching. Dey went to Great Britain where he familiarized himself with the modern movements but was more in tune with the Abanindranath's school. Dey won the distinction of Associate of the Royal College of Arts (London), and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (London). He wanted to study in Paris, but did not go on the advice of Rabindranath Tagore. When Dey became principal he made changes that had lasting impact. Dey abolished the monitor system of students. He sent out a circular to the students of the schools stating that each student needed to have with them a small drawing board for convenience of study. Advanced students did not like this because the younger students could copy their seniors.[125] Dey had to ask Rabindranath Tagore (who stayed with him in August 1929) Abanindranath and Acharya Prafulla Chandra for help on the matter. Moreover, Dey continued the two sections of art instruction and updated the school curriculum with more teachers to suit the changing demands of enrolled students.[126]

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[123] Ibid, Pg 78.
[124] Ibid, Pg 79.
[125] Bagal ,Chandra, Jogesh, "History of the Govt. School of Art and Craft" in *Centenary Government College of Art and Craft,* Calcutta, no publication date or details, Pg 44.
[126] Ibid, Pg 44-46.

The spread of the Bengal School artists continued (from Club Bichitra and the Indian Society of Oriental Art). Sailendranath Dey moved to teach at the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi. He then moved to the Jaipur School of Arts (1921-25). Kishitindranath Majumdar became the principal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (1921) and from 1942-64 was the principal of the Art Department at Allahabad University.[127] He used religious cultural themes in his paintings. This can be seen in paintings such as *Lakshmi* and *Apsaras Dancing on the Clouds*. Majumdar also syncretized Mughal and Rajput painting, (through the background architectural framing device) with the Japanese wash in *Woman Plucking Flowers*. This can also be seen in his watercolour of *Ras-Lila* where the gopis dance, their movements inspired by the movement of apsaras in the Ajanta caves. Majumdar owed a debt to Abanindranath's Watercolour and wash on paper *Radhika, Yaksha's Wife*.

Kshitindranath Majumdar, *Lakshmi* (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

[127] Pannalal, "Mazumdar's "Râsa Lilâ." *Rupam* 1921, Pg 23.

Kshitindranath Majumdar, *Apsaras Dancing on the Clouds* (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Kshitindranath Majumdar, *Woman Plucking Flowers* (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Kshitindranath Majumdar, *Ras-Lila* (Watercolour, 1926, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Abanindranath Tagore, *Radhika*, (No Date, Watercolour and Wash on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Kshitindranath Majumdar, *Yaksha's Wife*, (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Bireswar Sen, after studying under Abanindranath Tagore for six years at the Indian Society of Oriental Art (1918-24), and teaching (c. 1926 onward) at the Lucknow School of Arts and Crafts when Asit Kumar Haldar was principal, gained fame as a watercolourist. Sen was influenced by the academic style of the Russian polymath and humanist Nicolas Roerich.[128] Roerich's style verged on spiritual naturalism in his depiction of the Himalayan ranges, in *Maitreya the Conqueror* (1926). Sen fused this with the wash technique for his Watercolour *Pārbati* (1930). At the Lucknow School of Arts and Crafts Sen created an Indianisation of Haldar's pedagogy contributing to the development of crafts and applied arts.[129]

[128] For more information on the art of Nicholas Roerich see: Randhawa, M.S., "The Art of Nicholas Roerich", *Lalit Kala Contemporary* 18, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, Pg 3-5.

[129] Lloyd George, "Indian Art Conference At Wembley," address delivered by Sir George Lloyd in Hall No. 3, British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, on 2nd June, 1924, under the auspices of the India Society, Reprinted in *Rupam*, No. 19, 1924 July, Pg 125.

Nicholas Roerich, *Maitreya, the Conqueror* (1926, Tempera on canvas. 73 x 101 cm. Nizhnii Novgorod State Art Museum, Russia)

Bireswar Sen, *Pārbati*, (1970, Watercolor on paper, courtesy Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi)

The influence of Abanindranath over Sen is seen in the use of the wash technique in Abanindranath's *Twilight*, and *Stormy Night*. Both the works were derived from Hishida Shunso's wash effects in the paintings he made whilst in Calcutta, *Forest in the Evening* (c.1903-4), which became influential over Shantiniketan naturalism, and would be seen in the work of Binode Bihari Mukherjee and Nandalal Bose.

Hishida Shunso, *Forest in the Evening* (1903-4, Iida City Museum, Japan)

Abanindranath Tagore, *Twilight*, (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Abanindranath Tagore, *Stormy Night*, (No Date, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Continuing the theme of the Bengal School artists leading influential art schools, Asit Kumar Haldar moved from Shantiniketan Kala Bhavan (1920-23) to Jaipur School of Arts (1923-25), then to the Lucknow School of Arts where he became principal. He wrote about Bireswar Sen in 1930:

> Mr. Sen enjoys a deservedly worldwide reputation as an artist and has thorough knowledge in painting and is specially employed to teach Indian painting and design in my school. I am confident that his technical knowledge and high education will enable him to occupy the most responsible position in any art school in India. He has struck a new note of his own in Modern Indian Art and it is very difficult to find such a rare combination of an able officer with those of a distinguished artist.[130]

Samendranath Gupta thought Bireswar Sen's paintings were a "wilful" imitation of European art that led to artistic "insensibility."[131]

In 1924 Haldar, whilst teaching at the Jaipur School of Arts, continued the Bengal School discourse and through his pedagogical statements further lodged it within the colonial institutions. He wrote, "…it is only the impress of the artist's mental state that is left on the

[130] Quoted on webpage < http://bireswarsen.com/> Last accessed Tuesday 13th December, 2011.
[131] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Indian Painting," *Rupam*, 1922, Pg 22.

picture he draws, and to realize that mental state in all its reality …"[132] He stated:

> …the picture is the precept of his [the artists] 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 the artist's mind the pictures contain… 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.[133]

Haldar's pedagogy continued the nationalist reaction to realism and nature. He believed it was the artists' goal to internally transform the reality of nature. He wrote, "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."[134] "Not less than ninety percent…educated and uneducated," demonstrated a "blind partiality for western art," and "…our own art seems to be an eyesore for them."[135] Haldar saw western art as a cultural Other, something not to be relativized. He wrote, incorrectly, "…the greatest thing we have to learn from 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."[136] Haldar's statement was incorrect and nationalistically ignorant because Western artists were using exogenous discourses (in relation to their cultural-system) to re-work their endogenous discourses to break into abstraction. They were not merely 'busy with the western' but had opened their discourses to the Orient—overthrowing 'all the received truths'—in the process critiquing bourgeois modernity using exogenous philosophical theories and cultural forms to advance their aesthetic-cultural critiques and discourses. The connection between Western and Indian artists was far deeper than Haldar realised, and the European avant-garde and Abanindranath's Bengal School were, in a philosophical sense, trying to transcend and escape bourgeois rationality by effacing the aesthetic discourse of realism; pictorially transforming nature giving, using Haldar's words, 'expression to truths which lie beyond the range of vision or the reach of ordinary perception'. But for Haldar it was imperative to keep the autonomy of the resuscitated tradition to be able to withstand direct influence from Western realism, and Modernist art. For Haldar the exogenous was a contaminant, a pollutant. The representational difference between the modern Indian and European painting laid, Haldar thought, in the western artist's representation of externalized forms, which in modern art had become "vague." The "forms and external shapes" of European modernism, Haldar wrote

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[132] Haldar, Asit Kumar, "Stray Thoughts on Art," *Rupam*, No. 18, April, 1924, Pg 79.
[133] Ibid, Pg 79-81.
[134] Ibid, Pg 80.
[135] Ibid, Pg 80.
[136] Ibid, Pg 80.

"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,"[137] "the technique, which has over powered and submerged the creative aspect of art."[138]

By 1936, Haldar, as Gangoly noted, "with great energy and spirit of adventure and anxious to stimulate interest in Art by brave enterprise in the way of solo exhibitions, one of which was held at the Y.M.C.A Hall (Calcutta) in April [1935]..."[139], promulgated further the revivalist Indian painting discourse. Haldar's painting *The Procession* enhanced the painting discourse started by Abanindranath. In *The Procession* he used the line techniques of the Bagh and Jogimara Buddhist caves (Madhya Pradesh, visited in 1917), as well as of the Ajanta murals. He travelled to Ajanta in 1909-10 with Nandalal Bose and Samarendranath Gupta, and Lady Herringham. The Indian Society of Oriental Art funded their trip. James Cousins' thought the expedition was "epoch making."[140] The expedition allowed the restoration of civilizational Buddhist art discourse to be later modernized in Shantiniketan. This was seen in the flowing movement of bodies in the work of Haldar.

Asit Kumar Haldar, *The Procession* (No Date, Wash and Watercolor on Paper, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi)

Haldar helped in the reconstruction of the mural tradition. He was deeply influenced by the Buddhist fresco painters and wanted to revive the tradition. [141] He felt that the Buddhist art and cave paintings of Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh and Jogimara, represented a strong

[137] Ibid, Pg 81.
[138] Ibid, Pg 81.
[139] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 20.
[140] Cousins, James, E., "The Art of Asit Kumar Haldar," *Rupam*, No. 9, January 1922, Pg 1.
[141] Ibid, Pg 1-2.

mural tradition in India. He saw the mural tradition as proof of an Indian national superiority of painting over the west. Haldar wrote, "It is reasonable to infer that Indian painting had made a considerable advance long before any progress had been made in that art in Europe."[142] The cave paintings were essential to the spread of Buddhist art to Japan, Korea and China. Haldar stated in pan-Asian terms, "the mural paintings in the temple of Horyuji (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."[143]

Horyuji Mural Amitabha Paradise (Wall Painting of the Golden Hall of Horyuji, Fresco Secco, Late 7th Century A.D.)

Haldar continued the pan-Asian nationalist art historical discourse started by Nivedita, Abanindranath and Okakura.[144] Haldar demarcated the mural tradition as different to the west. He felt that the murals and frescoes represented a difference between European painting as Fresco Buono, or on the dried surface, Fresco Secco. He wrote, "It is the characteristic of the European ground of painting that work is rendered impossible if the

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[142] Haldar, Kumar, Asit, "The Paintings of the Bagh Caves," *Rupam*, No. 8, October 1921, Pg 13.
[143] Ibid, Pg 13.
[144] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 167-184.

fresco dries up completely."[145] For Haldar the "real difference between the European and Indian methods of fresco paintings" were evident in the fact that the "ancient Indian ground for painting was made of earth." Fresco painting "required no preliminary drenching process for painting work."[146] The Indian tradition of mural painting was culturally and technically different from western mural painting, and thus was unaffected by western art. Moreover, it had direct diffusional reach that influenced other parts of Asia and the Buddhist tradition. Haldar used the diffusional reach on the grounds of cultural difference.

He did this to define the revived tradition as oppositional to the 'cultural other' of the western cultural system.[147] Haldar's paintings, as Cousins wrote, "were the amalgamation of Buddhist art of over twelve centuries ago with modern Hindu art...where it has divested itself of theology and ritual..."[148] For example, in Haldar's fresco of the traditional Vaishnavite Chaitanya scene *Jagai Madhai and Nityananda* (1929), very important and well known in medieval Bengali literature, two (darker) drunk brothers throw an earthen pot on Nityananda cutting his forehead. The injured Nityananda reproached the drunken brothers and said: "Shall I stop giving you love because you have hit me with an earthen pot?" Chaitanya Nityananda's guru heard of the incident, he became furious with rage but Nityananda begged him to pardon them, and Jagai and Madhai became Chaitanya's disciples. In 1921 Asit Kumar Haldar, Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar, who then taught at Shantiniketan, were commissioned to make copies of the Bagh Murals by the State of Gwalior.[149] They would send back copies and pictures of their copies to students in Shantiniketan. Haldar's mural discourse was of great importance to the mural experiments of Nandalal Bose, Binode Bihari Mukherjee at Shantiniketan, and the tradition and experiments continued in post-Independence India in the work of artists such as K.G. Subramanyan and Gulam Mohammed Sheikh.

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[145] Haldar, Kumar, Asit, "The Paintings of the Bagh Caves," *Rupam*, No. 8, October 1921, Pg 14.
[146] Ibid, Pg 14.
[147] Ibid, Pg 12-18.
[148] Ibid, Pg 2.
[149] All three artists worked on the copies for two months from 1st January 1922 until March.

Asit Kumar Haldar, *Jagai Madhai and Nityananda* (1929, Fresco, Government College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow)

Haldar wrote, "artists…[must] take lessons in swimming from the master swimmers in their own waters before attempting to swim across the sea."[150] Haldar travelled to England c. 1916-19. He became the first Indian to be a Fellow (notably because of his work in the reconstruction and promulgation of India's artistic traditions which appealed to orientalists) of the Royal Society of Arts, London (1934). However, the voyage across the ocean did not influence Haldar. His nationalism was clear. In Abanindranath's letter to E.B. Havell on the 5th of September (c. 1917-19), when Haldar had returned to India after meeting Havell in England, Abanindranath wrote, Haldar "has come back perfectly cured of his 'foreign ideas' [and] says he will never cross the '*kala-pani*'[151] (black sea) again.[152] To cross the *kala-pani* was to become impure. This non-relativisation of exogenous discourses irritated Lahore and Delhi artists like Sailoz Mukherjea, Ram Kumar, Krishen Khanna, Kanwal Krishna, and B.C. Sanyal.

But in the 1920s Haldar understood some artists' wish to relativise discourses applicable to modern life and mythological themes. He wrote:

[150] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 9.
[151] In Hinduism to cross the ocean also meant to lose one's caste.
[152] Letter from Abanindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell, 5th September Mss.Eur D736/2, India Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 21.

> ...[in] 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...self-evident: the artist may do either or both.[153]

Understanding the imperative need to depict social conditions during the political situation brought about by the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), and predicting the experiments of creating an *Image of the people* in Shantiniketan, Haldar in Shantiniketan, wrote:

> 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.[154]

This became a principal idea at Shantiniketan.

Lalit Mohan Sen of Haldar's school painted Indian scenes, which made "a distinct contribution to the building up of an indigenous school of Landscape Painting in India." Other elements of the Lucknow school have "...stimula[ted] interest in Art amongst the general public by itinerant exhibitions organized by individual artists." The artists included Rameswar Chatterjee, Asit Kumar Haldar, Lalit Mohan Sen, and Bireswar Sen who "made a tour of the principal cities in India with considerable success."[155]

Samarendranath Gupta was part of the 1909-1910 winter expeditions to Ajanta, along with Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar.[156] Gupta sketched the Jogimara murals in 1914 with Asit Kumar Haldar. He became Vice-Principal of the Mayo School of Arts in Lahore, and continued the Bengal School discourse. Gupta exclaimed about the revival of tradition:

> The nation that can sense the true and the beautiful in art is marked out for greatness...Along with sustained patriotism, let us cultivate the aesthetic sense...so that the nation that will be ultimately evolved in India may be a nation full of overwhelming love for the Motherland, full of chastity, full of the subtle sense of the beautiful in creative art.[157]

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[153] Haldar, Kumar, Asit, "The Subject Matter of Art," *Rupam*, 1923, Pg 25.
[154] Ibid, Pg 25.
[155] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 21.
[156] Asit Kumar Haldar, *Art and Tradition*, Universal Publishers, India, 1952, Pg 65. See: Abanindranath Tagore, "Reminiscences", in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 45.
[157] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 211.

Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury held affinities with both the western academic school and Abanindranath's school. Roy Chowdhury, as a portrait painter, moved between Abanindranath's school and the western portrait realist position relativizing both. He also moved away from the Bengal School to sculpting an image of the people.[158] Roy Chowdhury's portraits of Mrs Percy Brown and Miss Buckland, according to an anonymous writer in the January 1924 issue of *Rupam*, struck "a golden mean between the accuracy of a speaking likeness and an idealization of the features of his model."[159] Roy Chowdhury harnessed both the inward internalization of Abanindranath's discourse and the externalized exogenous discourses of academy realism. Chowdhury exhibited with the Society of Fine Art, in Calcutta, on 23rd December 1921 alongside Jamini Roy, Atul Bose, and Hemendranath Majumdar. By 1928 he was Vice-Principal and by 1929 the first Indian Principal of the Madras School of Arts. Roy Chowdhury was a sculptor who knew of the Tagore's hiring of traditional sculptors (*stapathi*). He continued this tradition of sculpting in Madras, moving into the western idioms of "monumental style" to create the *Triumph of Labour.*

[158] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 173-76.
[159] "Notes Section" *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 54.

Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury *The Triumph of Labour* (Sculpture, Marina Madras, c. 1938)

By 1936 Roy Chowdhury's principalship at the Government School of Art, O.C. Gangoly wrote:

> ...Is keeping alive a high level of Portrait Sculpture and of Landscape and Figure paintings. The School attracts students from all parts of India and, as attested by the worlds of Kalikinker Ghose (whose "Struggle" has attracted great attention), Prabodh Das Gupta and Narayan Rao (of "Temptation of Buddha" fame), show in the last Annual Exhibition, is making quite valuable contribution to contemporary Art, a fact which should stimulate the Madras Fine Art Society which has been showing signs of decline.[160]

Roy Chowdhury moved between discourses, creating a national interstitial space, whilst critiquing Nandalal Bose for his following of the "indigenous tradition" rather then opening up to European art.[161]

The spread of the Bengal school continued. By 1936 the Travancore State Art Gallery (Sri Chitralayam), under the leadership of James H. Cousins, established two buildings. One devoted to Modern Indian Schools, which were, as Gangoly noted, "tastefully laid out in

[160] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*, Pg 20.

[161] As Devi Prosad Roy Chowdhury wrote, "It's suprising that with all his broad minded attitude, Nandalal sees aesthetic excellence only in that art which follows the footsteps of the indigenous tradition. He does not realize that there is no caste-system in the realm of beauty. He does however recognize castes in particular types of techniques, which he accepted as indigenous, should be followed by Indian artists! This mental orientation on close scrutiny would show that this partiality is somewhat like a mother's attraction for her child." See: Choudhary, Deviprasad Roy, on *Nandalal Niriksha*, Nandalal Number, 1351, Pg 77.

three rooms," and which displayed art from the Bengal Revival seniors, the Bengal Revival juniors, and works from the development of these tendencies in Madras, Gujarat, Punjab, and Sindh.[162] In 1922 Promode Kumar Chatterjee taught at the Andhra Jatiya Kalashala at Masulipatanam, establishing the National Art Gallery in Masulipatanam.[163]

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[162] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 20.

[163] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 312.
See: Wesbite http://anantaprema.blogspot.com.au/2009/06/promod-kumar-chatterjee-painter-and.html Last Accessed Monday 13th February, 2012.

2.5 Integration and Disintegration

In the first subsection of this section, we follow the Bengal School until they become integrated with ruling class culture. The Bengal School displaced both academy art and Ravi Varma paintings, which once used to be sponsored and sought after by the ruling classes, including the rajas. Their paintings and works become the new establishment.

The spread of the Bengal School across India institutionalized a once vanguard artistic cohort through the processes that established cultural nationalism. But this was attacked and de-stabilized by the 1930s, when Kala Bhavan, the art school of the Visva-Bharti University (Shantiniketan), was headed by Nandalal Bose. He was already canonized as a master-*mashai.* In 1938 Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda commissioned Bose (a year before the Maharaja's death) to paint murals in the recently built Kirti Mandir, which honoured Maharaja Gaekwad's ancestors. Almost fifty years ago (1888-1890) the Maharaja had commissioned Ravi Varma to paint fourteen mythological paintings in the durbar hall. That represented the ascendency of academy realism, which belonged to the Raj's cultural system. Fifty years after the murals by Bose represent the ascendency of the Bengal School. Bose used the mural techniques he had redeveloped with the help of Benode Bihari Mukherjee.[164] The murals were located on the mezzanine level of the Kirti Mandir's main hall (constructed in 1936). Bose's murals reflected a return to the endogenous cultural-system and the re-adoption of the ruling classes of their indigenous images painted in the Bengal School tradition. In 1939 Bose painted the mural: *Shiva in the Descent of the Ganges* on the south wall above the entrance. In 1940 he painted the biography of the 16th century *braj-basha* poet, saint and mystical disciple of Krishna, Mirabai. In 1943 he completed a multi-scene tableau for Rabindranath Tagore's Buddhist dance-drama Natir Puja. The last mural was a battle between the Kaurvas and the Pandavas from the Mahabharata depicting the slaying of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu (c. 1946-47).

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[164] See: Chakrabarti, Jayanta, R. Siva Kumar, Arun K. Nag, *The Santiniketan Murals*, Calcutta: Seagull Books with Vishva-Bharati, 1995. See: Sheikh, Gulam Mohammed, "The Viewer's View: Looking at Pictures" Pgs 141- 154 in *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, Eds., Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, Vivek Dhareshwar, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1993, Pg 148-49. Also See: Benodbehari Mukherjee, "My Experiments with Murals", *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, 14, April, 1971, Pg 9.

Nandalal Bose, *Descent of the Ganges* (1939, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Nandalal Bose, *The Slaying of Abhimanyu* (c. 1946, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

At a deeper level the Bengalisation of art created a type of aesthetic autonomy for the Bengal School's neo-traditional movement.[165] It was an aesthetic autonomy as it was separated, and reactionary, from academy realism. Yet it still used the modalities of the Raj's

[165] Zuidervaart, L, "The Social Significance of Autonomous Art: Adorno and Bürger," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 48:1, 1990, pp. 61-77. See Bürger, P, "Autonomy: Critique of Autonomy", in *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, ed, Kelly P., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

institutions to function. For the first time since the Mughal and Rajput autonomy of courtly art, Indian art had found another autonomous position, under colonial institutional systems. These institutionalized a nationalist, ahistorical, and romantic group whose artistic values were detached from the praxis of life and this created an endogenous Indian aestheticism belonging to the cultural-system and its high art value-system (they would be dismantled by the relativizing of exogenous discourses circulating around India). The dismantling would be caused by the disconnect between neo-traditional discourses and the life-values, life-worlds, and nationalism present in India.

This ascendency and institutionalization was a dalliance with the colonial state. It was an elite-aristocratic bourgeois operation tied to the Raj's institutional modalities. It functioned as a complicit form of nationalism against the Raj's state and cultural-system, but needed the Raj's systems to function. The complicity of nationalism replaced imposed western cultural idioms with 'endogenous' ones. The creation of elite-aristocratic Bengal School discourses into autonomy also spoke of the human sub-system of art[166] operating endogenously. The Bengal School used the imposed institutional system to function, and replaced the Raj's cultural system with indigenous hybridized neo-traditional art. The Bengal School salvaged the past and counter-appropriated their religious-cultural ahistorical (mythological) pasts (which the Raj had earlier appropriated through academy realism, naturalism and related forms of western art). The Bengal School used the Raj's institutional structures and placed their endogenous art into the state's systems, thanks to the elite-aristocratic relationship that existed between the westerners and the Indians, such as that between Havell, Ronaldshay and the Tagores. For the first time in Indian bourgeois society an endogenous neo-traditional art had become a part of the colonizer's apparatus.

Nandalal Bose articulated mythic cultural narratives in *Jadugriha Daha* first painted in 1910-11 then reworked whilst at Shantiniketan on May 20th 1940. The painting depicts a scene from the *Mahabharata* when the five pandava brothers foil the plan of the *kauravas*, their cousins, from burning their house by setting fire to the house before them and escaping. The influence of Ajanta can be clearly seen in the rendering of the burning house, and line contours of the *Pandavas*, and Bhīma carrying their mother Kunti on his shoulders. (Bose visited Ajanta in 1909-10 and copied the murals. They had been a persistent influence on

[166] See Luhmann, Niklas, *Art as a Social System*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000.

him). Later, Bose's mural was reproduced by the Lalit Kala Akademi and circulated widely in India.

Nandalal Bose, *Jadugriha Daha* (*Burning of the Lacquer House*, May 20th 1940, Wash and tempera on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi).

Nandalal Bose, *The Birth of Chaitanya* (1931, Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

However, the Bengal School gained political power because they were the dominant ideological group—the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie who had constructed a 'selective' Hindu past.[167] They visually answered Bankim Chandra Chattopadyhay's call for self-determination of history: "We have no history! We must have a history!"[168] This was used as nationalist self-representation and was a critique against the Raj's cultural-system. The Bengal School salvaged their past that had been sacralized by the Raj, in a quest to affirm their identity and cultural-system.[169] The redevelopment of an endogenous cultural-system and an Indian visual historical past became, by the 1920s and the beginning of the Non-Cooperation Movement, an old tradition paramount within the Raj's institutional structures, and art schools.

Mitter writes about the rise of the Bengal School to a position of nationwide dominance:

> Although art societies were active in Bombay, there were no debates on art in the city; it was a profession conducted with impersonal efficiency. But in Calcutta, art came to hold the centre stage in cultural politics. Annotated art plates in magazines, to

[167] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 237-38. See: Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1983. Pg 56-58

[168] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 76.

[169] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 3.

paraphrase Clausewitz, helped conduct the "war" by other means. They were the propaganda weapons in the Orientalist invasion, as acknowledged by Abanindranath: "Our pictures are in every household because of Ramananda Babu [Chatterjee]...By his perseverance and by financial investments in superior color and half-tone prints, he has created a demand where none existed before." From 1912, "Chatterjee's Picture Albums" [made the Bengal School familiar throughout India.][170]

[170] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922 Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 350.

Disintegration

At the time of their paramountcy, the Bengal School's art had separated from the Club Bichitra project of returning to the praxis of life. Before Amrita Sher-Gil arrived in India (1934), the Bengal School received serious criticism by Coomaraswamy, Rabindranath, B.K. Sarkar, and Roger Fry. The art critic Roger Fry severely critiqued the Bengal School and their use of orientalist exogenous thought and influence. Fry critiqued the Bengal School's "contact" with "European ideas" as the source of the drawings failings. Critiquing the Bengal School's use of European orientalist ideas in the form of Havell's influence and the Tagores' romanticism, he wrote:

> ...however anxiously these artists strive to adopt the formulae of their ancestors the spirit that comes to expression is that of the American magazine illustrator. Nothing, indeed, could provide a stronger proof of the profound corruption which contact with European ideas has created in Oriental taste than these well intentioned but regrettable drawings.[171]

The Bengal School continued a stagnant ahistorical school of painting institutionalized from the past and did not open their discourses for further relativization. This created a need for revival, which existed until the artists from Shantiniketan, and Amrita Sher-Gil, relativized exogenous discourses.[172] Concurrently academicism continued. Amrita Sher-Gil was an agent of change because she was not embedded in any art cohort in India, and had no knowledge of the modern forms of artists such as Binode Bihari Mukherjee or Ram Kinkar Vaij.[173] Free of financial burden, not depending on commissions from aristocrats and upper bourgeoisie, she was in a position to bring new exogenous discourses. The new exogenous discourses caused the move from neo-tradition into modernism, and the dismissal of neo-traditionality in the pursuit of artistic freedom (by the Bombay Progressives in the 1940s); and later, indigenous themes by artists such as Jagdish Swaminathan, Ram Kumar, Laxma Goud, Prabhakar Barve, K.C.S Panicker and Nasreen Mohammedi, to assert a cultural identity by the 1960s.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1922, the same year as the Society's support of the Bauhaus exhibition, received from the Raj "under the head of education" a grant of Rs.

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[171] Ibid.

[172] Fabri, Charles, "Notes towards a biography of Amrita Sher-Gil" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary* No. 2, No publication date, Pg 27.

[173] Sanyal, B.C., "Contemporary Indian Art: A Survey" 1980, in Dhamija, R., ed., *Sixty Years of Writing on Arts & Crafts in India in Roopa-lekha 1928-1988,* New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1988, Pg 154.

19,880.[174] This caused condemnation and Surendranath Mallik blasted the Indian Society of Oriental Art painters. He critiqued the orientalist influence over the Society, and the Society's obsequiousness to the Raj's ruling classes ideas and tastes. He wrote:

> ...I am of the opinion that the manner in which the Society's pictures are painted...vitiate[s] the artistic taste of our people. The painters belonging to this society paint fingers bigger than hands and nails bigger than fingers and eyes half shut just like those of confirmed opium eaters—it is simply ridiculous...Because Sir John Woodroofe or other great men have said that these pictures are beautiful, they must be nice things! As soon as one sees these pictures one is astounded and asks: "What is this? Is this oriental art? Or is it any art at all?" I strongly object to this grant. Let them paint better pictures and not spread such ridiculous ideas like that about Oriental Art and then we would gladly pay.[175]

The Members of the Legislative Council did not agree with Mallik. The Rs. 19,880 helped in the promulgation and integration of Abanindranath's school around India.[176] But Mallik was not alone. Rai Jogendra Chunder Ghose Bahadhur blasted the Indian Society of Oriental Art. He exclaimed:

> I know in England, pictures and figures supposed to be Indian are purchased because of their ugliness. The ugliest pictures and figures are the most in request, the uglier the better. If the Society of Oriental Art exists for that purpose, I certainly think it to be a degradation.[177]

In contradiction to Bahadhur's position was F.A. Larmour, a founder and once Vice-Secretary of the Society. Larmour wanted the funding to continue. The acquisition of funds ensured the redevelopment of traditional forms, Larmour felt, from "Rajputana." The funding would allow artists to travel to the "magnificent temples of Saranath, Halabede, Puri and Bhubaneswar."[178] Larmour wrote that the Indian Society of Oriental Art's "present activities find expression only in pictures and bronzes...[and the Society] is quite open to the assistance of sympathetic Indians...[which help] extend...usefulness in other spheres."[179] 'Sympathetic Indians such as Gaganendranath and Rabindranath used the funds for the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta. By 1935-36 the Indian Society of Oriental Art had become, as O.C Gangoly with his Bengali bias remarked, "for several years upheld a level unattained by any other School of Art in India and has been deteriorating during the last few years, principally

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[174] " "Indian Art" " Notes Section, *The Modern Review*, September 1922, Pg 401.
[175] Ibid, Pg 402.
[176] Tagore, Abanindranath, "Priyadarshika, Or the Amiable Critic: Being discursive notes on the 13th Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta," *Rupam*, No. 10, April 1922, Pg 61.
[177] " "Indian Art" " Notes Section, *The Modern Review*, September 1922, Pg 403.
[178] Ibid, Pg 403.
[179] Ibid, Pg 403.

due to the fact that owing to decentralization some of the most talented artists are unable to send in their best specimens" to fine art societies.[180]

The artistic milieu was changing in India. It was time for exogenous discourses to be assimilated with the reconstructed Bengal School tradition. In 1923 an anonymous critic reviewing the 1922 Bauhaus Exhibition in Calcutta wrote, "...the Indians artist's attempt to study the old masterpieces of his country is generally regarded with disapproval and sometimes with suspicion."[181] The critic understood that a movement away from the romantic and oriental Bengal School tradition, and the resuscitation of old Indian forms are becoming antiquated, and consequently a movement into modern western forms would take place, causing a relativisation between both. The critic wrote:

> ...any emphasis laid on the lessons of old Indian Art is sometimes regarded as a boycott of European aesthetics, an ample dose of which it is believed by many is sure to bring aesthetic salvation to India. That the ideas of the West are destined to bring about a new renaissance in India, and in fact are sowing seeds for such a consummation, under our very eyes, will be readily admitted.[182]

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[180] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 19.

[181] The Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art," *Rupam*, No. 13-14, January-June, 1923, Pg 15.

[182] Ibid. Pg 15.

2.6. James Cousins and the "Future of Indian Art."

In 1924 James Cousins[183] (1873-1956), the Irish writer, poet and theosophist; curator, Travancore Art Gallery (c. 1937); and a friend of Gandhi, the Tagores and W.B. Yeats, gave a lecture entitled "The Future of Indian Art." He delivered the lecture to the Indian Society of Oriental Art and argued that Indian art should continue to develop from its extant endogenous position. Cousins called for a "mutual comprehension" reinvigorating Indian and world art, creating "[a] freshness of purpose and enthusiasm," that will help to "expand horizons and new worlds."[184] These approaches benefitted a particular range of Bengal School artists who had move to Shantiniketan such as Nandalal Bose and were in the process of transforming their discourses with realism. Cousins thought western realism had *exhausted* itself. Japanese sensibility too, "has exhausted things felt, and looks for new sensations in the adoption of Western methods."[185] Cousins felt, "Indian symbolism," in the form of the Bengal School, "...has exhausted things thought, and is seeking escape from scholasticism having direct recourse to the inner life in the peace of Shantiniketan."[186] Mutual comprehension that Cousins was promoting would result in a "direct external exchange" between the cultural-systems, whilst staying true to the endogenous spirit of each tradition. The 'exchange' would lead to disastrous affects for Indian art if it were to follow the Japanese model, which undertook "a westernization...as a...protective anti-toxic measure against the threat held a century ago of national obscuration, as the adoption of such civilized talismans as bowler hats and knives and forks,"[187] inevitably leading to the breakdown of the endogenous elements of their cultural-system if Japan proceeded "further along the path of westernization." Cousins found the Japanese tendency unacceptable for Indian art, and accepted endogenous modernism relativised with exogenous discourses over the complete overhaul of the endemic tradition [188]

The West had two artistic needs: "Beauty and Spirituality." Indian artists would give this duality to the West. Due to European industrialization, disenchantment, and the teleological certainty of modernity, the West needed spirituality within its art.[189] The Bengal

[183] For more on James Cousins see: Viswanathan, Guari, "Ireland, India, and the poetics of Internationalism," *Journal of Global History*, Vol, 15, No. 1 Mar., 2004, pp. 7-30.
[184] Cousins, James, "The Future of Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 44.
[185] Ibid, Pg 44.
[186] Ibid, Pg 44.
[187] Ibid, Pg 44.
[188] Ibid, Pg 46.
[189] Ibid, Pg 44.

School needed to open up their symbolism, creating "more natural symbolism capable of understanding by the general mind."[190] The Indian artist, operating from a "deeper centre" sought, Cousins observed, "a means of expression that will provide finer *rapport* between himself and his friends abroad."

Changing an artistic technique for external appreciation will, according to Cousins, "also lead to some modifications of method ... in satisfaction of the natural need of the creative artist for technical adventure..."[191] Cousins presaged Ram Kinkar Vaij and Jamini Roy by asking if "Indian artists" will "take to oil-painting."[192] Cousins thought the Japanese had failed in their attempts with oil painting. He thought the Indian artist "...may be able to handle oils without soiling his distinctively Indian hands."[193] Western oil painting was "a symbol of artistic speculation" whilst Oriental watercolours were "a symbol of reflection in art."[194] "These symbols" were "the temperamental choice of materials made by Western and Eastern art."[195] Cousins, citing *Work and Worship* (1922), described the chronological development of oil painting as the "various art-sects" progressing with the "classical, romantic, pre-Raphaelite, impressionist post-impressionist, futurist, cubist."[196] Cousins' art history was a chronology based on Enlightenment Reason that rationalized (Comtean positivism[197]) the painting on objective principles. Speaking from a theosophical humanist position, Cousins thought that the art historical breaks in the European tradition were constructed by a dualist subject-object dialectic[198] "...positive, aggressive, self-conscious stir of the concrete mind—of intellectualism, which is realism at the mental level."[199] The 'aggressive' 'self-conscious' stir of the concrete mind and 'realism at the mental level' came from a place antithetical to the transcendent and interiorized Hindu philosophical view of nature and reality (atma and paramatma) and its transformation in the mind of the artist. Indeed, realism at the 'mental level' was antithetical to Abanindranath's (previously discussed) art theoretical discourses, which served as a basic code for Bengal School and

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[190] Ibid, Pg 44.
[191] Ibid, Pg 45.
[192] Ibid, Pg 45.
[193] Ibid, Pg 45.
[194] Ibid, Pg 45.
[195] Ibid, Pg 45.
[196] Ibid, Pg 45.
[197] See Comte, August, *General View of Positivism*, 2nd Edition, Tráubner and co, 1865.
[198] Kojève, Alexandre, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Ed. Allan Bloom, Trans., James, H, Nicholas, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1980, Pg 3-7.
[199] Cousins, James, "The Future of Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 45.

Shantiniketan artists. The 'concrete' materialist rational reality was oppositional to the idealism that had imbued the nationalist art theoretical constructions of the Bengal School.

Cousins, following the Indian nationalist point of view of reality that was set up to combat the "cognitive enslavement"[200] of Indians by the British cultural-system, stated, "Realism in the mind and in art calls for clarity, for 'truth to nature'."[201] "...[W]hat the eye sees (as a realization in consciousness) is not always an exact reproduction of the image on the retina." The "like(s) and dislikes" of the European artist add "subtle colours to the inner picture." [202] The modernism of 1920s Europe which was at the "cult-stage" (because of the "adaptability of oil-colours to experiment[ation],") changed "the various European schools...in the latest psychological phases, whilst still looking forward through the eyes toward external objects, are as much concerned with painting *how* a thing is seen as painting the thing itself."[203]

The Indian artist had succeeded at the latter by returning to their traditional aesthetics and texts, which were not driven by, but understood in the light of enlightenment rationality, to possess an intrinsic spirit of idealism. The inherent drive and consequences of rational modernity made European artists adapt and use spirituality within their work. They transformed realism and moved away from rationally representing the world. The emphasis on interiorized vision embedded in the Indian art discourse influenced European effacement of reality.

Cousins understood traditional Indian art and its Bengal School revival as succeeding in the relativisation of western forms. Cousins saw the movement toward a new revival of Indian art. This would be "a revival and domestication of mural painting; and this, from its very nature will bring about a development of pure design."[204] The Bengal School was not an "Art for Art's sake" movement and neither an "Art for religion's sake."[205] Cousins stated that Andree Karpeles, and her appointment in Shantiniketan, would bring "more space and muscle into modern Indian painting,"[206] and help "Indian artists ... [adopt] the 'mantric' form of an

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[200] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's Integrity: the philosophy behind the politics," *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, 2002, pp. 79-93, Pg 81.
[201] Cousins, James, "The Future of Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 45.
[202] Ibid, Pg 45.
[203] Ibid, Pg 45.
[204] Ibid, Pg 47.
[205] Ibid, Pg 46.
[206] Ibid, Pg 47.

evocative art instead of wasting themselves in tedious epics."[207] This relativisation was based upon a western and Indian dichotomy that opened an "understanding of art" between cultural-systems and artistic spheres.

[207] Ibid, Pg 47.

2.7 Ganguly, Sarkar, and Kramrisch: The Debate of Exogenous modern European discourses and Endogenous relativisation by the Bengal School.

In the debate between the Indian adoption of European modernism and the Bengal School's traditionalism a serious division took place. An anonymous author in a 1921 issue of *Rupam* wrote:

> One of the criticism[s]...levelled at the modern school of Indian painting is that the artists of the new school seek no inspiration in modern Indian life." The Bengal School artists steer clear of depicting 'modern life[s]' "new costumes and gestures, in its new environments and settings, and its new occupations and aspirations."[208] ..."[These] artists of Bengal appear to be forever condemned to be painters of the mythological world—the world pictured in the "puranic" legends and myths and in the stories of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana." [It]...has pertinently pointed out that when the art of an epoch depends wholly on the inspiration of the past and "is not braced by the sense that it is creating an ideal for the future," it is doomed to be circumscribed and futile."[209]

The author's position was articulated by the polymath Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887-1949), who lived in Berlin and Paris in the 1920s.[210] Sarkar wanted Indian art to be opened up to European modernism.[211] Sarkar was an intellectual inter-cultural cosmopolitan specialist who came under the influence of European modernism whilst in Europe.[212] He was concerned with the "universality of artistic values and a common world-standard for all art."[213]

In the 1922 article "The Aesthetics of Young India" Sarkar wrote, "...people, including our greatest men, come back from Europe, with a changed point of view, which they cannot adjust to Indian conditions...Our ideas must live and grow on Indian conditions"

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[208] Author Unknown, "A New Contribution to Shaivate Art," No 5, January 1921, Pg 1.

[209] Ibid, Pg 1.

[210] Sarkar's academic and intellectual writings were published throughout *The Modern Review* and various leading international academic journals. Sarkar wrote 53 books in English, several published in America. His writings covered social science perspectives from economics to political philosophy, history, sociology, literature, demography, political science, and anthropology. See: Mukherjee, H. *Benoy Kumar Sarkar: A Study*. Shiksha-Tirtha Karyalaya, Calcutta, 1953. Also see Tankha, Brij, "Benoy Kumar Sarkar: The Asia of the Folk", 1916 pp. 211-216 in Sven Saaler and Christopher W.A. Spilzman ed., *Pan-Asianism a Documentary History, Volume 1: 1859-1920*, 1920-Present, Rowman and Littlefield, U.K, 2011.

[211] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 223.

[212] Between 1914-1925, Sarkar visited Egypt, England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Japan, China, Korea, Germany, Austria, and Italy and was based in universities and research institutes, with the most time spent in Germany and Italy.

[213] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 222. Also see Sarkar, B.N., "Art Criticism in Shakoontala" in *Hindu Art: Its humanism and Modernism: An Introductory Essay*, Huebsch, 1920.

but "...our education and outlook may be finished and enlarged by foreign travels and intimate contact with the living phases of a living civilization."[214] Orientalist definitions of India as a mystical and spiritual annoyed Sarkar. He defined India through historical analyses and compared India with Europe by demonstrating scientific, historical and material developments. By doing so, Sarkar allowed a different understanding of Indian society and modernity to that of other critics such as Max Mueller, Max Weber, and Aurobindo whose opinions by that time had already become institutionalized. Sarkar read these theories as myths, locating Indian underdevelopment within the paradigm of colonial hegemony and dominance.[215] Sarkar's article "Aesthetics of Young India" set off a debate between Sarkar and O.C. Ganguly.[216] Sarkar, as Mitter notes, dismissed the Bengal School as a "species of myth-making."[217] Sarkar aimed to rid Indian art criticism from orientalist nationalist discourse that had been influential from the period of *Swadeshi* nationalism and through Okakurian pan-Asian ideology, exemplified by Sister Nivedita and Aurobindo Ghosh. Sarkar disavowed underlying 'idealist' racial characteristics of one's culture. He found that the use of racial characteristics caused difficulties in assimilation and integration of exogenous discourses. Ganguly felt that an Indian artist had:

> ...no natural or organic relations to the traditions of British Art, however successful he may be in denationalizing or de-racializing himself. He has not sprung from the same soil of the same traditions or the current of the same culture from which have grown the great representatives of British art.[218]

Sarkar called for a relativisation in cultural-systems rather than maintain a uniquely Indian art, one that was civilizationally separated from European modernism. This civilizational separation was, for Sarkar, a repetitive orientalization, which kept art within, (when examining art as universalist relativist), a 'non-modern' paradigm. Sarkar wrote, "...the East is postulated always to have been and even in the future to remain different from the West." Sarkar, moving to literary modernism, observed "...that writers of novels, dramas and lyric poetry in modern Marathi, Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Tamil and other Indian languages are not likely to imbibe any inspiration or derive any creative suggestions from Whitman,

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[214] Sarkar, B.K., "The Aesthetics of Young India" in *Rupam*, January 1922, Pg 8-9.
[215] See Sarkar, B.K, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, Allahabad, Panini Office, 1919. New York, AMS Press, 1974. Sarkar was not a historical determinist and did not believe in a stagist view of history. Sarkar was a theorist of modernity and critiqued orientalist and indological thinking. He refused to acknowledge base (in a non-Marxist sense), differences within the civilization and geographical blocs of Asia and Europe. Also See Bandyopadhyay, B. *The Political Ideas of Benoy Kumar Sarkar*, K. P. Bagchi, Calcutta. 1984
[216] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 16.
[217] Ibid, Pg 16.
[218] Ganguly, O.C. "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder", *Rupam*, No. 9 January, 1922, Pg 25.

Browning, Sudermann, Ibsen, Dostoyevsky, and Hervieu...And yet what else is Indian literature of the last two generations, but the product of India's intimate acquaintance with and assimilation of Western literary models?"[219] Sarkar understood modernism as a universal paradigm for all cultures to relativize their cultural-systems from.[220] Sarkar appealed to an endogenous modernism that referenced outside exogenous discourses. Appealing for Indian art to be released from Communist, spiritualist, and orientalist writings and discourse, Sarkar wrote:

> ...virtually with no exception the field of art appreciation is being dominated in India by one and only one strand of thought. And this 'monistic' critique of aesthetic values which our archaeologists and essayists have chosen to advocate...is essentially none other than what Euro-American 'orientalists' and 'friends of the orient' have propagated in regard to the 'ideals' of Asian art and civilization...Pursuing the current logic of art appreciation, we should have to dictate that Indians must by all means avoid the contact of Lavoisier and his disciples, of Humboldt, Pasteur, Agassiz, Maxwell and Einstein, because in order to be true to Hindu 'heritage' it is necessary to boycott everything that has appeared in the world, since Leibnitz, Descartes and Newton! [221]

Sarkar was scathing about Orientalist nationalist discourse. He wrote:

> ...since the only mechanical engineering of which our great encyclopaedia, the *Brihat Samhita*, is aware is the dynamics of the bullock cart, no Indian, if he wishes to remain a loyal Indian, must pry into the mysteries of the printing press, wireless telegraphy, the Zeppelin, and long distance phones! [222]

Sarkar hammering his point wrote,

> the advocates of the current method in art-appreciation...consider our students of philosophy to be the best representatives of Indianness, and of the distinctive Hindu spirit.

Due to failure of the 'advocates of the current method in art-appreciation', Sarkar wrote, "...to produce anything superior to mere paraphrases, translations and commentaries of the ancient *Darshanas*." This failure led to the success "...in demonstrating that they were incapable of assimilating and extending the thought-world exhibited...from Bacon to James and Wundt."[223] Sarkar wrote that orientalist nationalists:

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[219] Ibid. Pg 10.
[220] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 16.
[221] Sarkar, B.K., "The Aesthetics of Young India" in *Rupam*, January 1922, Pg 9-10.
[222] Ibid, Pg 9-10.
[223] Ibid.

> fail to appreciate the achievement, ... of Vivekananda...of his Western leavening, this Carlyle of Young India...the dynamic possibilities of a philosophy undreamt of by Shankaracharya...The absurdity of the current methodology in the appraisal of life's values is patent on the surface."[224]

Sarkar lauded Rabindranath's 1920-21 tour of Europe stating, "...we realize the magnitude of the service this ambassador from INDIA has rendered in laying the foundations of a new *rapprochement* between the East and the West", resulting in the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition.[225] Rabindranath's position like Sarkar's was opening an endogenously based art discourse to modernist exogenous discourses.

Continuing the debate Ganguly with the pen-name 'Agastya,' the famous sage and the introducer of the Vedic tradition into southern India and reputedly the author of a *rig Vedic* hymn[226], argued in "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder" for the heterogeneity of "aesthetic" practice in India. India is, he wrote, "...divided in more than one aesthetic camps and its aesthetic ideas are not dominated by one strand of thought." Ganguly referenced the academic, naturalist and classical art discourses in relation and existence to Abanindranath's Bengal School. Ganguly stated that Sarkar's position was nonsense. The Bengal School did not cultivate, felt Ganguly, "aesthetic stagnation,"[227] and neither the aesthetics of autonomy. For Sarkar to rid Young India of this 'aesthetic stagnation' built through an "insularity of its nationalistic doctrines" it was only the "dynamics of Impressionists, Expressionists and Futurists of Europe [who] can deliver Young India" out of a narrow discursial revivalist Bengal School.[228] Sarkar, as Mitter writes, "made a passionate plea on behalf of the avant-garde 'aesthetics of autonomy,' comparing it with the nationalist demand for self rule or autonomy from the Raj."[229] Sarkar understood that the dominant position of Bengal School discourses would cause Indian art to be bypassed by world developments if left to traditional discourses, further detaching art from the praxis of life. Especially European avant-garde discourses that were collapsing the aesthetic autonomy of art by the aesthetic reintegration into the 'praxis of life' (the living cultural-system), which was a level removed from

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[224] Ibid.

[225] "Rabindranath Tagore's Tour in Europe" *The Modern Review*, September, 1921. Original emphasis, Pg 375.

[226] Agastya literally means the mover of mountains. Dallapiccola, Anna, L., *Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend*, Thames and Hudson, 2002. As Dallapiccola writes, "A famous sage, especially in southern India, where he is said to have introduced the Vedic tradition and to have been instrumental in the formation of the Tamil language and literature...Agastya is reputedly the author of a Rig Vedic hymn and appears frequently in Vedic mythology," Pg 21.

[227] Ganguly, O.C. "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder", *Rupam*, No. 9 January, 1922, Pg 24-5.

[228] Ibid, Pg 25.

[229] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 16.

bourgeois capitalist dominance that created aesthetic autonomy.[230] Sarkar's article was an avant-gardist manifesto operating as a discourse rupture in India.

Ganguly argued that the Bengal School had assimilated western discourses, which play "a very active part" in the Bengal School.[231] The "advocacy of the Indianness of Indian Art," he wrote, "is not the product of the boycott of European aesthetics."[232] Referencing friends, and his knowledge of western modernism's use of abstraction and primitive motifs, he observed: "Many of my young friends are occupied with the Rodenesquerie of Rodin." And that "many of my young representatives are busy, with the aesthetic valuations of the Italian Primitives in relation to the Râginîs of the earliest Pahari painter." Ganguly felt the Bengal School was searching for western correlations of their internalization of objective reality. For the Bengal School European modernism moved away from depictions of objective reality through the pictorial effacement and the integration of spiritual and primitive discourses in their art. Yet they thought the European artists arrived at the pictorial effacement of reality not by internal conscious transformation but through the modelling and study of external reality. Ganguly noted, "Some of my friends have a nodding acquaintance with Massaccio and probably some of them are at the present moment balancing El Greco with Cézzane, Holbein with Anupchatar, and Chinese grotesque sculptures with the daring creations of Boccioni and Brancusi."[233] Maurice Denis and Pierre Bonnard thrilled Ganguly and the Bengal School. Ganguly, making reference to the European discourse on primitivism in India, wrote "I am anxious to tell Monsieur Sarkar that I have a secret sympathy with the latest Parisian craze over Negro sculpture. I can recall the new 'rûpollâsa', which I experienced when they brought to me their Polynesian image when I first set foot on Java-dwîpa."[234]

Ganguly, taking a nationalistic position on the relativisation of Indian art, stated, "...from their own aesthetic history—by a recognition of the value, and an assimilation of the spirit, of their cultural heritage, not by despising them, or replacing them by foreign imports," could relativisation occur.[235] Presaging the movement into internationalism via nationalism, Ganguly wrote "the process from nationalism to internationalism is a slow and difficult one."

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[230] See Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
[231] Ganguly, O.C. "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder", *Rupam*, No. 9 January, 1922, Pg 25.
[232] Ibid, Pg 25.
[233] Ibid, Pg 25.
[234] Ibid, Pg 25.
[235] Ibid, Pg 25.

Ganguly recognized the endogenous cultural-system needed re-establishment, following the pedagogical approach of Havell and Abanindranath. He thought Sarkar's position absurd, writing, "...Futurist music must replace the products of 'Sangita-ratnakara' and the Cubists must overtake the Buddhist frescoists."[236] Ganguly wanted the endogenous cultural-system strengthened before a relativisation occurred.[237]

Stella Kramrisch joined the debate through her April 1922 article "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder." Kramrisch was in some sense a universalist who translated (relativised) discourses cross-culturally. She understood the Indian art historical tradition and that its modern trends possessed an inherent component of European modernism's formal structure.[238] In 1922 Kramrisch, during Gaganendranath's experiments with cubism (discussed in the next section), published an article entitled "An Indian Cubist." Making no mention of Gaganendranath in the article, Kramrisch theoretically and historically argued that cubism was not a 'new' form diffused to India from western modernism. [239] Rather having endemic roots within the Indian pictorial tradition she suggested that cubist pictorial arrangements were visible in Ajanta Cave paintings and Rajput and Mughal miniature painting.[240] Seeking to promote the translation between endogenous and exogenous discourses, she wrote:

> Cubism therefore has its mission in Indian art, if it becomes absorbed by it; for it does not mean anything else but the newly awakened [European] consciousness of spiritual reality which knocks at the door of Indian art, disguised in a strange form. In order to enter, it has to throw off the masque.[241]

Kramrisch asserted that Gaganendranath's relativisation of cubism was different from Gaganendranath's western counterparts because of cubisms endogenous place in the Indian pictorial tradition. Kramrisch understood Gaganendranath's cubism to be seen in the "undulating rhythms" and "inner rhythm" which was "important to the Indian artist," giving the "expression of inner experience."[242] Western cubism was a modern form concerned with

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[236] Ibid, Pg 25.

[237] Sarkar kept up his absolute refusal of Agastya's position and wrote another article Sarkar, B.N, "Social Philosophy in Aesthetics" *Rupam*, Nos. 15-16, July-December 1923, Pg 88-100.

[238] Kramrisch, Stella, "The Aesthetics of Young India: A Rejoinder", *Rupam*, No. 10, April 1922, Pg 66-67.

[239] Mason, Darielle, "Dwellers on the Threshold" in ed. Pratapaditya Pal, *Something Old, Something New: Rabindranath Tagore 150th Birth Anniversary Volume,* Marg, Vol. 62, No. 3, New Delhi, March 2011, Pg 168.

[240] Kramrisch, Stella, "Notes (An Indian Cubist)", *Rupam*, No. 11, July, 1922. Kramrisch makes the same argument in Pg 221-25 Kramrisch, Stella, "The Present Moment of Art, East and West", *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1923, Pg 107-109.

[241] Kramrisch, Stella, "Indian Art its Creative power," *The Modern Review*, August, 1922, Pg 154.

[242] Ibid, Pg 154.

the pictorial dismantling of "towers, mountains, factories and bridges" that primary shapes attached themselves to. To simplify these objective externalized forms cubism was deployed to efface and abstract realism, and objective reality by simplifying external phenomena with the use of primary shapes. These were, Kramrisch wrote, "static and crystal-like in their nature."[243] Unlike the Ajanta frescoes, which were cubist in background pictorial conception and fluid in movement. Mason writes:

> [Kramrisch] legitimizes one Indian artist's adaptation of a Western visual trope (Cubism) both by linking it into the overarching legitimization of Asia's arts as spiritual and by reasserting that India's historic relationships with non-indigenous forms are 'absorption' rather than 'influence'."[244]

For Kramrisch "cubism was a discovery of the west...but its root[s] lie in the East." She produced the Indian move into western modernist avant-gardist forms from the Indian endogenous position relative to their cultural-system. Kramrisch did not reinforce a hegemonic position of European modernism imposed upon the endogenous Indian construction of its cultural-system. She did this by arguing that Cubist elements were a necessary constituent of the background frescoes in Ajanta; Kramrisch linked the modern endogenous movements in India with their own cultural traditions that had relativized cubism as a culturally 'own' rather than an 'Other' art discourse. Kramrisch's assertion made sure that the endogenous movement would not be defined within the western art historiographical relation, but from its own endogenous vantage point. However, Kramrisch wanted a assimilation between civilizations not simply an 'adaptation.' She understood the universal language of cubism as "confirmed by western psychoanalysis" belonging "to the whole world and no expression of modern spiritual life can escape it." But in every "civilization it has its own trend,"[245] and signals assimilation between the Indian and western cultural-systems rather than the imposition of exogenous idioms over the endogenous cultural-system. The latter option meant another domination to the stronger European cultural-system.

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[243] Kramrisch, Stella, "Notes (An Indian Cubist)", *Rupam*, No. 11, July 1922, Pg 108.

[244] Mason, Darielle, "Dwellers on the Threshold" in ed. Pratapaditya Pal, *Something Old, Something New: Rabindranath Tagore 150th Birth Anniversary Volume*, Marg, Vol. 62, No. 3, New Delhi, March 2011, Pg 168.

[245] Kramrisch, Stella, "Notes (An Indian Cubist)", *Rupam*, No. 11, July 1922, Pg 109.

2.8. The 1922 Bauhaus Exhibition.

Gaganendranath Tagore *Untitled* (1923, Watercolour on paper, Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

The 1922 Exhibition of Bauhaus artists in Calcutta was the first time that a public exhibition of European avant-garde artists, German Expressionist, and the *Blaue Reiter* group (1911-1914) was held in India. This exhibition became a landmark event because it changed the way Indian artists thought about how to relativize their endogenous discourses with exogenous discourses. The exhibition also demonstrated to the artists, European artistic, philosophical, and cultural critiques of global modernity, which the Indian artists' realized had correspondences to their own critiques.

The Indian Society of Oriental Art had divided the exhibition into two sections, one for modern western artists, and the other for Indian artists from the Bengal School, [246] clearly indicating the dominance of the Bengal School.

The exhibition was a ruling class affair opened by the Governor of Bengal, Lord Ronaldshay, at the Samavaya Mansions on the 23rd December 1922.[247] The Indian section exhibited a "new generation of artists who [were] attempting to frame a form of expression from the Indian view of life."[248] According to a reviewer: "From the modern point of view—the models of the Greek School or Italian Schools of the Renaissance—or even of the Dutch Schools of the 18th Century are as out-of-date as the Schools of Kangra or of the Moghuls." But "a study of [their own masters] by modern western artists is not entirely banned—the Indian artist's attempt to study the old masterpieces of his country is generally regarded with disapproval..."[249] The reviewer understood both Sarkar's and Ganguly's positions, and found correlation for their arguments in the exhibition. The reviewer stated, "...any emphasis laid on the lessons of old Indian art is sometimes regarded as a boycott of European aesthetics." But European aesthetics, he added, will "bring aesthetic salvation to India." The "ideas of the west" will bring about a "new renaissance in India."[250] The "contribution of Indian thought" should not be devalued.[251] Gaganendranath Tagore's paintings "could not be traced to any models in the East or the West."[252] And there were several diverse Indian painters who brought "eclecticism" and "individualism" to the Bengal school of painting.[253]

However, to align Indian artistic modernism and the beginning of "the avant-garde" in India, as Partha Mitter does, to the 1922 exhibition, erases previous artistic positions and cancels the origination of the endogenous modernism, and the associated avant-garde in India.[254] Mitter states: "An ambitious exhibition of the works of Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and other Bauhaus artists held in Calcutta in 1922 *marks the beginning of the*

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[246] Abanindranath Tagore, "The Indian Society of Oriental Art: Its Early Days" in *Abanindranath Tagore, Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 96-105.
[247] "The Fourteenth Annual Exhibition" *Rupam*, No. 13-14, January-June, 1923, Pg 14.
[248] Ibid, Pg 14.
[249] Ibid, Pg 15.
[250] Ibid, Pg 15.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid, Pg 16.
[254] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism – India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922–1947*, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 10.

avant-garde art in India."[255] The exhibition was organised by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, at Rabindranath Tagore's suggestion to George Müche, when Rabindranath was in Germany in 1921.[256] The exhibition consisted of European avant-garde painters, and included 250 paintings, sketches, woodcuts[257], and watercolors by Paul Klee, Gerhard Marcks, George Müche, Lothar Schreyer, Johannes Itten, M. Try, Sofie Korner, Anne Estelle Rice, Henri Matisse, Segonzac, Auguste Herbin, Gino Severini, Bernard Adeney, C.R.W. Nevinson, Andree Karpeles, Lionel Feininger, Wyndham Lewis and Wassily Kandinsky.[258] Mitter does not define avant-gardism, and places a non-specific arbitrary selection, which one has to assume was the definition of the European avant-garde in India. Mitter's alignment still makes use of European conceptions of modernism without being totally internal to the Indian endogenous cultural-system, discounting previous diffusions of western avant-garde art within Jorasanko. Mitter does, however, label this set of Bengal School artists as an "Indian

[255] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007. Emphasis added, Pg 10.

[256] Ratan Parimoo makes note of a letter he received from the Bauhaus-Archive, Darmstadt, Germany:
"There was indeed an exhibition of the Bauhaus – in Calcutta in 1922 which was arranged following a suggestion of Rabindranath Tagore. This exhibition was sponsored by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The exhibition consisted of 19 drawings and 16 woodcuts by Lyonel Feininger, 23 drawings by Johannes Itten, 4 aquarelles by Wassily Kandinsky, 9 aquarelles by Paul Klee, 20 woodcuts by Gerhard Marcks, 9 etchings by Georg Much, 7 graphical works by Lothar Schreyer, 2 aquarelles by Sophie Korner and a few drawings and aquarelles by Margit Tery-Adler".
This list does not account for the other artists listed in the Indian Society of Oriental Art catalogue of the exhibition.
Parimoo, Ratan, The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindrnath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 169.

[257] The Bauhaus exhibition brought several woodcuts, lithographs and wood engravings to Calcutta. Exhibited works included: 16 woodcuts by Lionel Feininger were exhibited. These were, *Windmill*, *Church*, *Church*, *Marine*, *Marine*, *Village*, *Mellingen*, *Vollersroda*, *Ship*, *Cruising Ship*, *Gelmeroda*, *House in Paris*, *Marine*, *Battleship*, *The Gate*, *Railroad Bridge*. Johannes Itten exhibited two lithographs *Landscape in Tyrol* and *Flowers on the edge of the Forest*. Gerhard Marcks, at the time of the exhibition was a Master in the Sate College of Architecture, Weimar. Marcks exhibited only woodcuts totaling twenty-nine, which were; *In the Herd*, *The Miracle of St. Hubertus*, *The Easter Cake*, *Mother Cat*, *Woodcut* I, *Woodcut* II, *Woodcut* III, *Woodcut* IV, *Woodcut* V, *Woodcut* VI, *Woodcut* VII, *Woodcut* VIII, *The Bull*, *Above and Below*, *The Team*, *The Festive Evening*, *Winter at Dornburg*, *The Soul and the World*, *The Dead Elk*, *The Wood Cutter*, *The Mouse Chase*, *Labourers Working with Shovel*, *The Water Carrier*, *The Fisherman*, *The Young Pig*, *The Shepard*, *The Man with a Pipe in his Mouth*, *The Wife with Child* and *The Ploughman*. George Muche, like Gerhard Marcks, was also a Master in the State College of Architecture, Weimar. Muche did not exhibit any woodcuts but nine etchings, which were; *I think therefore I believe*, *I think therefore I believe* II, *I think therefore I believe* III, *I think therefore I believe* IV, *I think therefore I believe* V, *The Moon*, *The table*, *Small romantic form – alphabet*, and *Woodcut*. Andree Karpeles was in Shantiniketan from 1921-1923. She taught the medium of wood engraving. Karpeles was an *Associé du Salon le la Societé National des Beaux – Arts. Societaire du Salon d'automne Membre de la Societe des artistes Decorateurs.* Woodcutting was part of Shantiniketan pedagogy.

[258] These are all the European modern artists represented in the show. I list them fully here as the only publication where the names of only two artists, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, are mentioned is Partha Mitter's *The Triumph of Modernism – India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922 – 1947*, Reaktion Books, 2007.

avant-garde." Unfortunately Mitter does not define this category within the matrix of the Indian socio-political and economic conditions.[259]

Partha Mitter argues that there can be structural affinities between both European and Indian modernism, seen in the global use of primitivism. In art historiography the shared use of discourses disentangles the "parthenogenic self-image of the West, enabling it to gain a deeper understanding of its own self in relation to its significant others."[260] There are similar social and cultural processes taking place in a world driven by global forces (capitalism's universalizing tendency) that are "structural affinities" in a shared place of cosmopolitan imagination where cross-fertilization of ideas takes place through a "virtual cosmopolis",[261] and allows non-Euramerican modernisms entry into the global discourse of art history. The stifling "Eurocentrism" of art historiography had left the non-Euramerican modernisms out of the "closed discourse" of Euramerican modernism.[262] Mitter challenges the Eurocentrism of art discourse. Mitter's 'structural affinities' between Indian and European modernism is a historiographical method that de-centers the clichéd 'grand narratives' of European modernity/modernism. Or, by de-centering European modernism and its 'master narratives' it claims a space for the peripheral modernisms that were interlinked with the master narrative (as seen by the master narratives).[263]

In contrast to Mitter this study seeks to explain Indian modernism as an endogenous structural causality that uses exogenous discourses for its development. Rather than isolating, isomorphisms, homologies or 'structural affinities' between Indian and European modernism in order to de-center the art historiographical hegemony of European modernism, this study examines the structural causes and historical processes (i.e., India's colonial modernity as a 'dominance without hegemony,' and European modernity as a bourgeois hegemony), that led to homologous structural similarities in global modernity. The underlying structural affinities are *caused* by capitalism's universalizing tendency, which aided the creation of hierarchical

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[259] Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol, 90 No. 4, December 2008, pp. 531-48, Pg 540.
[260] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 13.
[261] Ibid, Pg 11.
[262] Clark, John, "Open and Closed Discourses of Modernity in Asian Art," in *Modernity in Asian Art* Sydney: Wild Peony Press, 1993, Pg 1-17. See Footnote 79, Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol, 90 No. 4, December 2008, pp. 531-48, Pg 547. See: Mathur, Saloni, "Response: Belonging to Modernism," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol 90, No. 4, December 2008, pp, 558-560, Pg 558.
[263] See Lyotard, Jean-Fraçois, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984. See: Geertz, Clifford, "After the Revolution: The Fate of Nationalism in the New States" *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Fontana Press, 1993, Pg 234-245.

bourgeois hegemony in Europe (and associated reactive philosophical and aesthetic critiques of the bourgeois order) and a 'colonial capitalist dominance without bourgeois hegemony in India' (and associated nationalist cultural reactions against colonial hegemony and global modernity). Such a relationship created isomorphisms and homologous structural similarities/affinities between both modernisms, in which there was transcendence from capitalist materialism and rationality; all that bourgeois modernity ordered over both cultural-systems, causing an artistic and philosophical recourse to the spiritual, the inward—an interiorized escape from nature and realism toward an abstraction of objective representation. Indeed, at a meta-level the historical and cultural processes (artistic interventions) that cause 'structural affinities' act as a cultural critique of bourgeois modernity. This study probes how affinities were created, arguing that these are caused by the mechanism of relativisation (translation) of both endogenous and exogenous discourses under the power relationships of global modernity.

Structural affinities also occur within global modernity due to shared exogenous discourses entering endogenous life-world conditions that are altered by nationalist cosmopolitans—the nationalist bourgeoisie at the ideological-definitional forefront of their society (discussed in Part 5). At a shallow level, this is labelled the connection between the local and the global.

Mitter's structural affinities should also be seen within nations, and their forms.[264] The nation-form is bound up with the world-capitalist market(s).[265] The Indian periphery had been economically subjugated, and was thus subordinate in the world-economy to mercantile capitalist Britain,[266] making the narrative of colonialism construct two way life-world flows between the center and periphery[267] and, as Balibar points out, played a "decisive role" in

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[264] Balibar, Etienne, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Balibar E. and Wallerstein, I., London: Verso, 1991, Pg 86-106.

[265] This is a position analogous to Etienne Balibar. He sees 'the constitution of nations as being bound up not with the abstraction of the capitalist market, but with its concrete historical form: that of a 'world-economy' which is always already hierarchically organized into a 'core' and a 'periphery', each of which have different methods of accumulation and exploitation of labour power, and between which relations of unequal exchange and domination are established." Pg 89, Ibid. See Braudel, Fernand, *Civilization and Capitalism, vol. 2, The Wheels of Commerce* transl. Siân Reynolds, Collins, London, 1982, and *vol. 3, The Perspective of the World*, transl. Siân Reynolds, Collins, London 1984; Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Modern World System, vol. 1, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Academic Press, London 1974, and *vol. 2, Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy*, Academic Press, London 1980.

[266] See Kapur, Geeta, "The Center-Periphery Model or How are we Placed? – Contemporary Cultural Practice in India", *Third Text* 16/17 Autumn/Winter, 1991.

[267] Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Empire*, Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2000, Pg 124.

"the early forms of imperialism...In a sense, every modern nation is a product of colonization: it has always been to some degree colonized or colonizing, and sometimes both at the same time."[268] The two-way transactions allow for the interchange of discourses, or 'structural affinities', and from the viewpoint of this study, the exogenous affects an internal structurally caused endogenous modernism, which in turn affects exogenous thought creating a symbiotic structure. If affinity is to be regarded as a mechanism, the mechanism that causes affinity is the interplay in the translation/relativisation between endogenous and exogenous systems of thought.

This study agrees with Mitter's goal of de-centering modernism.[269] The study understands India in relation to its own cultural-system and historical socio-political conditions (internal power dynamics—and structural causalities), relates it to the larger power structure of global modernity, and shows the processes that lead to the intertwining of the endogenous and the exogenous from the viewpoint of both the participants.

The modern section of the exhibition was devoted to the European artists who were exponents of "pure art values" and the "art of tomorrow."[270] The western artists came "from all over Europe" and met in "Weimar."[271] Rabindranath's Shantiniketan was filled with artists from all over India. The spread of the Bengal School's neo-traditional discourses across India was another reason why Rabindranath wanted the exhibition in India. He wanted these artists to grow from tradition. Rabindranath's agenda was to demonstrate to Indian artists, in Shantiniketan and throughout India, how the "leading western" artists, despite "their variety of form," worked together to "realize the eternal truth of all art and to visualize it."[272] Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee became pedagogical for the Indian artists. Kandinsky "avoided all allusions to literature and nature and so made himself free to infuse

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For a critique of globalization theorists such as Negri and Hardt see: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press Second Edition, 2007, Pg xvii.

[268] Balibar, Etienne, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Balibar E. and Wallerstein, I., London: Verso, 1991, Pg 89.

[269] See Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol, 90 No. 4, December 2008, pp. 531-48

[270] The Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art," *Rupam*, No. 13-14, January-June, 1923, Pg 18.

[271] Ibid, Pg 18.

[272] Ibid, Pg 18.

his inner experience into mere lines and mere colours..."[273] Kramrisch wrote: "The Indian public should study this exhibition, for then they may learn that European art does not mean naturalism and that the transformation of the forms of nature in the work of an artist is common to ancient and modern India."[274]

The 1922 Bauhaus exhibition marked, "...the functioning of the avant-garde as a transcultural group in communicating among themselves, as well as to the art cultures in which they were locally placed."[275] The exhibition demonstrated to the artists from Abanindranath's school (in Shantiniketan and elsewhere), how a heterogeneous cluster of European artists came together searching to transcend bourgeois modernity and objective rationalism for a spiritual ideal in art. The exhibition was pedagogical, demonstrating modernist discourse based on a transcendental idealistic spiritualism. As Gino Severini, writing in 1913, stated:

> So now exterior reality and our knowledge of it no longer have any influence on our plastic expression, and with regard to the action of the memory on our sensitivity, only the memory of the emotion remains and not that of the cause that produced it.[276]

Clearly Abanindranath's art theory, although arrived through the Bengal nationalist avant-garde's reaction to modernity, held similarities with the historical avant-gardes, such as Marinetti's Futurist manifesto (1909). Severini wrote: "Memory...will act in the world of art as an *element of artistic intensification*, as a true emotive source independent of any unity or place, and as a sole *raison d'etre* of an artistic creation."[277]

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[273] Ibid.

[274] Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 168.

[274] See The Englishman, December 15th, 1922.
Quoted in Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindrnath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973.

[275] Clark, John, *Modern Asian Art*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1998, Pg 225.

[276] Severini, Gino, "The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism—futurist Manifesto 1913", *Futurist Manifestos*, Ed, Umbro Apollonio, Trans. Robert Brain, R.W. Flint, J.C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall, Tate Publishing, London, 2009, Pg 121.

[277] Severini, Gino, "The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism—futurist Manifesto 1913", *Futurist Manifestos*, Ed, Umbro Apollonio, Trans. Robert Brain, R.W. Flint, J.C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall, Tate Publishing, London, 2009, Pg 121.
Following Rosalind Krauss the Euramerican avant-garde relied heavily on "sedimentation". Simply put, the avant-garde's mythic "originality" required a process of museumization, so that "newness" became a function of the past in the archive of the museum. The museum would record and sediment each cultural deposit, sacralzing it in a past, which could not touch the future. Consequently allowing the avant-garde to have a mythic originality. See Krauss. E. Rosalind *"The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths"* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England. 1986.

Mitter writes that both western and Indian artists were "making a common front against academic art."[278] Mitter's statement needs to be re-addressed and understood in light of the fact that the Tagore's Jorasanko household had many books on the European modern. Moreover, the Tagore family, the Bengal School, the Indian Society of Oriental Art, and Club Bichitra interlocutors knew that European art did not mean artistic naturalism. Their holding onto their knowledge of European modernist discourses and using them for the restoration of Indian art typifies an ideological community who as keepers of knowledge used it for their purposes—an avant-garde function. This group relativized exogenous discourses as needed, when it suited their purpose. Harold Rosenberg observed:

> ...the avant-gardist has an idea of the present as a means of transition to the future; instead of communing with the present as the container of the past and the possible, he seeks to use it to fulfil the commands of his system. The rhythm of the avant-garde is the *forward drive...*[279]

European and Indian artists were separately combating the rationality imposed by modernity (as subjects under its rule). This had a different reaction in each cultural-system. Each system had its own critique of modernity, which, in reaction to the materialism of modern life, found a cultural embodiment in the effacement of art discourses of naturalism, realism, and academy art.[280] They moved away, independently, and for their own reasons. They moved away due to the structural causalities in their cultural-systems.

The institutions that had co-opted the Bengal School organized the Bauhaus exhibition.[281] There was no alignment with the group of academy artists such as Atul Bose

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[278] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 17.

[279] Rosenberg, Harold, "Collective, Ideological, Combative" in Ed., Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbury, *The Avant-garde, Arts News Annual XXXIV*, MacMillian, New York, 1968. Emphasis Added, Pg 76.

[280] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 33-5.

[281] I list all the exhibiting Indian artists as they have never been listed completely. The Indian artists who exhibited at the Bauhaus exhibition were:

Gagenendranath Tagore, Roop-Krishna, Kshitindranath Majumdar, Bireswar Sen, Nabendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar, Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Devi Prasad Roychowdhury, Protima Devi, Sailendranath Dey, Surendranath Kar, Sudhansu Chowdhury, Durga S. Bhattacharya, Kalipodo Ghosal, Brathindranath Tagore, Alokendranath Tagore, Abdul Rahman Chugtai, Ardhendu P. Banerjee, Dhirendra K. Deva Varman, Moni Bhusan Gupta, S.N. Banerjee, Vinayak Masoji, Ramaendranath Chakravarty, Manindra Ch. Das Gupta, Bishnu P. Roychoudhury, Gouri Devi, Durgesh Ch. Singha, Ananda K. Mazumdar, Benode Bihari Mukherjee, Uma Prasad Mukherjee, Basanti Devi, Kiran Bala Devi, Krishna K. Ghosh, Shanta Devi, Sunayani Devi, Boroda P. Lala, Promode K. Chatterjee, Rishikesh Banerjee, K. Anandamohan, Arya Dass, Sankar Ramanathan, Madhusudan Sarkar, Romesh Chandra Basu Mazumdar, Aswini K. Roy, 3 Anonymous Students, Siddharta Mahapatra, Charu Chandra Roy, Bepin Chandra Dey, Pashupati N. Banerjee, Siddheswar Mitra, Surendranath Kar, Ranada Chandra Ukil, Shivendranath Banerjee, Rani Nirupama Devi, Pulin B. Dutta,

and Hemdranath Majumdar; no academic painter was exhibited. The vanguard move by Gaganendranath and Rabindranath Tagore to exhibit European avant-garde discourses helped to create another discursive position in the autonomy of art established by Abanindranath's Bengal School. The de-stabilizing of the Bengal School through this exhibition was due to the co-option of European discourses in Shantiniketan.

What were Rabindranath's motives to publicly diffuse European modernism in India? Did Rabindranath believe Indian artists from the Bengal School and Shantiniketan would freely adapt these discourses? These artists were already using interiorized discourses endemic to their own cultural system. The geometric spatial layout of Paul Klee had similarities to indigenous Indian abstraction such as Tantric painting, which used two-dimensions to express ideal non-objective reality. Much later in the 1990s this connection was again harnessed this time by Jagdish Swaminathan to connect—in the form of a transcendental mantra—Indian and European aesthetics.[282] Rabindranath and the Shantiniketan artists saw in the Bauhaus exhibition how a closed discourse opened itself up and became relativized, and created an endogenous modernism. Rabindranath understood the Bauhaus artists, and associated artists like Wassily Kandinsky (who taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar from 1922 until the Nazis closed it in 1933), to be functioning as he hoped Club Bichitra would. Rabindranath wanted to demonstrate to Indian artists that western art did not mean purely academic formalist art but also had spiritual and transcendental elements, which had resemblances with the work of Indian artists. The similarity appealed greatly to Rabindranath. He wanted modernism to take on its own modalities and functions in creating a modernism that Indian artists would relativize and add to, and enhance a global universal modernism. He sought to combine what the Europeans and Japanese were able to do and what the Indian village had done, rather than adopt what Abanindranath's pupil Samarendranath Gupta (writing in 1923) called a "wilful imitation" of "European Art" that would be "fatal to Indian Art."[283]

The exhibition showed Rabindranath and others how European artists operated out of their own country's cultural systems. The Bauhaus group had similarities to Indian art. They transcended the representation of external reality configured as realism and naturalism. The

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Chanchal Banerjea, S.K. Dhar, M.C. Mandal, and Chitra Birbhadra Rao.See: Exhibition Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Samavaya Mansions, December 1922.

[282] Swaminathan, Jagdish, "The Cube and The Rectangle" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*., No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 21.

[283] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Indian Painting," *Rupam*, 1922, Pg 22.

abstracted transcendental forms were in opposition to the previous rationalist forms. The new forms developed due to the overarching milieu of urban transformation and decay, bourgeois decadence and hegemony, something the *Blaue Reiter* artists and the historical avant-gardes critiqued. The *Blaue Reiter* artists, such as Klee, Kandinsky and Franz Marc were influenced by the Bavarian countryside as well as by folk art (in opposition to urban motifs depicted by an artist such as Ludwig Kirchner). The *Blaue Reiter* artists sought freedom from modernity's imposition of rationalism, finding solace in spiritualism. In the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, Kandinsky and Marc declared that art moved towards a new renaissance by infusing it with spirituality that would create a "great spiritual epoch."[284] These abstract painters, Mitter writes, "were not unaware of the dubious aspects of Theosophy, but for them it served as a useful entry point for Indian thought." He continues, "Their response to these non-Western ideas was not a simple one of influence but rather a complex dialectical process that reconfigured these new ideas in the light of their creative needs and cultural experience,"[285] which was the cognitive processes of the Bengal school artists.

Rabindranath saw that the western artists represented a reality distinctly different from objective rationalist reality by moving into non-objective and abstracted art. He knew that this non-objective art had direct similarities with Abanindranath's art theory. Rabindranath showed Indian audiences how European nations and their artists produced culture linked with their habitus, environment, and First World War grief. He also showed their philosophical indebtedness to Indian (theological) philosophy, through the works of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. In contrast Paul Klee was suspicious of Theosophy and Anthroposophy whilst dismissive of Rabindranath's writings stating they were "not very heavy reading."[286] Rabindranath demonstrated how Indian philosophical discourses on the nature of being, and a non-materialistic philosophical outlook, had broken through aesthetic cultural boundaries in the formation of a German expressionism.

The Bauhaus artists, and the historical avant-gardes critiqued the nature of an exchange-based 'disenchanted' capitalist society, where god, and conceptions of self, had left the public sphere in a Nietzschean sense, leaving itself void and open to urban schizoid

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[284] Kandinsky, Wassily and Marc, Franz Eds, *The 'Blaue Reiter' Almanac*, Ed., Klaus Lankheit, Thames and Hudson, London 1974 (1965), Pg 154.
[285] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 35.
[286] DeLamater, Peg, "Some Indian Sources in the Art of Paul Klee," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 66, No. 4, Dec, 1984, pp. 657-72, Pg 657.

civilization—a 'will to power', where religious belief was replaced by secular ideology.[287] Rabindranath's writings shared how there was a universal connection between the spirit of the human that was embedded in culture, and spirituality. These had developed in European modernism by using philosophical traditions from the Orient, whilst staying largely orientalist and perceiving the Orient as Other.

The exhibition was pedagogical at a technical level demonstrating that the Abanindranathian School could relativize these discourses with their existing endogenous theories. It demonstrated that there were shared life-world cultural-critical-habits between European modernism and Abanindranath's school, with European modernism having distinct technical, theosophical and philosophical parallels to Indian modernism. For instance, the exhibition demonstrated, and critiqued, global modernity and capitalism due to its imposition of virulent rationality. The artists reacted to it by a return to inward, spiritual, and irrational notions of existence, and by using tribal, primitive, and folk cultures conjoined with the discourses of high capitalist bourgeois culture. In India, the anti-colonial nationalist assertion was that outward objective rationalist reality was a material reality imposed upon them by colonial capitalism, based on a distinctly 'rational relationship to the outside world.' A movement away from the imposed colonial modernity meant moving into a spiritual area that circumvented imposed bourgeois modernity. Spiritualism was an area innate to India, it defined its cultural system, it had contributed to European idealism, and it was an area that the imposed modernity could not reach with ease. The use of spiritualism, that was deep within the cultural system, was a way of defining an irrefutably Indian art.

The global modern move into the discourses of the primitive and folk involved a cultural critique of modernity, and an aesthetic critique of the ordered rationalist existence in Europe. The folk and primitive forms of the villagers and peasantry were outside the cosmopolitan hegemony of the city dwelling metropolitan bourgeoisie. Folk and tribal discourses, however, were not exempt from direct capitalist dominance, and cultural appropriation by the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the colonialized, Indian in this case, had to move away from two forms of dominance: a bourgeois capitalist colonial dominance and an imposed cultural system. Indian modernism moved into spaces that could be culturally utilised, and mobilised, as different then the forms within the imposing bourgeois cultural-system. Therefore the folk, tribal and primitive discourses were culturally reclaimed by the

[287] Johnson, P, *Modern Times*, New York: Harper & Row, 1983, Pg 48.

Indian bourgeois nationalists, and subsequently by the left leaning and Communist-Socialist progressives for social-realism, (because they were available endemic discourses that could be used for nationalistic reconstruction of the endogenous cultural-system). And in Indian modernism created an endogenous discourse on primitivism (expanded in Part 3 and 5). The transcendence from modernity was seen in western artists represented at the exhibition. Wassily Kandinsky was influenced by transcendental spiritualism that was an inner necessity to the artist, and helped in breaking formalist boundaries in European art.[288] Indian artists felt an "instinctive kinship" with Kandinsky and western artists seeking an alternative to "Western materialist rationalism."[289]

In the exhibition catalogue Stella Kramrisch wrote that Kandinsky heralded "the spiritual in art."[290] Johannes Itten's works exposed the "very essence of appearance," and Itten's method "is scientific and serves to express his insight into the rhythm of all visible things, as well as of his own soul." Itten's work "had religion."[291] The constructivist Lionel Feininger used "cubism...[as] a geometrized creed."[292] Kramrisch said that the exhibition, "...does not mean [academic] naturalism[293]; the "transformation of the forms of nature in the work of an artist is common to ancient and modern India and Europe as an unconscious and therefore inevitable expression of the life of soul and of artistic genius."[294] Globally, due to imperial expansion and industrial capitalism there was a move away from realism and naturalism, and even impressionism. Philosophically, Marx inversed Hegel's dialectic, suggesting that "naturalism" and "humanism" were the "unifying truth" between "idealism" and "materialism."[295] The aesthetic category of naturalism, and mimetic realism, sought to inculcate good taste[296] into India through the Government art schools.[297] Naturalism was an

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[288] See Kandinsky, Wassily, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1977.
[289] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 35.
[290] Exhibition Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Samavaya Mansions, December 1922, Pg 21.
[291] Ibid, Pg 22.
[292] Ibid, Pg 22.
[293] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 17.
[294] Exhibition Catalogue of the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Samavaya Mansions, December 1922, Pg 22.
[295] Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974, Pg 135.
[296] On art schools in India See: Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922, Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. See Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. See: Pinney, Christopher, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, Reaktion Books, London, 2004, Pg 19.

aesthetic extension of imperial power's scientific materialism. In philosophical terms naturalism and humanism were materialistically (Marx's inversion of Hegel) "capable of comprehending the action of World-History."[298] Hegelian World-History had arrived in India "as an instrument of the East India Company's colonial project and helped it to set up the Raj."[299] The colonial state had configured naturalism in painting and was the material reflection of science, development of rationality, and the world economy. In India the East India Company used academic naturalism amongst other discourses. They also commissioned Indian painters for Company painting, as well as in picturesque modes. However, the company made the "scientific scrutiny of nature...a sacred act."[300] Philosophically naturalism was related to the materialist, and Darwinian conception of human mind (or following Marx, the "material" and "structural" abstractions of consciousness and the human[301]). Aesthetically, seeking the spiritual was, for an artist such as Kazimir Malevich (artistically re-working Lenin's dialectics[302]), the representation of the "dialectical method" of the materialization of a feeling in the conscious mind.[303] Klee, who was indebted to the Indian artistic and philosophical traditions[304], thought art was the "communication with nature." He thought of "line as absolute spirituality."[305] And found that the aesthetic creation of it rested on spiritual principles. He wrote: "all true creation [was] born out of nothing."[306]

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[297] Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol, 90 No. 4, December 2008, pp. 531-48, Pg 532.

[298] Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974, Pg 135. See: Balibar, Etienne, *The Philosophy of Marx*, translated Chris Turner Verso, London and New York, 2007, Pg 65-66.

[299] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 51, 49-61.

[300] Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922, Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg 32.

[301] See Marx, Karl, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974. See: Balibar, Etienne, "Althusser's Object," *Social Text*, No. 39 (Summer, 1994), pp. 157-188, Pg 164.See: Darwin, Charles, *The Origins of Species*, E.P. Dutton, Dent: London; New York, 1972.

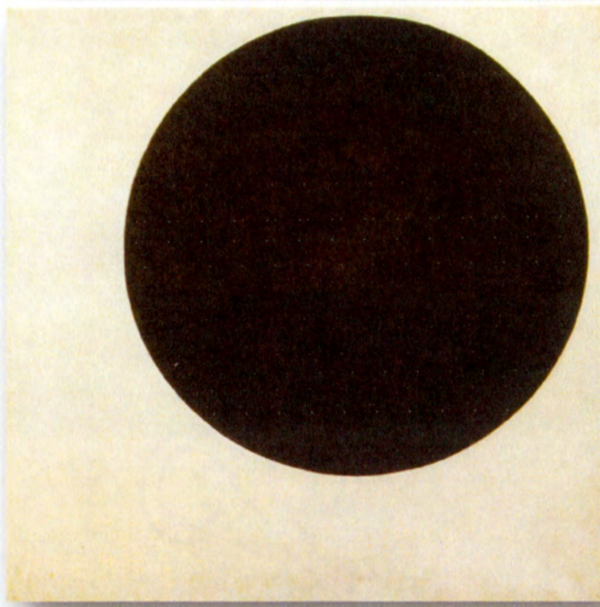
[302] See Lenin, Vladimir, *The State and Revolution* (1918) in Lenin, Vladimir, *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970, 25:381-49.

[303] Malevich, Kasmir, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, Theobald, Chicago, 1959, Pg 67.

[304] See DeLamater, Peg, "Some Indian Sources in the Art of Paul Klee," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 66 No. 4, 1984, pp. 657-72.

[305] Klee, Paul, *The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918*, Ed., Felix Klee, University of California Press, Berkeley, London, 1968, Pg 278.

[306] Klee, Paul, *Pedagogical Sketch Book*, Trans, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Praeger Publishers, New York and London, 1960, Pg 7-8.



Kazimir Malevich *Black Circle* (1913-15, and 1923, Oil on Canvas, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia)

Paul Klee *Architecture at the Window* (1919, Oil on Paper)

Paul Klee *Florentine Villas* (1926, oil on cardboard)

The European and Indian artists critiqued the movement of modernity. Both were culturally critiquing the power relationships (within their cultural-systems) of modernity by using spirituality as a cultural and philosophical paradigm to escape the pressures of modernism and mimetic representation, which was attributed to the bourgeois order and state power. Both areas feared the way modernity will move, and the repercussions it will have on their life-worlds. Zizek paraphrases this well:

> …with modernity, the life-world loses its immediacy—Heidegger was well aware of this, which is why he perceived European modernity as harbouring the "danger" of a "worldless" universe, as a threat to authentic life-worlds."[307]

[307] Zizek, Slavoj, *Living in the End of Times*, Verso, London, 2010, Pg 285.

2.9 The Effect of the Bauhaus Exhibition.

The exhibition was pivotal to Indian art. It provided the ability of 'new' European idioms and created discourse relativisation and flexibility in discursial positions. The integration became visible in the futurist-cubist art of Gaganendranath Tagore. Gaganendranath integrated the Japanese wash technique with an Indian miniature style and combined them with a cubist layout rendering the image into an abstracted cubist and futurist space.

Prior to the exhibition, Gaganendranath was indebted to Jyotirindranath Tagore who stayed clear of the Bengal School discourse. At first, Gaganendranath painted formalist watercolour wash and tempera on paper of cityscapes and nature. Examples are *Bridge* and *Riverview*.

Gaganendranath Tagore, *Bridge* (Wash and Tempera on Paper, No Date, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Gaganendranath Tagore, *Riverview* (Watercolour wash and tempera on paper, No Date, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Gaganendranath's post-Bauhaus-exhibition paintings were a relativisation of Picasso, Kandinsky and Wyndham Lewis. Gaganendranath's synthesis of Indian, Japanese and European discourses operate as modernist art on a European scale. But it also speaks of a type of Mughal painting, which, like Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism, breaks the picture plane so that several differently represented areas instead of just one focused perspectival area. Gaganendranath's work should be seen as an endogenous form of modernism that assimilated and fused western techniques and discourses.[308] Mitter correctly argues for a cultural relativism and deployment of syntax such as Cubism in the redefinition of certain miniature paintings using the wash technique in the creation of a different type of 'modern' Indian miniature (seen in Gaganendranath Tagore). Mitter demonstrates cubism was a relativised discourse in India, like primitivism was for Picasso. Cubism did not have a major hold over Indian artists due to the movement into discourses relating to endogenous primitivism.[309] Mitter notes "Though radical in its formal innovations, early Cubism was less radical politically than, say, certain expressions of non-objective art."[310] He writes, "Cubism

[308] Mitra, Asok, "Gaganendranath Tagore" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 2, No publication date, Pg 8.
[309] See Mitter, Partha, "Interventions: decentering Modernism: art history and avant-garde art from the periphery," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 90, Iss. 4; pg. 531
[310] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 12.

proved to be "merely a passing phase in India," superseded by the development of primitivism in India.[311] Cubism was superseded in India because of the endogenous cultural-system's reflection to nationalism, and the use of Gandhi's ideology for nationalism in the image of the people, and Rabindranath's call for universal modernism. Indian modernism reverted to its endogenous terms whilst understanding global art movements and power relationships. Mitter does not consider the influence of German Expressionism (from 1922 onward) on the Communist artists and the Calcutta Group artists, who were not aligned with Havell, Abanindranath Tagore and the Shantiniketan School. But Mitter is right in demonstrating that, apart from the relativisation of cubism by Gaganendranath, other artists preferred to explore primitive and folk styles within the discourse of the nation.

Gaganendranath Tagore was involved in artistic activities at Club Bichitra and Jorasanko, especially with the Japanese artists Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunsô (in Calcutta in 1903), and subsequently Arai Kanpô and Katayama Nanpû, who started teaching at Club Bichitra in 1916. This allowed for Gaganendranath's integration of pan-Asian aesthetic discourses. Gaganendranath also maintained his honorary secretary status at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Another exhibiting artist Bireswar Sen painted watercolour landscapes in an integrated realist discourse following Abanindranath's school. Sen broke the boundaries of the Bengal School but remained embedded within the project of resuscitating tradition before adapting to European modernism.

On Saturday the 19th December 1925 the paper *The Englishman* stated: "Trained by Japanese impressionism as well as by Western cubism, he [Gaganendranath Tagore] utilizes these two modes of sophisticated abstraction in a purely personal way..."[312] To link acceptance of what a foreign writer notes about what is modern within an endogenous discourse discounts how modernism can be self-perceived. Gaganendranath himself commented that he integrated, synthesized and relativized art discourses, cubism, Japanese, and Indian, to arrive at what he wanted:

> [These discourses] have "enabled me to discover new paths and I am now expressing them better with my new technique developed out of my experiment in cubism than I

[311] Ibid, Pg 27.
[312] *The Englishman*, Saturday, December 19th 1925. See: Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindrnath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 160.

used to do with my old methods. The new method is really wonderful as a stimulant.[313]

A complete endogenous marriage of exogenous discourses through the work of Gaganendranath did not take place. The cubist discourse was a 'stimulant' that could be deployed to further a geometrical layout within Gaganendranath's paintings. As Nirad C. Chaudhuri wrote "...cubism was no more than surface deep. It was not a marriage. It was not even a dubious liaison. It was simply a snare and a delusion of the art critic who was out to class and label him."[314] Gaganendranath's paintings were exhibited in Berlin and Hamburg in 1923, where his modernist outlook was praised. A group of 65 Indian paintings was sent by O.C. Gangoly to America in 1927, where the exhibition was circulated through 68 cities and three of Gaganendranath's pictures were included. Then in the 1934 Indian Society's Exhibition of Modern Art, at the New Burlington Galleries in London, Gaganendranath's paintings in the words of the *The Times* critic "excited the greatest interest."[315] This spoke of the attitudes of western modernist trends such as cubism rather than the endogenous experiments in Abanindranath's Bengal School. Gaganendranath can be seen to be a modern exemplar of an endogenous modernist Indian art.

In a later article—"Painting in Bengal—The art of Gaganendranath Tagore"—published by *Welfare* (Magazine) on September 24th, 1928, an anonymous reviewer stated:

> [Gaganendranath] has been affiliated with the school of painting founded by Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, on the one hand, and the cubist schools of Europe on the other. The emphasis laid by the critics on these two accidental features of his work has put the public on a false scent. It has hidden from view the essential fact that Mr. Tagore is another example of a great artist...who adopts any artistic conversion that happens to be in fashion in his eyes, yet always contrives to rise above it. No-one perhaps, would have dreamt of including him in the modern Bengali school had he not been the brother of its founder, and his manipulation of the cubist formula will, I am sure be more than resented by the puritan of that very doctrinaire school. Every thoughtful observer of his work in the exhibition must have noted with surprise how soon he had ceased to worry about the conventions of Gaganendranath Tagore's art. A knowledge of the "six limbs of the Indian painting" or the doctrines of cubist and

[313] Vakil, H, Kanaiyalal, " 'The Art World': Some Prominent Figures, and Interview" *The Bombay Chronical*, 30th June, 1926, Quoted in Pg 162, Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973.
[314] Chaudhuri, Nirad. C, "The Art of Gaganendranath Tagore" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 25.
[315] Gangoly, O.C., "Gaganendranath Tagore" in Ibid, Pg 23.

> futurist schools is not really an indispensable and distracting preliminary to a keen enjoyment of his drawings. He has been eclectic in his choice of styles. But the style in which he has embodied his vision is the least important thing about him. That is what distinguished his work from that of his contemporaries, which too often degenerate into mere pastiche.[316]

Gaganendranath broke with the Bengal School by moving into his own sphere of style by synthesizing various discourses around him. This placed him at the ideological and artistic forefront—a type of avant-garde position—in comparison to the artists in various art institutions around India. No other artist had combined such elements within their paintings. Gaganendranath had changed his style from the Bengal School (seen by the paintings from the collection of Havell and Coomaraswamy exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in April and May 1914). These were mythological in theme, Japanese in style, or street scenes of Calcutta with an impressionist Japanese brush technique.[317]

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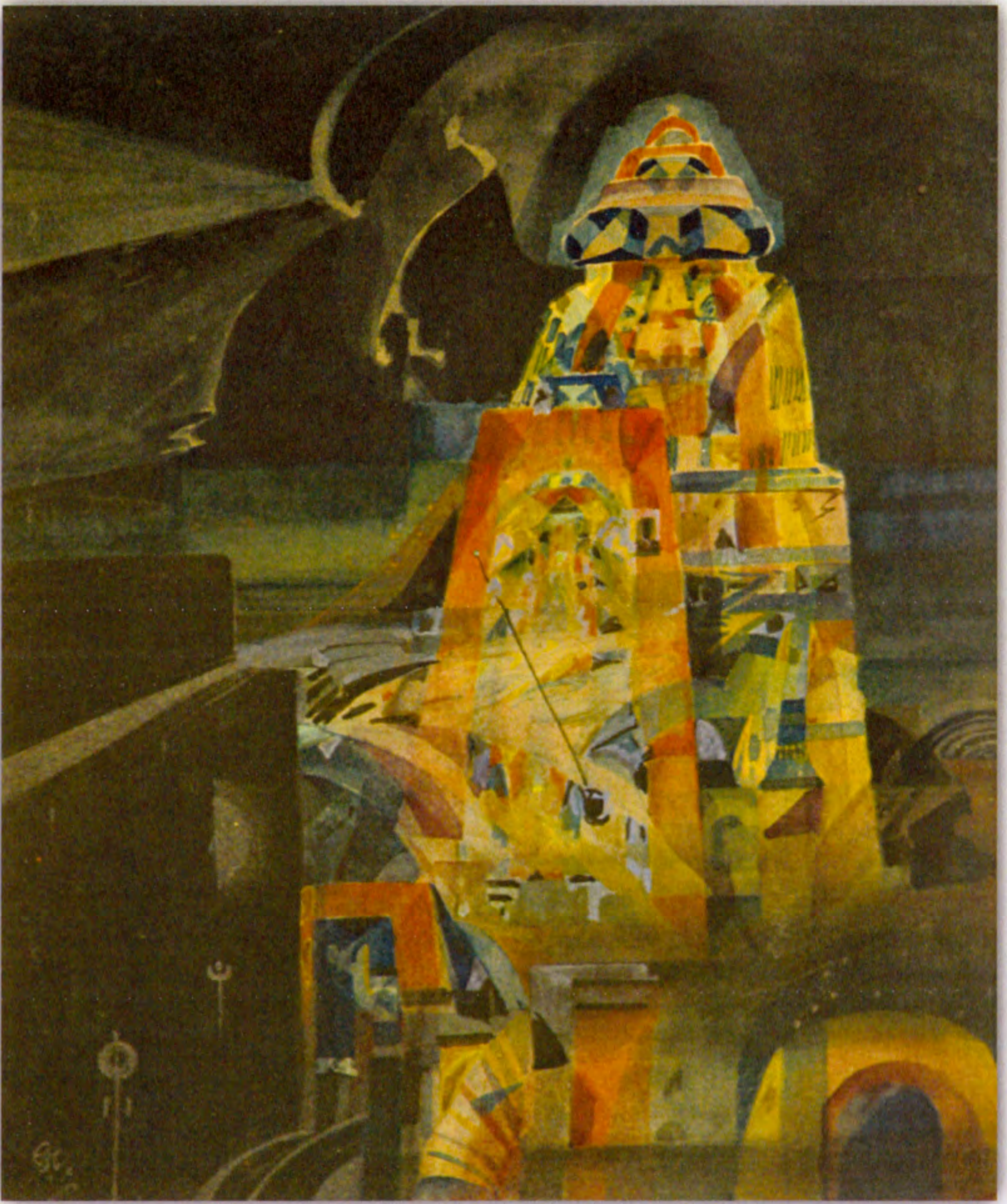
[316] No author, Welfare (Magazine), September 24th, 1928. See: Parimoo, Ratan, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores: Abanindrnath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath: Chronology and Comparative Study*, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1973, Pg 164.
[317] Ibid, Pg 165.



Gaganendranath Tagore, *Temple (Cubistic)*, Wash and Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, C. 1922-after)

Gaganendranath Tagore, *Magician* (Watercolour on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, C. 1922-after)

Gaganendranath Tagore, *Rabindranath Tagore in the Island of Birds* (Watercolour on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, C. 1922-after)

The watercolour *Magician* owed something to theatre staging. Gaganendranath, as a member of Jorasanko was influenced by Bengali theatre. Bichitra was also used for theatre, which had been an ongoing component of the Jorasanko mansion from the 1860s[318], where performances used to be held. Public figures such as the Marquess of Zetland, or Lord Ronaldshay the Governor of Bengal would attend. Lord Ronaldshay wrote:

[318] Banerjee, Sumanta, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989, Pg 162-163.

> ...And a charming performance of a short play—the post—box by Sir Rabindranath Tagore, given by the members of the Tagore family at their private residence. The staging of the play was quite excellent, and the atmosphere remarkable.[319]

Rabindranath Tagore in the Island of Birds and *Temple (Cubistic)* demonstrates a relativisation of cubist futurist discourses. Gaganendranath had updated or made modern the Bengal School's neo-traditional painting by relativizing European discourse within a pan-Asian neo-traditional Indian aesthetic. It represented the first shattering of the pictorial plane within a high art category in India. Gaganendranath stayed largely outside the stylistic orbit of the Bengal School but was aware of the Mughal miniature's tradition of multiple viewpoints and sets of activities simultaneously taking place within the picture frame. The cubist-futurist style was innovative in because it added another discourse on top of already extant discourses in India.

There was another artist from the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition who brings to light special considerations in Indian modernism. C.R.W. Nevinson exhibited four paintings of the social suffering and horrors of the First World War, *Searchlights* (c. 1916), *Returning to the Trenches* (c. 1914-15), *La Mitrailleuse* (1915), and *The Deserted Trench* (1916).[320]

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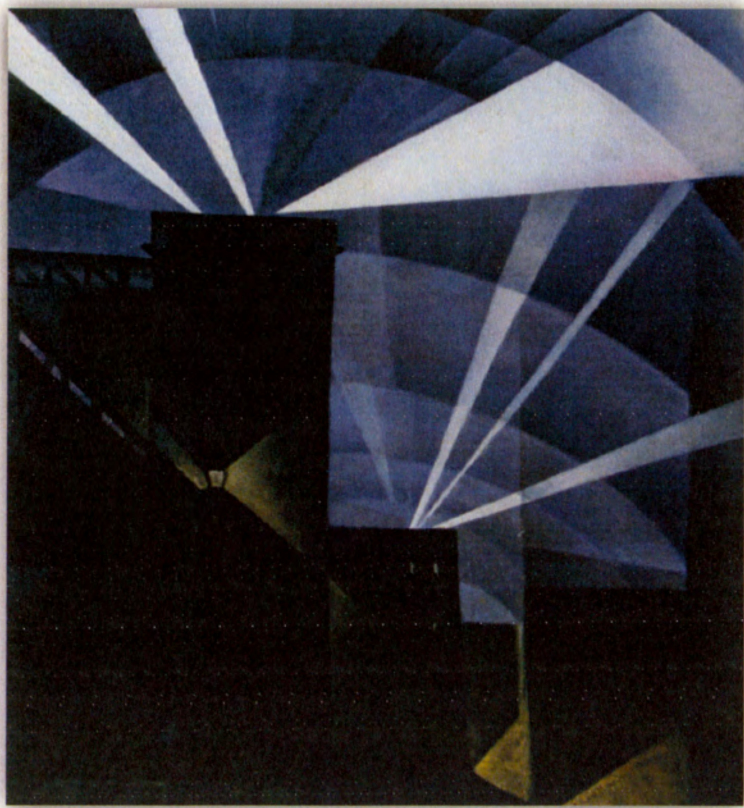
[319] January 6th 1918, My Bengal Diary, Ronaldshay, Volume 1, from February 21st, 1917 to November 11th, 1919. Mss Eur D. 609/1, India Office Records, British Library, London, Pg 107.

[320] No dates for the paintings are given in the catalogue. The Deserted Trench has elsewhere been titled The Deserted Trench on the Yser.



C.R.W. Nevinson, Searchlights (C. 1915, oil on canvas)

Return to the Trenches, 1914-14, C.R.W. Nevinson, (Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)

C.R.W. Nevinson, *La Mitrailleuse* (1915, Oil on canvas, Tate Britain)

Nevinson's paintings were not easily assimilable within the endogenous Indian discourse. Perhaps the later Indian artists known as the Rebel Art Center, Calcutta Group and the Young Turks borrowed from cubism more in the 1940s, due to their academic training and internationalist outlook. Yet, Gaganendranath had more affinity with the cubist watercolourists due to their softer line work and the ease with which the structures could be assimilated in the Japanese wash technique. Nevinson was more influential for the later generation of artists who came from the Jubilee School, formed the Rebel Art Centre, and became The Calcutta Group. Nevinson's paintings were strongly informed by his enthusiasm for eighteenth and nineteenth century Japanese woodblock prints, demonstrating the way Japanese endogenous painting came to influence European modernism, and through it the

world, a result that Rabindranath Tagore and others wanted for Indian modernism. Following artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), as Walsh notes, "Nevinson's stylized treatment of falling rain is decidedly reminiscent of Hiroshige in some of the color woodblock prints he executed in the early 1830s as part of his series *The Fifty-Three Post-Stations of the Takaido* (1830-34).[321]

In the 1930s there was a student protest at the Calcutta Art School. The protesting students were expelled. In 1931 the student's expulsion led to the breakaway Young Artists Union. By 1933 the Young Artists Union was largely defunct and the founding members formed the Art Rebel Centre. Indeed, this was another rupture for modern Indian art.[322] The name of the Art Rebel Centre was indebted to the short lived Rebel Art Centre in London founded by Vorticist Wyndham Lewis and C.R.W Nevinson. The Art Rebel Center issued a manifesto stating that their art was to be "anti-sentimental' and referred to the Bengal School's romanticism. The Calcutta based Art Rebel Centre called for a difference from the now establishment Bengal School and the Shantiniketan School. The call for anti-sentimentalism was directed at the Bengal School and Shantiniketan and also at the Academy Realism of the art schools. The Art Rebel Centre adopted, and adapted the European idioms that had become relativized, idioms such as cubism, vorticism, and futurism, as well as impressionism and post-impressionism.[323] A rejection of endogenous stylistic values demonstrated a counter-establishment in the formation of a new visual discourse in Calcutta and India. *It was a rupture*. The Art Rebel Centre was indebted to the blazing 1914 manifesto written by F.T. Marinetti and C.R.W Nevinson. Marinetti and Nevinson called for the overturning of academy style and pedagogy, which was a critique of modernity.[324] Marinetti and Nevinson were "against...the worship of tradition and the conservatism of Academies ... [and] ... the sentimentality with which you load your pictures—to compensate, perhaps, for your praiseworthy utter lack of sentimentality in life." They "wanted...strong, virile and anti-sentimental" art.[325]

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[321] Ed, Walsh, Michael, J.K., *A Dilemma of English Modernism: Visual and Verbal Politics in the Life and Work of C.R.W Nevinson (1889-1946)*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007, Pg 116.

[322] Due to a lack of space the Art Rebel Center only receives short attention. Part 5 examines more issues surrounding this group, and the Calcutta artistic milieu in the 1940s.

[323] Ed Sinha, Gayatri, *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007*, Marg Publications, New Delhi, 2009, Pg 85.

[324] *The Observer* on the 7th June 1914. The manifesto by F.T. Marinetti and C.R.W Nevinson.

[325] Ibid.

After the Art Rebel Center, the Calcutta Group emerged (1940s) as the group to relativize European modernist idioms. Members of The Calcutta Group were associated with the Art Rebel Center, and they called for the cessation of Academic Art and promoted internationalism in art. The Calcutta Group used all world discourses to explore the nature of man. This was one of the effects of the Bauhaus exhibition of 1922. It affected the academic painters who had not accepted the Bengal School art discourse but preferred the imperial academic art, which then became redundant by the acceptance of European modernism, especially post-impressionism. The leader of the Art Rebel Center was Bhola Chatterjee; he was also its founder-president. Artists such as Govardhan Ashe, Abani Sen, Kalikinkar Ghosh Dastidar, Manoj Basu, Suren De, and Samar De were all associated with the group. These artists wanted to open their discourses to European idioms whilst staying true to the traditions of Indian art.[326] During Rabindranath Tagore's seventieth birthday they organized an exhibition in Town Hall where his birthday was being celebrated.[327] It is unclear if this was intended to subvert the Shantiniketan creed. But one has to assume it wasn't, due to Rabindranath's universalism and his desire to open Indian artistic discourses to the world. After four months the Art Rebel Center became the Academy of Fine Arts (1933), which continued the project of the Art Rebel Center, and promoted "sculpture, painting, architecture and etching...on an all India basis."[328]

The establishment of the Art Rebel Centre, and then the Indian Academy of Fine Arts, challenged the dominant position of the Bengal School and the Shantiniketan discourse. The counter-establishment organizations wanted a pan-Indian group that promoted traditional Indian art infused with western art, and wanted a central committee. The Maharaja Prodyot Coomar Tagore[329], the founder President of the Indian Academy of Fine Arts, and a patron of the arts and promoted modernist Calcutta artists, appealed to the Governor of Bengal Sir John Anderson, for patronage.[330] On the 29th August 1933 the Calcuttan periodical *Ananda Bazar Patrika* featured an editorial stating:

> There has so far been no comprehensive central organization to unite all streams of Indian art and connect them with the cultivation of Western art. We are glad to learn that some distinguished citizens of Calcutta are making efforts to this end. The

[326] Sarkar, Kamal, "Fifty Years of the Academy of Fine Arts" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 63.
[327] Ibid, Pg 63.
[328] Ibid, Pg 63.
[329] Great grandson of Gopi Mohun Tagore and grandnephew of Dwarkanath Tagore.
[330] Ibid, Pg 63.

> organization proposed by them is to be named 'Indian Academy of Fine Arts'...The Academy will work for the propagation of both Oriental and Western art. One of its aims will be to encourage and help all kinds of artists...Particularly notable among its aims is to set up a public gallery containing specimens of Western art. Mr. Abdul Ali is the Chairman of the working committee and Messrs Van Manen...and Atul Bose are its joint secretaries.[331]

It was through this pan-Indian organization for the arts that the Bengal School dominance was displaced *in Calcutta*, which led to the relativisation of exogenous discourses. But in Bombay there was a protest led by W.E.G. Solomon at the J.J. School of Art. Solomon felt that the Society was a regional organization and could not speak for pan-Indian art. He felt there was an excess of Bengali representation. The Society acquiesced, and the prefix 'Indian' was dropped, and the society became The Academy of Arts.[332]

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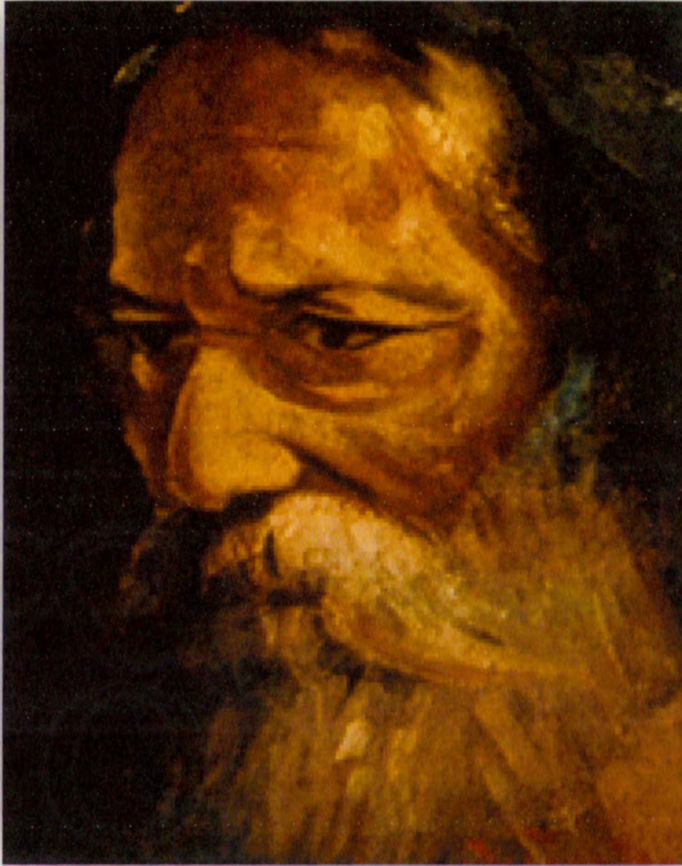
[331] Ibid, Pg 63-4.
[332] Ibid, Pg 64.

Part 3: Rabindranath Tagore and Modern Indian Art.



Jamini Roy *Portrait of Rabindranath Tagore* (section taken from photograph Kedar Vishwanathan, courtesy India Museum, Kolkata)

3.1 Rabindranath Tagore's Art: Its location, and meaning in Indian and European Modernity, Avant-Gardism, and Modernism.

> *The worst form of bondage is the bondage of dejection, which keeps men hopelessly chained in loss of faith in themselves.*[1]

> *When in the name of Indian Art we cultivate with deliberate aggressiveness a certain bigotry born of the habit of a past generation, we smother our soul under idiosyncrasies unearthed from buried centuries. These are like masks with exaggerated grimaces that fail to respond to the ever-changing play of life.*[2]

Rabindranath Tagore[3] led India's next endogenous artistic and ideological break in Indian art. The break was a movement away from the Bengal School whose philosophy and art Abanindranath and others exemplified, as discussed in the previous Parts. This break (or bifurcation), aesthetically and philosophically different and significant, is often missed and covered by the phrase "Bengal School", perhaps because Abanindranath was Rabindranath's nephew, they belonged to the same household, and institutions such as Club Bichitra and Shantiniketan, as well as the Tagores' Jorasanko household, were the locales for both versions of the Bengal School. Nevertheless, Rabindranath ruptured the previous Bengal School and created a new form in its place. Like most revolutions both forms continued. The philosophical, aesthetic, artistic, socio-political, and historical causes for the rupturing and the subsequent set of activities is the subject of this Part.

Rabindranath created an art as well as discourse, which was open, and distanced itself from past nationalistic and neo-traditional discourses that had failed to 'respond to the ever-changing play of life.' This Part will emphasize his artworks, which have been art historically analyzed by Partha Mitter in relation to European modernism as a 'triumph of modernism.'[4] This study will examine how Rabindranath's artworks operated within the endogenous Indian cultural-system, how they catalysed a departure in endogenous Indian modernism, how they were received in the European cultural-system, and also their relationship to global modernity. This Part discusses how global modernity affected Indian art, and Rabindranath's art and theories, and demonstrates how the European avant-garde and Rabindranath were

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[1] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 3.
[2] Tagore, Rabindranath, *On Art and Aesthetics A Selection of Lectures, Essays and Letters*, Ed. Prithwish Neogy, Subarnarekha, 2005, Pg 54.
[3] In this chapter Rabindranath Tagore will be referred to as Rabindranath.
[4] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 71.

engaged in similar critiques of global modernity, though the Indian critiques were sociologically, culturally and historically different due to their local cultural-system's growth and adaptation to global modernity. This Part focuses on Rabindranath's deep influence over Indian modern art and his various artistic theories.

Rabindranath was able to do this by understanding the Japanese cultural-system, critiquing Japanese nationalism and the rampant dangers of nationalism for art and for humanity. But he also critiqued western modernity and modernism, art and nationalism. His critique, and appeal for a universal modernity and modernism, harnessed the endogenous cultural-system. This became paramount in his construction of an art school (Kala Bhavan) connected to his Visva-Bharati school in Shantiniketan, which became the next historical and institutional development that was connected with the previous arts and crafts activities, from the Hindu Mela to Club Bichitra.

The position that Rabindranath's artwork broke away and redefined art discourse needs to be examined.[5] Rabindranath knew his paintings were unique and outside the current discourses of Indian art. He wrote, "...they do not represent what they call Indian Art."[6] Rabindranath did not think of himself as a visual artist. In May 1941, a few months before his death on 7th August 1941, he wrote, "...in my own heart where I am nothing but a poet..."[7], He profoundly affected the course of Indian modernism.

Rabindranath's paintings did not obey the traditional properties of the Bengal School discourse of painting mythological subjects. Though his paintings were internalized in the same tradition as the Bengal School, he engaged in a modern form of expression that was linked with the European avant-gardist tendencies (as an aesthetic reaction to bourgeois modernity and the associated academy realism). A link between his and European art was surrealist techniques such as automatism and psychological painting, which attempted to negate bourgeois modernity. Neither Rabindranath's paintings nor the linked discourses were conceived in the framework of a 'rational relationship to the outside world,' but as an

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[5] Anand, Mulk-Raj, "The Four Initiators of the Contemporary Experimentalism," *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 2, No publication date, Pg 1-5.
Archer, William, *India and Modern Art*, Ruskin House George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Museum Street London, 1959, Pg 49.
[6] *Imperfect Encounter; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-41*, Ed, Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, Pg, 325-6.
[7] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 96.

inversion of the rational relationship, allowing artists to privilege irrational subconscious states. Using this inversion promised a subjective and aesthetic transcendence from the imposition of rationality over cognitive processes. Indeed, this inversion had Indian philosophical correlates that Rabindranath was aware of. For instance, in Hindu Samkhya philosophy, such as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, who was very influential for Rabindranath, this was a meditational sublation of conscious thought through practice (*sadhana*) leading to blissfulness (*samadhi*).[8]

Rabindranath, in a 1929 letter to Suniti Kumar Chatterji[9], wrote:

> Some time ago I drew a picture in your notebook. I am not sure it was a good idea. I did not sign the picture, and I will not.[10] *I have no wish to acquaint the people of my province with my work as an artist; but in spite of this they have already begun to pass judgment on it.* You came across my pictures by your own initiative and I feel rather uneasy about it. *Alive or dead I have no desire to make this creation of mine public here. My pictures will not be allowed to commit the same offence as my other creations.* The evidence in your notebook was left there by accident. So my earnest request is that I may tear out the offending page before returning your notebook to you—this will not threaten the storehouse of Indian art in the slightest, but I shall feel secure.[11]

This statement is the reason why Rabindranath, as a cultural-humanist-poet, artist and ideologue, became pivotal to the development of Indian modernism. Rabindranath did not have an artistic cohort following or adapting his style. He understood the confusion about his modernist paintings. In 1937 he wrote of the "…stagnant world of Indian art..." He said "…my people are puzzled for they do not know what judgment to pronounce upon my pictures."[12]

Yet Rabindranath's ideas became paramount Indian modernism. His paintings, which were part of his unity of creation philosophy (later discussed), should be understood as showing European artists and critics that an Indian artist can be defined as a modernist artist

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[8] Tola, Fernando and Dragonetti, Carmen, *The Yogasūstras of Patañjali: On Concentration of Mind*, Trans, K.D. Prithipaul, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1991, Pg 46 & 51. See: Patanjali, *Patanajli's Yoga Sutras: with the commentary of Vyâsa and the gloss of Vâchaspati Miśra*, translated by Ram Prasada, Allahabad, Pânini Office, 1912, New York, AMS Press, 1974.

[9] Suniti Kumar Chatterji (a linguist and educator) went with Rabindranath to South-East Asia in 1927 and in 1916, and 1924 when Rabindranath went to China and Japan. Together they went to Java, Siam, Burma and Malaya.

[10] Rabindranath Tagore did not sign his works prior to his European exhibitions in 1930. Later he signed many but not all his works.

[11] *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 367.

[12] *Imperfect Encounter; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-41*, Ed, Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, Pg 363.

within European art historiography, whilst demonstrating an Indian modernist vision to Indian artists. His paintings were thought of as the examples of the first Indian modern artist free of the nationalism rampant in Bengal. They were deemed to be modernist by colonial art historians such as William Archer who, in the European art historiographical sense, said, "The first modern art to be produced in India was the work of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore." Archer made this statement because Rabindranath's paintings, such as *Dancing Woman*, had affinities to primitivism in European modernism. [13]

[13] Archer, William, *India and Modern Art*, Ruskin House George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Museum Street London, 1959, Pg 49.

Rabindranath Tagore *Dancing Woman* (c. 1930, Ink on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Coomaraswamy understood Rabindranath's paintings as examples of international primitivism in modern art. He wrote:

> An exhibition of drawings by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore is of particular interest because it puts before us…for the first time a genuine example of modern primitive art. One may well wonder whether these artists and critics who have so long striven for and praised the calculated primitivisms, archaisms, and pseudo-barbarisms of European origin will admire the real thing.[14]

Coomaraswamy, who did not see Rabindranath's paintings through the prism of European art historiography, understood the paintings to be original, and not derived from western modernism. Rabindranath was an inter-cultural long distance specialist and a universal-

[14] *Boston Evening Transcript*, 22nd October, 1930.

humanist expert in inter-Asian cultures.[15] He was not a mere, as Mitter labels him, "cosmopolitan."[16] Rabindranath did not denounce cosmopolitanism but understood it as a "colourless vagueness."[17] He did not believe in cosmopolitanism for nationalism, a position we will return to later. For these reasons Rabindranath did not mind Coomaraswamy's interpretation of his paintings.

Coomaraswamy's statement suggested that the use of primitive and archaic forms in European modern art were not endogenous, but adaptations and 'calculated' gestures. Rabindranath's 'primitivism' was endogenous, and was an endemic signifier of inner transformations embedded within the Indian cultural-system; in contrast to the European artists' search, outside their cultural-systems, for the archaic and non-European motifs that would relativise and re-define their art. Rabindranath's depictions of 'primitivisms' and 'archaisms' and his internalized thought processes were how Indian artists and philosophers

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[15] I take this title from a keynote lecture paper delivered by Professor John Clark entitled "Asian Artists as long distance cultural specialists in the formation of modernity's" at In the Image of Asia: Moving across and between locations conference. Australian National University, April 2010. See Clifford, James, 'Travelling Cultures', *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler, New York, Routledge, 1992.

The chronological sequence of Rabindranath Tagore's travels outside of India is:

England in 1878, 1890, 1912, 1913, 1920, 1921, 1926, 1930.
U.S.A in 1912, 1916 [Accompanied with Mukul Dey], 1920, 1929, 1930
Japan in 1916[Accompanied with Mukul Dey], 1917, 1924, 1929
Burma in 1916.
France in 1920, 1921, 1926, 1930
Belgium in 1920
Holland in 1920
Switzerland in 1921, 1926, 1930
Czechoslovakia in 1921, 1926
Sweden in 1921, 1926
Germany, in 1921, 1926, 1930
Austria in 1921, 1926
China in 1924
South America in 1924
Peru and Argentine in 1924.
Italy in 1925, 1926
Norway, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Egypt, Yugoslavia, in 1926
Malaya, Java, Bali in 1927
Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1922, 1924, 1928, 1934
Canada in 1929
Denmark 1921, 1926, 1930
Russia 1930,
Poland 1926
Persia 1932
Iraq 1932.

Source for the dates are taken from a wall plaque located at Rabindra Bharti Museum Kolkata, which is situated on the Tagores' ancestral home at Jorsanko.

[16] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 77.

[17] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 34.

traditionally transformed the reality of emotions (*bhava*) and nature (*prakrti*) into art.[18] Rabindranath was an Indian modernist who kept the endogenous system open to transformation, demonstrating more than affinities and sociological structural resemblances with European modernism, whilst remaining entrenched in the endogenous system. As James Clifford asserts, non-western forms from non-western systems when relativised with western modernism's rejection of "naturalist projects [do] not show anything like an affinity."[19] The relationships between the relativised use of the forms (i.e., the combination of exogenous and endogenous discourses) and the non-relativised use (i.e., endogenous use) are not affinities. And according to Michel Leiris, western cognition tends to see a certain resemblance between the non-western forms, "which lies, in point of fact, merely in their common differentness." The resemblances are due to the fact that the forms belong to another cultural system. "The affinity ... [is] an important optical illusion—the measure of common differentness from artistic modes that dominated in the West from Renaissance to the late nineteenth century." [20]

Coomaraswamy philosophically understood the relation to the modern as early as 1909. "The East has...revealed a new world to the West ... [that] will be the inspiration of a 'Renaissance,' more profound and far-reaching than that which resulted from the re-discovery of the classic world of the west ... [which] Schopenhauer so clearly foresaw."[21] This became an "inward and subtle Indianisation of the West", and, as Coomaraswamy wrote, "[It has]...stolen a march in the night, and already there are groups of western thinkers whose purposes and principles are more truly Indian than are those of the average English educated Indian of today."[22] Coomaraswamy regarded this as a *horizontal* civilizational diffusion, which India gave to the west and their sciences for centuries.[23]

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[18] See Coomaraswwamy, Ananda, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Second Edition, New York, Dover Publications, 1956. Also see: Sharma, K.K., *Rabindranath Tagore's Aesthetics*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1988, Pg 43.
[19] Clifford, James, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century, Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1988, Pg 192.
[20] See footnote 3, Ibid.
[21] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East" *The Modern Review*, May 1909, Pg 427.
[22] Ibid, Pg 427-28.
[23] Ibid, Pg 428.

European Modernism and Avant-Gardism

The success of European modernism, however, lay in the *opening* of their art tradition to Africa and the Orient. The opening of their art tradition came about through colonialism, which was guided by global capital. The opening permitted more exogenous discourses to circulate in Europe, which were relativised, and used to critique the sociological malaise caused by bourgeois hegemony, and the social suffering that followed the First World War (1914-18). The assimilation of exogenous with endogenous discourses in European modernism allowed for non-European originated spiritual and primitivist discourses to become widely deployed as aesthetic reactions to modernity, and was used to break from realism into abstraction.

In the European avant-garde, the artists understood the rational view of the world as conditions that pertaining to the ordering power structures of society. This was productive of the artist's subjectivity.[24] It repressed the "sovereign rational subject."[25] Art discourses of the colonizer (academy realism, naturalism, and realism) held a rational relationship to the outside world. The discourses were promulgated by the state apparatus (Art Institutions of Governments), under the conditions of modernity with the aim of representing and recording the external world in the expanding and conquest driven (post) Enlightenment world. It was, as Cohn has stated, the picturesque that made "India into an object to be appropriated."[26] Such a position can be seen in Thomas Daniell's (1749-1840) painting *Marnikarnika Ghat* (c.1790)

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[24] See Foucault, Michel, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Summer 1982, pp. 777-795.

[25] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated Lawrence, Frederick, Polity Press, 1998, Pg viii.

[26] Cohn, Bernard, "The Past and Present: India as A Museum of Mankind," *History and Anthropology*, 1988, 11:1, pp 1-38, Pg 20.

Thomas Daniell *Marnikarnika Ghat* (c. 1790, Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

In European modernism, and avant-gardism of the twentieth century, Michel Leiris, prompted by his close friendship and collaboration with Aimé Césaire and his own anthropological and ethnographic interests, questioned the West's dominant gaze. James Clifford, following Leiris, knew that a "new situation, one in which the "objects" of observation would begin to write back. The Western gaze would be met and scattered."[27] Rabindranath Tagore returned the gaze with knowledge from an earlier age. His gaze was receptive to heterodox, and historically different cultural-cognitive expressions. He did not construct *objects* to gaze at. He wished for a universalization of subjectivities formed within Occidental and Oriental cultural-systems, which assimilated into a collective harmony of spirit (*geist*) adding to a universal world object, spirit, and modernism. He thus made India

[27] Clifford, James, "On Orientalism," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1988, Pg 256.

examine itself in light of global modernity, but using its own endogenous cultural-system.[28] Rabindranath wanted a non-nationalistic universal modernism where each cultural-system contributed to global modernity. Rabindranath 'wrote back' by using endogenous religious-cultural methods structurally paralleling the Occident, and returning the gaze of the subject.[29] At a philosophical level Althusser pointed out, after the fact of surrealist avant-garde aesthetic reflections of modernity, the *object* needed to be inversed and could lead to the discovery of other objects, without fixed itinerary, toward the interior, with the guarantee only of discovering something new. [30]

Guha argues that the appropriations included historiography, and assigns a philosophical base (Hegel's *die Weltgeschichte* World-History*)* to those acts.[31] The Occidental view of the Orient was promoted by their Governments ideological means and rationalized by Baconian, and Darwinian scientific positivism as "objective true knowledge."[32] However, Foucault, if we follow Akeel Bilgrami:

> ...responded by pre-empting the strategy and declaring that the irrational was...the only defence for those who suffered under the comprehensive cognitive grip of the discursive power unleashed by modernity in the name of rationality.[33]

The turn to the 'irrational' as a movement away from rational modernity was an aesthetic, and cultural reflection of modernity. It took place in India in the form of Rabindranath's paintings. The paradigm was also reflected by the European historical avant-gardes such as Dada and Surrealism; by the avant-garde (anti-structuralist) French writers such as Georges Bataille[34], Michel Leiris, and Roger Caillios (ethnographic surrealism[35]); and by other

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[28] This follows Ashish Nandy's close reading of Rabindranath Tagore's novels in Nandy, Ashish, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 20-21. See: Nandy, Ashish, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.

[29] Belting Hans, *Art History after Modernism*, translated by Caroline Saltzwedel and Mitch Cohen with Kenneth Northcott, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, Pg 197.

[30] Balibar, Etienne, "Althusser's Object," *Social Text*, No. 39 (Summer, 1994), pp. 157-188, See Note 9-10, Pg 182.

[31] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 2-3.

[32] Nandy, Ashish, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, Pg 20.

[33] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Occidentalism, the Very Idea: An Essay on Enlightenment and Enchantment," *Critical Inquiry 32*, Spring 2006, pp. 381-411, Pg 382.

[34] See Bataille, Georges, *Visions of Excess Selected Writings 1927 – 1939*, Ed., Allan Stoekl, Translated by Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 14, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985

[35] Caillois Roger, *Mimesis and legendary Pyschasthenia*. Translated by John Sheepley, October 31 Winter 1984, MIT Press, Pg 18.

authors and artists associated with the Collège de Sociologie.[36] They pushed toward a nascent aesthetic post-structuralism with the transgression of conceptual, civil, and moral-limits that modernity ordered over cognitive and cultural existence. Leiris wrote about Alberto Giacometti's relativisation of Other cultural forms.[37] The avant-garde was an aesthetic and philosophical (Nietzschean) wish for a non-rational (Dionysian and Schopenhauerian) creative outburst[38], leading to a disavowal of rationality.[39] The avant-garde reacted[40] to subject-centering and rationalizing knowledge-systems.[41] It was an attack against "bourgeois modernity with its legitimizing representational and narrative modes and verisimilitudes."[42]

The European historical avant-garde exploration had structural affinities (but with differing cultural-system structural causalities) with the internalization and naivety depicted in Rabindranath's paintings. Rabindranath's primitivisms only superficially resembled the historical avant-gardes, because his paintings were not aggressive transgressions against Reason and rationalization of the historical avant-gardes. Rabindranath stated that his paintings were "...versification in lines."[43] (Paul Klee was also a poet). Rabindranath and his European artistic counterparts were engaged in similar critiques of modernity but from different vantage points. For example, Georges Bataille could violently critique and aesthetically transgress, through "radical experience"[44], religion in the French cultural-system, because it was disenchanted in public life and "the central ideology of bourgeois society is one of the base."[45] Dada, on the other hand, as Hans Richter wrote, "...in its pure

[36] See Ed., Hollier, Denis. *The College of Sociology, 1937-1939*, Translated by Betsy Wing, Theory and History of Literature, Volume 41, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988

[37] Clifford, James, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century, Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1988, Pg 190-2, 206, 227.

[38] See Nietzsche, F.W., *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, Penguin Books, London, New York, 1993.

[39] Pefanis, Julian, *Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard, Lyotard*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1991, Pg 46. See Foster, Hal, "Primitive Scenes", *Critical Inquiry*, xx/I, Autumn 1993, pp. 71-2

[40] Krauss. E. Rosalind *"The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths"* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England. 1986, Pg 70. Also see: Krauss. E. Rosalind *"Corpus Delicti"* October 33, Summer 1985 MIT Press, Pg 49.

[41] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated Lawrence, Frederick, Polity Press, 1998, Pg 294-326.

[42] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Occidentalism, the Very Idea: An Essay on Enlightenment and Enchantment," *Critical Inquiry 32*, Spring 2006, pp. 381-411, Pg 382.

[43] Archer, William, *India and Modern Art*, Ruskin House George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Museum Street London, 1959, Pg 51.

[44] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated Lawrence, Frederick, Polity Press, 1998, Pg viii.

[45] Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 23.

Habermas, Jurgen, *Legitimation Crisis* Boston: Beacon Press, 1975, Pg 25-26. Also see: Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated Lawrence, Frederick, Polity Press, 1998, Pg 211-37.

state was pure revolt, ANTI-EVERYTHING!"[46] Richter goes further, "...Dada showed itself to be an anti-bourgeois movement which had a certain solidarity with the anti-bourgeois working class."[47] As Ribemont-Dessaignes notes:

> It was necessary to make them understand that we were against Culture, and that we were rebelling not only against the bourgeois order but against all order, all hierarchy, all sacralization, all idolatry, whatever might be the idol.[48]

The European avant-garde modernists broke their forms, critiqued bourgeois society and appealed to Other religious cultural-systems to bypass the 'discursive power unleashed by modernity in the name of rationality.' They used irrational, inward, primitive cognitive, surrealist, and psychological aesthetic(s). *The "closed universe of Occident rationalism"*[49] *no longer harnessed tradition.* Instead the occident had reached an ordered rational bourgeois position and was ready to be globalized and relativised with heterogeneous exogenous discourses.[50] The avant-garde, critiquing bourgeois modernity looked elsewhere to find Other cultural forms to break into abstraction and rejuvenate their cultural-systems.[51] The primitivisms in Rabindranath's paintings can be seen as structurally corresponding to European modernist avant-garde primitivist discourse.[52] But Rabindranath's primitivisms were endogenous structural developments that relativised exogenous European discourses and added to an endogenous modernism. Rabindranath did not obtain primitivism from the Other. His primitivism was an Indian critique of global modernity based within the Indian cultural-system, one that used endogenous transcendental and interiorized discourses. His primitivism was a critique that found praise and acceptance with western audiences due to the correspondences in aesthetic structure and use of both western (aesthetic) and Indian (folk, spiritual, and philosophical) discourses. He did not believe that western artists use of primitivism was an intrinsic part of their cultural-system and endogenous artistic discourses. He, however, believed his use primitivism was intrinsically Indian, especially the folk traditions assimilated alongside aspects of Indian transcendental philosophy.

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[46] Richter, Hans, *Dada – Art and Anti-Art*, London Thames and Hudson, 2001. Pg 112, Emphasis inserted
[47] Ibid, Pg 174.
[48] Ibid, Pg 174-75. Also see: Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 22-3.
[49] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated Lawrence, Frederick, Polity Press, 1998, Pg 213.
[50] See Lyotard, J.F, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
[51] Said, E.W., "Orientalism Reconsidered", *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA, 2000, Pg 203.
[52] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 11-13 & 33.

Rabindranath received a series of books on European modernism from Hertha Mendel in 1931. He observed "...these artists seem to be obsessed with a doctrine and a primitive quality which they try to impart to their work is not naturally their own."[53] He stated:

> Evidently it is a reaction against a certain formal conventionalism, a sort of cul-de-sac of artistic respectability that had no spirit of growth in it, but the reaction itself may turn into a convention because of its lack of sincerity.[54]

Rabindranath realized that European artists had opened their *home* to the *world*, their cultural system to exogenous discourses, but their work was not naturally their own. This was to affect Rabindranath's theories.

In Paris in the 1870s Rabindranath admired an academic by Carolus-Duran and, as Partha Mitter observes, was critical of the "social prudery of drawing a veil over the beauty of the human body."[55] From the 1870s he became enamoured with painting and in 1893 spent a "summer morning"[56] examining the anatomical structure of Ravi Varma's paintings, whose structure, subject, and imagery he found clearly comprehensible to an Indian mind. In 1893 Rabindranath first decided to paint.[57] At the same time Jyotirindranath Tagore was painting in Jorasanko. By 1898, after seeing Jyotirindranath's western style academic paintings, Rabindranath praised G.K. Mhatre's sculpture *To the Temple* (1896, Silver Medal Winner Bombay Art Society), which Coomaraswamy thought "smacks more of Paris than the East"[58], for combining an Indian theme with classical realism.[59]

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[53] Letter to Hertha Mendel, 15th April 1931, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 399.
[54] Ibid, Pg 399.
[55] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 66.
[56] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Present State of Indian Art", *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, August, 1907, Pg 109.
[59] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 133-36. See: No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

G.K. Mhatre *To the Temple* (1896, J.J. School of Arts, Mumbai, Photograph Courtesy John Clark)

Rabindranath's early art criticism was not original and had not adopted the *swadeshi* (nationalist) views on art.[60] In March-April 1913 Rabindranath travelled to Chicago, visiting the Chicago Art Institute to see the comprehensive Armory show twice, which had 1600 exhibits of modern art.[61] Rabindranath's first exhibition was in Paris in 1930, and was organized by Victoria Ocampo (an Argentinian), Henri Riviere (who was curator at the Museum of Man), and Andre Lhote.[62] However, despite the exhibitions he had held in Europe (London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow) in 1930, to which he reputedly took "about four hundred ..."[63] paintings, he did not call himself a visual artist within the Indian art milieu.

In Germany, a country that heavily invested its philosophical discourse with Indian Hindu philosophy, Rabindranath's spiritualism, art, and ideologies had the greatest impact.[64] When Rabindranath lectured at Berlin University in 1921 the crowd was so large and

[60] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 185-226.
[61] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[62] Ibid
[63] *Imperfect Encounter; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-41*, Ed, Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, Pg 325-6.
[64] For instance see Benoy Kumar Sarkar's glowing account of Germany's exaltation of Rabindranath Tagore and his travels through German cities, Sarkar, Benoy, Kumar, "Rabindranath Tagore's Tour in Europe," *The Modern Review*, September 1921, Pg 375-78.

enthusiastic there were "some 14 or 15 thousand people standing in the street" outside the overflowing lecture hall.[65] So great was his popularity that "fifty thousand copies of the German translation of "Sadhana", which is a religious not a political work, were sold out, while "one lakh and fifty thousand copies of "The Home and the World" in German have been sold in the course of six months." In France *The Home and the World*, had several editions sell out in a short time.[66]

In August 1930, Rabindranath stayed in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, as a guest of Albert Einstein, Bruno, and his wife Hertha Mendel. Hertha was interested in modern art. Rabindranath sent his paintings to her. In return, Rabindranath wanted books on the latest trends in European modernism stating, "I have a great curiosity to know its tendencies and achievements."[67] In a letter Mendel observed:

> Your pictures have arrived safely, they are dreaming their dreams and allowing us to share them. We love them deeply – most of all the wonderful peace and harmony and the enveloping darkness of 'companions.' Their atmosphere is freedom. I am afraid the books I sent you about modern European art have nothing of that atmosphere of freedom.[68]

In 1930 Rabindranath held two exhibitions in England, one at the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, and the other in London at the India Society. The paintings exhibited at Birmingham were different from those earlier (pre-1928 work). A reviewer wrote that the "latest drawings" are "less spontaneous. ... [they were] ...tinged with the deliberate intent towards representation which is so conspicuously absent from the work of 1928."[69] The 'intent' can be seen in his painting *Brooding* (c. 1933).

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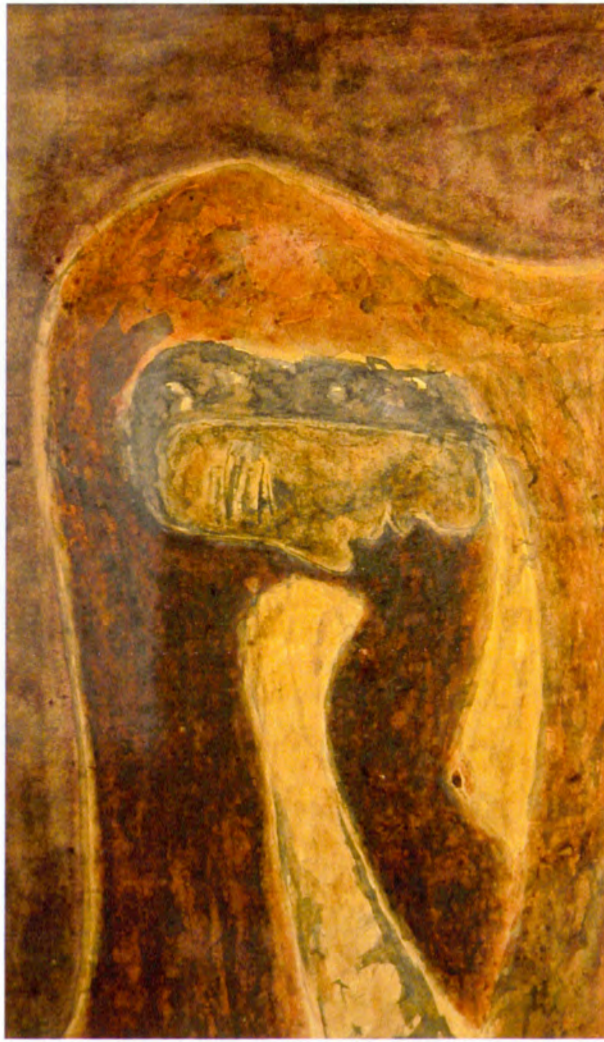
[65] "Rabindranath Tagore At Berlin University" Notes Section, *The Modern Review*, August, 1921, Pg 257-58.
[66] Ibid, Pg 258.
[67] *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 398.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Anonymous author, "Poet as Artist Work of Rabindranath Tagore, Birmingham Exhibition," *Rupam*, No 44, October, 1930, Pg 29.



Rabindranath Tagore *Brooding* (c. 1933, Ink on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

William Rothenstein promoted Rabindranath in England. Rothenstein explained to Thomas Sturge Moore, "the drawings are extraordinarily vital: they show none of the weakness of the revivalist schools which stand for modern Indian art."[70] Rothenstein organized an exhibition in London expecting Rabindranath to pay for the gallery and framing charges.[71] In 1931 Rabindranath wrote: "I do not feel the least enthusiasm about spending money over my picture exhibition." This was because of the financial problems associated with the "abnormally" low price of jute caused by colonial exploitation. Jute was "the

[70] *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 397.
[71] Ibid, Pg 397.

peasants mainstay," and as landlords—*zamindars*—the Tagores depended on its sale. The fall of jute prices drained the Tagore's wealth further[72] and worried the Tagores.

The west considered Rabindranath an Indian modernist but in India he was worried about the reception of his exogenously influenced paintings. But as an inter-cultural long-distance specialist, Rabindranath promoted the diffusion of European avant-garde discourses into India. Rabindranath changed the Bengal School and Academy Art discourses with the introduction of these exogenous discourses.[73] Rabindranath wrote about his paintings in Europe: "The praise which they had won from our own circle of artists I did not take at all seriously till some of them attracted notice of Japanese artists of renown whose appreciation came to me as a surprise."[74] The Japanese artists' appreciation came as a 'surprise' due to his paintings being disconnected from the Bengal School, and the Okakurian tradition of a nationalist art. The sculptress Marguerite Milward, a student of Emile Bourdelle, visited Shantiniketan in 1930 to do a bust of Rabindranath.[75] She saw Rabindranath's paintings and examined a portfolio of his work; her bust of Rabindranath was inspired by his paintings.[76] She thought that he must exhibit his work in Paris because "...there the artists will understand and appreciate them."[77] His paintings were so far removed from the Bengal School discourse that he only received praise in Europe because of the similarities with the trends of European modernism. He described his paintings as "...the unconscious courage of the unsophisticated, like that of one who walks in dream on a perilous path, who is saved only because he is blind to the risk..."[78] Henri Bidou, an ally of the Surrealists, found in Rabindranath's paintings, uninfluenced as they were by academic art, what Mitter calls "a...convergence of spirit between him and the European modernists."[79]

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[72] *Imperfect Encounter; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-41*, Edited Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, Pg 334.

[73] "Indian Periodicals," *The Modern Review*, August, 1921, Pg 217-18. See: "Rabindranath Tagore at Strasbourg," *The Modern Review*, July, 1921, Pg 95-96. See: Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922-47*, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 65-76.

[74] *Imperfect Encounter; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1911-41*, Ed, Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, Pg, 325-6.The Japanese artist who Rabindranath referred to most probably comes from Okakura's circle.

[75] See Note 10, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 374.

[76] Milward's completed Rabindranath bust became the frontispiece of Milward Marguerite, *An Artist in Unknown India*, London, 1948. And is located at India House London.

[77] Milward, R.M., "Rabindraanth Tagore's paintings", *The Modern Review*, November 1930, Pg 545.

[78] Tagore, R, " 'Foreword' (to European exhibitions of 28.4.1930)," *Rupam*, nos 42/44, April-October, 1930, Pg 27.

[79] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-47*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 66.

Rabindranath's paintings were substantially different to those being done in India. His paintings were wanderings of the interior psyche that had structural resemblances to European surrealist automatic drawing, and pure painting. Take, for instance, Rabindranath's *Fantastic Figure* and *Two Faces*.

Rabindranath Tagore *Fantastic Figure* (Undated, Ink and Watercolour on Paper, Collection: National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Two Faces, Rabindranath Tagore (Undated, Pen and Ink on Paper, Collection: National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Pleased with the success of his paintings in Germany and France, he wrote (from France on March 30th 1930) to William Rothenstein, "They certainly possess psychological

interest being products of untutored fingers and an untrained mind..."[80] Earlier, in 1917, the *Modern Review* had published an article entitled 'Automatic Drawing as a first aid to the artist' in its 'Gleanings' section. The anonymous author used Freudian interpretations of the unconscious[81] to steer the artist away from formalist rigidity, combining the surrealist technique of free-association, shattering 'imposed' rational cognitive structures, and breaking free from prevailing artistic techniques.[82] This was echoed by Andre Breton's declaration that "for a total revision of real values the plastic work of art will either refer to a purely internal model or will cease to exist."[83] The author suggested the use of exogenous avant-garde European discourses relativised within endogenous Indian modernism, something Rabindranath absorbed after his visits to Europe. The Author wrote:

> Drawings should be made by allowing the hand to run freely with the least possible deliberation. In time shapes will be found to evolve, suggesting conceptions, forms and ultimately having personal or individual style...The mind in a state of oblivion, without desire towards reflection or pursuit of materialistic intellectual suggestions, is in a condition to produce successful drawings of one's personal ideas, symbolic in meaning and wisdom. By this means sensation may be visualized.[84]

Rabindranath poured out his interiorized unconscious mind. He observed in a letter to Jamini Roy, "For art is *maya* (illusion), it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is."[85] Modernist painting is exemplified by his 1932 pen and ink work *Composition,* which has similarities to William Blake.[86]

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[80] *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 373.

[81] Freud, S., *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud,* Ed, and Translated by Brill, A.,A., The Modern Library, New York, 1966, Pg 545-56 &737-39.

[82] "Gleanings" - "Automatic Drawing as a first aid to the artist" *The Modern Review,* Vol. 31, No. 1-6 January to June, 1917, pp. 63 – 65, Pg 64.

[83] Breton, Andre, "Le Surrealism et la peinture," La revolution surrealiste. No 4 (July 1925). The complete series of essays was collected in Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, Trans. Simon Watson Taylor, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, Pg 28.

[84] "Gleanings" - "Automatic Drawing as a first aid to the artist" *The Modern Review,* Vol. 31, No. 1-6 January to June, 1917, pp. 63 – 65, Pg 65.

[85] Quoted in *The Modern Review*, Vol. 27, No. 6, December 1942, Whole No. 433, p. 494-5.

[86] Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*, New American Library, New York and Toronto, 1962, Pg 302.

Rabindranath Tagore *Composition* (1932, Pen and Ink, Rabindra Bhavan, Visva Bharati University)

Composition was made in Baghdad on the 24th of May. Both Rabindranath's doodlings and interiorized musings are placed next to a Universalist poem forging ties with the Middle East.[87] The examples provided by Rabindranath and the European avant-garde artists suggest that modernism is structurally endogenous to cultural-systems. Modernisms are causal concatenations of socio-political and economic developments that are shaped by flows in capital. Modernisms are endogenous discourses, with artists reaching into exogenous globally circulated discourses to redefine and enhance their endogenous discourses, which critique and harness their socio-political and cultural life-worlds.

The artworks of Rabindranath move between Indian and European modernity. Moving between different cultural-systems, he created an in-between, culturally doubled, and hybridized situation for the reception and understanding of his paintings and his country in

[87] The night has ended.
Put out the light of the lamp
Of thine own narrow corner
Smudged with smoke.
The great morning which is for all
Appears in the East
Let its light reveal us
To each other
Who walk on
In the same
Path of pilgrimage.

India and Europe. [88] He created a space for the paintings hermeneutic location in Indian and European modernism. By doing so, Rabindranath opened Indian modern art to European audiences, creating a new space for the discourse of Indian art.

Rabindranath moved away from the nationalistic sentiments of art for the nation, which hampered the Bengal School.[89] He entered, and created, a discursial space where art discourses made India and the world open to each other in a humanist sense. One reciprocally informed the other, as India advanced through its endogeny, while also borrowing discourses and inspiration from the west and Asia. Rabindranath's paintings were the first mode of an endogenous expressionism detached from the new Indian cultural-system's reaction to academy realism and bourgeois modernity.

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[88] Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, Pg 50.
[89] See Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism Colonial India, 1850 – 1922 – Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. See: Mitra, Asok, "Three Painters in Search of Coherent Vision" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 5.

3.2 Japanese Modernization, Aesthetics, the Unbroken Cultural-System, Inspiration, and Rabindranath's ideas on Contemporaneity and Historicism.

Rabindranath called for a redevelopment of the Bengal School during his first trip to Japan in 1916 before his trips to Europe. There he lectured on nationalism and modernism, and came under the spell of the living art of Japan, the integration of art in their life-habits. This inspired Rabindranath to open up artistic discourses by translating India's historical past into a modern vocabulary and coalescing art with a communitarian praxis. Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar Vaij, and Binode Bihari Mukherjee, who forged humanist world modernism via endogenous structures, would see this in Shantiniketan where it was exemplified.[90] The larger effort created a modernism that was both endogenous and global without being European, derivative, and historicist. This echoed Rabindranath's position on literature and historicality.[91] Rabindranath saw no historicism in cultures.[92] He believed that the "...past renews itself creatively in literature..."[93] Hegelian World-History, historical progression, linear teleology, or goal driven history and time, were unimportant to his modernism.[94] He felt that all cultural phenomena, and its production, were contemporaneous with the person who engages it and the religious-cultural and national heritage the person comes from. He wrote, "Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours wherever they might have their origin..."[95] Assimilating new and old discourses, Rabindranath escaped a historicizing tendency because he believed history was personal instead of public and secular. And consequently the person's consciousness conditioned history making it personal, and temporality unravelled in the artist's mind rather then

[90] See Jamal, Osman, "E.B. Havell and Rabindranath Tagore", *Third Text* 14 : 53, Pg 19-30, 2001.
[91] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002. The historical existence of man in the world, Pg 3.
[92] The term historicism as used here follows Ian Hacking. Hacking writes historicism is "...the theory that social and cultural phenomena are historically determined and that each period in history has its own values that are not directly applicable to other epochs. See: Hacking, Ian, "Two Kinds of 'New Historicism' for Philosophers," in Ralph Cohen and Michael S. Roth eds., *History and Historians within the Human Sciences*, Chalottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1995, Pg 298. Or following Maurice Mandelbaum: "historicism is the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development." See: Mandelbaum, Maurice, History, Man and Reason, Baltimore, 1971, Quoted in Ankersmit, F.R., "Historicism: An Attempt at Synthesis," *History and Theory 36*, October 1995, pp. 143-161, Pg 41.
[93] Guha, Ranajit *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 5.
[94] Ibid, Pg 75-83.
[95] Rabindranath Tagore, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore" in *The Modern Review*, May 1921, Pg 616.

"chronologically in the world".[96] The relationship between literature and historicality (the true existence of man-in-the-world), he said (months before his death in May 1941):

> I have heard it said again and again [writes Tagore] that we are guided altogether by history, and I have energetically nodded, so to say, in my mind whenever I heard it. I have settled this debate in my own heart where I am nothing but a poet. I am there in the role of a creator all alone and free. There's little to enmesh me there in the net in the net of external events. I find it difficult to put up with the pedantic historian when he tries to force me out of the centre of my creativity as a poet.[97]

In Japan Rabindranath stayed in Izura 110 kilometres north of Tokyo, in the estate where Okakura had died in 1913. His companion W.W. Pearson has recorded that Rabindranath sat:

> In front of the house, overlooking the sea is a small summerhouse, which was the favourite room of the late Mr. Okakura. There, Rabi Babu sat during the day, and wrote, or watched the fishing boats as they passed out of the bay into the open sea.[98]

Okakura's Sea Side Small Summer House, Photograph Kedar Vishwanathan 2008.

[96] Vajpayi, Ananya, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2012, Pg 88.
[97] Guha, Ranajit *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 77.
[98] Pearson, W.W., *The Modern Review*, November, 1916, Pg 541-42.

1st view from Okakura's Sea Side House. Photograph Kedar Vishwanathan 2008.

In Izura Rabindranath witnessed how the union of the human with the natural environment operated, but yet had not renounced the western cultural-system and the universalizing tendency of capital. Rather both had been assimilated within the endogenous cultural-system. This was to have a profound influence on his ideas.

Rabindranath was inspired by Japanese aesthetics, which did not "feebly imitate the west."[99] It had continued, without destroying tradition, and had infused and integrated Western, Asian, Chinese, Indian, and Korean aesthetic structures and discourses. The Japanese cultural-system was not ruptured by these infusions and integrations. Rabindranath said:

> Japanese aesthetics is a part of its dedication—a tremendous force. Luxury compels you to splurge within and without, and weakens you. But pure aesthetics protects man's mind from selfishness and materialistic clashes. So, in the mind of the Japanese this aesthetics, this thirst for beauty sublime has blended with masculinity successfully.[100]

Uncolonized Japan, during the Meiji Restoration, modernized and accelerated its industrialization. The modernization harnessed western capitalist elements whilst staying true to the core of traditional beliefs and aesthetics. Meiji-controlled socio-religious reform took

[99] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 14.
[100] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Japan Yatri*, Text taken from authors photograph of wall plaque in 2009, form Rabindra Bharati Society, Tagore's ancestral home Jorasanko, Calcutta.

place, for instance the abolition of the bushido (samurai) caste.[101] Yet core aesthetic principles were not lost. Japanese modernity did not sever itself from the habitual cultural-systems. For Rabindranath thought that Japan resisted "the dominance…[of the]…western Nation," allowing Japan to take the "benefit of western civilization in fullest measure."[102]

Mukul Dey (far left), Rabindranath Tagore (top right) and two Japanese ladies. Photo taken in Yokohama, 1916. (Image Courtesy Mukul Dey Archives.)

Rabindranath also stayed at Sankeien, the Yokohama residence of the millionaire industrialist Hara Tomitaro. In Sankeien, Rabindranath (and Mukul Dey) became enamoured with the paintings of Yokoyama Taikan and Shimomura Kanzan. In Yokohama Rabindranath commissioned copies of paintings of the old masters of the Nihonga School completed by Shimomura Kanzan. Rabindranath and Mukul Dey studied Sesshu Toyo's ink masterpieces, as well as a collection of classical Chinese painting. Kanzan, like Yokoyama Taikan, was

[101] See Tipton, Elise K., *Modern Japan: A Social and Political History*, Routledge: London and New York, 2002, Pg 36-87.
[102] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 44.

from the Nihon Bijutsuin, Okakura's nationalist school.[103] Rabindranath, Mukul Dey and W.W. Pearson also stayed in Yokoyama Taikan's vacation house. Inspired by the high level of aesthetic awareness and maintenance of spatial dimensions, which incorporated living space, Rabindranath wrote:

> Here I have found refuge in the house of our painter friend Yokoyama Taikan. From now on, I would be acquainted with the inner soul of Japan. To one side of the room, not covered in mat, glittered highly polished block of wood. On the wall to that side hung a painting and a bouquet of flowers, in a vase, was arranged on the block of wood under that. That painting was not for show, but for intense viewing. So that no one could carelessly lean upon it, a proper distance had been created. This revealed how much Japanese revered beautiful objects.[104]

Rabindranath was inspired by the way Japanese revere their objects. The intense viewing, and reverence, both spiritual in nature, echoing Indian worship, and *darshan*, resonated with Rabindranath. The harmony between interrelated aesthetic objects and the human environment appealed to Rabindranath when he visited the Bauhaus in 1921. Walter Gropius, too, held the ideals of integrated life, and a preference for handicrafts over mechanized production.[105] In India, handicrafts, connected with *swadeshi* nationalism, resisted the thrusts of capital, helping the development of the endogenous cultural-system. Rabindranath wanted to bring the Japanese and Bauhaus emphasis back to India, and for this was in contact with Johannes Itten (responsible for the Bauhaus basic course curriculum) who exhibited and helped write the catalogue for the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta, which as we saw in Part 2, impacted the course of modern Indian art. Itten was also responsible for the basic course at the Bauhaus. By integrating these discourses (Japanese, European, and Indian) Rabindranath hoped to reunite art and the praxis of habitual cultural-systems. Johannes Itten, whose interest in oriental spirituality was growing, shared his pedagogical ideas with Rabindranath, and made plans to come to Shantiniketan.[106]

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[103] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, "Dialogues in Artistic Nationalisms" in *Art India*, Volume XIV, Issue III, Quarter III, 2009, pp. 22-44,

[104] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Japan Yatri*, Text taken from authors photograph of wall plaque in 2009, form Rabindra Bharati Society, Tagore's ancestral home Jorasanko, Calcutta.

[105] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 68 & 79.

[106] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

3.3 Rabindranath's Critique of Western Modernity, Nationalism, and Modernism; and his call for a Universal Modernism.

Before his exposure to the non-realist abstractions of the European avant-garde, Rabindranath gave a lecture on nationalism in Osaka on 1st June 1916. It provided a major statement on modernity and modernism. Though addressed to a Japanese audience, the statement would have a large impact on Indian modernism, coming as it was, from someone who constituted a "part of the modern consciousness in India."[107] Rabindranath announced:

> I am quite sure that there are men in your country who are not in sympathy with your inherited ideals, whose object is to gain and not to grow. They are loud in their boast that they have modernised Japan. While I agree with them so far as to say that the spirit of the race should harmonise with the spirit of the time, I must warn them that modernising is a mere affectation of modernism, just as an affectation of poesy is poetising, It is nothing but mimicry, only affectation is louder than the original and it is too literal. One must bear in mind that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernise, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts. Modernism is not in the dress of the Europeans, or in the hideous structures where their children are interned when they take their lessons, or in the square houses with flat, straight wall-surfaces, pierced with parallel lines of windows where these people are caged in their lifetime; certainly modernism is not in their ladies' bonnets, carrying on them loads of incongruities. These are not modern, but merely European. True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life—a mere imitation of our science teachers who reduce it into a superstition, absurdly invoking its aid for all impossible purposes.[108]

The importance of spirit was the kernel idea. The other idea that drove the Japan lecture and his series of essays on nationalism—"Nationalism in the West," "Nationalism in Japan," and "Nationalism in India"— was a critique of the nation's form and its mechanical structure, driven by capitalism into materialism, creating nationalism. He defined the Nation as "the political and economic union of a people...in that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose."[109] Though he wrote, "I am not an economist," his critique of the nation-form was based on the "acknowledgment that there is a law of demand and supply and an infatuation of man for more things than are good for him." Modernity brought about a "conflict between the individual and the state, labour and capital,' paralleling the conflict between endogenous cultures and the universal nature of capital. He

[107] Nandy, Ashish, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self,* Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, Pg 4.
[108] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 19. Emphasis added.
[109] Ibid, Pg 37.

characterized the conflict as the split between "the greed of material gain and the spiritual life of man," as well as the "organized selfishness of nations and the higher ideals of humanity." The endogenous cultural-systems and the "giant organizations of commerce and state," have to be, he argued, "brought to a harmony in a manner not yet dreamt of."[110] If there was no 'harmony,' the universal bond of humanity could end in the aggressive nationalistic acquisition of land, and militarization.[111] The West, in "former days," "organized and plundered; in the present age the same spirit continues, and they organize and exploit the whole world."[112] This exploitation, he said, caused the "drainage" of the endogenous cultural-system's "lifeblood" by "economic dragons."[113]

Rabindranath promulgated his notion of the "Nation" as the "self-interest of a whole people, where it is least human and least spiritual."[114] On his 1916 trip to America, where he lectured in New York's Carnegie Hall (November 21), he said:

> ...with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the Churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril.[115]

The Nation and its nationalist processes were "illegitimate" because they were not universally applicable, because one's cultural-system may not accept another's nationalism. Accordingly, Nationalism was not universalizable. One country's cultural-system may not accept another's internal processes of nationalism.[116] Modernism was not a material-conceptual entity to be foisted without correct assimilation upon societies, which are not *tabula rasa*.[117] The Nation, wrote Rabindranath, "is neither British nor anything else." It was "an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles where it is used," creating a mechanical structure "like a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal," whose

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[110] Ibid, Pg 6.
[111] Ibid, Pg 20-21.
[112] Ibid, Pg 64.
[113] Ibid, Pg 87.
[114] Ibid, Pg 41.
[115] See Mukhopadhyay, Prabhat Kumar, *Rabindrajibani (Life of Rabindranath)*, Calcutta: Viswabharati, 1987, pp. 577, 583.
[116] See Nandy, Ashish, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, Delhi, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.
[117] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002, Pg xxiii.

"power may vary in different engines,"[118] the differing 'engines' being the diverse endogenous cultural-systems.

Rabindranath's critique was from the position of a humanist poet, who articulated the spirit of the human race through Vedantic and Upanishadic discourses creating a human embodiment of tradition and culture. [119] He experienced European modernism floating ashore to the peripheries causing Indian modernity to be labelled an 'uneven development,' a *décalage*. 'Uneven development' is the "dated grid"[120] of "*empty homogenous time*"[121] found in less advanced industrial nations, those in 'transition.' It drives synchronous behaviour [from the West] in the non-synchronous [India].[122] Rabindranath wrote: "...in India the only assistance we get is merely to be jeered at by the Nation for lagging behind."[123] Due to 'uneven' developmental modes and models, where [western] historicist thinking is complicit in creating historical, cultural and institutional differences and a 'slavery of taste', Indians were forced under the 'tutelage' of 'European *school-masters*'.

"All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one."[124] The larger history was not the Hegelian realization as the state (in self-consciousness and spirit) in world-history[125], but rather a bond of the universal spirit. The East, he argued, was "attempting to take into itself a history, which [was] not the outcome of its own living."[126]

Rabindranath's critique was an early Indian critique of Euramerican modernism, later finding clearer articulation in the 1960s, in the hands of ex-Marxist Jagdish Swaminathan. Rabindranath's 1922 Bauhaus Exhibition in Calcutta brought Paul Klee to Indian audiences, and it was Swaminathan who much later invoked Klee, understanding historical-aesthetic correspondences between Klee and Indian art history and modernism. Indeed, Rabindranath's

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[118] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 43.
[119] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 82.
[120] Chandler, James, *England in 1819*, Chicago University Press, 1998, Pg 131.
[121] Benedict Anderson uses Walter Benjamin's conception of "empty homogenous time". See Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London New York, 2006. However, the notion of "empty homogenous time", following from Partha Chatterjee, is an "uneven" model because it "linearly connects past, present, and future, creating the possibility for all of those historicist imaginings of identity, nationhood, progress, and so on that Anderson, along with others, have made familiar to us. But empty homogeneous time is not located anywhere in real space-it is utopian." See: Chatterjee, Partha, "Anderson's Utopia," *Diacritics*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson, Winter, 1999, pp. 128-134, Pg 131.
[122] Bloch, Ernst, "Non-synchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," *New German Critique* 11, translatedMark Ritter (Spring 1977), pp. 22–38. Inserted words are authors.
[123] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 45.
[124] Ibid, Pg 65.
[125] See Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002.
[126] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 65.

paintings had similarities with Paul Klee's due to the primitive aesthetic structure, and transcendence from objective reality. Swaminathan, however, found that Klee's transcendence from objective reality was much closer to the Indian tradition, something that Rabindranath (motioned earlier) thought was a quality not naturally part of European artists' work. Swaminathan found Klee's use of myth, and geometrical abstraction close to the indigenous tradition of abstraction in India, seen in the use of two-dimensional space in tantric, as well as other traditional painting. Swaminathan felt Klee had relativised (translated) these Indian discourses into his work, and he used Klee's work to critique European modernism, and to give impetus to the Indian tradition, by demonstrating how Indian and European modernism were indebted to each other, as both modernisms had used extant global discourses (in circulation for centuries). He did this to stop the hegemony of abstract expression over Indian modernism, whilst critiquing the European use of geometrical forms as a method to express and rupture the discourse of nature/realism, which, in a sense, was an attempt at the breakdown, effacement, and shattering of the discourse of realism in European art history.

Swaminathan thought Paul Klee to be the one and only exception in the European tradition; Paul Klee stood apart from the western modern tradition because he "...cut himself ... from the analytical stream to create a world of myth; to destroy all representational context to make the mystery of life palpable." Swaminathan wrote:

> ...there is no other painter who comes anywhere near what I would consider as our true tradition. The anthropomorphic imagination functioning in our miniature painting, the psychedelic use of colour in Tantric painting and the geometric use of space in all of our traditional painting have one end in view: not to represent reality or even analyse it, but to create that para-natural image which inspires man to contend with reality.[127]

Swaminathan felt the 'para-natural image' was not pure objective representation but a representation that allows 'man to contend with reality.' This contending with reality has to be viewed in light of the philosophical interiorization of Abanindranath and Ananda Coomaraswamy, as well as their discourses of transforming nature within the mind of the artist, which was the Indian art theoretical and historical basis that Swaminathan moved back to. Swaminathan did not want to dismiss the Western tradition or "oppose" it "with

[127] Swamianthan, Jagdish, "The New Promise" in Lalit Kala Contemporary, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 19-20.

something Eastern to arrive at originality."[128] He stated "it is impossible to overlook the values established by Indian art in the past if we have to achieve universality in defining ourselves through art." The western modern movement "gave up linear perspective for two-dimensional space."[129] According to Swaminathan miniature painters and the folk artists of "Rajasthan, Gujarat area and Tantric art", practiced working in two-dimensional space "long before Picasso was born."[130] He argued, "contemporary movements in Western art as hard-edge painting, pop art, Optical-art or even Psychedelic art have nothing "new" to give in terms of the use of materials as collage, spatial or colour organization..."[131] He found "this entire "tradition" of the modern movement in the West...wholly damaging and irrelevant...[for Indian] purposes."[132] Articulating similar art historical arguments made by W.G. Archer in 1959 in relation to a universal formal modernism[133], Swaminathan ideologically aggressively argued:

> In contradiction to the Western approach, the traditional Indian approach to painting-space has always been geometric. This, because painting was never meant to "represent" reality in the naturalistic, "objective" sense, it was the cogent and poetic rendering of *ideal* truth in terms of two-dimensional space. The fact that the "modern' movement in India did not take off from the spatial concepts evolved in traditional Indian painting at once explains the poverty of its contribution. Its future rests in a return and re-exploration of these concepts. This too, will be the beginning of the Indian contribution to 20th century world painting.[134]

Swaminathan also critiqued the cultural dominance of Euramerican abstract expressionism and the Indian artists who used it for relativisation.[135] He was against the Eurocentric and western art historiographical interpretation of Indian art. He argued that being modern in India does not mean an imitation of western cultural forms. He wrote:

> It is interesting to find [Clement] Greenberg's somewhat blunt judgment finding confirmation in Archer's enthusiasm for Indian art as represented by artists of the first decade and a half after independence. Archer, the noted English critic and writer on Indian art, finds in painters like Avinash Chandra, Souza, Husain, etc., the true precursors of the modern movement in Indian art, believing that it is their intelligent acceptance of the European vision that brings Indian art into the realm of modernity.

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[128] Ibid, Pg 19.
[129] Ibid, Pg 19.
[130] Ibid, Pg 19.
[131] Ibid, Pg 19.
[132] Ibid, Pg 19.
[133] See Archer, William, *India and Modern Art*, Ruskin House George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Museum Street London, 1959
[134] Swaminathan, Jagdish, "The Cube and The Rectangle" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 21.
[135] Patel, Gieve, "The Decades and the Seminar," *Contra '66*, no. 5-6, c. 1967, Pg 5.

> Unfortunately, it is this very acceptance of concepts developed by the modern movement in Western art that has inhibited our painters and relegated them to a secondary status *vis-à-vis* contemporary world art.[136]

Swaminathan's critique returned to endogenous discourses that pervade the society, such as aniconic tantric forms (two examples of which are shown below). Indeed, these aniconic tantric forms are structural (several examples of which are found in Indian art from the 16th century onward, especially in Rajasthan in western India, but for all ostensibly purposes have had a much longer theosophical and philosophical presence, then their availability in extant cultural forms suggest[137]) and wide-spread throughout Indian society in religious discourses in Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Hinduism. Tantric aniconic forms continue to be used in contemporary (such as the urban wall painting in Benaras, see image below), and religious forms.

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[136] Swaminathan, Jagdish, "The New Promise" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 18.

[137] See Khanna, Madhu, and Mookerjee, Ajit, *The Tantric Way: Art, Science, Ritual*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977.

Aniconic Yantra (Photograph Kedar Vishwanathan, Near Daultabad Fort 2010)

Aniconic Tantric Yantra wall of a building in Varanasi (Photo Kedar Vishwanathan 2009).

Swaminathan's critiques of Euroamerican modernism evolved "in conjunction with a 'national' and 'revolutionary culture."[138] His critique is important because it helped shape an Indian artistic identity in the wake of American cultural hegemony. Swaminathan criticized Euramerican modernism as the cultural component of the teleological progression of western history, which Indian artists had to join to become part of international modernism. Swaminathan thought that this made Indian art and artists appear to be derivate of western modernism. In his critique, like Rabindranath, Swaminathan used Vedantic principles. He used the philosophical category of the *Brahman*, the ultimate Hindu reality, which offered the ultimate reality of all pervasive spirit—an *upanishadic* transcendence into the infinite, and that, which is beyond time. Swaminathan wished for Indian endogenous modernism to defy the western logic of history and modernism. Rather than transcend historical progression through the "Marxian materialistic dialectic," he brought art in contact with the bare spirit and numen that, for him, pervaded artistic reality.[139] The artist Gulammohammed Sheikh wrote, "Swaminathan saw [an] invocation of the sacred numen."[140] The use of potential invocation of the sacral through the aniconic *Tantric* form can be seen in Swaminathan's painting *Untitled* 1993. The use of another aniconic form can be seen in S.H. Raza's painting *Param Bindu* 1989.

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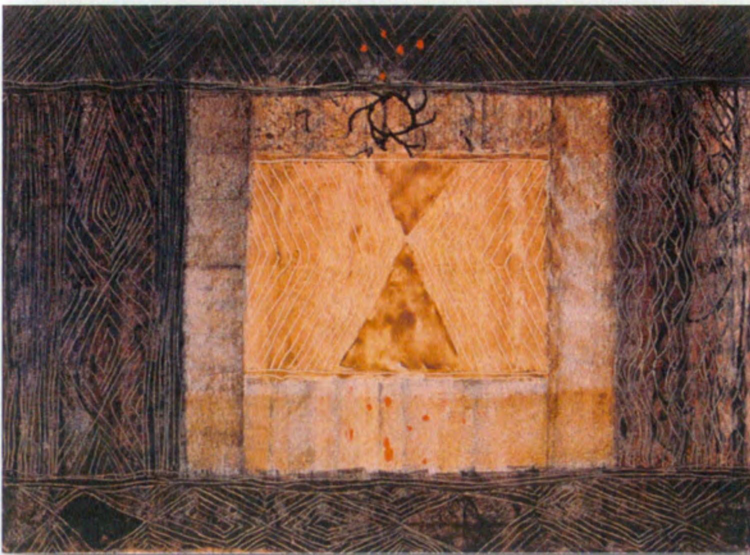
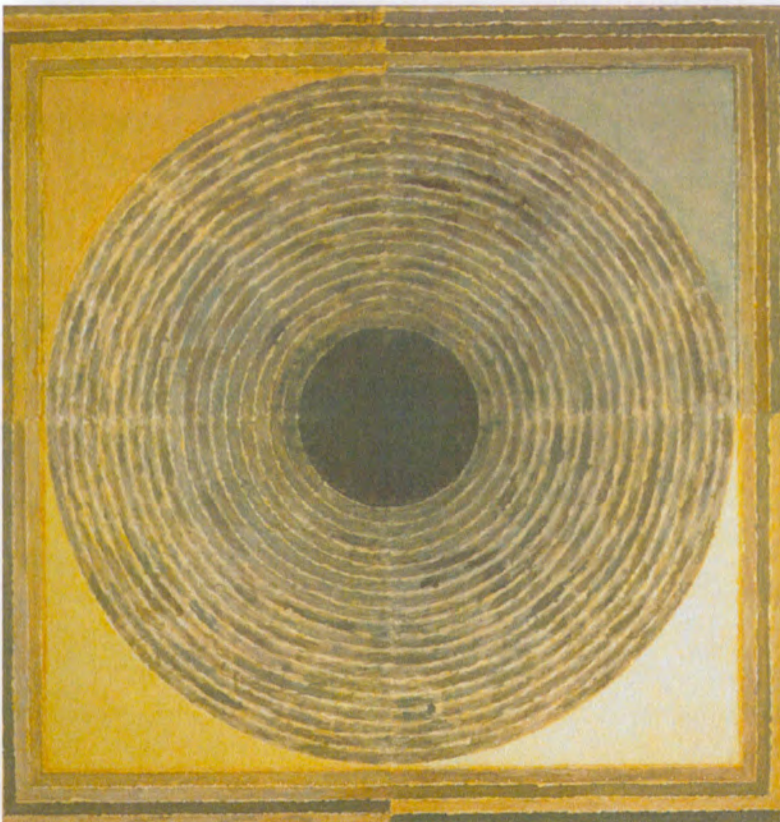
[138] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism: Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000, Pg 276.
[139] Kapur, Geeta, *Contemporary Indian Artists*, Vikas Publishing House Pty Ltd, New Delhi, 1978, Pg 193.
[140] Sheikh, Gulammohammed, "Two Decades of Indian Art," *Link* 15th August, 1978, Pg 61.



Jagdish Swaminathan *Untitled* (1993, Mixed Media on Canvas)



S.H. Raza *Param Bindu* (1989, Oil on Canvas, collection Michel Ferrier, Grenoble)

Swaminathan used these religious-cultural elements to transcend western history and time, escaping the hold that the west's historical logic had on Indian modernism.[141] Like Rabindranath, Swaminathan did not believe in the logic of history, and appealed to the transcendence of history in the present contemporaneous moment—the "*utopian time of capital*"[142]—that made everything available; both endogenous and exogenous discourses from any time was available for the artist. Swaminathan's "contemporaneity" suggested the "simultaneous validity of coexisting cultures", an approach that was inclusive of the "traditions of folk and tribal cultures."[143] In this he echoed the thought of Rabindranath. Swaminathan was a Marxist, but later moved away from it, seeing Marxism as an "extension of the essential Western Christian mind, which sees an antagonistic 'reality' and attempts physically and spiritually to grapple with it."[144] Swaminathan used the non-dualist Brahman (atma and paramatma) to understand and critique the subject-object master-slave dialectics of Hegel, and Marx's subsequent inversion of Hegel's dialectic.[145]

In Rabindranath's theory of modernism, an endogenous cultural-system that moves into a universal sphere still retains religious-cultural elements and relations. The aniconic religious and tribal symbols used by Raza and Swaminathan are examples that the nation has not eradicated. According to Rabindranath, the universalizing processes of capital failed to suppress the religious-cultural system. Marx states: "...bourgeois society is itself only a contradictory form of development, relations derived from earlier forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied."[146] Describing religion as a definitional feature of a cultural-system requires some elaboration. The religious should be thought of in Geertzian terms:

> ...A system of symbols which acts to...establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by...formulating conceptions of a general order of

[141] See Zitzewitz, Karin, *The Aesthetics of Secularism Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Thesis Columbia University, 2006, Pg 237-332.

[142] Chatterjee, Partha, "Anderson's Utopia," *Diacritics*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson (Winter, 1999), pp. 128-134, Pg 131.

[143] Swaminathan, J., "The Cygan – an auto bio note" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 40, Special Issue on Jagdish Swaminathan, Lalit Kala Akademi, March, 1995, Pg 12.

[144] Patel, Gieve, "An Interview with Swaminathan," *Times of India*, no date, C. 1968, Lalit Kala Akademi Clippings Files, New Delhi.

[145] See Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974. See Kojève, Alexandre, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Ed. Allan Bloom, Trans., James, H, Nicholas, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1980.

[146] Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse – Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, Trans., Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books & New Left Review, London, 1993, Pg 105.

> existence and...clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that...the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. [147]

The aniconic symbols used in paintings can be viewed with Marx and Geertz's words in mind. 'Relations derived from earlier forms' and their 'systems of symbols' are features of the (Indian) cultural-system in the public and private spheres. Religious elements constitutive in the production of social histories under modernity are not, as Chakrabarty writes in the context of the logic of capital and his History 2, "necessarily precapitalist or feudal."[148] Instead elements from the cultural-system are not "incompatible" with the "logic of capital."[149] Rabindranath's view was that the endogenous cultural-system had to harness its endemic features so as to create, as Chakrabarty states in an analogous context, "room for politics of human belonging and diversity."[150] Rabindranath wanted cultural-systems and their endemic histories to 'interrupt' in *different* ways the "totalizing thrusts"[151] of capital, something he witnessed in Japan. Rabindranath's modernism was humane and different from the western model, opening up the possibilities for different, plural, and parallel modernity's situated under the logic of global modernity. He said:

> Japan has imported her food from the West, but not her vital nature. Japan cannot altogether lose and merge herself in the scientific paraphernalia she has acquired from the West and be turned into a mere borrowed machine. She has her own soul, which must assert itself over all her requirements. That she is capable of doing so, and that the process of assimilation is going on, have been amply proved by the signs of vigorous health that she exhibits.[152]

Rabindranath's universalist humanist position is analogous to Susan Buck-Morss' globalized theory of humanity, which finds a global universal humanity at the points where identity and their interconnected cultural-systems rupture[153]:

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[147] Geertz, Clifford, "Religion as a cultural system" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Fontana Press, 1993, Pg 90. For a review of Geertz's conception of religion, which includes a criticism, but also how power has affected religion see: Asad, Talal, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz", *Man*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 2, June, 1983, pp. 237-259. Also See Durkheim, E., *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York, 1961, Pg 52 and 62.

[148] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Second Edition 2007, Pg 67.

[149] Ibid, Pg 67.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid, Pg 66.

[152] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 5.

[153] Buck-Morss' theory could be seen to discount the endemic minority histories created through colonialism and these histories connected within a broader universal history, or struggle against capital's universalizing tendency Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Second Edition 2007, Pg xvii.

> Rather than giving multiple, distinct culture equal due, whereby people are recognized as part of humanity indirectly through the mediation of collective cultural identities, human universality emerges in the historical event at the point of rupture. It is in the discontinuities of history that people whose culture has been strained to the breaking point give expression to a humanity that goes beyond cultural limits. And it is in our emphatic identification with this raw, free, and vulnerable state, that we have a chance of understanding what they say. Common humanity exists in spite of culture and its differences. A person's non-identity with the collective allows for subterranean solidarities that have a chance of appealing to universal, moral sentiment...[154]

In accordance with socio-political modernity, modernism (or the 'cultural logic' of capitalism) differentiates itself through different historical processes and dwelling patterns. Yet Rabindranath was opposed to the idea of a cultural system adopting, copying, or deriving itself from another in accordance with European modernism, or the Universalist multitudinous abstraction of *place* and cultural-systems.[155] He wanted a common universal humanity but was against the non-identity of a person. He did not argue for erasure of identity or personal histories. The Indian cultural-system dramatically changed after the fall of Mughal artistic patronage and courtly culture; the imposition of the bourgeois art institutions in India made the cultural-system profoundly different yet again in a way that displeased Rabindranath.

Rabindranath wrote: Indian culture had been "obliterated...by age-long obscurity of oblivion."[156] Rabindranath's modernism contained idealistic, romantic, and pedagogical components. His idealistic and romantic approach to education and art hinged on depictions of the peasantry, nature, and villages. Since capitalist materialism drove Rabindranath's critique of the western nation, he returned to nature and harnessed man's co-habitation with it as part of the pedagogy at Visva-Bharati (Shantiniketan). In this way he resisted "subjugation" and destruction of "old ways of life."[157] 'Old ways of life' for Rabindranath were essential for an endogenous education similar to the ancient university of Nalanda. A key pedagogical approach at Shantiniketan was to make do with one's own environment. In

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[154] Buck-Morss, Susan, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2009, Pg 133.

[155] See Hardt, Michael, and Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000. Also see Hardt, Michael, and Negri, Antonio, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2004. For the argument against the above globalization theorists see Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Second Edition 2007, Pg xvii.

[156] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Gaganendranath Tagore" in *Gaganendranath Tagore*, The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, The Birth Centenary of Gaganendranath Tagore, Ed,. Pulinbihari Sen, The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Park Street, Calcutta, March 1972, Pg 30.

[157] Marx, Karl, Grundrisse – *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, Trans., Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books & New Left Review, London, 1993, Pg 410.

Rabindranath's (aristocratic) words, "Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world…Therefore in my school, much to the disgust of people of expensive habits, I had to provide for this great teacher—this bareness of furniture and materials, not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world."[158] At his most passionate, Rabindranath spoke of Shantiniketan as a "temple to exorcise [the nationalist] demon."[159]

The pedagogical component of Rabindranath's modernism was that a wholly European university was an organic component of European civilization and thus cannot be transplanted into India.[160] However, Rabindranath wanted an educational system in which western, Indian, and global teaching methods would be relativised (and translated) with each other, rather than wholly transplanted, in order to create a globally "revived Indian style," so that a new type of university could "relive the…memories of Taxila and Nalanda, where students flocked from the four corners of Asia…"[161] The university "should be…of the soil," and maintain "its own life by the work of its own hands; students and teachers sharing in a common life, contributing to the life of the surrounding villages and to the solution of India's problems as they present themselves in the neighbourhood." The university should place India's "spiritual life on the foundation" of the past, while still "welcoming the spiritual contributions of every culture in the world."[162] In this creation of a new modernism, Rabindranath "…believe[d] in the true meeting of the East and the West."[163] The cross civilizational and pan-religious murals that Nandalal Bose and Binode Behari Mukherjee produced were inextricably linked to Rabindranath's ideology.

Rabindranath instituted a series of non-denominational festivals at Shantiniketan and at Sriniketan, the site of his rural development project. At the annual Halakarshan ploughing festival, held in August, people from the local villages and in the towns all joined together. Bose painted this as a mural in the fresco technique on the back wall of a pavilion at the site of the festival. It then became the larger mural in fresco buono, a technique with which Asit Kumar Haldar was experimenting. The study demonstrates the 'common life' of students and the villages. Rabindranath served as the ploughman and is represented in the right of the

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[158] Tagore, Rabindranath, "My School" in *Personality, lectures delivered in America*, Macmillan, London, 1945, Pg 121.
[159] Nandy, Ashish, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, Pg 7.
[160] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Dr. Tagore on a Centre of Indigenous Culture in India," *The Modern Review*, October 1920, Pg 418.
[161] Ibid, Pg 418
[162] Ibid, Pg 418.
[163] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 615.

composition. Such an approach can be seen to be the construction of images reflective of the villages and human's relationship with nature, which became an instituted feature at Shantiniketan and a feature of endogenous Indian modernism.

Nandalal Bose Section of Mural Study for Festival of Halakarshan (1928, Ink on Nepali Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

For Rabindranath, a universal modernism and humanity was where intrinsic elements of a human's ecosystem, environment and dwelling intersect to create a community and its defining religious-cultural-meaning system. Village, ideologies, dharmic law,[164] and "life-world" (*lebenswelt*)[165]are harnessed and shared with other environments and communities to dwell universally, rather than hegemonically and nationalistically.

Modernism was something that modernity gave, and through this a people could grow with 'freedom of mind' rather than imitating a 'ladies bonnet.' Rabindranath's critique of modernism followed on from Havell's previous assertion that modernism is a science, which needs to become 'Indian.'[166] Rabindranath said, "...when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in western civilization we shall be in a position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds."[167] The continued attempts by Indian nationalists to negate the western spirit would "alienate our heart and mind from those of the west", "an attempt at spiritual suicide."[168] The permanence of the west was its "spirit."[169]

[164] The material and mental world.

[165] Husserl, Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated David Carr, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970, Pg 108-9. For a comparison between Rabindranath's philosophy and Nietzsche see Pg 37-38, Haq, Kaiser, "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore," in *Asiatic* Volume 4., No. 1, June 2010 pp. 27-40.

[166] Havell, E.B *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras, India, 1912, Pg 17.

[167] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 42.

[168] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 616.

The western and Indian spirit should be united to create a universal spirit for humanity, culminating in shared cultural forms and discourses, where endogenous modernist discourses were not eradicated but celebrated, and each endogenous discourse can add to the universal spirit.

[169] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books, India, 2009, Pg 41.

3.4 Rabindranath's Letters from Japan to Gaganendranath and Abanindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath wrote to his nephew Gaganendranath Tagore on the 8th of August 1916.

> When will you all leave your corner and go out into the wide world? You ought to make your name properly known. But it is useless to chide you. Finally...on the advice of Taikan, I am sending you an artist named Arai. He and his companion will live in India for a couple of years, buying Indian art and paintings of India. If he can stay...six months in our house and provide you with some training that would be good. A new stimulus from outside reawakens our mind—the company of these artists will benefit you in this way ...This man is gentle and of good character—though he is not as good an artist as Taikan, he is by no means inferior. As a teacher he has much to offer. Had you come here, one thing would have made you very happy and could be applicable in your work: utilitarian objects here are very beautiful and also thoroughly suited to our country. If I had been returning home direct from Japan I would have cleared the shops and taken everything back with me. Every aspect of everything has been made beautiful - not even the tiniest detail has been neglected - which is where these people differ entirely from us. In their houses I do not see refuse anywhere - I don't know where they hide it all. The children learn to take care of everything and do not behave with lack of restraint. Women carry out all tasks with grace and precision that is a pleasure to behold. I spent a couple of days at Okakura's garden house.[170]

Rabindranath chided Gaganendranath for his insularity, hoping he would become more cosmopolitan, adding to discourse relativisation and the rejuvenation of Indian aesthetics. Rabindranath saw Japan as a place where people and their art were not divorced from the habitual cultural system. Everything there was in total creative unity. Following the Japanese example, he introduced habitat integration to the experiments at Club Bichitra, which developed into images reflective of the villages and the human's relationship with society and nature. Sixteen days after writing to Gaganendranath, Rabindranath sent a now famous letter to Abanindranath dated 24th August 1916 (italics added).

> Aban, since coming here I've not written to you. Main reason is laziness, second reason is busyness. When you come abroad it is better to cut the ties with home. To be constantly looking over your shoulder hinders your contact with new people. The Almighty is shaking me and gradually shifting me from my old foundations—he wants me not to be confined any longer. So on this trip I have not received many letters from home, nor have I written many. Now Andrews is returning, so I am sending these few hurriedly written lines to you—after I cross the Pacific I probably won't get time to write letters. The more I travel and see Japan, the more it has struck me that you people should have come with me. How vital it is to get into close contact

[170] *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Kirshna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 175-6.

with the living art of this country in order to infuse life into our own art—this you will never realize *if you remain ensconced in your south verandah*. *Our country has no artistic atmosphere, there is no arterial link between our social life and our art—for us art is a superficial thing, neither here nor there; which is why you people can never derive your full nourishment from indigenous sources*. If you came here, you would see how the Japanese race lives in the lap of art—every aspect of its life is artistic. Had you come, the scales would have fallen from your eyes, and the goddess of art in your innermost being would have received her proper homage. *Being here has made me realize for the first time that your art is not the twenty-four carat genuine article. But what can I do, since you will not come out?—Except leave Mukul here: everyone's hoping that he will become a real artist. I wonder how your Vichitra is getting on, perhaps it's better not to ask now—when I return home after a long time I shall see for myself whether the concept is there, nowhere or somewhere in between.*[171]

Rabindranath wanted a movement away from current practices. He wanted both Gaganendranath and Abanindranath to stretch their horizons and develop an internationalist outlook. To do this they have to see the *world* instead of their *home*. For Rabindranath the construction of identity through art was paramount in a (re)-definition of India. Rabindranath's position could be read as a Vedantic—*atman* (self) and Supreme Self that attaches with the "ubiquitous divine spirit," and (in a Hegelian sense) '...the spirit of the race should harmonize with the spirit of the times...'[172] Rabindranath borrowed and used in modern contexts the *upanishadic* discourse, which was a basic resource for his philosophical and cultural comparisons so that there would be a triumph of the human spirit.[173] Abanindranath and Gaganendranath needed to share their life-worlds with the Japanese to integrate art and the habitus within their practice and cultural-system. Rabindranath in his poems and lyrics was entrenched with the baul and the village.[174] He knew that villages preserved their style through localized traditions, which stemmed from habitual cultural production.[175] For Indians, unlike the Japanese, art was a superficial thing, disconnected from habitual cultural systems. Rabindranath wanted to form 'arterial' connections so that the indigenous sources (which Abanindranath and Gaganendranath cannot 'derive...full nourishment from...') would become part of a living culture that created a new endogenous Indian art and circulate it throughout the cultural-system and the country. Rabindranath

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[171] Ibid, Pg 177. Emphasis added.
[172] Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 85.
[173] Ibid, Pg 85-6.
[174] Haq, Kaiser, "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore" *Asiatic Volume 4.*, No. 1, June 2010 pp. 27-40, Pg 33-34.
See "Indian Periodicals" *The Modern Review*, August 1921. Under subheading "The Bauls of Bengal," Pg 217.
[175] Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency An Anthropological Theory*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, Pg 155-64. For a relativist's view of style see Riegl, Alois, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, Translated by Evelyn Kain, Princeton University Press, 1992.

sought a rupture from the English dominated styles, and from the Bengal School practises. He wanted Club Bichitra to experiment and create new forms. He wanted art to be linked to a living society (not to mythologies). He wanted art to be embedded within habitual codes of action endogenously arising from the Indian cultural system(s). By setting out this mission and activating the Bengal School artists in a different direction he created a rupture. The successful execution of his vision (through Shantiniketan and into India) created the next major achievement in Indian art.

3.5 Shantiniketan

After arriving in Seattle in the last week of September 1916, Rabindranath wrote a letter to his son Rathindranath. Rabindranath explained the need for creating the Visva-Bharati in Shantiniketan. He wrote:

> ...the connecting thread between India and the world. I have to found a world centre for the study of humanity there. The days of petty nationalism are numbered – let the first step towards *universal union* occur in the fields of Bolpur [Shantiniketan]. I want to make that place somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography—the first flag of victorious universal humanism will be planted there. To rid the world of the suffocating coils of national pride will be the task of my remaining years.[176]

Rabindranath formalized Visva-Bharati as an indigenous university in 1921. The various institutions in Shantiniketan became centralized under the Visva-Bharati University. In 1905 Rabindranath had stated to Dinesh Chandra Sen that Indian culture would be re-instated and bettered if there was "...an effort to take education into our hands ... [and make it] as indigenous as possible."[177] This comment echoes the fervour of *swadeshi* nationalism and presaged Gandhi's philosophy and his 1909 *Hind Swaraj* criticism of colonial education, which was apprehensive about "cognitive enslavement" to the British.[178] Rabindranath followed Rashbehari Ghose's nationalist criticism of colonial education, whilst also following Gandhi's critiques. But Rabindranath moved away from both positions. He did not want Indians to give up education.[179] In 1911 Ghose, full of the parochial nationalism that Rabindranath later decried, declared his support of the establishment of a Hindu university:

> Education...must have its roots deep down in national sentiment and national tradition.... We are the heirs of an ancient civilization and the true office of education ought to be the encouragement of a gradual and spontaneous growth of the ideals which have given a definite mould to our culture and our institutions ...in our curriculum, therefore, Hindu ethics and metaphysics will occupy a foremost place, the western system being used only for purposes of contrast and illustration. Special attention will also be paid to knowledge of the country, its literature, its arts, its philosophy and its history.[180]

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[176] Letter of 11th October 1916, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge University Press, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 53, 1997, Pg 179. Author's emphasis.

[177] Letter to Dinesh Chandra Sen, dated November 17, 1905, Ibid, Pg 64.

[178] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's Integrity: The Philosophy behind the Politics," *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, pp. 79-93, 2002, Pg 81.

[179] Sen Gupta, Kalyan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Ashgate, Hampshire, England, 2005, Pg 48-56.

[180] The Earl of Ronaldshay, "A Clash of Ideals as a Source of Indian Unrest," *The Modern Review*, April, 1923, Pg 453.

In contrast to Ghose's nationalist pedagogy, Rabindranath's Shantiniketan was a place of world-knowledge where Indian civilizational ideas crisscrossed with world currents of thought, adding to a human universal education. Rabindranath's university was different to the nationalist and communal educational institutions in India.[181] However, Despite Rabindranath's travels his early *swadeshi* educational position had not been universalized. In 1907 (during Bengal School's Jorasanko avant-garde activities), O.C. Gangoly said: "Very few people fully realize the disastrous significance of the system of University education which has done so much to sever the "educated" from their national tradition and continuity with their past, with the result that by reason of their ignorance of their own language and literature they have become totally estranged from the bulk of their fellow countrymen..."[182] In 1921, reflecting on the *swadeshi* period, the home-schooled Rabindranath wrote:

> I remember the day, during the swadeshi movement in Bengal, when a crowd of young students came to see me in the first floor hall of our Vichitra house. They said to me that if I would order them to leave their schools and colleges they would instantly obey. I was emphatic in my refusal to do so, and they went away angry, doubting the sincerity of my love for my motherland...[183]

He continued,

> ...it hurts me deeply when the cry of rejection rings loud against the West in my country with the clamour that the Western education can only injure us. It cannot be true. What has caused this mischief is the fact that for a long time we have been out of touch with our own culture and therefore the Western culture has not found its perspective in our life, and very often found a wrong perspective giving our mental eye a squint.[184]

In order for Indian art to integrate into the praxis of life Rabindranath opened Jorasanko to new discourses. Rabindranath responded to his father Debendranath's wish for a school to be established, accomplishing it in 1901, and calling it Brahmacharya Ashram. It was located in Shantiniketan. Okakura Kakuzo sent Hori Shitoku to study Sanskrit there in 1902. The first foreign student at Shantiniketan, Hori established the relationship between the Tagore's school and Japan. The Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, which he established in 1917, created a rupture and a next stage in Indian modernism. Nandalal Bose started teaching

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[181] Langohr, Vickie, "Educational "Subcontracting" and the Spread of Religious Nationalism: Hindu and Muslim Nationalist Schools in Colonial India" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. XXI Nos. 1&2 (2001), pp. 42-49.
[182] Ganguly, O.C., "The Study of Indian Pictorial Art—A Rejoinder," *The Modern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, August, 1907, Pg 303.
[183] Rabindranath in a letter written on March 5th 1921, Pg 614 Tagore, Rabindranath, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," *The Modern Review*, May 1921.
[184] Rabindranath Tagore, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," in *The Modern Review*, May 1921, Pg 616.

at Shantiniketan in 1919, and also went with Rabindranath to Japan, China and Burma, and in 1924 writer and educationist Kshitimohan Sen accompanied them.

Rabindranath formed an educational curriculum of art and culture, creating an integrated aesthetic pedagogy. Nandalal Bose's teaching was a boon for Rabindranath.[185] Nandalal had replaced Abanindranath. Nandalal had found the Raj funded Indian Society of Oriental Art to be a "stifling institution."[186] He helped Rabindranath by illustrating *Sahaj Path,* Rabindranath's Bengali language primer for young students. This radical reconventionalisation removed Indian education from colonial education. As Bose wrote, "In olden days, students broke their necks learning grammar, before they mastered poetics or poetry. That is to say, effort came first, enjoyment later. But we have arranged for the learning of poetry and grammar at the same time. Now it is the enjoyment first, effort late. The enjoyment will add force to the effort."[187] Andree Karpeles (who sent Abanindranath postcards of French post-impressionism and exhibited in the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition) taught European Bauhaus inspired techniques and styles of woodblock, linocuts, and lithographs at Shantiniketan, influencing the linocuts.

Nandalal Bose *Bullock Cart* (1930 Linocut on Paper for *Sahaj Path*, National Gallery of Modern Art, new Delhi)

[185] Kowshik, Dinkar, *Nandalal Bose: The Doyen of Indian Art*, National Book Trust, India, 1985, Pg 33-48.
[186] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-47*, London, Reaktion Books, 2007, Pg 79.
[187] Quotation taken from wall plaque National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. Acc. No.4900.

Nandalal Bose *Cooking the Evening Meal* (1930 Linocut on Paper for *Sahaj Path*, National Gallery of Modern Art, new Delhi)

Nandalal Bose *Mother and Child* (1930 Linocut on Paper for *Sahaj Path*, National Gallery of Modern Art, new Delhi)

The primer showed its debt to the expressionist woodcuts and linocuts that came to Calcutta with the Bauhaus exhibition in 1922. Bose articulated the surrounding village way of life free from urban colonialism. The way of life can be seen in the linocuts *Bullock Cart* (1930), *The Cooking of the Evening Meal*, and *Mother and Child.* Rabindranath accompanied Bose's linocuts with the syllabic sound created by rhyming verse—a new form of learning in contrast to rote memorization.

Abanindranath did not think Nandalal was up to the challenge of being principal at Kala Bhavan. He wrote to Havell (c. 1918-19): "I do not see who will take my place, Nandalal is not a fighter. So I want to finish all the fighting work before I leave so that I may

leave the field fit for The Corn."[188] Bose continued the practices of rural arts and crafts that began in Club Bichitra, such as the making of *alpana* designs.[189]

Nandalal Bose observing students creating *alpana* at Shantiniketan c. 1930s, Photo courtesy Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan

Havell's critique of western education was strategic for Rabindranath. Havell thought the problems of education in India have, "since Macaulay's time…been relegated to the pedagogic specialist…[who was]…as a rule entirely out of touch with real Indian life and thought."[190]After introducing Havell's book *A History of India* into the Shantiniketan syllabus, Rabindranath wrote to him (from Shantiniketan) on September 26th 1919:

> I feel my work lies here in India and our Shantiniketan needs my constant presence and watchfulness. You will be glad to learn that Nandalal is working with me in our ashram and students are coming here from different provinces of India to take lessons in Indian art. This has suddenly made our authorities wake up to the immediate necessity of tempting away Nandalal from this place and setting up a rival movement in Calcutta under their own aegis. And they are negotiating with Abanindra and Gagan, and I fervently hope that they will not succumb to their allotments.[191]

Rabindranath criticized Club Bichitra, which was an integral component of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and helped in the syllabus at Shantiniketan. Rabindranath wrote:

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[188] Letter from Abanindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell, 5th September, MssEur D736/2, India Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 22-3.

[189] Alpona is colourful folk floor motifs and designs of Bengal.

[190] Havell, E.B, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Second Edition, London, 1928, Pg 247

[191] Letter from Rabindranath Tagore to E.B. Havell, September 26th 1919, MssEur, D736/2, India Office Library, British Library, London, Pg 24.

I had hoped that from Bichitra would arise a great stream of art, fertilizing the whole country; but there was nobody capable of dedicating himself wholeheartedly to the cause. I was prepared to do all that lay in my limited power, but found no response. I am no painter myself, or I might have shown what was to be done. However, some day, someone will arise and lead the pathway for the swift progress of the artistic talent that lies scattered all over the country.[192]

Rabindranath said to an audience at Dhaka University:

I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny their obligation to produce something that can be labelled as Indian Art, according to some old world mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be herded into a pen like branded beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows.[193]

Rabindranath's statement was directed at the Bengal School.[194] He moved toward a school of thought beyond that of his nephews Abanindranath and Gaganendranath.[195] Rabindranath stated:

If it is a fact that some standard of invariable formalism has for ages been following the course of arts in India, making it possible for them to be classified as specially Indian, then it must be confessed that the creative mind which inevitably breaks out in individual variations, has lain dead or dormant for those torpid years.[196]

With his characteristic individualism, Rabindranath appreciated the west where artists were not 'cattle' blindly following a particular school of thought and artistic ideal. He wanted individuality. He wanted to create a modernist artist no longer impaired by the feudality of the courtly order, or the Government Art Schools, or the Bengal School. Rabindranath wished to rejuvenate systems of culture that were hampered by a spell of 'torpid years' by releasing into them 'individual variations'. He said:

All traditional structures of art must have sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile; to grow with its growth, to dance with its rhythm.[197]

Rabindranath did not want the Shantiniketan art course to become linked with anti-colonial, non-cooperative, and nationalist tendencies. Rabindranath feared it would become

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[192] Anand, Mulk, Raj, "The Four Initiators of Contemporary Experimentalism", in Lalit Kala Contemporary , No. 2. No Date. Pgs. 1-6, Pg 1, Emphasis added.

[193] Tagore, Rabindranth, *On Art and Aesthetics A Selection of Lectures, Essays and Letters*, Ed, Prithwish Neogy, Subarnarekha, 2005, Pg 53.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid, Pg 50.

[197] Anand, Mulk, Raj, "Sri Aurobindo the Critic of Art," *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 1., Winter Spring, 1989, pp. 104-113, Pg 107.

linked with aesthetic nationalism. In *The Modern Review* a nationalist populist writer, who reviewed Sister Nivedita's call for a national art education asked, "Why in...schemes of national education they have not included any of the Indian Fine Arts—Indian Painting, Indian Architecture, Indian Sculpture and Indian Music."[198] Rabindranath who held connections with several universities in Europe was wary of nationalist discourses, which could dismantle his goal of universal world knowledge.

Stella Kramrisch became a teacher attuned to Rabindranath's approach and philosophy on Indian art and the European tradition.[199] She helped Indian artists with their endogenous cultural-systems whilst teaching exogenous discourses and promoting their relativisation. Kramrisch was a relativist who understood that the relation between Indian and European art was "either based on an inner affinity or it resulted from a connection of trade and from similar conditions of culture." However, for Kramrisch, a mutual relativisation of cultural-systems was superior to the "transplantation...of [the] European tradition into Indian art schools." Kramrisch realized that Indian art and its "outlook" has a "deep impact on modern Western spirituality" whilst, at the same time, "the East accepts European civilization."[200] Due to William Rothenstein's contact with Rabindranath Tagore[201] Kramrisch arrived in Calcutta in 1921[202] to lecture on western art history. As Binode Bihari Mukherjee wrote, "Stella Kramrisch had given talks on 'Modern Art up to Dada' in 1921. The lectures were compulsory for all the staff and the students. Rabindranath had said, "you must all attend them!"[203] Kramrisch "opened a new vista for Indian artists by explaining to them from the point of modernism, experiments made in various media and form in Indian

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[198] "National Art," in the Indian Periodicals section, The Modern Review, November 1921, Pg 599-600.

[199] This can be demonstrated in Kramrisch's several articles published in the Modern Review about Indian art. For instance, "Sculpture of Bengal" The Modern Review, January, 1923, pp. 57-62 Also see: "The Conception of Space in Indian Art," *The Modern Review*, April, 1922, pp. 427-434.

[200] Ibid, Pg 86.

[201] In 1921 William Rothenstein sent a letter to Rabindranath Tagore about the influx of people to Shantinketan. Rothenstein talks about Stella Kramrisch: "The young Austrian-Slovakian lady came to see me yesterday to ask if I could help her get a passport for India. But...it is most unlikely to issue passports to any foreigners...[until] things have settled down in India...In this particular case I believe you owe me a cock. For I have saved you from the results of an invitation which the recipient, had she been quite worthy of it, would not have [been] quite so ready to accept. One wants more than a single meeting, on either side, in such important affairs. Perhaps I am unduly suspicious of the softer sex. But when great things have to be carried through, I doubt whether it is wise to encumber yourself with almond eyed ladies, however devoted to stupas and Boddhisaras." Letter 143, *Imperfect Encounter: Letters William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore 1911-1941*, ed. Mary M. Lago, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1972, Pg 281.

[202] Quoted on Visva-Bharati's website: http://www.visvabharati.ac.in/GreatMasters/Contents/GreatMasters_Contents.htm?f=../Contents/stella.htm. Last Accessed 12th July 2010.

[203] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 189.

art."[204] Kramrisch lectured on Dadaism, Cubism, Surrealism, and the western tradition from the Renaissance up to the avant-gardist and modernist ruptures. She taught Gothic Art, to European Art of the 17th Century with long discussions on Titian, Rembrandt and Dürer. She joined Karpeles who taught oil painting, woodcuts, linocuts and other graphics. The urban theorist Patrick Geddes helped influence the development of murals and art within the environment.[205] These western and traditional approaches to art education helped realize an endogenous cultural-system that integrated the western modernism in a manner that did not injure either Indian or the western spirit. The humanist Universalist approach of Rabindranath also allowed for flexible artistic borrowing from ancient painting and sculptural traditions, as well as the Rajput, Pahari and Mughal traditions.

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[204] Quoted on Visva-Bharati's website:
http://www.visvabharati.ac.in/GreatMasters/Contents/GreatMasters_Contents.htm?f=../Contents/stella.htm. Last Accessed 12th July 2010.

[205] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 80.See: Som, Sovon, "Santiniketan and the Bauhaus," *Nandalal Bose and Indian Modernity in Nandalal Bose: A Collection of Essays: Centenary Volume*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1983, Pg 51-8.
Subramanayan, K.G. "Foreword" in Chakrabarti, Jayanta, R. Siva Kumar, Arun K. Nag, *The Santinketan Murals,* Calcutta: Seagull Books with Vishva-Bharati, 1995, Pg X.

3.6 Rabindranath's Critique of Art and Nationalism, and his Creative Ideal.

Rabindranath understood the 'limits' of nationalism and the dangers of bringing nationalist anti-colonial discourse into aesthetic structures. After the nationalism of the *swadeshi* period he distanced himself from the pan-Indian anti-colonial mobilization of the nascent Indian state. Rabindranath understood the pitfalls of narrow nationalism, which could lead quickly into cultural aggression.[206] He thought it would corrupt Shantiniketan, the Bengal School, Indian art discourses and pan-Indian anti-colonial nationalism. After his first visit to Japan (in 1916 when he delivered the lecture critical of nationalism), Rabindranath visited Japan in 1917, 1924, and in 1929. These trips confirmed his view as he witnessed Japan's ultra-nationalistic militarized program, which eventually led to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (1940).[207] In 1916, Rabindranath had brought Katayama Kanpô and Arai Kanpô to Calcutta at the suggestion of Yokoyama Taikan. They worked in Club Bichitra but also sketched at Ajanta in 1917. Rabindranath was disappointed to see that on their return to Japan in 1917 both artists used the Buddhist cultural tradition as an ideology for aesthetic nationalism connected to the militarizing state. Buddhism as the art shaping national identity of imperial Japan was evident in a 1920 Exhibition of "Taikwan's School," where there was a "reversion to Ajanta."[208]

Ernest Fenollosa, during his tenure as professor at the Tokyo Imperial University, was instrumental in the creation of aesthetic nationalism in Japan[209]. Fenollosa restored Buddhist art to the "national pride" of Japan, creating a conflation between "religion and ideology."[210] The Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) demonstrated to Fenollosa, the "passionate idealism" of the "remarkable race," which had "displayed itself in the sacrifices of the recent Japanese War."[211] The material correlates to this 'passionate idealism' found expression in their national high art based on Buddhism, Shinto, and Zen. He saw the Japanese religious spirit, embodying itself in the Buddhist sculpture, marking the

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[206] See Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath and the Politics of Self*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994

[207] See Clark, John, "Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism", *East Asian History*, 29, June 2005, pp. 1-38

[208] Cousins, H., James, "The Future of Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 46.

[209] Reputedly the first Japanese artist to experiment with Indian Ajanta inspired effects in depictions of the life of the Buddha was Yamada Keichyu of the Imperial Art Institute in Tokyo. Yamada never visited India. "Indo-Japanese Painting," *Rupam*, No. 10, April 1922, Pg 40.

[210] Faure, Bernard, "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24. No. 3, Spring 1998, pp. 768-813, Pg 772.

[211] Ibid, Pg 772. See: Fenollosa, Ernest F, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design*, 2 vols. New York, 1913, 1:xxiv.

"...aesthetic flowering of the Japanese race."[212] Fenollosa's influence was paramount. Reputedly the first Japanese artist to experiment with Indian Ajanta inspired effects in depictions of the life of the Buddha was Yamada Keichyu of the Imperial Art Institute in Tokyo. Yamada never visited India.

Fenollosa's Hegelianism influenced Okakura. According to Hegel, the "spirit exists in the medium of consciousness not in a peculiar kind of matter."[213] The spirit guides and becomes synchronous within human's 'consciousness' guiding it into "phenomenal semblances." The spirit moves into the creation of material culture. As the consciousness of the artist is connected with the underlying unity and cultural-system, their cultural production embodies the national spirit. Hegel stated:

> Art liberates the real import of appearances from the semblance and deception of this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind.[214]

Fenollosa and Okakura influenced the idealism of Havell and Abanindranath and their promulgation of the Buddha image as an essence of national tradition. The Buddhist art of the Ashokan period, rather than Macedonian Gandhara Buddhist art, was elected as the best of Indian Buddhism[215], taking its place in the nations' art history. This nationalist paradigm was congruent with Sister Nivedita's article "Art in Shaping National Identity," and O.C. Ganguly's art nationalism, which raised art as a sign and marker of the nation's cultural and spiritual worth—a marker of national identity. Rabindranath examined the classical Gandhara Buddha, which had been promulgated as a truly Indian sculpture by E.B. Havell.[216] Rabindranath found the Greek aspect in it of "scientific...anatomical accuracy." However, the "purely Indian mind dwells on the symbolic aspect and tried ... to give expression to the soul of Buddha, never acknowledging the limitations of realism."[217]

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[212] Ibid, Pg 99.
[213] Bosanquet, Bernard [translation, notes, and prefatory essay], *The introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co, 1886, Pg xxxi.
[214] Ibid, Pg 15.
[215] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 176-178. Also see Havell, E.B., *The Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India*, London, 1915, Pg 4, 115-16.
[216] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 176-77.
[217] Tagore, Rabindranath, *On Art and Aesthetics A Selection of Lectures, Essays and Letters*, Ed. Prithwish Neogy Subarnarekha, 2005, Pg 52.

Rabindranath was dismayed by nationalism and also by his nephew Abanindranath, who, under the influence of Okakura, persisted in making religious-nationalistic aesthetic statements. Abanindranath wrote: "Place one of the Greek statues near those of Vishnu and Buddha, and if you like, get the figure of a Bodhisattva from the Nara Temple of Japan and thus complete this glorious pantheon." He thought the Buddhist images "...owe a great deal to the Greek model" but nationalistically imagined aesthetic similarities "because they come from the same source—spiritual inspiration."[218] He declared: "great religious faith" is a "force and stimulus for the development of national genius." In 1907 his nationalist rhetoric was essential for the orientalist reconstruction of Indian art histories. He asked: "Where is that nation that built the towering *stupas* of Sanchi and did marvellous painting in the Ajanta caves?"[219] and advocated Buddhism's role in the restoration of a pan-Asian cultural unity echoing what Lord Ronaldshay called "race-consciousness,"[220] which had links to war, ideology, and militarization through Fenollosa and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05).

Fenollosa gave the first impetus to Okakura's pan-Asianism. It was Okakura who continued this paradigm of connecting the spirit of the East, seeing "Asia as one."[221] His text *The Ideals of the East* (1903), and the posthumously published *The Awakening of the East* (1938) were nationalist tools, aiding Japanese militarization and aesthetic nationalism. As John Clark observes, "Okakura's text emphasize[d] the rebirth of Asia...on a renewed consciousness represented through its creation of art."[222] For Rabindranath the "fierce self-idolatry" of Indian and Japanese "nation-worship" was not "the goal of human history" because the spirit of the Nation overpowered the spirit of the human.

Rustom Bharucha sees this struggle played out in Rabindranath's friendship with Noguchi Yonejiro (1874-1943).[223] Bharucha describes:

> ...Noguchi made the mistake of attempting to justify his war [the 1937 Japan invasion of China] of 'Asia for Asia' on religious grounds, notably by invoking the 'Three-headed Siva' from whom he had derived his 'lesson of destruction as [the] inevitable truth of life'. Kali is another of Noguchi's mentors. In front of her image in

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[218] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art," *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 396-97. Also See: Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London New York, 2006

[219] Tagore, Abanindranath, "The Three Forms of Art" *The Modern Review*, Vol. I April-June, 1907, Pg 397.

[220] Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Second Edition, London, 1928, Pg 264.

[221] See Kakuzo, Okakura, *Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the art of Japan*, Indian edition Calcutta, India, First Published 1903, New Edition, Calcutta 1973.

[222] Clark, John, "Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism," *East Asian History*, 29, June, 2005, pp. 1-38, Pg 12.

[223] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 34.

> Kalighat, Calcutta, Noguchi had 'knelt', drawing from her 'face smeared in madness, with three wild eyes', a premonition of 'forthcoming peace'. Tagore's response could not have been more wry: 'I must thank you for explaining to me the meaning of our Indian philosophy and pointing out the proper interpretation of Kali and Shiva...I wish you had drawn a moral from a religion more familiar to you and appealed to the Buddha for your justification'. And yet, there could be no consolation in this riposte for Tagore, because he knew only too bitterly how Japanese priests and artists were erecting colossal figures of the Buddha in order 'to bless the massacre of [their] neighbors'.[224]

In 1938, the poet Noguchi Yonejiro[225] asked Rabindranath to endorse Japan's second invasion of China, which had happened the previous year. Noguchi claimed it was 'the inevitable means, terrible it is though, for establishing a new great world in the Asiatic continent... the war of "Asia for Asia."[226] Rabindranath reproached Noguchi, stating:

> You are building your conception of an Asia which would be raised on a tower of skulls...The doctrine of 'Asia for Asia' which you enunciate in your letter, as an instrument of political blackmail, has all the virtues of the lesser Europe which I repudiate, and nothing of the larger humanity that makes us one across the barriers of political labels and divisions.[227]

At the heart of Rabindranath's universalist humanity was the deep seated fear, as Rustom Bharucha observes, that, unlike his counterparts in Europe, his "artist friends" in Asia and Japan, were not opposing the "politics of violence and genocide" but were "endorsing it, and thereby playing into the 'the betrayal of intellectuals,' which Tagore regarded as a 'dangerous symptom of our Age'."[228] He deplored the thinking that would later lead to the "Asia is One" monument where Okakura's profiled head is carved into a monolithic rock.

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[224] Bharucha, Rustom, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*, Oxford University Press, 2006, Pg 170.
[225] Ibid, Pg 168-72.
[226] Das, S, Kumar, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. 3, ed. Sisir Kumar Das, 3 volumes, New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1999, Pg 834.
[227] Ibid, Pg 837.
[228] Bharucha, Rustom, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*, Oxford University Press, 2006, Pg 170. This position was also articulated by Binode Bihari Mukherjee who travelled to Japan in 1938 staying in Tokyo. As Mukherjee observed, "side by side the national flags of Japan and Germany were unfurled as a sign of friendship", further starting, "" The whole city was white with snow but one could notice easily that the blood of the Japanese was warming up; even a foreigner like me could tell. In the talk of those painters who worked in the pure Japanese style there was no trace of it but from time to time a wave of heat burst forth from the modern, Paris-educated artists and youth. One saw, now and then, newspaper announcements about an artist who had returned from France and declared that he was giving up his French wife and French colours and brushes and would hereafter take to Japanese brush techniques." See: Mukherjee, Binode, Bihari, *Chitrakar: The Artist*, trans, K.G. Subramanyan, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 29.

Asia is one Monument (Tenshin Memorial Museum, Irbaraki, Izura, Japan, Photo Kedar Vishwanathan, 2008)

Rabindranath noted, "I saw in Japan the war trophies from China publicly exhibited. I failed to understand this gloating attitude."[229] Rabindranath furthered his critique of Japan's aggressive nationalism: "Japan had vanquished China in naval battle, but it should have realized that it was barbaric and unaesthetic to display relics of that victory all over the country like harsh thorns."[230] As Sugata Bose comments, "[Rabindranath] did not want Indian patriots to imitate the monstrous features of European nationalism and the territorially bounded model of the nation-state."[231] If, during anti-colonial nationalism, India copied the modular forms of western nationalism(s), modernity, and modernism, it would create the construct of the parochial nation and eschew universally shared humanist values. This brand of nationalism was equally inseparable from parochial art production. Rabindranath understood the necessity of tradition as a fundamental essence of the nation but saw that this was a position supporting anti-colonial nationalism throughout India. In Rabindranath's philosophy, aesthetic nationalism extinguishes the true nature of artistic expression and freedom.

Pan-Asianism, in Rabindranath's formulation, was racist and closed to the world. Pan-Asianism was in congruence with the components of the Nation-form. It too was part of another a colonizing influence and contained a dominating agenda. Such an agenda showed

[229] *Rabindranath Tagore's Visit to China*, Santinketan: Visva-Bharati, 1924?, Pg 16.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Bose, Sugata, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 2006, Pg 234.

aesthetically in the examples of Yokoyama Taikan, and to a lesser extent in Hishida Shunso, both of whom came from the Bijutsuin and, at Okakura Kakuzo's suggestion, visited Calcutta in 1900 and 1903, immediately before the Russo-Japanese War. Both subsequently became ultra-nationalists. When the Hitler Jügend visited Japan in 1938, Taikan addressed them. During the war he also headed the Japanese *gleischaltung* in the arts.[232] Interestingly, all artists painted Hindu subjects. Hishida painted Saraswati; Yokoyama Taikan painted Kali and the Ras-lila.[233]

Nosu Kosetsu "finished the mural paintings at the new Mula-Gandha-Kuti Vihara[234] at Sarnarth [in the] far eastern manner"[235] He then returned to Japan and used this pan-Asian cultural tradition within the milieu of ultra-militarization and aesthetic nationalism. Like Katsuta Yoshio, who also visited India and sketched at Ajanta in 1907 or 1908, Nosu connected the Ajanta Buddhist tradition with the frescoes and murals of Horyuji, which were completed during the Nara period (710-94 A.D.) Katsuta did not "borrow the technique or the types of old Indian painting" but rather "gave a very distinct and individual presentation—without missing the spirit and the atmosphere of his subjects," and achieving "a conscious rendering of the Indian spirit of the subjects," as if "seen through Indian eyes." This was "not merely an Indian subject pictured by a Japanese artist—but an Indian subject conceived in an Indian way and rendered by a Japanese brush."[236] This cross-civilization legacy is seen at Shirakami-Sanchi which near Horyuji. The name "Sanchi" is indebted to the Indian Buddhist site of Sanchi, where the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (304-232 B.C) constructed Ashokan edicts as state sponsored ideology and built the stupa housing the Buddha's relics. Okakura's nationalist slogan 'Asia is One' was influenced by the civilizational diffusion of Buddhism from India by Ashoka. The spiritual doctrines travelled with the Chinese monk and explorer, Hsuan-Tsang (c. 602-664) first to China, then to Japan. Nosu Kosetsu appropriation of the mural paintings was used as a pan-Asian civilizational heritage, which justified ultra-nationalistic aggression in Japan.[237] Rabindranath was dismayed that Japanese artists followed the narrow militarized doctrines of their political leaders into "the passion of

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[232] Clark, John, *Modern Asian Art*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1998, Pg 81.
[233] "Indo-Japanese Painting," *Rupam* No. 10, April 1922, Pg 41.
[234] Buddhist Monastery
[235] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual 1936-37*. Ed., Coomaraswamy, Gangoly, 1937, Pg 21.
"Indo-Japanese Painting," *Rupam* No. 10, April 1922, [236] Pg 40.
[237] See Kakuzo, Okakura, *Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the art of Japan*, Indian edition Calcutta, India, First Published 1903, New Edition, Calcutta 1973.

collective militarism."[238] Okakura's book *The Ideals of the East* and Sister Nivedita's nationalistic introduction to 'Aggressive Nationalism'[239] had an influence on the Bengal School. Sister Nivedita wrote: "Mr. Okakura's visit to the caves of Ajanta marks a distinct era in Indian archaeology."[240] Her views helped the Bengal School develop a nationalist acknowledgment that India was the fountainhead of Buddhism, and Japan the perfect synthesis of India and China. Rabindranath's distaste for aesthetic nationalism influenced his creative ideal.

The Creative Ideal

It is clear Rabindranath did not want aesthetic nationalism to override Indian art. He wrote, "I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live."[241] He had growing concerns over the path that the anti-imperial and anti-colonial movement was taking in India. The Japanese situation was a warning. He appealed for a creative unity—a synthesis of the spirit between the East and West, a sharing of life-worlds.[242] He appealed for a creative unity between the *home* and the *world*, where the *home* was and where the *world* was.

After returning to India from Europe in 1921, Rabindranath published an article entitled "The Creative Ideal" in the 1922 January issue of *Rupam*. The article should be understood as a manifesto that promoted a new understanding of Indian aesthetics. The new understanding had to be viewed in light of his Shantiniketan School, his various tours in Europe, the planned Bauhaus exhibition in December of the same year, the Gandhian pan-Indian nationalism, and the India National Congress' Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22).[243]

Rabindranath called for a human and environmental reciprocity. He used the 'essential elements of a picture' defined in Sanskrit as *rupa-bheda* (separateness of forms)

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[238] Tagore, Soumyendranath, *Rabindranath Tagore and Universal Humanism*, Bombay: Standard Vacuum Oil Company, 1961, Pg 20-22.
[239] Clark, John, "Okakura Tenshin and Aesthetic Nationalism," *East Asian History*, 29, June, 2005, pp. 1-38, Pg 11-2, See: Shigemi, Inaga, "Sister Nivedita and her Kali, the Mother, the Web of Indian Life and Art Criticism: New insights into Okakura Kakuzo's Indian Writings and the Function of Art in Shaping Nationalist", *Japan Review*, 2004, Vol. 16, Pg 129-59.
[240] Kakuzo, Okakura, *Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the art of Japan*, Indian edition Calcutta, India, First Published 1903, New Edition, Calcutta 1973, Pg 2.
[241] Letter to Aurobindo Mohan Bose, dated 19th November 1908, in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, editors, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, Pg 71.
[242] Zizek, Slajov, *Living in the End of Times*, Verso, London, 2010, Pg 285.
[243] The article was subsequently republished in Rabindranath Tagore's book Creative Unity: Tagore, Rabindranath, *Creative Unity*, London: Macmillan, 1962, Pg 312.

and *pramânâni* (proportions). Abanindranath's texts *sadanga* (1921) and *Bharat Shilpa* (1909)[244] used the same Hindu, Shukracharyian and Abhinavaguptaian[245] concepts to describe the six limbs of Indian painting. Rabindranath, however, used these terms to speak of a "living unity" within poetry. Rabindranath felt poetry brought the natural world and the human into reciprocity. In this sense he is similar to Condillac, who understood the development of human progress from poetry into prose as inextricable in the development of the man with nature.[246] In Rabindranath's mind, meaning in pictures and paintings[247] stemmed in part from the 'living unity' of man with nature.[248] In what was practically a ploy, Rabindranath used these Sanskrit terms because the Bengal School was publicly expounding them. The ploy was simply to show that even a rigid and traditional stylistic guide for drawing figures and proportions could creatively open up tradition. It suggested, through a type of sublation, or upanishadic transcendence (*uttaran*), that an attempt to "overcome the law of proportion and to assert absolute separateness is [a form of] rebellion."[249] The rebellion occurs because there is a negation of the unity of the system, or a break in creative unity.[250] Rabindranath argues that tradition should not be bypassed in the search of 'absolute separateness.' Truth in painting derives from the harmony of the relationships between humans, their ideas, the living cultural-system and human consciousness.[251]

Rabindranath's theory can be regarded as a biological Universalist art theory[252], biological because of the emphasis on connections between humans and nature. This position is analogous to that of (the much later) E.H. Gombrich, who appealed to universalism in opposition to cultural relativism, and was "...convinced that the visual arts rest ... on

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[244] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, "Wresting the Nation's Prerogative: Art History and Nationalism in Bengal" in *Monuments, Objects, Histories Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, Pg 162-71.

[245] Abhinavagupta was the 10th century philosopher of the Kashmiri school of Shaivism and a writer on aesthetics. See: Ranerio Gnoli's *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968.

[246] Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de, *An Essay on the Origin of the Human Language*, Gainsville, Fla: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971, Pg 227–29. See: Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, Pg 14.

[247] See Geertz, Clifford, "Shifting aims, moving targets: on the anthropology of religion", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 11 no. 1 (spring 2005), pp. 1-15.

[248] Tagore, Rabindranath, "The Creative Ideal," *Rupam*, January 1922, Pg 5.

[249] Ibid, Pg 6.

[250] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Creative Unity*, London: Macmillan, 1962, Pg, 312.

[251] Sen Gupta, Kalyan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Ashgate, Hampshire, England, 2005, Pg 58-76.

[252] Dasgupta, Uma, "Santiniketan: The School of a Poet', in *Knowledge, Power and Politics: Educational Institutions in India*, ed. M. Hasan, New Delhi, 1998, Pg 258-303.

biological foundations."[253] Rabindranath appealed to universalisation of art through the relativisation of the endogenous cultural-system with exogenous discourses. He used the position later advanced by cultural relativists (Geertz's position of anti-anti relativism) and the Gombrichian position, He understood the uniqueness of one's cultural-system but only in relation to the universality of all cultural-systems, as he saw patterns emerging through shared life phenomena.[254] Rabindranath, moving toward a relativisation between cultures, stated:

> Therefore, when we talk of such a fact as Indian Art, it indicates some truth based upon the Indian tradition and temperament. At the same time we must know that there is no such thing as absolute caste restriction in human cultures; they ever have the power to combine and produce new variations, and such combinations have been going on for ages, proving the truth of the deep unity of human psychology.[255]

Yet Rabindranath realized that problems arose in the creative act. For instance, in poetry and painting, problems arose if the human subject lost the ability of expressing the inner ideal of the object. The inner ideal, Rabindranath felt, is expressed through the connection of the world to an emotional (*bhavah*) response, creating, and allowing the subject to create, the unity in the world.[256] When the connections within the cultural-systems containing the mental structures (which holistically store knowledge) become severed the unity of the creative ideal becomes fractured. Rabindranath observed:

> This is why, when some storm of [nationalistic] feeling sweeps across the country, art is under a disadvantage. For in such an atmosphere the boisterous passion breaks through the cordon of harmony and thrusts itself forward as the subject, which with its bulk and pressure dethrones the unity of creation.[257]

When narrow nationalistic sentiments are aroused within a country the unity of creation is lost. Ideology solidifies and stifles the true connections between environment, universalism and creation. Only the true reciprocity between humans and the environment

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[253] As Gombrich wrote: ...interaction between fulfilment and denial, between the delay of satisfaction and the surpassing of expectation leads to what we call art, and for this to happen it needs a developed tradition and a universal admiration of masters who can control such psychological effects. But...these structures and ...sequences ... result from the interplay of elements...operat[ing] within fields of tensions which derive their energy from the original polarity of universal human reactions. In any social community every colour, every sound, and naturally also every word has feeling tone which determines its exact position within this system...
Gombrich, E.H., " "They Were All Human Beings: So Much Is Plain": Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Summer, 1987, pp. 686-699, Pg 697-98.

[254] Geertz, Clifford, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2000, Pg 42-9.

[255] Sen Gupta, Kalyan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Ashgate, Hampshire, England, 2005, Pg 52.

[256] Tagore, Rabindranath, "The Creative Ideal," *Rupam*, January 1922, Pg 7.

[257] Ibid.

could produce "...a beautiful face, a poem, a song, a character, a harmony of interrelated ideas."[258] Thus when art serves the Nation[al] drive of the country (its ego, rather than its life-worlds) it loses its unity and becomes part of the mechanizing drives of the Nation. By contrast, the art of Shantiniketan still reflected the artist's natural surroundings, the life-worlds of the tribal *santhal*s and *adivasis*, which is exemplified in the artwork of Ram Kinkar Vaij, Nandalal Bose and Binode Bihari Mukherjee.

Rabindranath's travels to Japan gave him insight into Indian nationalism and aesthetics. Rabindranath observed:

> India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.[259]

Rabindranath appealed for a universal modernity/ism, a modernity/ism would not be used to rouse the nation into an exclusive nationalist parochial sentiment, but would express an inclusive use of discourses, a wide collection of cultural grammars. As he notes, "the interaction of various arts invigorates each culture to make it many splendored".[260] Asian and Indian idioms enhance traditions from Buddhist Ajanta to Akbar's Secularized Mughal cultural production, whilst incorporating western and Japanese discourses. Thus Shantiniketan became a focal point for experiments in art styles.[261]

Like Gandhi, Rabindranath sought reciprocity with the villager (those outside of the bourgeoisie hegemony). Villagers spoke from a living tradition, and their art was art within life-praxis, which had not completely manipulated "...arts and crafts and genius into skill."[262] The villager was able to teach the urban bourgeoisie and landowning intellectual — like Rabindranath — far more about how their cultural-system operates and is embodied. The

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[258] Tagore, Rabindranath, 'The Religion of an Artist', *The English Writings*, vol. 3, ed. Sisir Kumar Das, 3 volumes, New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1999, Pg 691.
[259] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 70-1.
[260] Tagore, Rabindranath, *Journey to Persia and Iraq: 1932*, translated form the Bengali by Suyrendranath Tagore and Sukhendu Ray, edited by Supriya Roy, Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 2003, Pg 85.
[261] Kowshik, Dinkar, "My Student Days in Shantinketan", *Lalit Kala Contemporary* 10, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, pp. 31-34, Pg 33.
[262] In full Rabindranath states: "The same thing happened where she tried to ward off the collisions of trade interests. She associated different trades and professions with different castes. This had the effect of allaying for good the interminable jealously and hatred of competition – the competition which breeds cruelty and makes the atmosphere think with lies and deception. In this also India laid all her emphasis upon the law of hereditary, *ignoring the law of mutation, and thus gradually reduced arts into crafts and genius into skill.*" (Italics added). Tagore, Rabindranath, *Nationalism*, Penguin Books India, 2009, Pg 78.

villager did so by creating symbolic, non-mechanized cultural forms, more than those taught by the Raj's systems could. This was where the nation had to be re-linked with the urban bourgeoisie. Forging these ties would create "ideals of life in co-operation."[263] The village was still not touched by colonial educational institutions, and could possess, in asymmetrical terms, the same habitualized aesthetic experience as Rabindranath witnessed in Japan. The diffusion of Bauhaus knowledge in Shantiniketan, with Andree Karpeles demonstrating a total unity within creation, would have further achieved this. Karpeles wrote in 1923:

> Twenty-four years ago I was sent out to India to instruct Indians in Art, and having instructed them, and myself to the best of my ability, I returned filled with amazement at the insularity of the Anglo-Saxon mind, which has taken more than a century to discover that we have far more to learn from India in Art, than India has to learn from Europe.[264]

In 1922 Samarendranath Gupta wrote of this in relation to arts and crafts:

> *It is a well known fact that a considerable portion of India is living in absolute detachment and untouched by the contact of European ideas*, which British dominion has imported into India. In the world of arts and crafts—it is yet possible to find a few craftsmen still working each in his old indigenous way true to the traditional spirit and method of his ancestors without any influence from Europe such as has affected his brethren brought up in the Government Schools of Art.[265]

[263] Ibid, Pg 37.
[264] Karpeles, Andree, "The Calcutta School of Painting," *Rupam* No. 13-14, January-June, 1923, Pg 3.
[265] Gupta, Samarendranath, "European Influence on Modern Indian Art," *Rupam* No. 11 July 1922. Emphasis added, Pg 109.

3.7 Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi.

The connections between Gandhi and Rabindranath's ideology have to be seen in regards to the direction of Shantiniketan discourse.[266] Both wanted to move into life-habits and communities free of capitalist dominance in order to harness an 'Indian' way of life that incorporated all Indians, not just the nationalist bourgeoisie.

K.G Subramanyan observes:

> It is here that the Gandhi-Tagore axis assumes some significance, Tagore had forestalled Gandhi in realizing the dire need for character-building and cultural regeneration of the Indian people to rescue them from the stagnation and small-mindedness they were lapsing into. His focus may have been on the educated and the elite to start with, but through the years he wanted his school in Shantiniketan to spread out its influence in the surrounding community. A reinterpretation of ancient concepts for the modern context, a re-examination of old knowledge in the light of the new, a holistic developmental strategy that would not let the pressures of society negate the individual and his personality and...the environment, all close to Gandhi's ear, were his intentions as well.[267]

The village peasant was where India was true, real and supreme, where India escaped the trappings of a colonial-capitalist education, avoiding completely Western institutional structures. The village provided a living habitual artistic praxis that could add to the discourse on modernism, and create a universal discourse by rejuvenating endogenous forms. The urban Indian could learn about Indian culture from the village peasant.

However, as K.G. Subramanyanian writes, "Gandhi's constant spotlighting of the realities of rural India where, he insisted, lay the real life of India—and, later in the day (while talking to foreign visitors), the real culture of India—gave greater depth to the awareness of the Indian artist and connoisseur."[268] By implication, the movement toward the life-habits and life-worlds of the villages was made for nationalism. For Rabindranath, this cultural rejuvenation was awkwardly connected to the nationalist movement. His cultural renewal was connected to the nationalist movement because it required the peasantry and rural India to be incorporated into the INC independence movement. Shantiniketan's non-urban emphasis fulfilled this paradigm. Yet the impact of Gandhi "did not come from his

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[266] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 107-8.

[267] Subramanya, K.G., "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2009, Pg 242. See: Ibid, Pg 107-8.

[268] Subramanyan, K.G. "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2009, Pg 238.

individual pronouncements, which were understandably limited and contextual, but from a total attitude that grew out of his words, actions and philosophy of life."[269] Gandhi was asked, "How is it that many intelligent and eminent men, who love and admire you, hold that you, consciously or unconsciously, rules out of the scheme of national regeneration all consideration of art?" He answered:

> I am sorry this matter has been generally misunderstood. There are two aspects of things, the outward and the inward. It is purely a matter of emphasis with me. The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true art is the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they express the inner spirit of man.[270]

Like Rabindranath, Gandhi too stressed the moral spirit of dharma. For Gandhi, the cultural production emboldened by Shantiniketan fulfilled the moral attributes and nature of dharma, a belief that calls for additional analysis.

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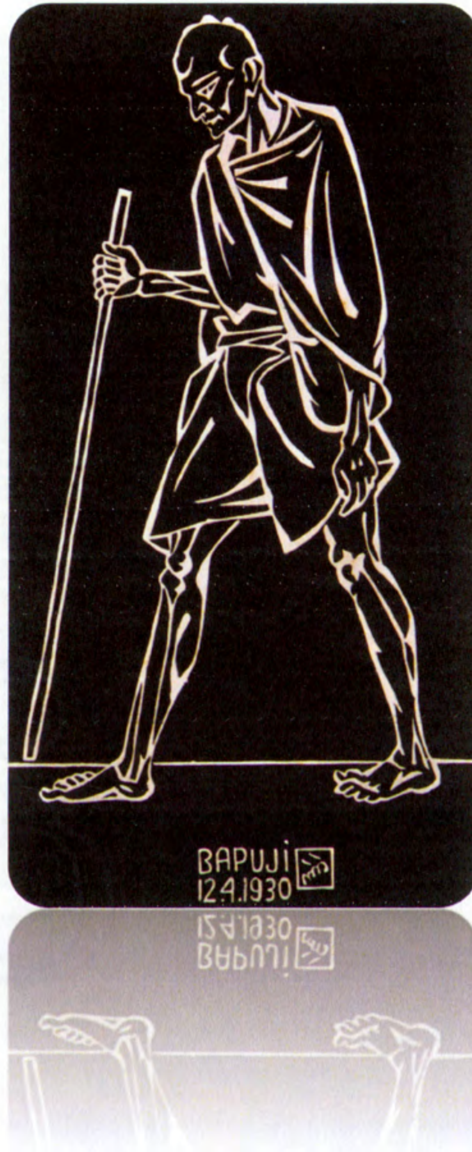
[269] Ibid, Pg 232.

[270] This question was formulated by G. Ramachandran a student at Visva-Bharati Shantiniketan from 1924 onward, Ibid, Pg 234.

Part 4 The Indian Image of the People.



Nandalal Bose *Dandi March Babuji* (April 12th 1930, Linocut, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

4.1 An Endogenous Image of the People: A Theory.

This section analyses how the Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement and the Indian National Congress politically and culturally appropriated the peasantry for pan-Indian nationalist mobilization. Culturally, the artists at Shantiniketan such as Nandalal Bose, Binode Bihari Mukherjee, and Ram Kinkar Vaij, painted the peasantry and associated their art with Gandhian pan-Indian mobilization. The image of the people visually represented all of Indian society outside the parameters of the Raj's dominion. The images romanticized the peasantry as Indian cultural essences characteristic of an Indian *life-world* uncontaminated by colonialism and capitalism. Gandhi, during the INC political sessions, employed Nandalal Bose to create cultural designs and integrate the peasantry into the sessions. Once again Bose created images of the people's habitus, which functioned at an ideological level and became a cultural organ of the INC.

To add context, this section focuses on the political and social histories that formed this position. It assesses the debates between Gandhi and Rabindranath, Communist Party of India ideologue M.N. Roy's reaction to this, and constructs a theory of the Image of the people. It analyses the historical and sociological similarities between the European variant of the Image of the People and the Indian construction. Indeed, during this period, art transcended the Bengal School discourses and relativised realism in order to visually appropriate the peasantry. The Shantiniketan artists excelled in the construction of art mirroring INC nationalism, which was in opposition to Rabindranath Tagore's universal humanism. The peasantry became central to the discourse of Indian modern history and Indian modern art. Amrita Sher-Gil relativized exogenous European discourses with endogenous Indian ones and privileged the peasantry as subjects of her paintings. Her paintings were also appropriated under the INC banner. Jamini Roy introduced folk discourses into Indian modern art.

The appropriation of the peasantry into the INC was part of the cultural nascent nation-state's ideological structure and nation-form. This annoyed ideologues and artists associated with the Communist Party of India. An artist who fought against the appropriation of the peasantry's culture was Chittaprosad Bhattacharya. He fought against the Bengal School dominance, the INC's image of the people, and sought to depict the peasantry non-romantically, and as their own subjects, whilst using social realism as a breakthrough

discourse in Indian modernism. For this reason this Part is important in Indian modernism because it demonstrates how an ideological structure in the INC came to be reflected in art, and was fundamentally opposed by the other anti-colonial nationalist ideology of Communism.

The creation of an Indian *Image of the people* was connected to the nationalist movement and was an endogenous process of Indian modernism.[1] The creation of the image of the people resulted in the heterodox nationalist-bourgeoisie's appropriation of the peasantry's folk signs and symbols and the images of their life-world. The bourgeois-nationalists and the Indian National Congress needed to structure their discourses within the nascent nation-state's ideology. In the creation of Indian modernism the Bengal School's discourse of internalizing nature was relativised with realism and was essential in the construction of a romantic Image of the People. The Image of the People was the next rupture in Indian modernism. The canvas became the surface on which to foreground the substantial peasantry of India, mirroring the socio-political developments in the nationalist movement. The canvas was the surface on which the intersection of nature, people, and the environment was represented—the imagined and appropriated high art culture as opposing the Raj's cultural-system.

The romantic construction of the image of the people was also a critique of global modernity. The construction refused to follow the path of European modernism because of the endogenous cultural-system's reaction to global capitalism. The image of the people was directly related to the pan-Indian moment that maneuvered and mobilized the nation against

[1] The term Image of the People I borrow from, Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, and London Thames and Hudson, 1982.
Indeed, borrowing European Marxist art history to understand the Image of the People in India is fundamental to the understanding and narrative of Indian modernism. Following from India's colonial modernity as a "dominance without hegemony", the Image of the People was the cultural movement which allowed the bourgeois nationalists to appropriate the peasants (or the Indians outside of the bourgeoisies' hegemony) into the nationalist movement, cultural nationalism, and into the discourse of Indian modernism. It allowed a type of hegemonic appropriation of non-bourgeois cultural forms by the nationalist bourgeoisie, who were escaping European hegemony and capitalist dominance. The appropriation helped in the freedom movement, and the formation of the Indian nation-state. Consequently, the borrowing of T.J. Clark's fantastic idea of the Image of the People, still allows this study to see India's modernism coming from within, but opens it to corresponding critiques of global modernity, and European historical-political processes. The structural parallels between Indian and European modernism are also noted in this section, and attempt to allow an isomorphic and homologous understanding of how the peasants are politically and culturally represented by the Indian and European bourgeoisie under different socio-political conditions and differing equations of power (i.e. European conditions had bourgeois hegemony and a bourgeois revolution, but the Indian condition had a passive revolution, and no bourgeois hegemony, but a capitalist dominance, which was critiqued in a manifestation of ways argued implicitly and explicity throughout this study).

the Raj.[2] The image of the people was politically connected to Gandhi's all-India *satyagraha* opposition to the Rowlatt Act of 1919, his Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-21), and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31).[3] The peasantry was pivotal to the discourse of Indian nationalism and culture from the 1920s onward. The importance of the peasantry was due to the overarching desire for Independence. The peasantry was mobilized as a populist political force by Gandhi and the more "extremist" elements of the Indian National Congress.[4] The political "agitations" that these mobilizations created, however, were "always patchy occurrences."[5] But Gandhi's political mobilization of the peasantry caused the artists at Shantiniketan to give cultural expression relating to the peasantry. Ram Kinkar Vaij, Binode Bihari Mukherjee, and Nandalal Bose followed Rabindranath's call for discourse innovation and moved into the romantic appropriation of the life-worlds of the peasantry.[6]

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[2] Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivate Discourse?*, Zed Books London, Second Impression, 1993, Pg 85-130. See: Brown, Judith, Gandhi *and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928-34*, Cambridge University Press, 1977. See: Brown, Judith, "The Mahatma and Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 4, 1969, Pg 321-44. See: Amin, Shahid, "Waiting for the Mahatma," in Robin Jeffrey ed, *India: Rebellion to Republic, Selected Writings, 1857-1990*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1990, Pg 83-96.

[3] Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivate Discourse?*, Zed Books London, Second Impression, 1993, Pg 131-166.
See also No Author *Cultural Forum Special Number on Jawaharlal Nehru*, Ministry of Education, Nehru Number 24, New Delhi, 1964. [Magazine Impression] See: Hardiman, David, "The Rowlatt Satyagraha," in *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917-1934*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981, Pg 129-38.

[4] As Nehru writes: My politics had been those of my class, the bourgeoisie. Indeed all vocal politics then...were those of the middle classes, and Moderate and Extremist alike represented the peasantry and, in different keys, sought their betterment. The Moderate represented especially the handful of the upper middle class who had on the whole prospered under British rule and wanted no sudden changes, which might endanger the present position and interests. They had close relations with the British Government and the big landlord class. The industrial workers, their number swollen up by the war, were only locally organized in some places and had little influence." Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Penguin Books India, 2004, Pg 53.

[5] Ed., Low, D.A., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2004, Pg 16.

[6] Kumar, Siva, R., "Sāntiniketan: A Development in Three Movements," in *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007*, Ed Gayatri Sinha, Marg Publications, New Delhi, 2009, Pg 104-17.

Binode Bihari Mukherjee *Village Shop* (Tempera on Paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

The image of the people culturally played out in Shantiniketan Rabindranath's art program. Shantiniketan's program encouraged the exploration of the *adivasi* tribes and villages as well as the Santhals. Their cultural-system and life-worlds could be harnessed as emblematic of an authentic Indian culture. The tribals and peasantry were the heterogeneous elements constituting an Indian totality outside the space of the Raj and Indian bourgeoisie's hegemony. The artists at an ideological-cultural level became linked with Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909). In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi critiqued western civilization, and the Raj's state.[7] He critiqued the Enlightenment and liberalist forms of secularism embedded in the British "political apparatus of formal democracy." He critiqued science and rationality, which "desacralized" nature and divorced Indians from their indigenous political life. For Gandhi, Indian political life was found in "organic village communities" which were the antithesis of modernized industrialized rational western life. In Gandhi's philosophy a rupture of indigenous life-worlds removed Indians from human *dharmic* and moral needs.[8] Gandhi was

[7] Chatterjee, Partha, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society," in *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Ed. Guha, Ranajit, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Delhi, New York, 1984, pp. 153-95, Pg 158-61.
For a more recent series of analysis by various scholars see Special Issue on Hind Swaraj Eds, Ritu Birla and Faisal Devji, 'Itineraries of Self-Rule: Essays on the Centenary of Gandhi's Hind Swaraj', *Public Culture*, Vol. 23, Numbe 2, Spring 2011.
[8] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Occidentalism, the Very Idea: An Essay on Enlightenment and Enchantment" *Critical Inquiry* 32, Spring 2006, pp. 381-411, Pg 394. Also see Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's integrity: The philosophy behind the politics" *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, pp. 79-93.

also aware of the "new spirit" that modernity provided, which allowed for heterodox self-criticism. Nevertheless, he wrote, "The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality."[9] Gandhi sought to reconnect Indian culture with the non-mechanized, and moral components of Indian civilization. He called for a civilization connected with *dharma*. He wrote: "Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty."[10] *Hind Swaraj* was a philosophical-nationalist critique of capitalism and industrialism, the way they alter people's life-habits, the changes they cause to mental codes and the ways of life of Indians through the processes of modernization, and education.[11]

The INC attempted to form an 'integrated nation' for mass nationalist mobilization. The INC did this by creating a populist political and nationalist framework that could appeal to and integrate the peasantry. The heterogeneous integration required the integration of social, political, and cultural differences between castes, classes, and ideologies in a manner that would allow them to speak with each other and form an imagined nation.[12] To do this the INC needed to coalesce habitual-cultural dispositions and attach the nationalistic cause to forms of political consciousness that was outside the consent of the bourgeoisie.[13]

To achieve the mass mobilization required for independence, the urban middle-class British educated Indians, like Gandhi and Nehru, needed to speak for the nation. To speak for the nation meant returning to endogenous political contexts that were entrenched in the mental-structures of the majority of the national body, the peasantry. Therefore the INC returned to endogenous and indigenous structures. Who better was there for the INC to call upon then Gandhi, who had been returning to the endogenous discourses, which he, and the INC leadership, thought peasants, and pan-Indians, would comprehend and in turn become part of the freedom movement. Indeed, part of Gandhi's power lay in his endogenisation of liberalism. His subversion of liberalism meant that the peasantry (for whom the Raj's state

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See Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Ed., Parel, Anothony, J., Cambridge University Press, Great Britain,1997.

[9] Gandhi M.K., *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Ed., Parel, Anothony, J., Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1997, Pg 71.

[10] Ibid, Pg 67.

[11] Ibid, Pg xv-xviii. Also See Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's integrity: The philosophy behind the politics" *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, pp. 79-93.

[12] Geertz, Clifford, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretations of Culture*, Fontana Press, Basic Books, New York, 1993, Pg 234-310.

[13] The communities were the small landowning and dominant rich and middle peasantry. For more see: Pg 243-44, Alavi, Hamza, "Peasants and Revolution," *Socialist Register* 1965, pp. 241-77. See: Srinivas, M.N,. "Caste in Modern India," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 16. No. 4, Aug 1957, pp. 529-48.

was an externality, and who were not English educated[14]) could respond to Gandhian mobilization. It was a return to customary codes such as *dharma*. The image of the people was the romantic cultural reflection of Gandhi's ideology. Gandhi, through his various acts of abnegation—penance-like fasts, wearing of homespun (khadi) [15], renunciation of violence, emphasis on truth and dharma, renunciation of sex, to name only a few—became a sage-like figure worthy of darshan.[16] The goal of independence, and associated acts of nationalism, became pure, noble. This enabled him to harness relationships across the society. He had to do this because India did not make a "logical whole." He had to use religious cultural elements to gain group-wide support in a "domain of the political" that was "irreducibly plural in its structure" and contained "different types of relationships."[17] Gandhi harnessed, collectivized, disciplined[18], taught, and imagined the community to imagine a nation.[19] This was the religious appeal of Gandhi. The peasant nationalists of Gujarat using traditional codes such as Bhakti followed him.[20] The "Indian nationalists" used religious-cultural elements for political mobilization because they found in them, as Partha Chatterjee has described, the "greatness of the indigenous tradition." "It was capable," he writes, "of absorbing diverse social forms into a single unity without destroying the marks of difference."[21]

The INC regarded itself as the largest political body representing India and speaking for the whole nation,[22] even though the majority of Indians were outside its liberalist

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[14] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 160. See: Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 65.

[15] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "*Khadi* and the Political Man," in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2002, Pg 51-64. See: Gandhi, M.K, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Ed., Parel, Anothony, J., Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1997, Pg 173.

[16] Amin, Shahid, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern U.P., 1921-2" in *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Ed. Guha, Ranajit, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Delhi, New York, 1984, Pg 291-95. Also See: Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 36-41.

[17] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2002, Pg 13.

[18] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 122-131.

[19] See: Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London New York, 2006.

[20] Hardiman, David, "The crisis of the Lesser Patidars: Peasant Agitations in Kheda District, Gujarat, 1917-34," in Ed., Low, D.A., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2004, Pg 59-61.

[21] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 169

[22] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 128-131.

heterodox mental structures of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Gandhi overcame the integrative failure of the "...Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation,"[23] which was because the bourgeoisie had not reached a position of hegemony, which meant they could not fabricate an ideology incorporative of the peasantry. Thus culture came to reflect the peasantry's life-worlds in the process of nationalism. Here culture was produced that was representative of the non-bourgeois social body.

The failure of the Raj's cultural-system's universalization was why the peasant population, not integrated into bourgeois hegemony, or the capitalist markets, became politically and culturally appropriated under the project of all-India mobilization. The creation of the image of the people was a cultural agenda intrinsic to Indian modernism, and forms a central component to the narrative of modern Indian history.

Pan-Indian mobilization of culture made the "external frontiers" of the nation into the "internal frontiers." The nationalist-bourgeoisie culturally and politically absorbed the non-integrated populace as part of the nascent nation-state's "external frontiers", which were "... imagined constantly as a projection and protection of an internal collective personality..."[24] and therefore became appropriated within the national structure. Rabindranath wrote:

> What is it that lies at the root of all our miseries? *It lies in our mutual isolation.* It therefore follows that any serious application to the cause of our country's welfare must be addressed to the work of uniting the disparate Many of our land. What is it that can unify the disparate Many? Dharma.[25]

Rabindranath found that *dharm*a was the glue that would stop Indian misery and create a collective national imagining that would 'unify the disparate many.' Rabindranath and Gandhi's use of Dharma was part of the 'internal spiritual principle' that could harness the unified[26] ideological mental-cultural codes[27] of the nascent nation-state, and the "home."[28] Understanding the 'home' helped to redefine culture as an inextricable part of the nascent

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[23] Ibid, Pg xii.
[24] Balibar, Etienne, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Balibar E. and Wallerstein, I., London: Verso, 1991, Pg 95.
[25] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 36. Emphasis added.
[26] Althusser, Louis, "Contradiction and overdetermination," *New Left Review*, I/41, January-February, 1967, pp 15-35, Pg 25.
[27] Geertz, Clifford, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretations of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Fontana Press, 1993, Pg 198-205. Also see Geertz, Clifford, Pg 55-86, "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind," in Ibid.
[28] Balibar, Etienne, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Balibar E. and Wallerstein, I., London: Verso, 1991, Pg 95.

nation-state's cultural worlds, which extended to the 'external frontiers.' This meant that cultural production in Shantiniketan became connected with the INC as the Shantiniketan artists represented in their art the 'external frontiers.' The peasantry and tribals, understood to be not capitalist and not ruined by western capitalism, and not corrupted by its individualism, were authentic subjects for nationalist populism.[29] The artists romanticized the nation body. Rabindranath wrote, "...Gandhi, frail in body and devoid of all material resources, should call up the immense power of the meek, that has been lying waiting in the heart of the destitute and insulted humanity of India."[30] It was the romantic search of an uncontaminated Indian *life-world.*

The artists in Shantiniketan paid attention to Gandhi's pan-Indian mobilization using *Satyagraha* (for instance, his agrarian movements in Champaran (Bihar) and Kaira (Gujrat), the *kisan* (farmer's movement) in Allahabad, and the *hartals* in 1919 by the peasantry and *harijans*.[31] They also followed Rabindranath Tagore's ideas of how art has to become connected with the praxis of life in the creation of a universal modernism. Nehru reminisced that in 1921 the INC slogan was "go to the villages."[32] Gandhi's creation of the All India Village Industries Association (1934) at Wardha was linked to Nandalal Bose's Shantiniketan pedagogy, which was used for INC Sessions. By 1937 the Congress Working Committee at Wardha led by Gandhi were "regulating the growth (more precisely restricting the growth) of modern industries."[33] The restriction on the growth of modern industries was historically connected with the initial *swadeshi* critiques of industrial capitalism, and connects the endogenous rural arts and crafts of the Hindu Mela and Club Bichitra to this paradigm. Arts and crafts were organized under the All India Spinners Association and coalesced with the Congress and Gandhian ideology on an all-Indian level.[34]

The ideology of *satyagraha* and the INC did not appeal to everybody. One time member of the INC, Periyar E.V Ramasami, critiqued Gandhi's ideology of *Swaraj* and his salt *Satyagraha* stating, "I do not have an iota of faith in Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha

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[29] Chatterjee, Partha, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society" in *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Ed. Guha, Ranajit, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Delhi, New York, 1984, pp 153-95, Pg 158-61.

[30] March 2nd 1921, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore" *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 613.

[31] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Penguin Books India, 2004, Pg 60.

[32] Ibid, Pg 83.

[33] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 200.

[34] Arnold, David, "The Politics of Coalescence: The Congress in Tamilnad, 1930-37," in Ed., Low, D.A., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2004, Pg 269.

sentiments."[35] Communist Party of India (CPI) ideologue M.N. Roy did not like the nationalist-bourgeoisie appropriation of the peasantry. The "interests" of the nationalist "bourgeoisie" thought Roy, formulated the "programme" operating in the "Congress" party.[36] The "once powerful Non-Cooperation Movement," Roy exclaimed, "had become nothing but a dramatic show."[37] The "counter-revolutionary sentiment", Roy wrote in 1929, of the "nationalist-bourgeoisie is evident."[38] The nationalist bourgeoisie "appeal[ed] to the imperialist[s]" for "political power," wrote Roy " for suppressing the working class [and] also the national revolution."[39] He felt that "Indian Nationalism" was "divorced" from the "masses" and had become a "purely middle-class affair."[40]

Rabindranath questioned Gandhi's non-violent *swaraj* and non-cooperation, and his call for a removal of western education. An anonymous writer in the *Modern Review* stated that Rabindranath has "taken no part in the non-cooperation movement."[41] Rabindranath explained his absence: "What irony of fate is this that I should be preaching co-operation of cultures between the East and West on this side of the sea just at the moment when the doctrine of non-cooperation is preached on the other side?"[42] He thought non-cooperation "is political asceticism." Non-cooperation disrupted education. He wrote:

> ...students are bringing their offering of sacrifices to what? Not a fuller education but to non-education. [Non-education was] at best...asceticism. [Non-cooperation was]...in its passive moral form is asceticism and in its active moral form is violence. The desert is as much a form of *himsa* (malignance) as is the raging sea in storms; they both are against life.[43]

Rabindranath was dismayed, after returning from Europe to Shantiniketan in July 1921, to find that staff members were under the spell of Gandhi's non-cooperation. Rabindranath severely questioned this. Having toured Europe he realized that there were many people who

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[35] Ramasami, Periyar E.V., *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation*, Penguin Books, India, 2010, Pg 31.
[36] Roy, M.N., "The New Trend of Indian Nationalism," *The Labour Monthly*, Vol. 6 February 1924, No. 2, pp. 97-105, Pg 98.
[37] Ibid, Pg 98.
[38] Roy, M.N., "The Indian Bourgeoisie and the National Revolution," *The Labour Monthly*, March 1929, pp 163-170, Pg 165.
[39] Ibid, Pg 165.
[40] Roy, M.N., "The New Trend of Indian Nationalism," *The Labour Monthly*, Vol. 6 February 1924, No. 2, pp. 97-105, Pg 97.
[41] "Clash of Art Ideals as a Source of Unrest," *The Modern Review*, May 1923, Pg 636.
[42] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 615.
[43] Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi, ed., The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore 1915-1941, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1997, Pg 58.
See March 5th 1921 "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore" *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 614.

sought, "...to achieve the unity of man, by destroying the bondage of nationalism...with the hope of a united mankind."[44] Rabindranath told Gandhi:

> ...the whole world is suffering today from the cult of a selfish and short-sighted nationalism. India has all down her history offered hospitality to the invader of whatever nation, need or colour. I have come to believe that, as Indians, we not only have much to learn from the West but that we also have something to contribute. We dare not therefore shut the West out. But we still have to learn among ourselves how, through education, to collaborate and achieve a common understanding.[45]

Rabindranath questioned the "erection of *Swaraj*" and why its structure was "a foundation of quarrelsomeness?"[46] Rabindranath thought *Swaraj* was "*maya*...a mist...that will vanish..."[47] Gandhi answered in defence of the Non-Cooperation Movement as "...a refusal to co-operate with the English administrators on their own terms. We say to them, 'Come and co-operate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world'." For Gandhi Non-Cooperation and nationalism was to save the nation, its populace, and humanity. Gandhi wrote, "In order to be fit to save others, we must try to save ourselves." Thus Indian nationalism, Gandhi said, "...is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity."[48]

Even if Rabindranath did not want Visva-Bharati and Shantiniketan to become a nationalist centre, its artists still promoted and created an *image of the people*. The centres became connected with pan-Indian Gandhian nationalism. Village life was depicted for nationalism[49] by Shantiniketan artists, due to Tagore's indebtedness to romanticism[50] (which can be seen in Gandhi's promotion of the *charkha* and village industries[51]). The appropriation of the peasantry spoke of the structural growth of the nation looking to its backbone. These

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[44] Tagore, Rabindranath, "The Call of Truth", *The Modern Review*, October 1921, reprinted in Truth Called Them Differently, pp. 72-73, 72f, Pg 72-3.

[45] Elmhirst, L.K, *Poet and Plowman*, Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1975, Pg 20-22.

[46] Rabindranath Tagore, "The Call of Truth", *The Modern Review*, October 1921, reprinted in Truth Called Them Differently, pp. 72-73, 72f, Pg 73.

[47] Tagore, Rabindranath, "Letters from Rabindranath Tagore," *The Modern Review*, May, 1921, Pg 613.

[48] Gandhi, M.K, "The Great Sentinel", *Young India* 13th October 1921, in *Truth Called Them Differently*, (Quoted passages on pp. 80-81). This exchange has also been reprinted in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, ed, *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1997.

[49] See Redfield, Marc, *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism*, Stanford University Press, 2003.

[50] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2000, Pg 176.

[51] Subramanyan, K.G, "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 237.

were the processes attached with a colonized nation in transition. To fight colonial capitalist industrial dominance, and reimagine the subjects of the nation, the bourgeois-nationalists had to move into the orbit of the agrarian sectors.

A brief comparison of the socio-political trajectory of European modernism will now take place, demonstrating correspondences between Indian and European modernism in their respective constructions of the Image of the People. A symmetrical socio-historical phenomenon can be seen with the artists Jean Francois-Millet and Jules Breton's classicist yet naturalist paintings[52], which romantically depicted the rural French peasantry working on their land—within the national market—a century after the French revolution. These artists reflected modernity by moving from the discourse of classicism and naturalism slowly into realism, exemplified by Gustave Courbet. In the narrative of European modernity and modernism, this position came about through a bourgeois revolution, an intrinsic process in the trajectory of European modernism. The artists re-interpreted and criticized the industrialized dominant culture of the urban bourgeoisie, and returned to the signs and symbols of the village and the peasantry. Millet and Breton represented the peasantry, in a sense romantically (because economically the agricultural world was diminishing to a dominant industrial culture due to the nationalisation and industrialisation of capitalist markets), with realism. Realism was used as a discourse to represent the outside, natural and ordered world.

In 1909 Coomaraswamy stated that the tendency to represent nature was due to the divorce of nature from "human life." Coomaraswamy, understanding the European rupture into modernism, wrote:

> The chief characteristic of the bulk of modern European art, the art of the Salons and the Royal Academy, is a great development of imitative power. The exhibition walls are hung with studies in still life, studies of landscapes, of trees and animals and of human beings in every sort of situation and moved by every kind of feeling. Much of this is the expression in art of a comparatively new appreciation of nature in all her varying moods ...[53]

[52] Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, and London Thames and Hudson, 1982, Pg 19. See: Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, *The Making of a new 'Indian' art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal*, c. 1850-1920, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Pg 319.

[53] Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "The Message of the East" *The Modern Review*, May 1909, Pg 428.

Further stating, "It is in the absence of nature, in the artificial life of towns, that we need pictures of nature's outward form to call up within us the memory of far-off peace and beauty."[54] Coomaraswamy felt realism was a "return from artificiality to truth."[55]

The Indian movement, seeking a relationship with nature, moved towards depicting *the image of the people*, using realism. The European use of realism depicted the objective truth of the world in an ordered rational way, by visually representing habitual dispositions, and *life-worlds*, of people from all classes without romanticism. But the Indian artists in Shantiniketan, such as Nandalal Bose, romanticised the peasantry using realism with endogenous discourses because it was a discourse capable of recording real dispositions of the peasantry, and because the artists were nationalists and could, by using realism, visually appropriate the colonially uncontaminated peasantry's *life-worlds*, which were outside the colonial states hegemony, into the visual narrative of Indian modernism. The use of realism in India became linked with anti-colonial nationalism, creating a rupture in Indian endogenous modernism. It was because the nation was in transition, the independence movement was in swing, and Gandhi and Rabindranath held charismatic sway over many Indians.

However the European realist depictions of the peasantry were due to the ascension of the bourgeoisie and their ruling iconography, which made Millet return to the village, fleeing an urban and industrializing Paris, to Barbizon, in 1849, as an avant-garde artist (in the original, utopian, socialist, Saint-Simonian[56] sense[57]). Millet deconstructed the urban vision of the bourgeoisie and depicted the national body. This was the result of the French Revolution of 1848 where Louis Napoleon became President of the Second Republic due to the support of peasants. Millet—antecedent to Gustave Courbet—depicted the national body in idyllic pastoral settings. Millet's romantic and nationalist agenda spoke of the visual

[54] Ibid, Pg 428.

[55] Ibid, Pg 428-29.

[56] "In terms of understanding the later condemnations of avant-garde art and literature both by the right (*entartete Kunst*) and by the left (bourgeois decadence), it is important to recognize that as early as the 1890s the avantgarde's insistence on cultural revolt clashed with the bourgeoisie's need for cultural legitimation, as well as with the preference of the Second International's cultural politics for the classical bourgeois heritage." Hussyen Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass-Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, Pg 5. Also see Calinescu, Matei, " "Avant-Garde": Some Terminological Considerations," in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, Number 23, 1974, Pg 68.

[57] As T.J. Clark notes, "In such a world, being avant-garde was just an institutionalized variant of everyone's gambit. It was a kind of initiation rite — a trek out into the bush for a while, then a return to privileged status within the world you had left. It was a finishing school, an unabashed form of social climbing." See: Clark, T.J., *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London Thames and Hudson, 1982, Pg 14.

appropriation of the proletariat within the bourgeoisie's national market. This appropriation made the peasantry worthy citizens of pictorial representation, toppling the structure of dominant French aristocratic visual discourse. The peasantry's life-worlds were an appropriation by "modern critics of modernity, especially romantics", because they "saw in [the] peasantry the rapidly vanishing virtues of simplicity, naturalness, and cultural authenticity."[58] This can be seen in Millet's paintings *The Sower* (1850), *The Gleaners* (1857) and *Peasant Watering her Cow* (1873-74).

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[58] Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 158.

The Sower (1850, Jean-Francois Millet, Oil on Canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

The Gleaners (1857, Jean-Francois Millet, Oil on Canvas, Musee d'Orsay, Paris)

Peasant Watering her Cow (1873-74, Jean-Francois Millet, Oil on Canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

The return to the peasantry as a visual critique of global modernity was on the cusp of the next modernist rupture by artists such as Camille Pissarro whose hero was Millet. This modernist rupture, T.J. Clark has suggested, can be seen in the realism of Gustave Courbet. Global similarities can be seen with the Indian condition. Indian modernism's image of the people need not be understood as a time lag—*decalage*—with European modernism, but as a global condition in which endogenous processes attempt to restore a cultural system using its own signs and symbols of folk village culture, and appropriating them into high art.

In 1846 Charles Baudelaire called for realism in paintings that expressed "the heroism of modern life,"[59] which drove Courbet (who was "influenced by Realism which is influenced by Positivism which is the product of capitalist materialism") to paint the realist scene of the peasantry.[60] Courbet's realism was at a time of social upheaval, soon after seen in the Paris Commune of 1871.[61] Albert Boime argues that the Paris Commune was an essential moment in the creation of European modernism and was "...wrought out of the unexpected dislodging of...the bourgeoisie and the replacement of its rule—if ever so brief—of Paris by that of another class: the proletariat and its political expression in the

[59] See Baudelaire, Charles *The Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life*, in *Art in Paris*, translated by J. Mayne, Phaidon, 1966, pp. 116-120.
[60] Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London Thames and Hudson, 1982, Pg 10.
[61] See: Ed., Shanin, Teodore, *Peasants and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971.

Commune."[62] The other "class[es] rule was short-lived, its shocking hold on the apparatus of the city forced an extreme reaction in which every weapon in the bourgeoisie's political, social, and cultural arsenal was mobilized to bring Paris back and up to the point where the middle class had "systematically occupied" it."[63] This is a situation similar to the one experienced by Communist artists such as Chittaprosad Bhattacharya who represented in social realist discourses the Indian peasantry suffering under the Bengal Famine (1943). He represented the peasantry in opposition to the dominant Shantiniketan discourses. On the other hand, Millet, freed from the confines of urban Parisian industrial capitalism, and denouncing the Commune "for the destruction of Paris"[64], *created* an *Image of the People* visually appropriating *peasants into Frenchmen*.[65] He appropriated the peasantry because they did "not constitute a class" due to a lack of "national bond" and because they had "no political organization among them."[66] Millet's appropriation of the peasantry as visual signs of the "great mass of the French nation" spoke of their representation. It was the avant-garde bourgeois artists who formed the peasantry as a visual cultural subject. Marx wrote, "they cannot represent themselves, they must be *represented*."[67]

In the Indian condition it was a *cunning of populism* orchestrated by Gandhi that conducted and conjured the peasantry to become subjects of mass INC nationalist mobilisation, and subjects of a reconstruction of Indian modern art. But the Non-Cooperation Movement was a challenge against the dominant Raj. The Non-Cooperation Movement was "designed" as a "counter-hegemonic strategy"[68] whose "aim" was "to mobilize the masses in order to destroy the structures of collaboration by which colonialism had hoped to endow its dominance with hegemony." However, Non-Cooperation also created the "nationalist elite" to "speak for" and visually represent "all of Indian society."[69] This representation was a concatenation of developments in a Gellnerian mode, resulting in endogenous processes embedded within a nation.[70] As David Lloyd notes, nationalism is "an inconceivable concept

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[62] Boime, Albert, *Art and the French Commune Imagining Paris after War and Revolution*, Princeton University Press, 1995, Pg 3.
[63] Ibid, Pg 3.
[64] Ibid, Pg 49.
[65] See Weber, Eugen, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976. See: Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993, Pg 158.
[66] Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte*, International Publishers, New York, 1975, Pg 124.
[67] Ibid, Pg 124. Emphasis added.
[68] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 128.
[69] Ibid, Pg 128.
[70] Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1983, Pg 53-62.

except as a product of modernity," which, for Gellner, is inextricably tied to the new industrial state,[71] which Gandhi argued, had to be systematically brought down. The Shantiniketan artists such as Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar Vaij, and Binode Bihari Mukherjee followed the Gandhian INC Non-Cooperation position, as the 'nationalist elite' artists visually 'representing', appropriating, and 'speaking' for the peasantry, co-opting the peasantry's image *and life-worlds* into Indian modern 'high' bourgeois art (discussed in the next section). But this Non-Cooperation was the "counter-hegemonic strategy," led by, Guha writes, "the Indian National Congress," which (in the Gramscian sense) was to "serve as the organ by which the bourgeoisie would want to exercise its "leadership before winning governmental power."[72] The INC position irritated artists like Chittaprosad Bhattacharya who formed a critical avant-garde against the Shantiniketan artists (discussed in Part 5).

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[71] Lloyd, David, *Nationalism and minor literature: James Clarence Mangan and the emergence of Irish cultural nationalism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987, Pg 173. See: Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1983, Pg 19-52.
[72] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 128.

4.2 The Image of the People at Shantiniketan—Ram Kinkar Vaij.

This section considers three Shantiniketan artists: Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar Vaij, and Binode Bihari Mukherjee. (The section considers Vaij more fully, and does not elaborate on the Shantiniketan murals at Visva-Bharati due to existing explorations in the field[73]).

The artists were able to take Rabindranath's art ideology and theories, the Indian past, the socio-cultural environment that surrounded them in Shantiniketan, Nandalal Bose's curriculum, and integrate them to re-work the Indian tradition with Western and Far Eastern discourses to create a romantic image of the people, incorporating the countryside, villagers, adivasis, and the santhals. This became a breakaway in Indian modernism because Nandalal Bose, as Siva Kumar points out, combined "the Western realist idea of drawing from nature with the Eastern concept of drawing from memory."[74] However, Nandalal Bose wrote, "the Europeans were bent upon exact reproductions of nature." Bose thought this was not "the right road in art and cannot in the end lead to fulfilment and satisfaction." "As a reaction" he wrote, "the Europeans are at present trying hard to deny nature wholly." Bose felt this denial was "unnatural" not leading to "*rasa*, the aesthetic delight." Bose thought, "[European] landscape painting contains none of the nine *rasas*."[75] Consequently Bose used the European discourse of realism relativising it with Abanindranath's interiorized discourse (painting from memory), as a method to romantically depict the tribal's life-worlds. In the process, a new discourse was created in Shantiniketan, which will now be elaborated upon.

Landscape painting became an important part of Shantiniketan curriculum. It was an inheritance from the partially blind, and subsequently fully blind Binode Bihari Mukherjee and Ram Kinkar Vaij. Siva-Kumar writes:

> Nandalal thus saw a close connection between drawing from memory and composition, and for him it was established through the dual function of rhythm as an expression of the life content of the figure and as a means of determining its image. This also helped him to think of representation and decoration as compatible, rather

[73] See Chakrabarti, Jayanta, R. Siva Kumar, Arun K. Nag, *The Santinketan Murals*, Calcutta: Seagull Books with Vishva-Bharati, 1995. See: Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 84-94. See Mukherjee Benodebehari, 'My Experiments with Murals', and 'Adhunik Silpa Shiksa', Chitra Katha, pp. 395-6 and p. 154. On Nandalal Bose's murals also see: Arun K. Nag, 'Duti Sakshatkar', Nandan, vol. 6, 1983, p. 13 and Gouri Bhanja, 'Amar Pita o Guru Nandalal', Rabindra Bhavana (Nandalal Number), November 1984, pp. 89-90.

[74] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

[75] Bose, Nandalal *On Art*, Kalakshetra Publications, India, 1956, Pg 73.

than as mutually exclusive, concepts. And in concepts, though not in style, this brings him close to an artist like Matisse.[76]

Matisse's watercolours were exhibited at the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition. The romanticisation of landscape, myth, and tribal elements seen in Bose's, Vaij's and Mukherjee's works combined the inward transformation of nature in the Indian fashion, with its understanding of the inward transformation of nature in the western fashion, with the western objective depiction of it using realism. In 1921, Bose's trip to copy the Bagh murals, and prior trips to rural India such as Orissa[77], brought him into close contact with nature and the local and tribal inhabitants. Geeta Kapur writes it was Bose's "experience through Orissa which opened his eyes to the vastly variegated forms of what was too generally called the Indian tradition."[78]

The santhals living around Shantiniketan further inspired Bose, and became an integrated part of the *image of the people.* He appropriated the image of the Santhals into a high art tradition, but did not treat them as subject being appropriated for objective painting (there was an attempt at unity between the painter and the subjects of his paintings). The high art tradition had moved away from Abanindranath's discourse of internalization. The new approach, with its nuanced gaze of the people, and the image of the people, assimilated western representational realist techniques, which were taught at Shantiniketan with the Eastern mode of internalization. Bose's romanticisation and idealization of the peasantry that can be seen in his watercolours (which, after working with the Japanese artists, the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition, and the teaching of western art movements by Stella Kramrisch) owed to western and far eastern Japanese brush and Chinese scroll painting. The romanticisation of the Indian world that was outside the Raj is seen in Bose's use of a mythological theme, which replaced the mythological character Sabari[79] with an everyday Santhal among whom he was living.

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[76] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

[77] Subramanyan, K.G., "The Drawings of Nandalal Bose', *Art Heritage*, No. 2, New Delhi, n.d, Pg 58,.

[78] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 109.

[79] Sabari is a mythological character from Ramayana. When Rama and Lakshmana were wandering in the forest, Sabari, a tribal woman, offered Rama wild fruit, but before offering to him she made sure they were fit for him by tasting each fruit.

Nandalal Bose *Sabari in Her Youth* (1941, Tempera on mounted board, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Bose appropriated, into the high art cultural tradition, the image of the Santhal —the metonymical structure—into the mythological system of the Ramayana. He made the mythological Sabari a Santhal girl who became a subject of a non-mythological history; she was a recognizable, non-mythological image—an image of the people. He also painted *Sabari in Her Old* Age (1941).

Nandalal Bose *Sabari in Her Old Age* (1941, Tempera on mounted board, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Bose created a naturalism that went hand in hand with the "ideology of cultural indigenism" at Shantiniketan. He painted life-worlds of the locals and the tribals using the internalized impressions using the Japanese and Chinese ink techniques and objective realism, for instance in temperas and watercolours such as *Buildings in the Rains* (1949), *Floating a Canoe* (1947), and *New Clouds* (1937).

Nandalal Bose *Buildings in the Rain* (1949, Water Colour on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Nandalal Bose *Floating a Canoe* (1947, Watercolour on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Nandalal Bose *New Clouds* (1937, Tempera on mounted board, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Ram Kinkar Vaij (1906-1980) radically changed the development of modernism in Shantiniketan.[80] By the time Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement was in full swing Vaij was fifteen and had joined the movement. He started spinning his own *khadi* (cloth). The movement was a life-long influence on him.[81] He reminisced:

> …the Non-Cooperation movement: the people's struggle for freedom from British rule. Schools and colleges were declared closed. One day a professor who was sympathetic to me took me to the National School and got me admitted in it. With this my work for the Congress Party…began. At that time Mr. Anilbaran Ray was the organizer of the Congress Party. Instead of giving me the duty of distributing spinning wheels, he asked me to do some office work and to paint portraits of Congress leaders, to be taken out in processions. I painted these in oil colour on large canvasses.[82]

When he was fifteen he started to sketch local nationalist leaders like Ramananda Chatterjee, who told him, when he was 19, to study in Shantiniketan.[83] The 1920s, when Indian mobilization was in full swing, was a nascent period of learning for Vaij. It was during the Civil Disobedience Movement (from the 1930s[84]) that his sculptures and paintings start

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[80] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 114.

[81] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 15.

[82] Ibid, Pg 16.

[83] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

[84] See Brown, M,. Judith, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928-1934*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

exhibiting a clear political connection. They use the life-worlds of the Santhals to provocatively destabilize Indian sculptural traditions.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Santhal Family* (Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan, Photo: Kedar Vishwanathan, 2009)

Vaij de-stabilized the sculptural traditions by relativizing the traditional Hindu sculptural motifs and the peasantry. He made their life-worlds a central—canonical—discourse in Indian modernism.

As a young man Vaij was "...mainly attracted to realistic art..."[85] Vaij re-worked the Indian tradition promulgated by the Bengal School, and moved it into a new discourse of primitivism and folk-tribal art. He re-worked the modern into a relativized Indian modernism, whilst introducing oil painting into the genealogy of Shantiniketan. "...Without recourse to realism, [Indian art]...would not go far enough ... realism came to be accepted in Shantiniketan at a later stage."[86]

Vaij's first teacher Dhrendra Deb Burman said that Abanindranath had seen some of Vaij's "untutored art" and praised it for its "expertise and maturity."[87] Vaij went to Shantiniketan in 1925 when, as he writes, "the government schools and colleges had been closed down and national schools with reputed teachers opened."[88] In 1927 he travelled to Nalanda, Rajgriha, Jaipur, Chittor and Udaipur assessing India's sculptural, artistic, religious, and cultural traditions. He examined Buddhist sculpture, and met Maliram the most important

[85] Prasad Devi *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 183.
[86] Ibid, Pg 184.
[87] Ibid, Pg 15.
[88] Ibid, Pg 183.

sculptor of Jaipur.[89] Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury briefly taught at Shantiniketan and recommended Edouard Lanteri's *Modelling: A Guide for Teachers and Students* to Vaij.[90]

In 1928 Nandalal Bose revived the pre-colonial artistic method of instruction. Art students were apprenticed to masters.[91] At this time Vaij was invited by Rabindranath Tagore to meet Liza von Podt, a sculptor from Vienna, from whom Vaij learnt western sculptural techniques. Rabindranath's acquaintance Marguerite Milward came to Shantiniketan the same year as a visiting teacher. Milward gave a small maquette by Bourdelle to the Kala Bhavan Museum.[92] Milward was a student of Bourdelle and Rodin who had praised Indian sculpture.[93] Vaij learnt sculpting and casting from her, whilst learning terracotta reliefs from the British sculptor Bergman.[94]

From a very young age Vaij had absorbed the techniques of folk clay pottery and sculptures, by watching potters. He used to model riverbed clay.[95] Abanindranath, Nandalal Bose, and Binode Bihari Mukherjee's styles were different, and Vaij understood artists' styles to originate independently.[96] The cultural and art philosophy that pervaded Shantiniketan, the classical Indian and folk sculpture and traditions combined with Western tradition, and the techniques learnt from the visiting sculptors at Shantiniketan, provided the foundations for him to create new discourses in Indian art. [97]

Vaij was also a painter. Like his sculpture, his paintings were also independent of other Shantiniketan artists. Unlike Nandalal Bose and Binod Behari Mukherjee's paintings, which used Chinese and Japanese techniques, Vaij's paintings depicted the local life-world in a different manner. To understand the differences the following sub-section considers the works of Binode Behari Mukherjee. Vaij's paintings are discussed immediately after.

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[89] Ibid, Pg 216.

[90] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 94.

[91] Ibid, Pg 80.

[92] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

[93] For instance see "The Dance of Shiva—By the Late M. Auguste Rodin," Translated from the French original by Professor Kali Das Nag, *Rupam*, No. 8, October 1921.

[94] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 216.

[95] Ibid, Pg 15.

[96] Ibid, Pg 175.

[97] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

Binode Behari Mukherjee's watercolours were a relativization of Matisse with the Bengal School. Mukherjee focused on the far eastern techniques of drawing. He wrote: "I...had realized that painting mythological pictures was not my forté and made no bones about this while talking to friends."[98] Mukherjee "could not warm up to Asitkumar's metaphorical paintings. I never tried to, even by mistake."[99] Mukherjee spoke of a formative relationship at Shantiniketan that he used in his relativisation of Pan-Asian aesthetic structures. He met Wu Hsiao Ling who was a Professor at China Bhavan (in Shantiniketan). Mukherjee also met Xu Beihong when he was staying as a guest at China Bhavan at Visva-Bharati in Shantiniketan. It was from Wu Hsiao Ling that Mukherjee learnt about Chinese aesthetic structures.[100] (Later, in 1942 Madam and President Chiang Kai-shek visited Visva-Bharati; Chiang had hosted to Rabindranath Tagore when he visited China in 1924 with Nandalal Bose). Mukherjee notes that Beihong was so "extremely busy" that he could only speak to him once. And about this occasion Mukherjee notes:

> When I opened the topic of Chinese aesthetic treatises he got agitated, kicked forward his shoe-shod foot and exclaimed, 'These treatises have ruined China. Kick them out! Groups of artists sit at home and turn the pages of these treatises to see which side of a tree, according to its rules should have two branches and which side one; they study the rules, they do not look outside!'[101]

Later, in 1938, Mukherjee saw the State Exhibition at Shanghai and said that he "would have considered this reaction of Xu Beihong's exaggerated" had he not seen the exhibition. Beihong had a great respect for the Tang tradition, and according to Mukherjee, used to say, "I want to resurrect the ethos of the Tang era; this is why I am working so hard.' Mukherjee could not "understand...how a Paris-educated oil painter like Xu Beihong could re-establish Tang traditions in today's world."[102]

Mukherjee, "plagued...by weak eyesight," moved into an endogenous modernism through the assimilation of the internal image and western post-impressionist discourses combined with Chinese and Japanese brush and ink painting.[103] He wrote: "During those days in Kala Bhavana...I realized to some extent that although we all stayed together, we were,

[98] Mukherjee, Binode, Bihari, *Chitrakar: The Artist*, trans, K.G. Subramanyan, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 29.
[99] Ibid, Pg 29.
[100] Ibid, Pg 44.
[101] Ibid, Pg 45.
[102] Ibid, Pg 45.
[103] *Benodebehari Mukherjee (1904-1980) Centenary Retrospective*, Curated by Gulammohammed Sheikh and R Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Pg 4-5.

each, distinct in the field of art."[104] He created an image of the people focusing on non-urban naturalistic environments and an endogenous modernism based on local cultural arrangements that relativised (translated) exogenous discourses.[105] As Siva Kumar writes, "they demonstrated artistic modernity is achieved not through forms borrowed from other cultures…but through the reconstitution of their syntax to fit the local context and the representational and narrative practices of the particular artist."[106] This can be seen in his relativization of Abanindranath's and Nandalal Bose's watercolours with the Japanese wash technique.

Binode Bihari Mukherjee *Palm Grove* (1932, watercolor on tempera, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Mukherjee travelled to Japan in 1938[107], and subsequently combined far-eastern ink techniques with Matisse's fauvism, as seen in Mukherjee's paintings *Palm Grove* (1932), *Banaras Ghat* (1943), and *Mother from Najibad* (1948).

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[104] Mukherjee, Binode, Bihari, *Chitrakar: The Artist*, trans, K.G. Subramanyan, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 27.
[105] *Benodebehari Mukherjee (1904-1980) Centenary Retrospective*, Vadehra Art Gallery, Curated by Gulammohammed Sheikh and R Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 2006, Pg 73-81.
[106] Siva Kumar, R, "Santiniketan A Development in Three Movements," in *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007*, Ed, Gayatri Sinha, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 2009, Pg 116.
[107] Mukherjee, Binode, Bihari, *Chitrakar: The Artist*, trans, K.G. Subramanyan, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 35.

Binode Bihari Mukherjee *Banaras Ghat* 1943, watercolor on Nepali paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Binode Bihari Mukherjee *Mother from Najibad Collection* (1948, tempera on canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art)

Vaij recounted, "I came from a humble family, used to seeing laboring people. Their simple life, mode of working, their movement—these were my subjects … Santhals in Shantiniketan especially influenced me. Both Santhal men and women work cheerfully and break into song and dance at any pretext. Their needs are few but they have an infinite capacity for happiness

and for giving pleasure to others. I have tried to capture moments from their dynamic life in my painting and sculpture."[108]

Before Vaij (who was financially constrained) started working in Kala Bhavan, the Modern School in Delhi offered him a job. It was where Sarada Ukil, an ex-student of Abanindranath Tagore was teaching. Vaij taught there for six months (1931-32), before leaving because Ukil's Bengal School discourse was inimical to his ideas. When Vaij was in Delhi he made a bas-relief sculpture of *Sarwasti* for the entrance of the school. Vaij did not come under the influence of the Bengal School painting promoted by Ukil.

The use of oils in Shantiniketan is traced to Vaij. As Siva-Kumar writes, "...though in the early 20s many in Shantiniketan learned the technique of oil painting from Andrée Karpeles, it took roots in Kala Bhavan only after Ramkinkar [Vaij] and some of his contemporaries began using it in the 30s."[109] It was, as Binode Bihari Mukherjee writes, "Prabhatmohan Bandopadhyaya and Satyen Bandopadhyaya who "systematically learnt [oil painting]," in 1921-22 from Andree Karpeles before Vaij arrived in Shantiniketan.[110] It was also prior to Stella Kramrisch's 1921 lectures on modern European art, which Rabindranath made all students attend.[111] Kapur notes: "during this phase of national resurgence" (but in contradiction to her "modernism") European art was not treated "as an alien ideology and source of reification."[112] Western discourses, such as cubism, were used by Ram Kinkar to suit local *life-world* conditions, creating an endogenous modernism.

Vaij, (after his early oil paintings commissioned by the Congress party) did not follow the Bengal School's, and especially Cousins' position that oil paintings were a western material used for their discourses. Vaij, who made a series of wash water-colour studies of his sculptures from 1925-30, used oils for his experiments with abstract art. Vaij transcended the wash technique, which disappointed Abanindranath.[113] He broke away from the Bengal

[108] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 98.
[109] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[110] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 188-189.
[111] Pg 189, Ibid.
[112] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 11.
[113] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007. For the whole story of Abanindranath Tagore's challenge for Ram Kinkar Vaij to paint using the wash technique see the above, See Pg 24-25.

School's watercolour discourses. He adapted cubism to his sculptures, redefining it within a muscular syntax and arranging it in order to give a romantic, powerful and larger-than-life feeling to the postures of Santhals he painted and sculpted.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Maternity* (c. 1937-38, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Mill Call* (Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan, Photo: Kedar Vishwanathan)

Vaij inserted the tribal woman as a marker of Indianness into the discourse of Indian modernism. These were images of the people who were the backbone, "the substantial class,"[114] of the Indian movement. Vaij romantically talks of his influence:

> Moving images of labourers attract me. Santhals and ordinary folk are the working people of our country. They…are my 'models'. And you know… who you call labourers lead a simple life and have a very simple heart. Their simple lives. Their culture, dance and music, have been…a great inspiration for me.[115]

He continued, "artists have a role to play in the processes of social change, and that must always be so."[116] Vaij's works were the reflection of the political and social changes of the time. He was also linked to the environmental art pedagogy at Shantiniketan with the broader national emphasis on people who formed the country's backbone—the tribals, Santhals and the peasantry. The cultural reflection can be seen in *At Rest* (c.1937-38), where a family of *Santhals* rests upon stacks of cotton.

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[114] Hegel, G.W.F, *Philosophy of Right*, translated T.M. Knox, London, 1952 reprint, Oxford University Press, 1967, Pg 131.

[115] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 173.

[116] Ibid, Pg 174.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *At Rest* (c. 1937, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Vaij used cubist abstraction allowing the bodies to form fused masses. Vaij had seen Picasso's post-cubist works by the mid 1930s having access to issues of *Caheirs d'art*.[117] Vaij felt the 'Western influence' was a "mistaken idea." He started using abstract and cubist discourses. He writes: "it is not good to always go on imitating, as is the convention."[118] He understood abstraction as not ostensibly western. He said, "see…the *Shivalinga* form. Is it abstract? Is it Western? Surely not! So how did that form come about?..."[119]

His paintings, *Ploughing*, *Maternity* and *Mother and Child* broke from Binode Behari Mukherjee's modernism. These paintings have to be seen as Vaij's abstracted, post-cubist, depictions of nature. He understood nature to be "the god of art." His abstract and female cubist forms together with a child was the combination of sexual elements that, for Vaij, were "…man and woman, and what they bring forth: the child." [120]

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[117] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[118] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 176.
[119] Ibid, Pg 176.
[120] Ibid, Pg 178.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Mother and Child* (c. 1937-38, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Ploughing* (c. 1937, Oil on Canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Vaij's modernism was still based on the visual internalized and transformed perception of the artist and the creation of that within the mind, creating the inner rhythm of nature. For Vaij European modernism was born due to the impact of Japanese woodblock prints which made the western artists give up the emphasis on realism and anatomical accuracy.[121] Vaij states that his approach is "essentially Indian," whereby it was "not about

[121] Ibid, Pg 178-79.

imitation but about capturing the inner essence of things, which is rhythm."[122] For Vaij, like Bose and Mukherjee, line and rhythm were paramount in Oriental art. Thus Vaij relativized western discourses suiting already extant Indian discourses in the construction of an endogenous modernism. Vaij did this by balancing the traditions of India with Europe and Sanchi, Konarak, Ellora with Rodin, Epstein to post-Cubist Duchamp Villon.[123] Vaij states he was influenced by da Vinci, Michaelangelo and Rodin...Picasso...Matisse and Chagall."[124]

Vaij observed:

> I have often been invited to go abroad[125], but have not responded. What would be the benefit of going there? Why leave your homeland? The context of my art, my painting or sculpting is here, and so is the ambience. What would I learn by travelling out of the country? We can know all about art in the world by sitting here; as for technique—of either painting or of making sculptures—it is a question of talent, genius for that matter. Why go begging door to door for information? Many do that, no doubt. They come back to this country after carrying out their particular aim. After all, Abanindranath Tagore did not go abroad, nor did Jamini Roy.[126]

For Vaij, the Santhals "represent the archetypal man, and that man stands in the foreground of his vision of life."[127] Vaij moved away from Bose's Okakurian, triadic vision of the Santhals as an integrated larger reality of nature, of tradition, and originality, by romantically depicting them as subjects of heroism through their labour.[128] He used materials endemic to Shantiniketan. He used a lateritic-gravel mix, with cast cement. Vaij's techniques and sculptures combined Indian and western discourses, abstraction and realism. For Vaij Ravana, Ganesha and Picassos were equally modern. The way the forms bend and are shaped were not to be considered 'modern' in western terms. The growth of Vaij's sculptural abstraction is visible in his formalist *Bust of Rabindranath Tagore* (c. 1941-42, Cement), and

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[122] Ibid, Pg 179.
[123] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[124] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 174.
[125] Vaij went to Nepal to complete a commission for the Government. His trip to Nepal was the only time he left India.
[126] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 23.
[127] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[128] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 108. Also See Chaudhury, Satyajit, "Nandalal Bose and Indian Modernity," *Nandalal Bose and Indian Modernity* in *Nandalal Bose: A Collection of Essays: Centenary Volume*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1983, Pg 38-42.

then his abstraction in *Rabindranath Tagore* (c. 1941-42, Bronze), which Rabindranath said "…is good work …he has emphasized his vision of his subject."[129]

[129] Ibid, Pg 30.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Bust of Rabindranath Tagore* (c. 1941-42, Cement, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Photo: Kedar Vishwanathan)

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Rabindranath Tagore* (c. 1941-42, Bronze, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Photo: Kedar Vishwanathan)

The sculpture of *The Winnower* (Bronze c. 1943), which was a maquette in bronze for the later 1944 version of *The Harvester* located next to the entrance of the original Kala Bhavan hall, was an entry to an international competition on The Unknown Political Prisoner.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *The Winnower* (c. 1941-42, Bronze, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Photo: Kedar Vishwanathan)

The judges rejected it. Vaij was asked why he submitted such a theme to this competition. He asked in reply, "Are not women labourers the most obvious example of prisoners of a political system?"[130] Vaij's use of abstraction was to "catch the body in a certain posture." For the sculpture of *Rabindranath Tagore* he "placed a ball in the place of one eye," with the aim of distorting the form which had not been distorted in his previous *Bust of Rabindranath Tagore*.[131]

Vaij thought sculptures "…all…have movement." He did not believe in "staticity." Vaij assimilated realism and abstraction from mural painting. He deployed a dense movement reminiscent of Indian murals and sculptures.[132] The Ajanta, Bagh, "Aryan and Non-Aryan" traditions had striking unity in form, line and rhythm. He unified Indian racial types and assimilated tribal and Aryan traditions.[133] Vaij compared his sculptures to the labours of the Santhals. He said "I have done almost all my work in daylight under the hot sun…In fact

[130] Ibid, Pg 32.

[131] Ibid, Pg 173.

[132] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

[133] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 180.

summer is my favourite season for work."[134] Vaij was influenced by the labouring classes in Edouard Lanteri's *Modelling* as well as by a post-Bourdelle lyricism.[135]

"While making *Santhal Family*," Vaij said, "I tried to show them in motion exactly as they would appear when departing." For Vaij the Santhals were of paramount importance to a new discourse on Indian modernism. He said:

> People say Santhals do not understand art. That is not at all correct. One day I saw a fisherman looking at the sculpture with great interest. At times he moved away, gazing at it from a distance, at other times he came close and then went round it again and again...I was working nearby. He came near and asked, 'Babu, what are you doing?' I said I was trying to make a fisherman like him. The man laughed and said: 'Yes, you may call it a fisherman, but it is actually the image of a god.' This comment gave me great joy.[136]

Vaij thought, "everything in art is making or breaking."[137] He consciously destabilized the hierarchical tradition of sacral and ritual mural painting and temple sculpture by democratically forming the *santhal's* image, and used their everyday movements in the construction of the image of the people. The *Santhal Family's* movement is reminiscent of the sculptural lintels in Hindu temples, and even has a mythological feel in the way the man shoulders the burden.

Nandalal Bose, Binode Behari Mukherjee, and Ram Kinkar Vaij all used endogenous discourses relativised with modern European discourses, such as realism, cubism, and fauvism. Each artist explored aesthetic aspects of the Indian tradition in their own distinctive modern style, by using pan-Asian aesthetic discourses in combination with European modernist ones, especially realism. This was the first time since Abanindranath's initial rupture of academy realism, and discourses pertaining to rationally depicting objective reality, that artists, who were affiliated with Abanindranath, used realism as an aesthetic discourse to depict the Indian peasantry—who were authentic subjects for nationalism, as they were outside of colonial hegemony—culturally appropriating them into the nationalist movement. Indeed, to use realism, and cubism, as an aesthetic discourse intertwined with drawing from memory was a marriage, and relativisation, between endogenous nationalist and exogenous discourses. All artists painted their surroundings: the villages, peasantry, and

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[134] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 22.
[135] Ahuja, Naman, *Ramkinkar Through the Eyes of Devi Prasad*, exhibition catalogue 8 October – 14th October 2007, The School of the Arts and Aesthetics JNU, New Delhi, Pg 14.
[136] Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007. Prasad, Devi, *Ramkinkar Vaij Sculptures*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, Pg 29.
[137] Ibid, Pg 173.

their life-worlds. They romantically painted the Indian peasantry, making them subjects of nationalism, establishing the INC's Image of the People, as well as metonymically inserting them and the *signs* of their *life-worlds* into 'high' Indian modern art.

4.3 The Paramountcy of the Image of the People

In c. 1920 Gandhi's emphasis on village industries, handicrafts, and khadi started to take hold. Gandhi had transformed himself in the image of the people. The transformation included an act of renunciation: "a sign of mourning, and a bare head and a bare body is such a sign in my part of the country."[138] The Shantiniketan artists such as Nandalal Bose had created an art in the Image of the People creating discourse innovation, and a modification in the Bengal School. Shantiniketan was steeped in village life and in a tradition of handicrafts—due to its heritage from Hindu Mela, Club Bichitra, and Swadeshi Nationalism. Congress followed Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and located its arts ideology in the praxis of the village habitus, in the dimensions outside the Raj's cultural-system. K.G. Subramanyan (who studied in Shantiniketan, was a student of Binode Behari Mukherjee (as well as Nandalal Bose and Ram Kinkar Vaij), and later taught in Baroda influencing artists such as Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh) notes:

> [Charka] was to [Gandhi] a symbol in which he saw a certain vision of India's future. In a world where rapid industrialization was dehumanizing people and leading to exploitation and internecine conflicts, he wanted to build a man-friendly production system as a counterforce."[139]

It is worth noting that E.B. Havell did not like Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and feared its impact on Indian art and cultural life. He wrote: "The most influential of your politicians, Mr Gandhi, wishes all India to be captivated by a devastating catchword—"Non Co-operation," I say 'devastating advisedly, because if the idea were carried to its logical conclusion its effect upon Indian life could not be otherwise.[140]

In 1925 Bose met Gandhi through Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhi immediately realized that Bose could help his mobilization of the Indian peasantry. Nandalal Bose became co-opted by the INC for the construction of images for nationalism, and later, he illustrated the Indian Constitution. Bose said of Gandhi, "If revered Bapu [Gandhi] needs me, I would go to

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[138] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "Khadi and the Political Man," in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago University Press, 2002, Pg 52.
[139] Subramanyan, K.G, "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 237.
[140] Havell. E.B, "Art, Economics and Politics," An address to the Oxford Majlis on May 31st 1925. In Havel Files – Mss.Eur.D.736/5, Indian Office Library, British Library, London. Also See Pg 350, "Art, Economics and Politics," *The Modern Review*, September 1925., Pg 350.

the end of the world riding over all abuse! Bapu is my shield!"[141] Nandalal Bose made linocuts of the political leaders Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffer Khan. These were mass reproduced as emblematic of INC's Hindu and Muslim national leaders (as seen in the linocut of Gandhi striding with a staff during the Dandi salt march, and of Abdul Ghaffer Khan who led the non-violent independence movement of the North-West Frontier Province).

Abdul Ghaffer Khan (1936, Nandalal Bose, Linocut, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Gandhi has famously said that India lives in the villages.[142] Peasant consciousness mattered to Gandhi.[143] As Akeel Bilgrami observes:

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[141] Kowshik, Dinkar "Artist of the Indian National Congress," in *Nandalal Bose: The Doyen of Indian Art*, National Book Trust, India, 1985, Pg 88.

[142] Ed. S. Radhakrishnan, *Mahatma Gandhi Essays and Reflections of his life and work, presented to him on his seventieth birthday, October 2nd 1939*, 2nd Edition, London, Allen and Unwin, 1949, Pg 12.

[143] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's Integrity: the philosophy behind the politics," *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, 2002, pp. 79-93, Pg 81.

> Gandhi chose his version of non-violent civil disobedience instead of the constitutional demands of the Congress leadership because he thought that the Indian people should not merely ask the British to leave their soil. It was important that they should do so by means that were not dependent and derivative of ideas and institutions that the British had imposed on them. Otherwise, even if the British left, the Indian populations would remain a subject people. This went very deep in Gandhi and his book *Hind Swaraj*, is full of a detailed anxiety about the *cognitive* enslavement even of the nationalist and anti-colonial Indian mind, which might, even after independence, never recover from that enslavement.[144]

Gandhi could see that the ideals of the painters and their paintings were consonant with his thought. He invited them to embed the Image of the people into the INC for pan-Indian propagation in order that the image of the people could speak to the people through the organization.

Gandhi invited Bose to design the entire environment for three Congress Sessions, Lucknow (April 1936), Faizpur (December 1936), and Haripura (February 1938). Bose was to design the tents (shamianas), the stages, murals, and posters. Nehru presided over the Lucknow and Faizpur sessions where he made "socialist speeches" rallying the *kisans*.[145] The agrarian programme adopted at Faizpur pledged a "radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system."[146] The programme extended beyond INC; it included the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party. These nation-wide activities were taking place in an environment specifically constructed by Nandalal Bose.

In Lucknow Bose was commissioned (with Jamini Roy) to organize the Indian Exhibition of art, which was held alongside the Congress sessions. Roy painted large panels. He constructed a panorama of Indian art. Asit Kumar Haldar met all the artists there.[147] Binode Behari Mukherjee, Prabhat Mohan, and Vinayak Masoji accompanied Bose, as Binode Bihari Mukherjee wrote, "on the wave of the Non-Cooperation Movement."[148]

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Seth, Sanjay, "The politics of the United National Front," in *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995, Pg 161.

[146] "Congress Election Manifesto" reprinted in, Eds, Zaidi A.M. and Zaidi S., *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 11 (1936-38), New Delhi, 1980, Pg 212-13. Also See: Seth, Sanjay, "The politics of the United National Front," in *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995, Pg 162

[147] Kowshik, Dinkar "Artist of the Indian National Congress," in *Nandalal Bose: The Doyen of Indian Art*, National Book Trust, India, 1985, Pg 85.

[148] Mukherjee, Benodebehari, *Chitrakar: The Artist*, translated by K.G. Subramanyan, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2006, Pg 25.

Bose constructed a historical panorama of Indian art, a panorama where Ajanta and Bagh murals, medieval paintings of Jain manuscripts, Rajput and Mughal miniatures, Kalighat Pats, and works by Abanindranath Tagore were displayed.[149] Gandhi commented during the Lucknow Congress, "Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hunger stricken impoverished land of skeletons have come craftsmen who have wrought miracles in bone, horn and silver. Go and see how the soul of man even in an impoverished body can breathe life into lifeless horn and metal."[150] He spoke about Bose. "... the simply but exquisitely decorated walls done by Nandalal Bose, the eminent artist from Shantiniketan, and his co-workers, who have tried to represent all the villagers and crafts in simple artistic symbols ... and that the work was "not a spectacular show, but a kind of fairyland."[151] The Lucknow Congress session's cultural organization was, in the words of O.C. Gangoly, "The most outstanding and the most important Exhibition of the year [1936]."[152]

He reported:

> It was in many respects highly educative and distinctly representative in its aim. While very distinguished and instructive specimens of the Tagore School in all its phases were shown, the whole history of Ancient Painting was exhibited to great effect in a series of typical examples, chronologically arranged, according to the sequence of development. Another important feature was the section of the History of Indian Sculpture, represented by a series of carefully chosen photographs of masterpieces of different schools.[153]

In Faizpur Bose was requested to design the accommodation for delegates from all over India. It was to be designed with cheap materials such as mud, bamboo, and straw. Mitter notes that for Gandhi "...the township became an object lesson in rural self-reliance through art."[154] Gandhi wanted, according to K.G. Subramanyan, "...the whole complex to be built and decorated in the best traditions of rural architecture and artisanry using local materials and local workmen."[155] Gandhi asked Nandalal to "...build the township at Faizpur using only, rural material and employing country craftsmen." Gandhi told Nandalal, "The

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[149] P Kowshik, Dinkar "Artist of the Indian National Congress," in *Nandalal Bose: The Doyen of Indian Art*, National Book Trust, India, 1985, Pg 85.

[150] Tendulkar, D.J., *Mahatma*, Volume 4, 8 Volumes, New Delhi, Publications Division 1960, Pg 68.

[151] Chopra, S. "The Folk in Modern Art", *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2, Monsoon 1990, Pg 67.

[152] Gangoly, O.C. "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual, 1936-37*, Pg 19.

[153] Ibid, Pg 19.

[154] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 82.

[155] Subramanyan, K.G, "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 240.

conception should be indigenous. As for the decoration you are in sole charge."[156] Nandalal, with the assistance of architect Baburai Mhatre, built the structures entirely of bamboo, hay, and wicker. The construction was free of any modern materials and used local materials and colours.[157] The "Anglo-Indian papers...called it crude."[158] Gandhi reflected, "God has given me the sense of art but not the organs to give it shape. He has blessed Nanda Babu with both. The result is that the whole of Tilak Nagar is an exhibition in itself. It begins not where I am going to open it but at the main gateway which is a fine piece of village art."[159] Gandhi said during his speech at Faizpur, "Please remember that Nandababu has depended entirely on local material and local labour to bring all the structures here into being."[160]

At Haripura, Bose's folk wall panels became part of a performative function in aesthetic anti-colonial nationalism and subaltern national imagining. They incorporated a pedagogical approach to politics. They taught the peasantry nationalist politics.[161] The Congress delegates, as well as villagers and peasants, gazed upon the panels "...as they went about their daily business."[162] Gandhi's directive was an aspect of the performative and pedagogical side of nationalism, where it was essential for the peasant to learn about political nationalism, and being Indian. This was Gandhi's and the INC's collaborative effort to pull the peasantry into the nationalist movement. Knowledge will co-opt them into the movement.[163] Gandhi wanted "...to make the exhibition clearly visible to the rural people passing by." He wanted the "entire area" to be covered with "examples of art."[164] The exhibited posters became known as the Six Haripura Congress Posters. These were folk

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[156] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Subramanyan, K.G., "Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Scene" in *The Magic of Making Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 240.
[159] Ibid, Pg 240.
[160] Kowshik, Dinkar "Artist of the Indian National Congress," in *Nandalal Bose: The Doyen of Indian Art*, National Book Trust, India, 1985, Pg 86.
[161] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Revised Edition, 2007, Pg 172-78. Also see: Bhabha, K. Homi, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," *Nation and Narration*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, Pg 291-322.
[162] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 83.
[163] Bhabha K., Homi, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in Bhabha, K., Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London Routledge, 1994, Pg 139-170. See: Chatterjee, Partha, "The Moment of Arrival: Nehru and the Passive Revolution" in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivate Discourse*, Zed Books Londoon, Second Impression, 1993, Pg 131-66.
[164] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.

extensions of "kalighat pat." Indebted to Bose's exposure to mural and cave paintings, the images of the people were created using indigenous materials and earth pigments—*vasli.*[165]

[165] Ibid.

Nandalal Bose *The Drummer* (1937, Tempera on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Nandalal Bose *Woman Feeding her Child* (1937, Tempera on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Nandalal Bose *Woman Feeding her Child* (1937, Tempera on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

The posters were an integral part of the Congress sessions. As Jaya Appasamy notes, "…they are representatives of the culture of the soil, they are basic human prototypes who are timeless and immortal; for they are eternally reborn…like a river these archetypes are continuous and always with us."[166] The posters deployed images which were reflective of the life-worlds of the peasantry, such as the drummer used in folk festivals, the female who cooks for the nation, as well as the mother feeding her child, emblematic of the backbone of the nation. This was Gandhi's folk realism. Gandhi's ideological, material, and spiritual practice; his emphasis on morality and political-social use of *dharma*[167] was synthesised in Bose's images into his *propagandistic moralistic dharmic folk realism*, which was in contrast to Lenin's socialist realism. Gandhi and Lenin shared "anti systemic"[168] correspondences in using art for state purposes. Lenin subordinated the "vital dialectic" between the political and cultural avant-garde, making the latter serve the former. For Lenin, "…the artistic avant-garde was an instrument of the political vanguard."[169] Though the action of using art for state purposes was common to Lenin and Gandhi, Akeel Bilgrami notes the key difference:

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[166] No Pagination, Appasamy, Jaya, *Nandalal Bose—The Six Haripura Panels*, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1986.
[167] Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Pg 36-7.
[168] Balibar, Étienne, "Lenin and Gandhi: A missed encounter?" *Radical Philosophy*, March/April 172, 2012, pp. 9-17, Pg 10.
[169] Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass-Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, Pg 5.

> He was not unaware that there existed in the West ideologies of revolutionary violence which were geared to mass movements, but he was not unaware either, that these were conceived in terms of middle-class leadership vanguards that were the fonts of authority. Peasant consciousness mattered very little to them ... In Gandhi there was not a trace of this vanguard mentality of a Lenin.[170]

The Image of the people, created by the Shantiniketan school, and inserted into the apparatus of the nascent nation state by Gandhi, had now achieved a pan-Indian acceptance and paramountcy.

[170] Bilgrami, Akeel, "Gandhi's Integrity: the philosophy behind the politics," *Postcolonial Studies*, 5:1, 2002, pp. 79-93, Pg 81.

4.4 Amrita Sher-Gil—A new discourse on Indian Modernism.

Amrita Sher-Gil died when she was 28. In her short life (1913 - 1941) she ended the dominance of the Bengal School, and created another Image of the People. The way Sher-Gil created her image of the people, and the discourses used, inspired groups of painters operating in Lahore, Delhi, and Bombay, who were disenchanted with the Bengal school and academy art discourses, to use western modernist techniques and relativize endogenous discourses. Indeed, segments in this section elaborate on the artistic rivalry between Sher-Gil and other Indian artists. It includes the public and private arguments and criticisms Sher-Gil espoused. This study understands Sher-Gils criticisms of her contemporaries and her redefined artistic discourse(s), as a major contribution—*par excellence*—to Indian modernism. It allowed artists after her to follow not only her method of painting but also her artistic criticism levelled at the dominant Bengal School and Shantiniketan artists' paintings. In a sense, Sher-Gil was an endogenous-exogenous critique of extant and past Indian art discourses, whilst her artistic contemporaries critique against her work has to be understood as an endogenous nationalist critique of European post-impressionistic discourses. Sher-Gil is the only female artist examined in this study, and at times her arguments against her contemporaries may appear as an exposition of insolence, but they are not; and should not be read in this manner. Her arguments and critique are absolutely fundamental to the narrative of Indian modernism. She is respected in equal status to her male contemporaries, and other male artists that have been discussed throughout this study.

> *"I want to ask your advice on a matter of some importance. The publishing houses Kitaban of Allahabad (the people who did Jawaharlal Nehru's World History) have asked me to write a book for them on Modern Indian Art. Shall I do it? You know my views on Modern Indian Art and if I do write I won't make any concessions, I Assure you. They will all set upon me like pack of hyenas and tear me to bits. Shall I do it notwithstanding?"*[171] Amrita Sher-Gil, 1938.

[171] *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 1, Ed., Sundaram Vivan, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 325.

Amrita Sher-Gil's life and work described in this section is important to the narrative of Indian modernism because Sher-Gil's critique of the Bengal School and Shantiniketan discourses, her transition from the European to the Indian conditions, and her relativization of European and Indian discourses, brought about the conditions for the emergence of the Bombay Progressives and artists from the late 1940s and '50s, and allowed them to participate in the development of internationalist idioms, which caused Indian art to join exogenous Euramerican discourses.

Sher-Gil's was very influential. Her far-reaching influence merits elaboration, and consequently this section also discusses other art groups and movements in relation to her influence. The conditions she catalysed helped in the creation of the Progressive Artists Group (PAG) and other groups to look beyond the Academic, Bengal and Shantiniketan School discourses to modern individual styles, which is further discussed. This enabled the artists to fulfil their ambitions to use international discourses, and removed the weight of both nationalism and colonialism. It enabled them to join a greater world as free artists using internationalist idioms to express themselves as artists of independent India.

Sher-Gil achieved this in her short life. Born of a Hungarian mother and an Indian father (in 1913), she won the Gold Medal from the Grand Salon in Paris for the painting *Young Girls* (1932). She had achieved this status in an important global artistic establishment by the age of 20. As a result, she was appointed associate member of the *Société Nationale*. It can be surmised that she was an establishment, not a counter-establishment, artist. She left Paris and Hungary and returned to India in 1934 (she was previously in India in 1921 for a brief stint of home-schooling). Sher-Gil won the Gold Medal at the Bombay Society Exhibition in 1937 for her painting *Group of Young Girls* (1935).

Amrita Sher-Gil, *Young Girls* (1932, Oil on Canvas)

Amrita Sher-Gil, *Group of Young Girls* (1935, oil on canvas)

The award to an artist who was perceived to be an exogenous artist catalyst became a watershed moment in the creation of a cohort of artists, which privileged exogenous European modernist discourses over the revivalist trends. As Geeta Kapur writes, "M.F.

Husain acknowledges only one Indian precedent, Amrita Sher-Gil ... "for the emancipatory agenda of his generation."[172] (Another artist like S.H. Raza, who won the Bombay Art Society Gold Medal in 1948, should be included in this category).

After the 'emancipatory' role of the Bombay Progressives, Indian modern art was linked with international modernism, but turned back to endogenous forms, such as neo-tantric forms, and articulated them in a high art paradigm. The turning back was due to the cultural hegemony of Euramerican abstract expressionism. Indeed, Jagdish Swaminathan S.H. Raza, K.G. Subramanyan, Ram Kumar and K.C.S Panikkar exemplified this endogenous modernist position.[173]

The Bengal School's idealistic romantic representations of the Indian populace, the integration and autonomy of mythological paintings by the ruling classes irritated Sher-Gil (consequently she established a theory on good and bad art, later discussed[174]). For instance, in 1937 the Maharaja and Maharani of Trivandrum, Ravi Varma's home state, sent for all of Sher-Gil's paintings. However, following the advice James Cousins, who was the curator of the Palace Museum, the Maharaja and Maharani returned Sher-Gil's paintings without purchase. They disapproved of Sher-Gil's paintings as they lacked the nostalgia and idioms of Varma, the Bengal School, and the Shantiniketan artists, which had become the standard taste of thc ruling classes. Sher-Gil blasted Cousins and the Palace Museum. She wrote: "Half the gallery is consecrated to the works of Ravi Varma and the other held to the most representative collection of unutterable muck that ever masqueraded under the name of Modern Indian Art." However, "one picture in the whole collection that could be called good: a small portrait by Jamini Roy" (probably a folkish academic portrait executed before he moved into the folk discourses). Indeed, Roy's earlier work shared with European modernist portraits' the tendency towards abstraction of the sitter, which Sher-Gil was used to, and thought of as a higher modernist model in discourse. Sher-Gil thought the Nandalal Bose's in the collection "hopeless". She found Cousins to "have a special faculty for picking out the worst specimens in everybody's work."[175] In the above Sher-Gil had critiqued two distinct

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[172] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism: Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000, Pg 6.
[173] See: Zitzewitz, Karin, *The Aesthetics of Secularism Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Columbia University, 2006
[174] This is a similar position to Ijaz Ahmad who understands the birth of the modern Urdu novel to be a reaction to the petty bourgeoisie rule and the status of women, rather than colonialism. See: Ahmad, Aijaz, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness" in *In Theory –Classes/Nations/Literatures*, Oxford Indian Paperback, 1992, Pg 113-118.
[175] Amrita Sher-Gil in a letter from Trivandrum, dated 5th Janurary 1937, to Indira Sher-Gil, in *Amrita Sher-Gil*, Sundaram, Kapur, Sheikh, Subramanyan, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1971.

categories of modern Indian art: the Ravi Varma academic style, and the Shantiniketan image of the people.

However, the Bengal artists thought that Sher-Gil was a foreigner with no Indian pictorial, technical, and cultural-system experience. She could neither grasp nor understand the endogenous systems of tradition and their role in the creation of a new art via India's past. The Bengal artists were apprehensive about Sher-Gil as they thought she was someone who would once again bring about a domination of European academic realism to interpret Indian conditions. They understood Sher-Gil to be another European like W.E.G. Solomon, who could potentially dominate their 'newly' created discourses. They felt their philosophies will be marginalized if Sher-Gil claimed the attention of artists. They opposed the relativization of endogenous with Sher-Gil's European discourses (which she learnt by studying at the Grand Chaumière under Peirre Valiant, with subsequent training at the École des Beux-Arts under Lucien Simon (1930-34)). Using western post-impressionist discourses creating a new Indian art was not part of the Bengal artists' nationalist ethos, which was concerned with strengthening 'their' cultural system(s). Sher-Gil came from the West into India rather than the opposite Rabindranathian approach. This approach gave her a vanguard position, which no other artist until that point held. Her vanguard position was due to her knowledge of the Parisian art world system and institutions. This societal and colonial arrogance was a part of Sher-Gil's remarks and insults about the Indian art world. Due to the dominance of the Parisian art world and the difference(s) between that world and the growing Indian art world, her beliefs, behaviour, aesthetic and interpersonal attitudes were shaped and formed by her cosmopolitanism, and belief in her superiority.

Elaborating on her western education with Lucien Simon, Sher-Gil wrote, "The greatness of Lucien Simon lay in the fact that he never 'taught'; he let us struggle with technical difficulties ourselves, but encouraged each of those students whose work interested him in his or her own individual mode of self-expression."[176] She was the first nationally celebrated artist in the Indian milieu that was scathing about education, art institutions, and the public sphere of painting in India. These attitudes were due to her progressivism from her birth as a mixed identity. Her European attitudes worried her father's Indian sensibility. Sher-Gil was a cultural outsider removed from the Bengali cohort. But she was part of the Indian ruling classes due to her Sikh father's aristocratic heritage. Her father Umrao Sher-Gil came

[176] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 1, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 323.

from a family of "British loyalists," and he was "lone among his family, a nationalist."[177] Her ability, as a cosmopolitan outsider, to see into Indian social conditions whilst depicting them, gave her a position that no other Indian artist held. Her vanguard views and public dismissal of other artists were due to her (understandable) lack of knowledge of Indian social conventions and her position as an elite Parisian artist—a member of the *Société Nationále.* Her privileged background and indifference to the sociological matrix of the Indian society allowed her to freely attack the Indian art institutions. She had no Indian art teacher to pay respects to—in the traditional mode of a *chela* to their *guru* (the traditional relationship that Nandalal Bose had reinstituted in Shantiniketan). Sher-Gil never had to form a *ustad-shagird* relationship with her teachers.[178] She preferred to 'struggle with technical difficulties' to formulate 'her own individual mode of expression.'

Sher-Gil wrote: "Although I studied, I have never been *taught* painting," because "I possess in my psychological make-up a peculiarity that resents any outside interference. I have always, in everything, wanted to find out things for myself."[179] She wrote, "I am averse to the mode prevalent in every type of school of teaching drawing and painting." She considered schooling "noxious in the extreme." "...Averse to the teaching of Art altogether," she wrote "being of the opinion that, if a talent is virile enough, it will develop without any external aid, besides being saved from being swamped in superfluous and pernicious technical tricks that must be forgotten before one can even think of producing "works of art.""[180] She was irreligious and openly sexual, which was quite different from the Indian society. Her way of seeing was different to the Indian artists painting at that time. She did not pay respect to anybody else except herself, and her art.

Roop Krishna, who had studied in Calcutta with Abanindranath (and Mukul Dey), and had spent time in the Parisian artistic milieu, thought that Sher-Gil's paintings were worth

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[177] Kapur Geeta, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 4.

[178]This relationship is recorded by Satish Gujral: "The *ustad* expected his *shagird* to be like a slave attending to all his needs. The most cherished of these errands was preparing the chillum (smoking bowl) for the hookah (pipe); next was the privilege of serving *chai-pani* (tea and water) to which the *ustads* were equally addicted. Students who graduated without distinction had to master these arts." Gujral, Satish, *A Brush with Life – An Autobiography*, Viking: Penguin Books India, 1997, Pg 50.

[179] Sher-Gil, Amrita, "Modern Indian Art—Imitating the Forms of the Past", *The Hindu*, 1st November 1936 in *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 1, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 249.

[180] "Amrita Sher-Gil—The Talented Artist' in *The Indian Ladies' Magazine*, Vol. X, No. 1, Jan & Feb 1937," in Ibid, Pg 321.

tossing off his balcony in Lahore. Krishna hated Sher-Gil's personality and the cult around her. Satish Gujral writes:

> She [Amrita Sher-Gil] was only in her mid-twenties when she had her first ever exhibition in the city [Lahore]. Fabri [Charles Fabri] hailed her as the only genius colonial India had produced. Roop Krishna, who had spent years in Paris meeting and seeing great artists at work, had scant respect for Amrita's talent. He considered it passé, dated by more than half a century, and a poor imitation of past European masters. When Amrita brought some of her canvasses to him, Roop Krishna unceremoniously tossed them out of his balcony onto the street below.[181]

Roop Krishna openly dismissed Sher-Gil's paintings and the cult-like celebrity status that she attracted. Attacking people that promoted her work or thought of it as exemplary of national standard, he wrote:

> Amrita…had returned to India painting in the manner thousands of students had been doing in the dormitories of the Ècole des Beaux Arts in Paris. There was not much to her talent except a good hand at drawing bold lines.[182]

Roop Krishna gifted his *Untitled* aquatint on paper to Abanindranath Tagore in 1938.

Roop Krishna *Untitled* (Aquatint on Paper, 1938, Courtesy of Rabindra Bhavan Society, Jorasanko, Kolkata)

The work can be seen as echoing Abanindranath's Mughal-Rajput style *My Mother* (No Date), where the mother in profile, framed by a window, is shown. These paintings were part of the nationalist romantic sentimentalization of past, and rural India.

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[181] Gujral, Satish, *A Brush with Life – An Autobiography*, Viking: Penguin Books India, 1997, Pg 54.
[182] Ibid, Pg 54.

Abanindranath Tagore, *My Mother* (Wash and Water Colour on Paper, No Date, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

The rural aspect is visible in Mukul Dey's *Santhal Maidan* (1916).

Mukul Dey, *Santhal Maiden*, Aquatint and Etching on Paper, 1916, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

Sher-Gil unconsciously aligned herself with the Sarkarian trend of modernism opening traditional Indian discourses to western modernism. She found similarities with Rabindranath Tagore rather than Jamini Roy, whose early post-impressionist paintings bear resemblance to Sher-Gil's paintings. However, unlike Roy, Sher-Gil never stopped using European modernist discourses. Sher-Gil aligned her themes around 'Indianness'—the "poor

and sad" Indians—to be culturally and nationalistically sensitive. She sided with Indian nationalism. Ram Kumar reminisces, "...when the Bengal School was predominant, she put up another kind of way... that this is also nationalistic thing, but maybe to some extent influenced by the West."[183] Indeed, Satish Gujral, schooled in Lahore, and once a member of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra, thought of Sher-Gil's work as praiseworthy.[184]

Sher-Gil understood the "poor and sad" Indians were the subjects of the INC Shantiniketan discourses.[185] Sher-Gil by using European relativized discourses paved the path for an endogenous Indian modernism that was not steeped in romanticism, idealism and tradition. She depicted Indian conditions with her own brand of social realism.

A painter in the modernist mode, she was not ideologically aligned with any Indian art or political movements. She created a discursial space for artists to create in, and move freely between exogenous and endogenous discourses. This freed the post-independence artists. The discursial space within a secular liberal democracy under conditions of modernity gave to the Bombay Progressives, to artists such as F. N Souza and M. F Hussain, the ability to use Euramerican discourses for painting Indian conditions.[186] This was also the case of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra artists Ram Kumar, Satish Gujral, Jaya Appasamy, Krishnan Khanna, and the already rebellious Calcutta artists around the Art Rebel Center, between exogenous and endogenous discourses in creating a modern Indian art.

Sher-Gil relativized Parisian post-impressionist and neo-realist discourses with the Ajanta mural tradition, and Pahari, Rajput and Mughal traditions. By doing so, Sher-Gil created a new social realist art discourse, one in which she was the first Indian artist who non-romantically painted the everyday realities of rural India, as well as the representation of the Indian peasantry, tribal women, and other components of rural India. She did this prior to the 1940s when Bombay and Calcutta art collectives, and Communist Party Of India (CPI) affiliated artists started to do so.

Sher-Gil read the Indian art milieu to be either derivative of western discourses or dependent on past Mughal and Ajanta discourses of the Bengal artists. Straddling both

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[183] Ram Kumar interviewed by John Clark, 20th December 1991, in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney, Pg 184.
[184] Gujral, Satish, *A Brush with Life – An Autobiography*, Viking: Penguin Books India, 1997, Pg 160.
[185] Anand, Mulk-Raj. *Amrita Sher-Gil*. National Gallery of Modern Art, Jaipur House, India Gate, New Delhi, 1989, Pg 2.
[186] See Dalmia, Yashodhara, *The Making of a Modern Indian Art: The Progressives*, New Delhi: New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.

discourses and assimilating all, she created a modernism that other Indian artists were to follow from.

Amrita Sher-Gil's vision of social art came from the European painters' tradition of appropriating citizen-subjects as new cultural emblems of a modern regime, such as those seen in the works of Millet, Breton, and Courbet, which reflected the national social history as remnants of visual discourses from the European revolution(s).[187] Unlike the Shantiniketan use of realism for nationalistically romanticizing the peasantry, Sher-Gil used realism non-romantically; she used it to capture the social reality of the Indian everyday. She created a unique blend of Indian social-realism to suit her aesthetic predilections and her sometimes subaltern and non-bourgeois subjects. Although Cézanne, Gauguin[188], Van Gogh and Modigliani influenced her as direct contemporaries, Picasso's paintings of harlots and beggars, reflective of his isolation in Paris, were a greater inspiration. In reference to constructing his modern Indian image, Jagdish Swaminathan wrote, "It took a Sher-Gil with her intimate knowledge of the European movement to turn to secular and democratic themes, though she owed more to Modigliani and Gauguin for her style and inspiration than to any artist from India's past."[189]

In 1934 Amrita Sher-Gil returned to India and attacked (in letters and public statements), prominent members of the Indian art establishment. Publicly she wasn't as heavy-fisted on the Bengal School and the Shantiniketan artists as she was in her private letters. Publicly she wrote that "Indian painting" has "found" a "distinguishable mode of pictorial expression in the Bengal school." But "whether this movement has succeeded in its aim" to produce an "essentially Indian art" which is "modern, is a different matter..."[190] She wrote, "The work of the Bengal school is... entirely illustrative in quality" and depended "for its popularity not on pictorial merit, but on romantic appeal."[191] The Bengal School and the Shantiniketan artists failed, she wrote, "...to capture the true spirit of Ajanta painting." Critiquing their use of miniatures, and creating a discourse space for herself, she observed, "Toning down, softening and emasculating all they touch, the present-day artists rob their

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[187] Clark, T.J, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London Thames and Hudson, 1982.
[188] Letter dated 30th April 1941, in *Amrita Sher-Gil*, Sundaram, Kapur, Sheikh, Subramanyan, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1971.
[189] Swaminathan, Jagdish, "The Reality of the Image" *Contra 66*, Number Two, November 19, 1966, Pg 9.
[190] *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 731.
[191] Ibid, Pg 731.

work of the acrid, pungent charm that emanates even from the most decadent specimens of Indian miniature's schools."[192] Gaganendranath Tagore's relativisation of cubism with the wash technique was "Picasso" but "fairly misapprehended," though Picasso had "made himself felt in the work of Gaganendranath Tagore."[193] Sher-Gil was more attuned to figuration in Picasso (although cubist). She felt that Picasso, not Kandinsky or Klee, was the artist to seek inspiration from. Her modernism and art ideas was based on the modernist European position of formalism into abstraction of the picture plain, instead of the revivalist transcendental Indian position.

Sher-Gil declared: the "Bengal revival" "is to be feared" because "far from fulfilling its past ambitions, this school is actually responsible for the stagnation that characterizes Indian painting today." The school had a "cramping and crippling effect on the creative spirit. ... [that would create a] "younger generation of artists... [who] merely copy the work of their predecessors." [194] The Bengal school was a movement, which once, Sher-Gil wrote, had its "originations" and drew its "inspiration direct from the vital source of India's magnificent art heritage." [195] Sher-Gil attacked the dominant Bengal schools as stagnant and repetitive. Her attack created an avant-gardist rupture in the history of Indian modernism. Breaking the aestheticism of the Bengal School and the Shantiniketan artists, and backed by Nehruvian modernism, Sher-Gil re-worked the modern in India.

In a letter to Karl Khandalavala, her modernist ally, She blasted Asit Kumar Haldar's paintings, "Asit [Kumar] Haldar, principal of the Lucknow School of Art, whose work when it isn't Ajanta (unassimilated) is exploitation of the absent researches of Picasso (also unassimilated) diluted with mysticism..." She was "amused to hear" that Haldar "deplored the fact that in spite of my Indian father my work "smells of the west." [196] Sher-Gil did not see herself as a cultural outsider. Sher-Gil knew Haldar and his coterie "resented" her "intrusion into the field of Indian art "because the Indians (represented of course by him) don't want another 'Solomon'!!! to be thrust on them."[197] The dispute became a classic artistic impasse. Sher-Gil thought Haldar couldn't assimilate exogenous discourses. Haldar

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[192] Ibid, Pg 783.
[193] Ibid, Pg 783.

[195] Ibid, Pg 783.
[195] Ibid, Pg 783-85.
[196] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 1, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 325.
[197] Ibid, Pg 325.

felt Sher-Gil did not understand the Indian tradition because she had bypassed the restoration of tradition and the internalization of reality from Abanindranath's theory, and was merely using western impressionist discourses for Indian settings. Haldar did not want another European cultural domination of art discourses to arise again in India. He did not think that Solomon's J.J. School of Arts' revival of Indian art was fitting to Indian aesthetic structures and Bengali nationalist doctrines. There was a battle between the "Bombay creed" and the "Calcutta Creed."[198]

Haldar thought that it was the Bengal School who had correctly assimilated the Ajanta tradition.[199] Despite the differences between the Bengal schools and the J.J. School, the Bengal nationalists backed Solomon's appeal and call for more patronage for modern Indian art to support its growing autonomy. The art cohort was unanimous: "We are pledged on this occasion to shelve our differences and give our humble support to his plea for patronage which he has so ably put forward."[200] Solomon stated, "In the depths of their dark eyes are the fires of enlightenment, but it is a Secret of their own Country that they are engaged in unravelling in the School of Art."[201] Mitter writes, "Solomon divested the school of the foundational South Kensington curriculum with decorative arts as its cornerstone. This is unsurprising since Solomon had been nurtured at the rival institution, the Royal Academy, with its fine arts basis."[202] The argument between the Bengal orientalists and the Bombay artists was on the grounds of "cultural authenticity," because the Bombay school and academic painters such as M.V. Dhurandhar lacked in "national characteristics."[203]

Solomon's statements appealed to a nationalism based on the colonizer to the students still under the power of colonial pedagogy, which was antithetical to the Bengal School, steeped in the tradition of nationalist art movement. This was because of the Bengal School's loyalty to Havell, Abanindranath, Gandhi and Rabindranath and their position within the Bengal cultural renaissance. In Bombay, the Governor of Bombay Sir George Lloyd announced that "...successful artistic work cannot be achieved without inspiration, and inspiration can come only when the artist is working on lines natural to him, and endeared by

[198] "Mr. Solomon on Modern Indian Art," *Rupam*, No. 9, January 1922. Notes Section, Pg 36.
[199] Haldar, Asit, Kumar, *Art and Tradition*, Revised Edition, Universal Publishers, India, 1952, Pg 52.
[200] "Mr. Solomon on Modern Indian Art" *Rupam*, No. 9, January 1922. Notes Section, Pg 37.
[201] Solomon, W.E.G, *The Bombay Revival of Indian Art*, Bombay, 1924, Pg 4.
[202] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 183.
[203] Ibid, Pg 186.

inheritance and tradition."[204] Solomon followed this edict pedagogically. However, the main problem, the Bengal schools' imbrication in a "contradictoriness" nationalist artistic "thinking",[205] was that Solomon came from academic discourses into an Indianized restoration of endogenous art amounting to the decorations of the Indian Room, through the Ajanta Mural tradition. Indeed, the mural tradition had been assimilated within the Bengal Schools' discourses and in Shantiniketan. Sher-Gil understood Shantiniketan as a continuation of the Bengal School and not as a re-ordered school and nor a rupture. She wrote, "There are various other branches of the Bengal movement that style themselves "schools" but...they are mere derivatives..."[206]

Solomon understood the Bengal School's "...exclusionists' doctrines may have accomplished in the way of high-sounding phrases to meet the taste of the dilettantes..." He thought, "they have...failed to provide adequate art training in India."[207] Solomon pointing his arrow at the Bengal schools wrote, "One of the errors in that sort of teaching has been the pretense of excluding at all costs (at least nominally) the bugbear of 'Western Influence', and the result of this idea is seen today when so many of the artists who claim to be hundred per cent 'Indian' in their propaganda..."[208] His statement was fortuitous as it was an important aspect of Indian endogenous modernism, as it was form the JJ School of Art that the Bombay Progressives developed from.[209] He wrote:

> My differences with my critics have usually been purely on the question of methods for promoting art in India. I have always been of the opinion that the attempt to *exclude* Western ideas from Art in India is worse than futile, considering the influx of Western films, pictures, and advertisements; and the popular demands in painting and sculpture...The Exclusionists profess to be shocked at the idea of "de-orientalizing" the Indian art students, but what they have actually done by their negative policy is to de-patriate them.[210]

[204] Solomon, W.E.G *The Bombay Revival of Indian Art*, Bombay, 1924, Pg 79–80.
[205] Chatterjee, Partha, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society," in *Sublatern Studies III: Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Ed., Guha, Ranajit, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, Pg 155-56.
[206] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 783-85.
[207] Solomon, W.E.G, "Indian Art Students and their training" in *Four Arts Annual, 1936-37*, India, 1937, Pg 12.
[208] Ibid, Pg 12.
[209] See Dalmia, Yashodhara, *The Making of a Modern Indian Art: The Progressives*, New Delhi: New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.
[210] Ibid, Pg 12.

Solomon felt artistic training that was available in England should be secured "in their own country" but was "never satisfactory."[211] The "aim", he wrote, "...is for *India to furnish her own Art Training* and fix its own standards of taste."[212] He suggested:

> I have never taken up a purely provincial standpoint upon these questions, and have assisted and strongly encouraged many students from all over India—including several from Bengal. May there be less and less of the provincial element in art propaganda in the future, and more and more of the broadest all-Indian co-operation in the advancement of Indian art.[213]

Although Sher-Gil and Solomon view's were not too far apart, Sher-Gil wrote: "It [J.J. School] models itself on the more academic art schools of the West..." producing "...painters and sculptors..." emulating "the work of the worthy elderly gentlemen whose artistic output adorns the more backward of the various salons and academies of the Continent and England." O.C. Ganguly made similar remarks during the Exhibition of Modern Indian Art (1935) in London. Ganguly wrote there was "some caustic controversy over the so-called superiority of "Bombay" Art over the "Bengal brand, which the London exhibition evoked."[214] Blasting naturalism and mimetic representation, Sher-Gil wrote:

> Academic naturalism, as this manifestation of decadence in art is called, holds that the sole function of painting and sculpture is to reproduce a given object faithfully; in other words, with as much cretinish minuteness and servility as is humanly possible without perceiving that this principle is in reality and admission of impotence in art.[215]

Sher-Gil, however, predicted the emergence of the Bombay Progressives: "...once its followers discard the academic shackles that keep its talent in fetters it will probably emerge into the realm of Indian art with something worthwhile." She felt this was due to "...the medium of oils introduced by the Bombay school into Indian painting," which have "unlimited possibilities," and "gives them a tremendous technical advantage over the water colourists of Bengal."[216]

She realized that India needed to use its tradition but must relativise instead of "clinging to traditions" or imitating "fifth rate western art."[217] She knew the importance of

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[211] Ibid, Pg 12.
[212] Ibid, Pg 12.
[213] Ibid, Pg 14.
[214] Gangoly, O.C., "Art in India: A Year's Survey" in *Four Arts Annual*, 1936-37, Pg 19.
[215] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 735.
[216] Ibid, Pg 735.
[217] "Is Not Art Meant for Masses?" in The Tribune, 20th September, 1936," in *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 783.

the Bengal School's reconnection to ancient art. She wrote, "Till the advent of the Bengal revival people were ignorant and therefore contemptuous of the ancient art of their land...Inclined to accept...with complete lack of discrimination of all that reached them through western influence." She found the attempted universalization by the Raj's cultural-system to have "unfortunately" powered the "Victorian ideal in art." Cognitively, the 'Victorian ideal in art' ideology came to be "imposed on the minds of Indians of that day" resulting in "assimilation," and "...responsible for the production of third-rate oleographic painters."[218]

Sher-Gil had problems with the nationalistic outlook and pro-Indian sentiments that artists like Haldar associated with the Bengal schools held. Indeed, Haldar thought Sher-Gil was like Solomon and 'didn't want another Solomon' to be thrust upon Indian artists. Haldar's position was analogous to Bireswar Sen who sought for the revival of tradition prior to the integration of western modernism. Sen wrote:

> From this point of view the art of Jamini Roy based on the traditional pats of Bengal is far superior to the works of such artists as Amrita Sher-Gil and those who follow her. The former has links with the nation's past and roots in the soil of the country of its origin, but the latter is a hot-house plant, a European bride in an Indian home.[219]

Such positions didn't please Sher-Gil and neither was Sher-Gil able to find much praise for her work. Clark notes:

> [The] artist who returns from...foreign post-matriculation can find difficulty in identifying with a given grouping within the art world at home. In fact Sher-Gil had very little influence in her lifetime in India despite being recognized by the award of the gold medal at the Bombay Art Society in 1937. This was possibly due to her lack of affiliation with a regular cohort of Indian art school graduates and her only intermittent...exhibitions...[220]

The fact that the Bengali nationalists saw Sher-Gil as a foreign imposition made it difficult for her to popularize her modernist discourse. Commenting on Sarada Ukil a Bengali artist integral within the Bengal School, Sher-Gil wrote:

> Sarada Ukil declares that my work does not represent the feeling of the People (with a capital P). He probably imagines that because his decadent pictures appeal to the

[218] Ibid, Pg 783-85.

[219] Sen, Bireswar, "Essentials of Art" Article taken from website < http://bireswarsen.com/> Last Accessed Monday 12th December, 2011.

[220] Clark, John, *Modern Asian Art*, University of Hawai'I Press, Honolulu, 1998, Pg 170.

degenerate taste of some middle-class Indians his work does! How some of these creatures loathe me almost as much as I detest their work.[221]

In 1918 Sarada Ukil, a student of Abanindranath Tagore had moved from Dacca to Delhi joining the Modern School as its first art teacher.[222] Ukil's 'decadent' picture can be seen by his *Girl with Chati* (1921).

Sarada Ukil, *Girl with Chati*, (1921 Wash and Tempera on Paper, Collection National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Sarada (who established the Ukil School of Art in Delhi 1926), and his brother Barada established the Delhi Fine Arts Society in 1928. It was modelled on the Shimla Fine Arts Society and was a direct institutional copy of the Royal Society of Arts. Barada Ukil then established the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society in 1931, which institutionalised Bengal School revivalist discourses of Indian art. Ram Kumar (b. 1924), who took evening classes at the Sarada Ukil School of Art, said in 1992:

> …the impact of Bengal School is there in Delhi also, because all these people were Bengalis, who were—some of them were trained in Shantiniketan, and then they—I think what they did was Shantiniketan, and then they spread out, and spread this thing to other parts of the country. So somebody went to Madras, somebody went to Delhi;

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[221] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 1, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 325.

[222] See Website: < http://www.chitralekha.org/articles/sarada-ukil/sarada-ukil-profile-pioneer> Last accessed 3/07/2012.

> somebody went to Bombay, Mysore, like that. So here I think Sarada Ukil, who was—then his followers, these were his followers—and he started a Sarada Ukil School of Art...and he thought only his way of...[223]

Sher-Gil held an exhibition with the Ukil brothers in New Delhi at the Imperial Hotel on 27th February 1937, where she met Jawaharlal Nehru, which means that, even though the Ukil brothers and her held opposing ideologies, there was limited space to exhibit other discourses.[224] This exhibition helped Sher-Gil attract artists who wanted to free themselves of the Bengal School discourses, such as Sailoz Mukherjea, Biren De, and Chintamoni Kar. Sailoz Mukherjee was, as Ram Kumar writes, an "...avant-garde artist... he was quite a rebel sort of person, he did things in a different way."[225]

Sher-Gil criticized Jamini Roy even though she was conscious of his difference from other Bengali artists. She observed, "I have seen four or five specimens of Jamini Roy's Bengal Folk art style," and "I agree that it is certainly in a different class from the work of most Bengalis." But she disagreed with Khandalavala "regarding [Roy's] line being "worthy of the old fresco painters." She "unhesitatingly" told Khandalavala that Roy's "...line, unlike the vital yet at the same time subtle, sensitive quality of the Ajanta fresco painters and the vigour of Mattacheri, is not really powerful or vital at all." She felt "The illusion of strength it creates on the layman is brought about by a laborious heaviness." She thought Roy's "line is dense" and "it is dead, if you know what I mean."[226] She did not see Jamini Roy's post-impressionistic paintings, which she had something in common with, before he moved into a neo-folk art.[227]

As Partha Mitter notes:

> If by modernism we mean radical non-illusionist art, she was radical, except in the later works, than either Rabindranath Tagore or Jamini Roy. Her modernism straddled the cusp of representation and abstraction.[228]

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[223] Ram Kumar interviewed by John Clark, 20th December 1991, in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney, Pg 194.
[224] Dalmia, Yashodhara, *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Life*, New Delhi; New York, Penguin, Viking, 2006, Pg 94.
[225] Ram Kumar interviewed by John Clark, 20th December 1991, in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney, Pg 193.
[226] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010. Original Emphasis, Pg 651.
[227] Fabri, Charles, "Notes towards a biography of Amrita Sher-Gil" *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 2, No publication date, Pg 28.
[228] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's artists and the Avant-Garde 1920-47*, Reaktion, London, 2007, Pg 46.

However, to compare Sher-Gil with other Indian artists is difficult due to the exogenous discourses that she first learnt. These discourses were based on neo-realism and post-impressionism. Only Jamini Roy moved into territory that Sher-Gil inhabited. But Roy threw away his academicism, an academicism seen in his *City Streets*. Sher-Gil, however, never threw her art school training away. She assimilated Indian traditions within it.

Writing in the second issue of the journal *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, Mulk Raj Anand thought the trajectory of Indian "experimentalism" of Gaganendranath, Rabindranath, Amrita-Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy. Anand's analysis was based on a Eurocentric comparison to primitivism and European modernism, defining Indian modernism within the orbit of European modernism.[229] Sher-Gil occupies a place defined outside of Anand's trajectory, due to the variety of painterly techniques learnt in her time in Paris and Hungary, and due to her attitude towards her artwork and its status in India. In 1935 when the Shimla Fine Art Society awarded her a prize for one painting but declined others[230], Sher-Gil stated:

> I shall in future be obliged to resign myself to exhibiting them merely at the Grand Salon Paris, of which I happen to be an Associate, and the Salon des Tuileries known all over the world as the representative exhibition of Modern Art...where I can, at least, be sure of receiving some measure of impartiality...[231]

The French institutions may be impartial, but there is an inference that the European institutions were superior. Sher-Gil subscribed to the European neorealist movement. Indeed, neo-realism was a reaction to postimpressionism.[232] She combined these with Mughal and other miniature styles, such as *pahari* paintings. Neo-realism was different to the other branches of European modernism and dismissed the shattering inherent in surrealism, cubism, Dadaism, and other avant-garde movements. This gave Sher-Gil, as a product of *Ecole de Beaux Artes*, an advantage, and created a formalist entrance for her to paint Indian settings from within. Sher-Gil "saw this form of realism as a bridge for her projected Indian experience."[233] It was this 'bridge' that the Bengal artists fought against.

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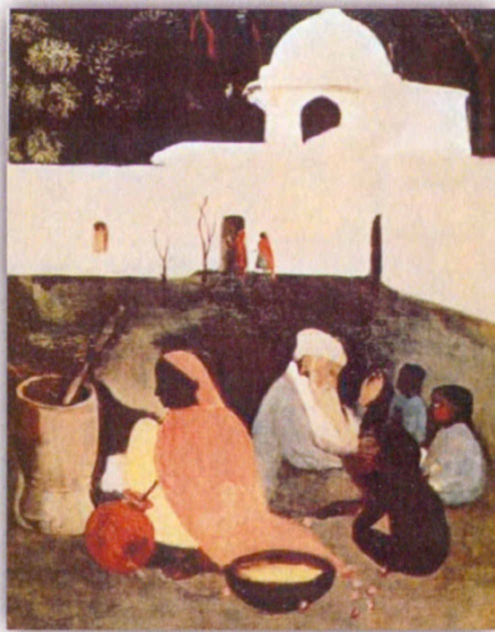
[229] Ananda, Mulk-Raj, 'The Four Initiators of the Contemporary Experimentalism', *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 2, No publication date, Pg 1-5.
[230] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's artists and the Avant-Garde 1920-47*, Reaktion, London, 2007, Pg 47.
[231] Ibid, Pg 47-49.
[232] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. Tulika, New Delhi, 2000, Pg 4-5.
[233] Ibid, Pg 7.

Sher-Gil's discourses were not subversive and counter-institutional when viewed in relation to the European modern, but were subversive in relation to the Indian milieu. In Europe her discourses were not counter-institutional due to the very institutionality of neo-realism, and also because of the critical socio-political and ideological positions that were available to artists, and the Parisian intelligentsia, within differing avant-garde movements. Neorealism can be seen in her paintings *Hungarian Market Scene* (1938) and *Ancient Story Teller* (1940), which had affinities with plein-air composition.

Amrita Sher-Gil, *Hungarian Market* Scene, (1938, Oil on Canvas)



Amrita Sher-Gil, *Ancient Storyteller*, (1940, Oil on Canvas)

Sher-Gil was a painter of the academies not aligned with the avant-garde. Sher-Gil, as an art student in Paris, (1929-1934), was the very embodiment of an institutionalized artist. She

won her teachers' approval, she won prizes, and, as K.G. Subramanyan notes, "...she conformed to their expectations."[234] Parisian avant-garde underground activity had ceased to be as revolutionary as it had been from the turn of the 20th century to 1920. Sher-Gil missed most of these activities. She was outside of the Bengal schools' discourses, and those of the European historical avant-gardes.

In the Indian milieu her discourse was counter-institutional. It was different to the established schools in India, was seen as different by those who wanted to be different from the established schools in India, and was also different to Victorian aesthetic tastes, which were still prevalent in India. It was this counter-institutional position and her social characteristics, which helped form a new space in Indian art

Amrita Sher-Gil on 'Bad' and 'Good' Art.

Sher-Gil wrote on Indian art: "Indian Art Today", "Art and Appreciation", and "Modern Indian Art – Imitating the Forms of the Past."[235] Sher-Gil's article 'Indian Art Today' critiques modes of sculpture and painting (Sher-Gil may not have been acquainted with Ram Kinkar), she wrote: "...depressing fact that sculpture in India in our day is practically non-existent." She observed (probably referring to Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury), "Measuring the success of their work by the degree of technical skill achieved in the imitation of the outmoded, decadent, academic sculpture of the West...Indian sculptors remain stationary." She felt the sculptors did not evolve "any characteristic, individual form." [236]

Sher-Gil maintained her critical view and understood the need to dismantle traditions in order for a 'new' style or aesthetic category to be created, furthering her emphasis on an art open to European and Indian discourses. She created a theory of art that relativised European and Indian discourses. She wrote a discourse for Indian modernist art appreciation that was not connected to the Bengal School, Shantiniketan and other art schools.. "...Good Art is limited to the few because," she wrote, "it has characteristics that are difficult for the average

[234] Subramanyan, K.G., *The Magic of Making: Essays on Art and Culture*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2007, Pg 187.

[235] "Indian Art Today" was published 19th August 1941 in The Indian Listener and "Art and Appreciation" was published March 1937 The New Outlook, Ahmedabad, "Amrita Sher-Gil—The Talented Artist" published January & February 1937 in The Indian Ladies' Magazine, Vol. X, No. 1, "Modern Indian Art – Imitating the Forms of the Past" published Sunday November 1, 1936, in The Hindu.

[236] *Amrita Sher-Gil : A Self-Portrait in Letters & Writings*, Vol. 2, Ed., Vivan Sundaram, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pg 731.

person to appreciate." " ...[It] tends towards Simplification...[creating]...essentials of a form.[where the] stress [is] invariably laid on the *textural* and *technical* beauty of a work, instead of the beauty of the *subject* depicted." Good art was "characterized", Sher-Gil wrote, "by vitality & pungency of execution" that "never has the slightest trace either of prettiness or sugariness." 'Good art' is "stylized' and "never imitated", but "always interpreted." This was 'Good Art,' opposed to "bad art." 'Bad art' she "...characterized by softness of execution, and conception, floridity, effeminacy of treatment and stress on inessential detail." In 'Bad art' there was a close resemblance—almost an imitation—to the perceived object by the artist. Making the form "either photographically imitated...or stylized in the wrong sense..." Sher-Gil convicted Ravi Varma of this artistic crime and also his European influences such as the artists "Bouguereau" and "Alma-Tadema." This was "more recently visible in many specimens of the Bombay and the Bengal Schools."[237]

She understood that bad art was "diametrically opposed to the vital...stylization of form" which was the characterizing elements of the "sculpture and painting of Ellora, Ajanta, Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese, early Christian, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art." Her art was an assimilation of world painting with an emphasis on line. She created a discourse for her image of the people in a social realist manner. This was in opposition to sentimental forms for which she indicted, "Lord Leighton," "Paul Chabas," and "all the so-called paintings that are exhibited yearly at the Royal Academy and at the Salons." She felt "Bad Art depends for its appeal on the prettiness or the sentimental aspect of the subject treated and therefore seldom fails to be popular." "People who have the illusion that there are no absolute values in Art...believe... that personal taste is the only standard by which a work of Art can be judged, and consequently dub everything that repels them as bad with the certitude and intolerance that can only be the outcome of ignorance."[238]

She used these theories to construct her version of the *Image of the people*. Sher-Gil, as Guha-Thakurta writes, opened a new engagement with Indian pictorial traditions.[239] Sher-Gil used this new engagement to enter the modern milieu. In this milieu the depiction of the peasantry, those outside of bourgeois dominance, equated to a political sensibility. By painting the everyday scenes she reinterpreted Indian life whilst privileging the marginal positions in Indian society of the non-bourgeois peasant and subaltern figures. Sher-Gil

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[237] Ibid, Pg 731.
[238] "'Art and Appreciation' Sher-Gil, Amrita, in The New Outlook, Ahmedabad, March 1937." in Ibid, Pg 731.
[239] Guha-Thakurta, Tapati, "Lineages of the Modern in Indian Art" in *Culture and the Making of Identity in Contemporary India*, Ed., Kamala Ganesh and Usha Thakkar, Sage Publications, 2005, Pg 100.

declared that she hates "cheap emotional appeal", and that it was her task to "interpret the life of the Indians, particularly the poor Indians, pictorially."[240] She declared that she is "not a propagandist of the picture that tells a story." She developed a discourse privileging subaltern identities.[241]

She was influenced by the paintings of Paul Gauguin. His paintings Sher-Gil thought, had a common atavism with Basohli miniaturists Before returning to India she wrote to her parents from Budapest:

> Modern art has led me to the comprehension and apprehension of Indian painting and sculpture... it seems paradoxical, but I know of certain, that had we not come away to Europe, I should never have realized that a fresco from Ajanta or a small piece of sculpture in the Musee Guimet is worth more than the whole Renaissance![242]

It was not only the Parisian influence of impressionism, post-impressionism, and neo-realism but was also due to Sher-Gil's annual stays in Hungary that allowed her freer access to paint Indian subjects and create a newer Image of the people. In Hungary, during the 1930s, the Nagyabanya School had surpassed her artistic training in Paris due to the importance placed upon freer models of painting such as different methods of incorporating and interpreting light and shade through the technique of plein-air painting. The founder was Simon Hollosy, and his students tended to paint outdoors capturing the simplicity of rural life.[243]

It was her South Indian paintings of 1937 that depicted the village and non-urban India and furthered her agenda of Indian themes and forms. During this trip she became aware of the emasculated nature of India's people.[244] She painted a range of ethnic figures; of village girls and banana sellers, *haldi* grinders and storytellers.[245] Her painting *Brahmacharis* (1937), depicts South Indian Brahmins. She stayed true to the iconography of the Brahmin adorned with their respective sacred threads (Janoi)[246] around their torsos, and

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[240] Anand, Mulk-Raj. *Amrita Sher-Gil.* National Gallery of Modern Art, Jaipur House, India Gate, New Delhi, 1989, Pg 2.
[241] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism – Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India.* Tulika, New Delhi, India, 2000, Pg 7-13.
[242] *Amrita Sher-Gil* Ed., Sundaram, Kapur, Sheikh, Subramanyan, Marg Publications, Bombay, 1971, Pg 92.
[243] Yashodhara, Dalmia, *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Life*, Viking, Penguin Books, 2006, Pg 195-6.
[244] Ibid, Pg 194.
[245] Tapati Guha-Thakurta "Lineages of the Modern in Indian Art" in *Culture and the Making of Identity in Contemporary India*, eds., Ganesh Kamala and Thakkar Usha, The Asiatic Society of Mumbai Bicentenary Volume, Sage Publications, 2005, Pg 100.
[246] Representation that the Brahmin is now twice born - Dvija.

Vaishnavaite[247] clan marking (Thiru-namam) on their forehead. She depicted the "long hollow cheekbones", the limp wrists and inverted the dominant nationalist male gaze to that of the female.

[247] The cult of Vishnu. For more information see Page 195 Dallapiccola, L. Anna. *Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend.* Thames and Hudson. 2002.

Amrita Sher-Gil, *Brahmacharis* (Oil on Canvas, 1937)

Amrita Sher-Gil, *Hill Women* (1935, Oil on Canvas)

Hill Women (1935) also stayed true to the depiction of Indian village women in a social-realist form. These two images show the subaltern and everyday scenes. After her death in 1941, her father Umrao Singh Sher-Gil presented about one hundred (from a total of about one hundred and fifty) of her paintings to Jawaharlal Nehru. The gift from Umrao to

Nehru took place immediately after Indian Independence in 1947. Nehru housed the core collection in what was to become, in 1954, the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.[248] This institutionalization of her Image of the people demonstrates the appropriation of the non-bourgeois populace into the bourgeois culture high art. This appropriation promoted a pan Indian collective visual representation of the nation.

It was Sher-Gil who, as Kapur notes, "enlarges the allegorical reach by attempting to make the woman's subjective presence the model for the developing subject-in-history."[249] Sher-Gil, through her rendering of subdued, oppressed and rural female subjects, once again contradicted the male middle-class gaze. This gaze was an aspect of Varma's paintings, and the Bengal School. But was not an aspect for Sunyani Devi, who was a pioneer primitivist artist.[250] She painted in Jorasanko and was indebted to early Bengal board paintings as seen by her painting *When Rain Comes* (No Date).

When Rain Comes, Sunyani Devi (No Date, Wash and tempera on paper, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

Sher-Gil's depiction of the female's presence in her painting *Bride's Toilet* (1937) and *In the Ladies Enclosure* (1938) was the "real" everyday scene, outside of her own aristocratic position. She painted the females as iconic of the nation. *Bride's Toilet* has a melancholic atmosphere that is emphasized through the use of dull reds and browns. *In the Ladies*

[248] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. Tulika, New Delhi, 2000, Pg 54.
[249] Ibid, Pg 175.
[250] Kar, Amina, "Sunayani Devi—A Primitive of the Bengal School", *Lalit Kala Contemporary* 4, Pg 4-7.

Enclosure depicts the relations between females in the domestic sphere. She disrupts Varma's, Tagores, Mukul Dey's, Roop Krishna's, the Bengal School's, and Shantiniketan's depiction of the female serving the nation by portraying social realist scenes emphasizing the domestic of communal female subjectivity. Her painting *Mother India* (1935), a celebration of the 'poor and sad Indian' as a female embodiment of a national essence, turns on its head the idealized romantic depictions of the Indian tribal female. This is also seen in *Woman Resting on a Charpoy* (1940). In her *image of the people* she created a new discourse that opened space to use realism to represent the subaltern identity, which was appropriated as high cultural discourse.

Amrita Sher-Gil *Woman Resting on Charpoy* (1940 oil on canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art New Delhi)

4.5 Jamini Roy and the *Image of the People.*

Jamini Roy, *Paddy Cultivation* (C. 1925 watercolour on paper)

Jamini Roy's development shows that he rejected his academy approach to art to integrate folk idioms with high art to create an Image of the people. Though Jamini Roy is studied extensively, his folk approach to the Image of the people is important, and this study briefly discusses his work.

Jamini Roy[251] (1887-1972) stayed largely outside of the Bengal School cohort and their discourses. He studied at the Calcutta Art School (at age 16) and was taught by Abanindranath Tagore in 1907. Abanindranath suggested to Roy to look at folk forms and examine Abanindranath's Banglar Brata Katha, which contained folk and courtly forms.[252]

[251] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 100-122.
[252] Purohit, Vinayak, *Arts of Transitional India Twentieth Century Volume 1*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1988, Pg 738. See: Mitra, Asok, "Three Painters in Search of Coherent Vision" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 6.

Roy has a complicated position in Indian modernism because he circumvented the Bengal School and Shantiniketan discourse on primitivism and arrived at a neo-folk expression via academy realist and post-impressionistic discourses making him, in an endogenous modernist sense, an avant-garde artist. Roy was not a member of a critical avant-garde. He broke away from academicism and the Bengal School of the later 1910s. He abandoned his academic oil painting practice, and after 1925 adopted different styles from popular and folk painting such as Kalighat and *patachitras*.[253] He moved into the terrain of primitivism and folk art with a modern consciousness. He reinterpreted Indian popular art fusing Kalighat's bold contours and lines of bodies with western discourses informed by the post-impressionism of Van Gogh. He never subscribed to the discourses from Shantiniketan or the Bengal School; yet was influenced by the interaction between art and human life. He merged both with the traditional Indian *pata* village craftsmen. He turned his back on the mural traditions. He broke away from the neo-traditionalism of the Bengal School and the Academy Realist paintings into a neo-primitivist Indian folk art.[254] This places Roy as a radical modernist who created a new engagement with Bengali folk traditions.

Roy aligned himself with the Calcutta clique of academic portrait painters Atul Bose and Hemendranath Majumdar. The later attacked the Bengal School dominance, whilst still paying respect to Abanindranath Tagore. They established The Society of Fine Arts (1921), which was the re-formed institution from the Indian Academy of Art (1920), in Calcutta. The Society of Fine Arts continued to receive the Raj's patronage from sponsors such as the Lord Ronaldshay who was the first patron, and the Maharaja Vijay Chand Mahtab of Burdwan who was the first president.[255] The coterie of Majumdar and Bose, with Percy Brown and Jamini Prakash Gangoly, Principal and Vice-Principal of the Government Art School, respectively, challenged the aesthetic autonomy of the Bengal School.[256] They instituted their own academic and neo-classical history style painting and, whilst doing so, Majumdar also launched polemical attacks against the orientalist historicism of the Bengal School, promoting the Kantian conception of art in contradiction to the revivalist mode, and

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[253] Subramanayan, K.G., "Folk Art and the Modern Artist in India" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary* 10, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, pp. 15-20, Pg 18. See: Som, Sovon, "The Art of Jamini Roy and the Bengal Folk Paradigm" in *Jamini Roy - In the Context of Indian Folk Sensibility and his impact on Modern Art, Seminar Papers*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1992, Pg 25-43.
[254] Das Gupta, "The Calcutta Group: Its aims and achievements", *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, no.31, April 1981, Pg 11.
[255] Sarkar, Kamal "Fifty Years of the Academy of Fine Arts" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 62.
[256] Ibid, Pg 62.

promulgated it through the journal *Indian Art Academy*. Majumdar de-centered the dominance of the Bengal School's media coverage in *Rupam*, *The Modern Review*, *Bharati*, published from Jorasanko, and through *Chatterjee's Picture Albums*.[257] Majumdar and Bose were another counter-institution but they did not relativize their discourses with the Indian idioms and European modernist discourses seen in the Bauhaus Exhibition of 1922, but rather privileged academy realism. Bose was commissioned by Rabindranath Tagore to paint his portrait, and maintained friendly relationships with other artists such as Benode Bihari Mukherjee.

Roy's discourse became connected with the wider ambit of nationalist interest through the discourses on the arts and crafts of rural Bengal. Roy became, by the 1940s, embedded within the discourse of modernist primitivism, at first seeing through the prism of European modernism[258], but which, unlike Rabindranath's, folded itself back into a deeper endogeny.

Roy, according to Suhrawardy, "... always held, in contradistinction to the theorists and practitioners of the Bengal School, that a picture is Indian not because of its subject matter but because of the technique and the conception."[259] Roy started from a post-impressionism inspired by Van Gogh, painting portraits and landscapes, as seen in his *City Street* and *Landscape*.

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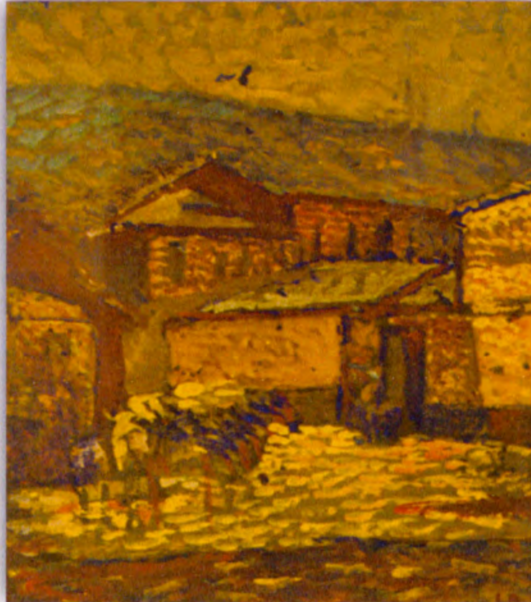
[257] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 130-33. See: Sarkar, Kamal "Fifty Years of the Academy of Fine Arts" in Ed, Dwijendra Moitra, *The Academy of Fine Arts Golden Jubilee: A Commemoration 1933-1983*, Calcutta, 1983, Pg 62-3.
[258] Ibid, Pg 110.
[259] Suhrawardy, Shahid, *Prefaces, Lectures on Art Subjects,* University Press Calcutta May 1938, Pg 134.

Jamini Roy, *City Street* (C. 1920 oil on board, Courtesy India Museum, Kolkata)



Jamini Roy, *Landscape* (oil on board Courtesy, India Museum, Kolkata)

Jamini Roy, *Santhal Girl* (Oil on Canvas Courtesy National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

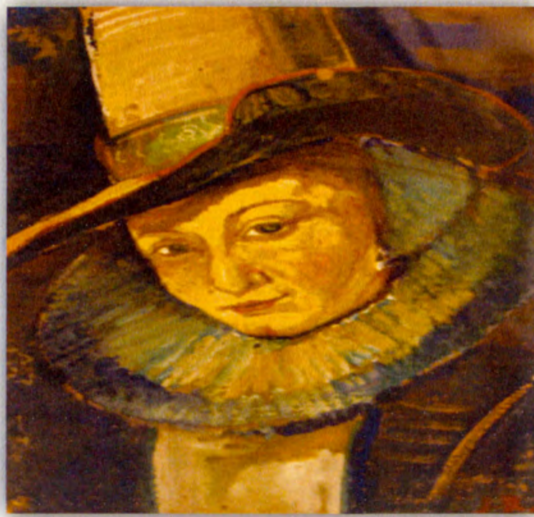
Jamini Roy, Santhal Girl (Tempera on Plyboard, Courtesy National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

According to Jagdish Swaminathan Roy had "straitjacketed"[260] himself by adopting the folk form. Roy's movement into what was perceived to be strict indigenous discourses was perhaps due to Roy's association with Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, a founding member of the Workers and Peasants Party, and possibly the sitter for the following Roy portrait.

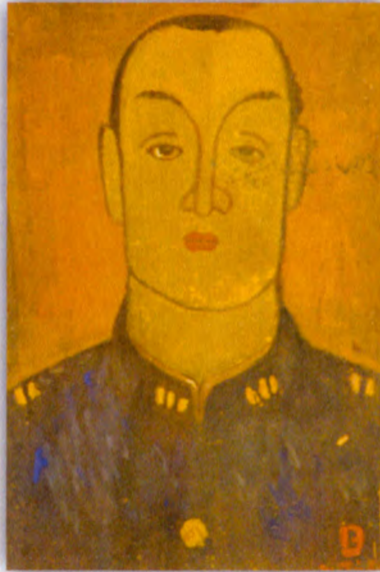
Jamini Roy, *Portrait of Kumar Sarkar* (oil on canvas Courtesy India Museum Kolkata, possibly Hemanta Kumar Sarkar the founder of the Workers and Peasants Party)

Roy did not shape or formally politicize his art with the CPI. Roy started painting portraits of English sitters using an indigenous style—effacing the bourgeois conception of imperial academic art privileging the use of indigenous discourses, and counter-appropriating the British sitters within the folk manner (as seen in the portraits *Portrait of an English Lady* gauche on paper and *Portrait of an English Man* oil on board).

[260] Jagdish Swaminathan interviewed by John Clark, 24th December 1991, in *Asian artist interview transcriptions*, Vol. 5, 1992, Schaeffer Library, University of Sydney, Pg 212.



Jamini Roy, *Portrait of an English Lady* (gauche on paper courtesy India Museum, Kolkata)



Jamini Roy, *Portrait of an English Man* (oil on board Courtesy India Museum Kolkata)

An anonymous reviewer wrote in *Rupam* (1924):

To the school of modern Indian Painting—of the Calcutta school, to whom the imitative accuracy of natural appearances is of no criterion of any value—this idealistic element in portrait-painting makes a special appeal. That an artist has the

right to take liberties with the actual features of his models is a creed which many Western artists of modern times are sharing with their old Eastern comrades.[261]

Roy blurred the distinctions between high and low art categories and their views of tribal arts and handicrafts. He was a close friend of Rabindranath Tagore because of his actualization of the village tradition and promotion of it within the nexus of an Indian high art. He created a folk aesthetic village autonomy producing or reproducing several works and became the traditional pata craftsman rather than the bourgeois artist.[262] Or, as Mitter notes, "...seeking to subvert the distinction between individual and collaborative contribution in a work of art."[263] Roy, staying outside of the Bengal School aestheticism, used folk expression and helped dismantle the Bengal School's dominant position.

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[261] "Notes Section" *Rupam*, No. 17, January, 1924, Pg 54.

[262] Das-Gupta, "The Calcutta Group: Its aims and achievements", *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 31, April 1981, Pg 11. See: Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 118. See for Jamini Roy's moving into the peasantry and village's belief systems as an alternative to the use of High Hindu or Christian art See Mukhopadhyay, Amit, "The Art Situation Before 1940" in Lalit Kala Contemporary 32, April, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1985, pp. 24-29, Pg 27-8.

[263] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 119.

Photograph of Jamini Roy (right) and Rabindranath Tagore c. 1938, photographer: Anonymous, Re-Photographed by Kedar Vishwanathan, courtesy India Museum, Kolkata.

Photograph of Jamini Roy in his studio (courtesy India Museum, Kolkata, photographer: Anonymous, Re-Photographed by Kedar Vishwanathan)

Roy brought to Indian art a folk aesthetic discourse by throwing away his academicism. [264] Roy's discourse, effacing high Indian art, toppled the iconographic structures of the Bengal School, and academic art. Roy fused indigenous Indian village arts and crafts into a discourse of high Indian art, and promulgated this new structure in institutional circuits. By this aesthetic assimilation into market forces, Roy allowed other artists to question the basis of European art discourses and their value, as well as the Bengal schools' endogenous Indian modernism. Roy opened the existing discursial space to appropriate folk, primitive and non-bourgeoisie signs and symbols within the framework of high bourgeois art. In Indian high art this was the first time an artist had removed the distinction of a high art category from English styled tastes of the Government schools, or the

Bengal schools' trends. Turning his back to his previous European based discourses, he constructed himself as both a modern artist and a traditional craftsman, and created a new Indian modern art.

Roy's achievements, which had become the instituted tastes of the urban bourgeoisie in Calcutta, were later critiqued for not moving forward stylistically, and also for appropriating the tribal discourse for money and fame.[265] Roy's art was still for the bourgeoisie, but it enabled the urban class to grasp a different iconographic tradition that was/is Indian and return its visual mentality to an indigenous apprehension of Indian high art imbued with a non-dominant cultural-system—that of the folk and tribals. Roy kept his paintings cheap to sell to people who could not afford them.[266] Roy's ideology followed those of Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore and were indebted to the notion that, as Mitter writes, "our [Indian] ideal must be small, heterogeneous, (*svatantra*) communities, which restored man's intimate connection with the soil."[267] Following Mitter, Roy expropriated the localized Bengali village traditions, which could make the Indian viewer and artist restore a cultural-artistic 'connection with the soil'. He placed folk art in the bourgeoisie's category of 'high' art, appropriating the signs and narratives of the peasantry's life-worlds into the hegemonic orbit of the Indian bourgeoisie, in the process critiquing the importation of the European hierarchical capitalist structure of a division between 'high' and 'low' art. He de-stabilized the bourgeoisie's metropolitan want for academy art, and mythological images from the Bengal School. Using folk and primitive idioms, (which were also being used in European modernism), he brought the Indian folk aesthetic to hang on the walls of urban homes in an updated modernist expression. He opened a space for folk art as a category of high art in India, creating a neo-folk paradigm, whose expression, narrative and process had clear roots in the country's soil, whilst having international modernist relevance and affinities, and was located outside of the hegemony of the capitalist materialism of a centralized nation-state.

The Indian image of the people became an endogenous romantic discourse that filtered itself into the 1930s-40s and post-independence national-cultural discourses. The movement started initially by an idealistic romantic vision of the peasantry as the nation's essence and incorporated the peasants into the main discourse of an endogenous Indian modernism. By the 1940s this was being critiqued. Internationalist idioms such as social

[265] Ibid, Pg 120.
[266] Ibid, Pg 119.
[267] Ibid, Pg 118.

realism, and agitational propaganda linked with socialist, Marxist, Communist, Leninist, and Royist ideologies that developed during the anti-imperial and anti-fascist movements of the '30s and the '40s. They critiqued former discourse as sentimental. We will now turn to them.

Part 5: Social Realism and Cosmopolitan Political Interactions in the 1940s. The Communist Party of India, and Chittaprosad Bhattacharya.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Famine Revolt* (Linocut, c. 1943)

5.1 Political Background

The development of Communism in India, its political party the Communist Party of India (CPI, c. 1920-21 Tashkent)[1], as well as the associated cultural movements were vital in developing an endogenous modernism, anti-colonial nationalism and avant-gardism in India. Communism, socialism and Marxism-Leninism grew as an anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and anti-colonial ideology during the threat of Japanese, Italian and German imperialism and fascism, as well as for a nationalist liberation against colonial domination. Ideologically and theoretically Marxism was essential in the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles.[2] Communism was seen by many as an alternative to the Congress-dominated political scene. It was an ideology that could topple bourgeois-nationalist dominance and their allegiance to the Raj. Communism would attempt to foment revolution and pan-Indian support in a largely peasant (including the divisions dominant, middle, landless, and poor peasant) and agrarian based population. The theoretical bases for this came from Lenin and Roy's Marxist theories in the aim of revolution. The CPI would engender the peasantry as revolutionary subjects produced under capitalism from where a national revolution could take place. For this reason the British Government, anxious about counter-imperial insurgencies, clamped down on the CPI's activities through the mid 1920s-1930s. By 1933 the CPI had formed a pan-Indian organizational structure.[3] The British Government banned the CPI in 1934. The banning caused underground international cosmopolitan—revolutionary—activity.[4] By the 1930s the CPI was a small party. In 1942 (after it was legalized) its membership was 15,000. It grew rapidly; in May 1943 the membership was 53,000 and by mid-1946 it was over 100,000.[5]

The peasantry could be represented and spoken for politically, culturally and socially by the CPI. The CPI followed the Marxian paradigm in terms of subject and class formations.[6] The CPI, following the Communist International's, and Comintern's positions

[1] Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri writes, "After studying for some time in the Communist University of the Toilers of the East the *Muhajirs* came to accept Marxism as their creed, and according to Rafiq Ahmad the CPI was formed in 1921. Ahmad adds: 'as a matter of fact the Communist Party of India had been set up towards the end of 1920 in Tashkent, though some of us did not join it. Now we formed the party though we were away from home, we did so because we felt it was necessary.'" Chowdhuri, Rai, Satyabrata, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, Pg 58-60.

[2] For more on how categories of Marxism can be stretched in the application to the colonial subjects in relation to their colonizer see Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York, Grove Press, 1967. Also See Seth, Sanjay, Marxist *Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995.

[3] Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, Macmillan India, 1983, Pg 413.

[4] Ibid, Pg 413.

[5] Ibid, Pg 413.

[6] Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, International Publishers, New York, 1975, Pg 124.

promulgated by Lenin, and argued against by M.N. Roy[7], believed that the peasantry, or proletariat, as products of capitalism tied to the bourgeoisie, had "nothing to lose but their chains," and a whole new "world to win."[8] But Lenin thought that the overthrow of capitalism required the toppling of the British Empire's colonial regimes, and therefore the Communists (whose leadership regarded the peasantry as the revolutionary subjects of history), should side with the nationalist liberation front.

Lenin believed imperialism was "striving for domination" over the colonies.[9] Lenin, like Gandhi, was an anti-systemic thinker, and wanted to bring about imperialism's dissolution.[10] Lenin argued imperial empires found their colonies to be "crucial [to the] importance of...monopoly finance capital."[11]He thought the East was integral to the highest stage of capitalism, which was imperialism. The east was a key part of capitalism's world structure. Lenin wanted the Communist parties in all colonial areas to help with "bourgeois-democratic liberation" movements such as that led by the INC in India.[12] M.N. Roy hesitatingly agreed with Lenin. But Roy argued that the bourgeoisie was "incapable of leading the bourgeois-nationalist revolution." Roy felt it was essential to organize a People's Party that would harness all the social classes for national revolution.[13] The CPI needed to join the INC and Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in order to have a United Front against imperialism. The CPI vehemently disliked the INC's appropriation of the peasantry and saw them as revolutionary subjects who could be activated to the cause of the revolution.

The peasantry could aid in the overthrow of global capitalism and establish communism. However, it was not always the peasants who turned to communism as an ideological weapon to topple the *zamindars* and resist colonial exploitation and feudal relationships of domination and subordination.[14] It was the middle-class intelligentsia, who,

[7] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995, Pg 58-61.
[8] Engels, Freidrich, and Marx, Karl, *The Communist Manifesto*, Pluto Press, London, 2008, Pg 84. See: Balibar, Étienne, "Lenin and Gandhi: A missed encounter?" *Radical Philosophy*, March/April 172, 2012, pp. 9-17.
[9] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995, Pg 43.
[10] Balibar, Étienne, "Lenin and Gandhi: A missed encounter?" *Radical Philosophy*, March/April 172, 2012, pp. 9-17, Pg 10.
[11] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995. Emphasis added, Pg 43.
[12] Haithcox, John P., "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: a New Interpretation," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 23, 1963, pp 93-101, Pg 43.
[13] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995, Pg 99.
[14] Roy, M.N., "The Indian Bourgeoisie and the National Revolution," *The Labour Monthly*, March 1929, pp 163-170, Pg 165. See: Roy, M.N, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*, Hyperion Press, Westport

having imbibed Enlightenment knowledge and liberalism, spoke for the peasants and villagers through language of Lenin, and M.N Roy.[15]

Indian communists, and CPI affiliated artists such as Chittaprosad, understood the Bengal Famine (1943) to be a direct result of colonial capitalist exploitation. The techniques and discourses of social realism were used to depict the social suffering caused by direct colonial capitalist dominance. However, social*ist* realism (which became state policy in the Soviet Union in 1932) never became an art discourse embedded in either the INC or CPI. Chittaprosad only sparingly used it. Social realism was used to depict the truth of economic drainage. This was in opposition to the romanticism of the Bengal School and Shantiniketan artists, and the romantic realism of the peasantry. Chittaprosad's social realism was created through his translation of European social-realist discourses and it's relativisation with endogenous folk-forms and the current socio-political Indian milieu. The results of Empire's economic exploitation and the widespread deaths it brought gave social realism its narratives; art directly represented the peasantry. Thus social realism was used in the creation of an endogenous modernism that moved away from the dominance of the Bengal School and Shantiniketan romantic discourses. It was a rupture against the dominant discourses that had represented the city, countryside, and peasantry romantically and mythologically. Social realism dislodged the dominant paradigm of the bourgeois-nationalist and the ruling classes' art and culture. It created the next step in endogenous modernism by relativising exogenous discourses suiting *life-world* conditions of urban and village Bengal. It became and avant-garde moment in Indian modernism.

This Part will explore the processes behind the diffusion of social realism discourses entering India as well as the cosmopolitan interactions in the process of diffusion (ideology and history), and how an artist like Chittaprosad Bhattacharya used these discourses to give representation to, and for, the peasantry. Indeed, social realism was a discourse that was in an antagonistic relationship with the discourses from Shantiniketan and the Bengal School due to their internationalization of nature discourses, and because social realism was an exogenous discourse that had not yet been used in the revived national tradition or the high art cultural-systems of Shantiniketan and Bengal. Also, Sher-Gil's images of the people were

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Connecticut, This edition 1974, Pg 374. Also see: Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, 1997.

[15] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995, Pg 58-61. See: Pg 77, Lenin, V.I., *Imperialism, the highest stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, New York: International Publishers, 1939.

bourgeois. It took socio-political, international, and national events for Chittaprosad and others to relativize social realism with endogenous discourses. In the process Chittaprosad critiqued the dominance of Shantiniketan, Bengal and the Calcutta Group's discourses. Chittaprosad is an endogenous critical avant-garde artist for breaking stylistic ground, and for creating a 'new' discourse. The new discourse, which had a *different* mode of representation of the peasants, critiqued the bourgeois use-function of the other discourses. He broke from art for, and of, the ruling classes whilst using exogenous and endogenous discourses. His artwork held a social function that removed the distance between art and reality, which was a scheme of the historical avant-gardes.[16]

The overlap of socio-political and ideological categories by individual artists and ideologues possessing several different ideologies, agendas and nationalist persuasions, becomes an issue in the categorization of anti-colonial nationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, and cosmopolitan international engagement. In most circumstances Indian ideologues and artists formed dual ideological allegiances under the rubric of *anti-colonial* nationalism. So in the following analyses it is important to pay empirical attention to the Marxist cultural movement in India, and not to completely separate the movement's avant-gardist tendencies and socio-political commentaries from other ideologues who had embedded their ideology, or nationalistic standpoint, within the INC. An allowance for flexible horizontal-historical examination, rather than an examination where formalist rigidity presupposes ideology over cosmopolitan[17] historical circumstance, is necessary.

The derivation of Marxist theories created through the global left-movement under the guidance of the Communist International were mixed with the ideologies that were present in the Indian political situation. The CPI's and M.N. Roy's ideas on revolution became important to Indian nationalism and the Independence movement.[18] These kept abreast of nationalist, revolutionary, and cosmopolitan engagements in Europe, which allowed Marxism to be attached to nationalism. This created interlinked relationships with the INC and anti-

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[16] Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass-Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, Pg 5-8.
[17] Bharucha, Rustom, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*, Oxford University Press, India, 2006, Pg 115. See Derrida, Jacques, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, London, Routledge, 2001. See Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Cosmopolitanisms," *Public Culture*, 12(3) 2000, pp 577-89.
[18] See Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995.

imperialist and anti-fascist movements, which became central to modern Indian history, and modern art.

5.2 The Entrance of Social Realism into India and Cosmopolitan Engagement in the 1930-40s.

Roy's ambivalent friendship with Virendranath Chattopadhyay (1880-1937) was related to cosmopolitan revolutionary resistance in India.[19] The importance of both Chattopadhyay and Roy to the cultural movement must not be underestimated as they played a key role in the importation of propaganda to India. This avenue needs to be explored to understand the discourses entering India and the CPI cultural movement.

Chattopadhyay and Roy were politically active in numerous countries around the world. In 1921, after establishing the CPI in Tashkent, Roy sent members of the CPI to Moscow for training in the recently established Communist University of Workers of the East (1921).[20] After graduating from the university the workers were to train revolutionaries in India and, among other activities, prepare propaganda in Indian languages.[21] Around March 1922, Adolph Joffe left Moscow for Tashkent and established a central committee to help with propaganda in India.[22] However, it was Roy, who, due to his representative status at the International Comintern (as Sobhanlal Datta Gupta observed), enabled the Comintern to "establish a close liaison" with the underground communist leadership operating in India.[23] The connections between the CPI and the Comintern are found in the confiscated papers from the Meerut trial of 1929, where most of the documents (as observed by Gupta) were Comintern documents.[24] On 12th August 1921, on the initiative of the Executive Committee of the Communist International's third congress, an organization was set up in Berlin, which was later reorganized into International Workers' Relief with Clara Zetkin as Chairman. However, intellectuals led by Romain Rolland[25], whom Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi

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[19] See Karnik, V.B., *M.N. Roy – Political Biography*, W.S. Kane, Nav Jagriuti Samaj, First Edition, 1978. Pg 1-5, Kaye Cecil, *Communism in India: With Unpublished Documents from National Archives of India (1919-1924)*, S. Ghtack Editions India, Calcutta, 1971.

[20] Ibid, Pg 5

[21] The activities were (1) Prepare propaganda literature in all Indian languages, (2) Collect and train Indian revolutionaries and send them to India, (3) Select, from Indians now in Moscow, an emissary to India; who shall Form a Communist Party in India; Establish liaison between the Third International, Gandhi, and the Khilafat party; Arrange for dispatch to Russia of representatives from Gandhi and the Khilafat party; Send representatives of the Indian working classes to Russia for instruction in revolutionary matters, (4) Send a man to America to form a Communist Party among the Indians in California. Ibid, Pg 6.

[22] Ibid, Pg 7.

[23] Gupta, Datta, Sobhanlal, *Comintern, India and the Colonial Question, 1920-37*, CSSSC Monograph 3, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1980, Pg 1.

[24] Ibid, Pg 1.

[25] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Penguin Books India, 2004, Pg 204.

were in contact with[26], had previously issued in 1919 a 'Declaration of Independence of Thought' signed by Gorky, Barbusse, Russel, Upton Sinclair, Stefan Zweig and others. Rabindranath Tagore and Ananda Coomaraswamy were, along with several others[27], also signatories. It had been followed in December 1922, the same year as the European Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta, by an international peace congress, which was held in Den Haag. Members of the conference included members from the Second International and pacifist organizations, Trade Unions, and Co-operative societies (including those from the USSR). In March 1923 shop stewards of Reheinisch-Westphalia set up a Committee of Action Against War Danger and Fascism headed by Clara Zetkin, Friz Heckert and Henri Barbusse.

Henri Barbusse was in written contact with Rabindranath. His weekly *Le Monde* reviewed the exhibition *Painters and Printmakers from Revolutionary China*, which opened at the Galerie Billiet-Pierre Vorms, Paris, on March 14th 1934.[28] In 1934, Rabindranath Tagore was in Ceylon, and his final trip to France was in 1930 so he did not see the exhibition.[29] Other Indians in France may have seen the exhibition such as Benoy Kumar Sarkar. It is probable that Sarkar saw this exhibition and passed information on to other Indians in Paris, and the information found its way to India.

In February 1926 at a conference in Berlin, the representatives of a number of anti-imperialist organizations formed a League against colonial oppression. They decided to hold a World Congress against colonial oppression and imperialism; it was held in Brussels on February 10th, 1927. The League Against Imperialism's honorary presidents were, Albert Einstein, Henri Barbusse and Sun Yat-Sen. The Executive Committee had as President James Maxton (Member of Parliament, U.K). Edo Fimmen was Vice-President; and the members were Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohamed Hatta, Liau Han-Sin, Mustaph Chedli, Mme Duchese, S Saklatvala, A. Marteaux, R. Bridgman, Roger Baldwin and Diego Riveria.

Virendranath Chattopadhyay and Willi Muezenberg were elected as secretaries of the organization and the day-to-day operations of the office fell to Chattopadhyay.

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[26] Tagore first met Rolland in 1921 in Paris. See Serial No. 321, Rolland, Romain, Rabindra Bhavana Archives, Visva-Bharti University, Shantiniketan, for the correspondence between Romain Rolland and Rabindranath Tagore. Rolland is congratulatory to Tagore for Tagore's definition of narrow nationalism. Romain Rolland also presided over the World Congress against Fascism and War in Amsterdam, 1934.

[27] The other signatories were, Albert Einstein, Bernard Shaw, Anatole France, Henri Barbusse and Martin Anderson Nexo.

[28] Tang, Xiaobing, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement*, University of California Press, Berkely, 2008, Pg 153.

[29] There is no archival account, in Rabindra Bhavan Shantiniketan, of Barbusse sending any information regarding the exhibition to Tagore.

Chattopadhyay influenced Indian nationalism and cultural production. Chattopadhyay and Nehru had met earlier (1921) in Berlin and they had quickly become friends. It was thanks to Chattopadhyay and the League Against Imperialism that Nehru was introduced to Labor Movements. This gave Nehru "…manifestations, and facets of imperialism around the globe, and Marxism and other radical thoughts."[30]

Virendranath Chattopadhyay and Agnes Smedley.

Chattopadhyay had an intimate relationship with Agnes Smedley (1892-1950), an American journalist and Comintern agent.[31] By this time Chattopadhyay had joined the German Communist Party and was working closely with labor organizers such as L. Gibarty of Hungary, Edo Fimmen of Holland, and the Comintern figure Willi Münzenburg of Germany. Such a close proximity to international communist and labor figures gave Chattopadhyay access to revolutionary propaganda.

In 1926, Nehru came from Switzerland (where his wife Kamala was recovering from an illness) to Berlin. At that time Nehru was the secretary of the Indian National Congress. Whilst in Berlin he encouraged the Indian nationalists in their anti-imperialist stance. His arrival created a stir in the Indian nationalist community in Berlin. Nehru paid particular attention to Chattopadhyay and Smedley, especially Chattopadhyay as the European leader of the Indian nationalist community. Nehru and Smedley remained in contact until Smedley's death in 1950. It was Chattopadhyay who introduced Nehru to Sun Yat-Sen (Song Qingling) and other Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) officials.[32] Smedley made it her task to keep the Indian nationalists in touch with the Chinese Nationalist Party, and also reported events occurring in China in the Indian Press.[33] This came to a head during the Meerut Conspiracy on March 29th 1929, where thirty-one suspected Indian communists and fifty-one absent co-defendants, including Smedley, were charged with "conspiracy to deprive the [British] King [and] Emperor of sovereignty."[34] Smedley was indicted because Sikh activists

[30] Barooah, Nirode, C., *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, Pg 253.
[31] For details on their relationship see Barooah, Nirode, C., *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, Pg 225-45.
[32] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Toward Freedom*, New York, 1942, Pg 121-27.
[33] MacKinnon, Janine R, and Stephen R,. *Agnes Smedley – The Life and Times of an American Radical*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988, Pg 123.
[34] Ibid, Pg 139.

were publishing, in Urdu, propaganda articles sent from Berlin by Smedley, about an impending war between Britain and the Soviet Union.[35] Smedley's revolutionary position lent itself to participating in trafficking and sharing information between Indian communists, nationalists and their Chinese counterparts. Smedley publicly lectured on Indian nationalism in Beijing and Nanjing.[36] But there is no actual documentation explicitly linking her to diffusion of agitation propaganda material or Chinese woodcuts, which contributed to the social realism of Chittaprosad and others. However, this avenue cannot be discounted in the search for their diffusion into India.

In June 1924, after Chattopadhyay and Smedley had ceased intimate relations, Smedley gave a public lecture in Berlin. Reputedly a hundred Chinese and Indian men attended the lecture. Smedley projected paintings of social misery by German Expressionists. Käethe Kollwitz, who had started producing woodcuts in 1918, had attended the lecture and her images were projected using magic lantern slides.[37].

Smedley had a friendly relationship with Kollwitz.[38] Smedley published the article "Käethe Kollwitz, Germany's artist of social misery" in the August 1925 edition of *The Modern Review*. This was a year before Rabindranath Tagore met James Frazer and Käethe Kollwitz whilst in Europe.[39] Articles published by Smedley in the *Modern Review* about German and European culture, communism, China, and the Soviet Union, reached many Indian readers.[40] This may have been the first entrance into India of a text on Käethe

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[35] Ibid, Pg 139.
[36] Ibid, Pg 140.
[37] Barooah, Nirode, C., *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, Pg 236.
[38] Ibid, Pg 240-41.
[39] No Pagination in Exhibition Catalogue See: *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism: Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Ramkinkar Baij*, Exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1997.
[40] For instance, there are several articles published by Smedley in *The Modern Review*, of interest are:
"Germany's Artist of Social Misery" *The Modern Review* 38, no. 2, August 1925: 148-55
"Adult Education in Czechoslovakia." *The Modern Review* 39, no. 4, January 1926: 378-82
"Cultural Film in Germany." *The Modern Review* 40, no. 1, July 1926: 61-66
"The Negro Renaissance." *The Modern Review* 40, no. 6, December 1926: 657-61
"Theatre in Revolutionary Russia." *The Modern Review* 44, no. 2, August 1928:177-83, and Reviews, 165-67
"German Literature since the War" (co-author with Julian Gumperz). The Modern Review 45, no. 2, February, 1929: 171-74
"Nanking" and "Sun Yat-sen's Funeral." *The Modern Review* 46, no. 2, August 1929: 137-42, 167-73.
"Chinese Athletes." *The Modern Review* 47, no. 6, June 1930: 739-41
"War and Revolution in China" *The Modern Review* 48, no. 3, September 1930: 245-49
"Amongst the Peasants of Kwangtung." *The Modern Review* 48, no. 6, December 1930: 683-88
"Students and Communism in China." *The Modern Review* 49, no. 2, February 1931: 158-61
"Women in the Philippines." *The Modern Review* 49,, no. 4, April 1931: 456-61
"Portraits from the Philippines." *The Modern Review* 49, no. 5, May 1931: 577-79

Kollwitz, which a number of Indian artists would have perused due to the *Modern Review's* wide dissemination. The article was potentially the first time Käethe Kollwitz's art was seen in a mass-produced and widely disseminated magazine in India.

Smedley wrote "…Kollwitz is a product of the time: her work is a synthesis of social problems of the western world."[41] Smedley's article is replete with Kollwitz's depiction of the hungry and emaciated "workers", the "toiling masses", and the peasantry. Nine reproductions were printed in the article. An etching entitled *The Ploughers* from the "War of Peasants" series, *The Carmagnole* (pencil sketch), *The Prisoners* (from "The Man of the Peasants"), *The Uprising*, *The Char-Woman*, *Death and Woman*, *Peasants Arming in a Vault* (from the cycle of the "War of the Peasants"), *Gretchen,* and *Bread!*

Käethe Kollwitz *The Ploughers* (1906, Aquatint and Etching, from The War of Peasants series)

"Death Comes to China." *The Modern Review* 50, no. 5, Novemeber 1931: 513-18
"Japanese at Shanghai." *The Modern Review* 51, no. 4, April 1932: 402-6
"Shanghai Thermopylae." *The Modern Review* 51, no. 5, May 1932: 501-6
"Chinese Red Army Goes to Town." *The Modern Review* 62, no. 5, November 1937: 486-88
"We Start for the Front." *The Modern Review* 62, no. 6, December 1937: 606-14
"Interview with Chu The." *The Modern Review* 63, no. 1, Janurary 1938: 9-11
"Chinese People Arm Themselves." *The Modern Review* 63, no. 2, February 1938: 133-40
[41] Smedley, Agnes, "Germany's Artist of Social Misery" in *The Modern Review*, August, 1925, pp. 148-55, Pg 148.

Käethe Kollwitz, *The Uprising* (1899, Etching)

Käethe Kollwitz *Bread* (1924, Lithograph)

Käethe Kollwitz, *The Prisoners* (1908, Etching)

Kollwitz started working in the woodcut medium since seeing an exhibition of woodcuts by Ernst Barlach on the effects of war on June 24th 1920.[42] Kollwitz had started producing some lithographs prior to 1919 but began to take a serious interest in the woodcut medium after seeing the exhibition, an interest that culminated in her 1922 *War* series.[43]

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[42] Köllwitz, Han, Ed, trans, Richard and Clara Winston, *The Diary and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz*, Northwestern University press, Evanston, Illinois, 1988, Pg 97-8.

[43] Hartley, Keith, "Käthe Kollwitz: the need to identify" in Exhibition Catalogue , *Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1945 – The Graphic Works*, Exhibition by Kettle's Yard in association with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Kettle's Yard, 1981, Pg 32. Also see Ed., Kollwitz, Han, trans, Richard and Clara Winston, *The Diary and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz*, Northwestern University press, Evanston, Illinois, 1988.

5.3 Chinese Influence in India on left-wing Communist Agitation Propaganda.

Agnes Smedley influenced the arrival of social-realist, and left-wing revolutionary propaganda into India. This allowed for endogenous assimilation of an exogenous discourse for political, agitational, and social realist representation. Smedley also influenced the Chinese woodcut movement. Lu Xun circulated at his workshop Kollwitz's *War* series of 1922-23. Lu Xun had purchased this directly from the artist with the help of Smedley. Smedley also interviewed Lu Xun on December 1929 for *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and contributed articles to *Modern Review* and the *New Masses* introducing political and literary developments in China.[44] Smedley introduced Lu Xun to the German Socialist cartoonist George Grosz.[45] George Grosz was influential ideologically on both the Chinese and Indian Communists artists. He wrote, "Go to a proletarian meeting...and understand these masses are the ones who are reorganizing the world." He declared that artists should give their art "a content which was supported by the revolutionary ideals of the workers."[46] Smedley was involved with the League of Left Wing Writers, and she publicized them in India.[47] In 1936, from Shanghai, Smedley published a book on Käethe Kollwitz's etchings.[48]

In 1937 Smedley travelled to Yan'an where she met Mao, and in March or April of the same year applied for membership to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). She left Yan'an in 1937.[49] She was not in Yan'an for Mao's May 1942 Forum on Art and Literature, but may have passed information on to Indian communists and revolutionaries. However, by 1943 the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA c. 1943) knew about the Chinese Peoples Theatre Movement, which was staging progressive plays in the countryside. The IPTA had imbibed Mao's 1927 report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan,

[44] Tang, Xiaobing, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde – The Modern Woodcut Movement*, University of California Press, 2008, Pg 108.
[45] MacKinnon, Janine R, and Stephen R,. *Agnes Smedley–The Life and Times of an American Radical*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988, Pg 150.
[46] Hore, Somnath, *Tebhaga: An Artist's Diary and Sketchbook*, trasnlated by Somnath Zutshi, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2009, Pg 8.
[47] Ibid, Pg 151.
[48] Ibid, Pg 168.
[49] Ibid, Pg 182-86.

and his 1942 Yan'an Forum Rectification Movement.[50] IPTA's knowledge may well have been derived from contact via five Indian doctors who were with the CCP in China.

The first formal contact between Nehru and the CCP in Yan'an came through Smedley. Smedley worked with Zhu De to promote Chinese nationalist relations with India.[51] The Chinese communists needed medical and monetary assistance and Smedley issued a call of help to the Indian National Congress. She sent a letter to Nehru.[52] After successfully appealing to INC colleagues, Nehru launched a medical mission to Yan'an. During the summer of 1938, five Indian doctors departed Bombay to Hankou and onward to Yan'an. Mao Tse-Tung wrote to Nehru (dated May 24th 1939,) offering thanks to the Indian National Congress that the medical unit under Dr. M. Atal had arrived and had been "warmly welcomed by all members of the 8th Route Army."[53] Nehru visited China when the Second World War broke out in September 1939.[54] He visited Kunming, Chungking and Chengtu. Nehru found the Chinese to be a "singularly grown up people."[55] The "vitality of the Chinese people astonishe[d]" Nehru who could not "imagine a people endowed with such bed-rock strength going under."[56] On the 9th September Nehru returned to India having been unable to meet Mao and the Communists who were in Northwest China.[57]

It was reputedly these doctors rather than the nationalist cosmopolitans who brought back news about the Chinese left-wing cultural movement and Mao's Forum on Literature and Art (1942) into India, which was subsequently diffused in Calcutta by the CPI. Smedley met the five doctors—D.S. Kotnis, M. Atal, M. Cholkar, B.K Basu, D. Mukerji—when they arrived in Hankou in October 1938.[58] She was instrumental in them five going to Yan'an and

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[50] IPTA Bulletin No. 1, July 1943, "People's Theatre Stars The People", Quoted on Pg 125, Pradhan, Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, July 1979, Pg 128 & 168.

[51] MacKinnon, Janine R, and Stephen R,. *Agnes Smedley–The Life and Times of an American Radical*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988, Pg 199.

[52] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Bunch of Old Letters: Written mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and some written by him*, London, Asia Publishing House, 1958, Pg 260- 62.

[53] Ibid, Pg 385-86.

[54] Sarvepalli, Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography: Volume 1 1889-1947*, Jonathon Cape, Thirty Bedford Square London, 1975, Pg 249.

[55] Ibid, Pg 249.

[56] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Penguin Books, India, 2004, Pg 48.

[57] Sarvepalli, Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography: Volume 1 1889-1947*, Jonathon Cape, Thirty Bedford Square London, 1975, Pg 249.

[58] One of the doctors was Kotnis who stayed on in China throughout the war and died in the service of the Eight Route Army. Dr. B.K. Basu was also present. See: Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Bunch of Old Letters: Written mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and some written by him*, London, Asia Publishing House, 1958, Pg 260-62. See also Xiangong, Sheng, *An Indian Freedom Fighter in China – A Tribute to Dr. D.S. Kotnis*, Foreign Languages Press Beijing, First Edition, 1983. Especially Pg 20 for Agnes Smedley's translation work between Chinese and

joining the Eight Route Army. B. K. Basu, and D. Mukerji were from Calcutta, and left Yan'an in 1943. They were probably aware of Mao's Forum of the 2nd of May 1942. Basu wrote in his diary that "an eight-month programme had been drawn up for them," and they learnt "about the various political activities carried out by the Eight Route Army." The doctors were sent to "different anti-Japanese bases for rendering medical services," whilst learning the "tactics and organizational methods of this army." Basu thought that the "present international situation was in favour of our people in India to liberate themselves from British domination." Basu felt that to understand and be a part of the CCP who were "...actively fighting for liberation...[was]...a rare opportunity for us...Indians."[59]

Leaving Yan'an and China in 1943, Basu wrote "The comrades were busy in a group meeting discussing the dissolution of the Communist International and Comrade Chou [Zhou Enlai] was speaking." Chou told Basu the "Communist International had outlived its existence," and that the "communist parties in different countries," were "mature," and not needing direction from a "central body in Moscow." This signalled a shift in the general ideology of the CPC towards Maoism. Chou told Basu the "Communist party leaders in every country know better how to apply Marxism-Leninism in their own countries," and didn't need to "take directions from someone from a distant corner of the earth." Chou said "the Communist Party of China had sent a congratulatory message to the Communist Party of India on its first congress being held at Bombay." Chou gave Basu "a whole year's file of 'People's War' (*Janayuddha*), the weekly organ of CPI, to go through, to become abreast of the political situation in India." He wanted Basu "to request the CPI to keep constant contact with CPC and regularly exchange experiences."[60]

D.S. Kotnis was in Yan'an during the rectification movement in 1942. Kotnis received the documents of the rectification movement and studied them. He said to the political commissar, "How I wish I could grasp the entire meaning right away and engrave in my mind Mao Zedong's teachings on the revolution!"[61] Basu was engaged in the Eight Route Army, which was being actively attacked by the anti-communist Kuomintang in early 1940.

Indians. Dr. Bose became a figure in Bengal and Calcutta for the Communist Party of India, and for Maoists/Naxalites, as he was a figure who met Mao. Such personal histories and narratives are written about by V.S. Naipaul in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Minerva, Second Edition, London, 1991, see pp. 299-308.

[59] Sheng Xiangong, *An Indian Freedom Fighter in China – A Tribute to Dr. D.S. Kotnis*, Foreign Languages Press Beijing, First Edition, 1983, Pg 58.

[60] Basu, Dr. B.K., Ed,. Singh, H, Manjeet., *Call of Yanan – Story of the Indian Medical Mission to China 1938-43*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 2003, Pg 324-25.

[61] Xiangong, Sheng, *An Indian Freedom Fighter in China – A Tribute to Dr. D.S. Kotnis*, Foreign Languages Press Beijing, First Edition, 1983, Pg 164-7

Basu later became iconic in Calcutta for having met Mao, and as a doctor who had fought on the side of the Communists. Basu brought back material knowledge with him to Calcutta in 1943. This was a direct avenue for Chinese left-wing cultural movement documentation as well as Maoist ideology entering Calcutta.

Indeed, this could be how, years after Smedley had published about Käethe Kollwitz's art in India, the Chinese woodcuts, inspired by Käethe Kollwitz and catalysed by Smedley, entered Calcutta, in the bags of Dr Basu, whose visit to China as a member of the group of five doctors was also initiated by Smedley. The Chinese woodcut's arrival in Calcutta influenced artists such as Chittaprosad, Somnath Hore, and Debrata Mukhopadhyay. For instance Chittaprosad's 1943 *Hungry Bengal* was a woodcut.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled* (1943, *Hungry Bengal*, Woodcut)

The Chinese woodcut propaganda reputedly reached the Indian communist cultural activists in 1946. An album containing revolutionary woodcut propaganda was circulated in Calcutta amongst the communist cultural activists.[62] Sometime in the year 1946 the cultural activists of the Communist Party received an album of contemporary Chinese woodcut prints that caused comprehensible excitement.[63] Chittaprosad, Somnath Hore and Debabrata Mukhopadhyay used woodcuts during the Tebhaga Movement in Bengal (1946). Hore wrote that the "Chinese wood engraving after the German artist Käethe Kollwitz, were influences

[62] *Somnath Hore*, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1984, Pg 4.
[63] See Mallik, Sanjoy, http://mohileparikhcenter.org/mpcva/?page_id=412 last accessed 4th August, 2010.

that drew" him to woodcuts.[64] The communist leadership delivered agitation against the colonial state as well as landlords.[65] During the Tebhaga movement *Krishak Sabha* (the peasant wing of the CPI) carried out "heroic struggles." The Tebhaga movement, which was led by Communist workers remained against and resisted the communal uprisings that were occurring in Bengal. There was apprehension that the "Muslim *jotedar* could spark of a communal riot" within the peasantry. The peasant sharecroppers who were subtenants resisted and boycotted the rule of the *jotedar.* The *Kisan Sabha* had come under some Communist control, and they did not want the sharecroppers who were subtenants to be influenced by rampant communalism.[66]

The influence of the Chinese woodcuts can be seen in Chittaprosad's *Tebhaga* woodcut, Debrata Mukhopadhyay's *Tebhaga* woodcut, and Somnath Hore's two woodcuts[67], which are shown below. Chittaprosad's depicts the village life of the sharecroppers, Debrata Mukhopadhyay's depicts the revolutionary fervour of the sharecroppers, and Hore's woodcuts depict the planning strategy of the peasantry. These woodcuts were carried in the CPI's periodicals *Ekshan* and *People's War.*[68]

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[64] No Pagination, Hore, Somnath, *Wounds*, Seagull, Calcutta, 1992.

[65] Chatterjee, Partha, "Peasant Resistance in Bengal, 1920-1947," *Past & Present*, No. 110 Feb., 1986, pp. 169-204, Pg 195.

[66] Sen, Sunil, *Agrarian Struggle in Bengal 1946-47*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1972, Pg 4. Also see Chatterjee, Partha, *Bengal 1920-47*, Calcutta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1984, Pg 203.

[67] Chatterjee, Partha, "Peasant Resistance in Bengal, 1920-1947," *Past & Present*, No. 110 Feb, 1986, pp. 169-204, Pg 197. Also See: Hore, Somnath, *Tebhaga: An Artist's Diary and Sketchbook*, translated by Somnath Zutshi, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2009. Appasamy, Jaya, "The Graphic Art of Somnath Hore" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary* No.11 April 1970. Pp. 29-31.
See Mallik, Sanjoy, http://mohileparikhcenter.org/mpcva/?page_id=412 last accessed 4th August, 2010.

[68] Hore, Somnath, *Tebhaga: An Artist's Diary and Sketchbook*, translated by Somnath Zutshi, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2009, Pg 11.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Woodcut Tebhaga* (Woodcut, 1946)

Debrata Mukhopadhyay *Woodcut Tebhaga* (Woodcut 1946)

Somnath Hore *Woodcut Tebhaga* (Woodcut 1946)

Somnath Hore *Woodcut Tebhaga* (Woodcut 1946)

Two ways by which Mao's Forum on Art and Literature and the prevailing paradigms could have arrived at the communist doorstep in Bengal have been discussed: one from Europe, and the other from China. The discourses and movements that were circulating in the world at that time used these or similar avenues to diffuse the Chinese woodcuts into the CPI in Bengal. The CPI artists and cultural organisations such as the IPTA absorbed the Chinese woodcuts and their ideology.

The use of Mao's Forum on Art and Literature to serve the people became important in semi-colonial and colonial countries to politicize their art discourse in order to destabilize the colonial regime, and for art to have a clear political agenda.[69] The importance lay in making art for, and of, the peasantry, an art that was constructed using the peasantry's folk forms, which were outside of the Raj's cultural-system, outside imperial academy art, and also beyond the Bengal School and Shantiniketan's romanticisation of the peasantry. The discourse ruptured the reconstructed endogenous tradition by relativising exogenous discourses with folk discourses and provocatively fusing them in a construction that broke away from the Bengal School and Shantiniketan elements.

[69] Chopra Suneet, "Debating Modernism" in *Frontline* Volume 18 - Issue 25, Dec. 08 -21, 2001.

Mao, having read Soviet styled Marxism and Leninism alongside Chinese social, and historical discourses[70] proposed a political aspiration for art that imbued a Marxist-Leninist paradigm for the CCP.[71] Mao discusses the marriage of the paradigms:

> But will Marxism not destroy any creative impulse? It will; it will certainly destroy the creative impulse that is feudal, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, liberal, individualistic, nihilistic, art-for-art's-sake, aristocratic, decadent, or pessimistic and any creative impulse that is not of the people and of the proletariat. As far as the writers and artists of the proletariat are concerned, ought not these kinds of impulses to be done away with? I think they ought; they should be utterly destroyed, and while they are being destroyed, new things can be built.[72]

Mao linked cultural production with the peasantry. He (following Lenin and similar to Gandhi) created an interrelationship of arts with the 'proletariat' and the 'people,' (non-bourgeois cultural-system). Mao's 1942 Forum on Art and Literature became part of the strategy by the CPI to develop a political stance for art alongside the party serving the nation's people. As Suneet Chopra[73] observed:

> It gave us the perspective of rejecting an apolitical posture in art as well as political slogans and posters standing in for art. This perspective allow[ed] us to understand the acceptance of folk trends by progressive artists as the expression of the peasantry who were the militant backbone of the resistance to imperialism at that time as well as for their alternative expression to imperial academic art.[74]

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[70] Dirlik, Arif, Pg 119-48, "Mao Zedong and Chinese Marxism" in *Marxism Beyond Marxism*, Eds, Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino and Rebecca E. Karl, Routledge, New York, 1996, Pg 120.

[71] See McDougall, Bonnie, S., *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an conference on art and literature"*: A translation of the 1943 text with commentary, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1980. Clark, John, *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai Art Compared, 1980 to 1999*, Sydney, Power Publications, 2010, Pg 257.

[72] Fokkema, D.W., *Literary Doctrine in China and Soviet Influence 1956-1960*, Mouton & Co, The Hague, 1965, Pg 11.

[73] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995.

[74] Chopra Suneet, "Debating Modernism" in *Frontline* Volume 18 - Issue 25, Dec. 08 -21, 2001.

5.5 Progressive Writers Association and Indian Peoples Theatre Association.

Cultural organisations such as the Progressive Writers Association (PWA) and the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) had anti-imperialist ideologies. The CPI and IPTA were associated with the international struggle against fascism, imperialism, and other Indian ideologues despite ideological differences. The amorphous Indian grouping spelt the arrival of exogenous socialist and social-realist discourses. Such a development in Indian endogenous modernism has to be seen as a critique of how the tribes, villages and peasantry had been harnessed by the Tagores, and by the bourgeois-nationalists for mass political nationalist mobilisation, for the redevelopment of an Indian cultural-system, and for the construction of an image of the people. The cultural development of entering the peasantry's *life-worlds* was a reaction to the Empire's exploitative world-market measures, which resulted in the Bengal Famine (1943). The CPI and IPTA critiqued both these developments and made art for the people.

The communist artists saw the Shantiniketan discourses as those of a comprador bourgeoisie representing the peasantry. For instance, the Indian Society of Oriental Art, its offshoot Club Bichitra, and their continued influence in Shantiniketan were all set up by the ruling classes. The Indian Society of Oriental Art was formed by the Zamindars of Bengal, initially called the Landholders' Association, that had previously came out of the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, and was established by Dwarkanath Tagore in March 1838.[75] Indeed, Rabindranath Tagore was criticised, and some communists sought "to protect the proletariat from the bourgeois poet's harmful influence."[76] Many felt that the appropriation of Indian land under the aegis of the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, because it changed land relations, and the mode of production to the British bourgeois mode, made the peasantry, what Marx called "the great desideratum of Asiatic society"[77], subjects under capital and thus could be used to overthrow capitalism. The Permanent Settlement Act subordinated and dominated Indians under British tenancy arrangements, whereby the East India Company

[75] Abanindranath Tagore, "Indian Society of Oriental Art: Its Early Days" in *Abanindranath Tagore*, Indian Society of Oriental Art, Golden Jubilee Number, 1961, Pg 96.
[76] Mukhopadhyay, Subhas, *Tagore without Bounds*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990, Pg 12.
[77] Pg 126, Marx, Karl, "Future Results of the British Rule in India," in *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, New York, Doubleday, 1968.

maximized collection of land revenue.[78] This created another type of bourgeois relationship of ownership of people, indenturing them to the appropriated land, and allocated to the *zamindar*.[79]

Culturally, however, the PWA announced that art and literature were divorced from the masses. The PWA was itself in a contradiction because it was a ruling class and bourgeois-nationalist organization. Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer (founding members of the PWA, Lucknow 1936,) had drawn up a declaration in London (1935).[80] In 1937, the PWA sent a declaration signed by Rabindranath Tagore, who had become the President of the Indian Committee of the League against Fascism. The declaration, which was also signed by Sarat Chatterjee, Munshi Premchand, P.C. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Pramatha Chowdhury, Ramananda Chatterjee, Nandalal Bose and others, was sent to the Second Congress of the International Writers' Association, held in London from the 19th to the 23rd June, 1936. The Congress declared:

> Today the spectre of a world-war haunts the world ... Fascist dictatorship has revealed its militant essence by its offer of gun instead of butter and the lust of empire building in place of cultural opportunities ... Rivalry and contradiction among big imperialist powers deliberate provocation of crude national chauvinistic sentiments, high-speed rearmaments — these are but portents of the critical situation in which we are placed today.[81]

The declaration called for "our countrymen" to "detest war", have "no interest in war", and abjure war. The signatories stated they were "against the participation of India in any imperialist war" because they knew "that the future of civilization will be at stake in the next war." The Hallet circular sent around on the 17th of September 1936 warned local governments about the PWA's connection to active communists. Sudhi Pradhan wrote, "most of the traditional writers and artists did not like to associate themselves directly with any organization where men with extremist political views were in control."[82] Yet despite mounting imperialist propaganda sections of the national liberation movement and

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[78] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995, Pg 30.
[79] Ibid, Pg 160.
[80] Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, Macmillan India, 1983, Pg 342-43.
[81] The same manifesto was also sent to the Peace Congress in Brussels, September 1936, convened by Romain Rolland. See: Ed., Pradhan, Sudhi., *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents* (1936-1947), National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1979, Pg vii.
[82] Ed., Pradhan, Sudhi. *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-1947)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1979, Pg x.

nationalists such as Nehru kept contact with the PWA.[83] In the late 1930s a "Left Book Club" was formed (following the initial model of Victor Gollanez, Stafford Cripps, and John Strachey's London established Left Book Club in 1936), which had as its editors Mulk Raj Anand, Jayapraksah Narayan, P.C. Joshi, Ram Manohar Lohia, and others. The Left Book Club brought to India books otherwise banned by the British Government, books that gave a detailed account of Soviet Russia and the October Revolution such as *Russia Without Illusions* by Pat Sloan, and Sidney and Beatrice Webbs' *Soviet Communism – A New Civilization.*[84]

These activities led the PWA's 1936 manifesto. The manifesto called for an endogenous social realism in literature and visual art. It stated that it was the "duty" of "Indian writers" to "give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life." By doing so they would promote "the spirit of progress in the country by scientific rationalism." The manifesto declared: "the new literature of India must deal with the basic problem of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection." The PWA found that "passivity, inaction, and unreason" were physical and mental functions that "drag us down" and should be "rejected" as "reactionary." They appealed to the arousal of "a critical spirit" that would examine "institutions and customs in the light of reason," which would help "ourselves, to transform." These were "*progressive*" acts for the nation.[85] However, it was not until the PWA dropped the word 'Progressive' from their title and included artists such as Jamini Roy in their organization that the Anti-Fascist Writers and Artists Association (AFWAA) joined, forming a single organization the AFWAA.[86] The manifesto called for social realist writing

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[83] For instance, "...the traditional imperialist powers tried to create division in the national liberation movement by raising the bogey of communism on the one hand as had been done through Hallet circular...and on the other hand, by painting fascist dictators as men of peace and genuine nationalism as against 'Moscow's fifth column'. The story (Communist propaganda: Moscow changes its tactics_ dished out by the Statesman's Simla correspondent, dated 3rd July, 1936 and published on 7th instant on P.W.A's activity was a typical example. In fact it tried to malign entire European movement of intellectuals against war and fascism. But this did not prevent a section of the Indian nationalists led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Abul Kalam Azad, Bhulabhai Desai and others to keep contact with P.W.A and I.P.T.A up to 1946. In fact, Sarojini attended the first conference of the P.W.A and Nehru attended meetings and contributed articles to the journal published by the P.W.A and Tagore continued to bless its activities. There is a report that Nehru addressed a session of the Hindusthani Progressive Writers' Association held in Allahabad on 167th November 1937 and Tagore sent an illuminating message there." Ibid, Pg, viii-ix.

[84] October Revolution and India's Independence: Proceedings of the Soviet Land Seminar on "The Great Struggle Socialist Revolution and India's Struggle for National Liberation" held in New Delhi on August 20-21, 1977, Eds,. Ali Ashraf and G.A. Syomin, Sterling Publishers. Safdarjang Enclave, New Delhi, 1977, Pg 193-4.

[85] Ed., Pradhan, Sudhi., *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-1947)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1979, Pg x. Author's emphasis.

[86] *Chittaprosad: A Retrospective 1915-1978 Volume 1*, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 117-26. Ghosh, Sankho, "Towards a new beginning, the literary world of modern Calcutta, 1941-1908," in *Calcutta the Living City*, ed., Sukanta Choudhury, Vol. II (The Present), Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990, Pg 232-44.

and literature and helped in the formation of the cultural movement connected with the CPI and IPTA.[87]

The first IPTA bulletin (July 1943) during the Bengal Famine (1943) entitled "People's Theatre Stars The People," signalled a rupture with prevailing art discourse. This rupture was connected with the peasantry and class struggle. The bulletin stated, "...artists and writers of the last century...failed to maintain the growth of our culture." The "living quality" of culture was suppressed by its lack of "continuous adaptation, transformation and development," which prevented them from "expressing the significant facts, aspirations and struggles of our people." The IPTA believed that art had become a ruling class phenomenon, and consequently had lost "touch with the experiences of the masses." Indeed, art would pay the price—the "penalty of extinction." They believed the "people failed to develop their art" creating an "inspiring expression of their struggle for freedom," and therefore were "hampered" in the "development of their struggle." [88] There was a call for art for the people and from the people. A call to return art to the praxis of life, and here the IPTA were indebted to already extant discourses on village life (dance, art, and the folk tradition) by Gurusaday Dutt's Bratachari organization, Jamini Roy and Rabindranath Tagore, all whose inspiration was the Bengali village.[89] Radicalism in the Indian arts can be linked to the CPI cultural movement and the IPTA[90], who, in the first clause of their September 1945 Constitution, wanted to:

> ...foster the development...of theatre, music, dancing and other fine arts and literature in India, as an authentic expression of the social realities of our epoch and the inspirer of our people's efforts for the achievement of peace, democracy and cultural progress.[91]

The IPTA critiqued the Bengal School and other artistic practices for having been co-opted by the INC nationalist movement, and for being divorced from the people. The IPTA was influenced by Romain Rolland's 'People's Theatre' which was antithetical to "decadent

[87] Bhattacharya, Malini, "The IPTA in Bengal" in *Journal of Arts and Ideas* no. 2 (Jan-Mar 1983) pp. 5-22, Pg 5-7. See Bharucha, Rustom, *Rehearsals for Revolution*, Seagull, Calcutta 1983.

[88] IPTA Bulletin No. 1, July 1943, "People's Theatre Stars The People", Quoted on Pg 125, Pradhan, Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, July 1979.

[89] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007, Pg 118.

[90] Bhattacharya, Malini, "The IPTA in Bengal" in *Journal of Arts and Ideas* no. 2 (Jan-Mar 1983) pp. 5-22. Also See: Kapur, Geeta "Secular Artist, Citizen Artist" in *Art and Social Change – A Critical Reader*, ed., Will Bradley and Charles Esche, London: Tate, 2007, Pg 422-39.

[91] "The Constitution of The Indian People's Theatre Association" in Pradhan, Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, July 1979, Pg 221.

bourgeois theatre."[92] IPTA's ideological influence spread to CPI affiliated artists. The IPTA wanted to stop feudal social relationships. Its first Bulletin stated:

> ...It is not a movement which is imposed from above but one which has its roots deep down in the cultural awakening of the masses of India...which seeks to revive the lost in that heritage by interpreting, adopting and integrating it with the most significant facts of our people's lives and aspirations in the present epoch...[93]

The IPTA found the Bengal School to be the "revival of the national consciousness of the upper and middle classes" who "awakened their interest in these [folk] arts." The IPTA understood that the Bengal School had sought to "resurrect the glory" of folk, tribal and traditional "arts" around mythological "themes, which since long had ceased to be of any great significance in the lives of the people." Art had become detached from the endogenous cultural-system creating an aestheticism that had to be dismantled (again, considering that similar arguments had been used by Shantiniketan artists earlier).

The IPTA felt that the Bengal School and Shantiniketan displayed an "attitude" of "romantic revivalism." "The themes of these arts continued to be tales from mythology," or romanticisations of an "idealized peasant life." Mythology and romanticisations of 'peasant life' had no "clear conception or understanding" of the "forces" that "were revolutionizing society." Thus the "poignant details of the present" never became "a suitable material for artistic expression." Art was for the ruling classes and the bourgeoisie, and the religious, an "ornament, the past embalmed and exhibited, a variety of the cult of ancestral worship..." It was "not a potent force of the future." The separation between the past and the future created a "complete divorce between arts like dancing and painting and the revolutionary *motifs* and attitudes of the masses."[94] There was also a disconnection between the ruling classes and the peasantry's culture because of the ruling nationalist elite's romantic appropriation of folk and village cultural forms within their revival of the endogenous cultural-system. Indeed, the constitution explained "...princes like the Raja of Travancore and idealist poets like Vallathol, tried to resurrect artificially" these forms "within the four walls of temples and palaces." But "traditional dances" and folk culture were "living art forms." The "democratic movements of the peasantry and working class have taken," folk culture "from their isolation

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[92] Bhattacharya, Malini, "The IPTA in Bengal" in *Journal of Arts and Ideas* no. 2 (Jan-Mar 1983) pp. 5-22, Pg 6.
[93] Ibid, Pg 6.
[94] "The Constitution of The Indian People's Theatre Association" in Pradhan, Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, July 1979, Pg 126-7.

and made them the expressions of the revolutionary moods of the people."[95] The IPTA used the endogenous elements of the cultural-system and attached them to the people. Clearly the IPTA's use of endogenous idioms was different to the INC's appropriation of the peasantry. The IPTA was more in tune with the CPI and Royist-Leninist ideology, rather than Gandhi's. The IPTA possessed a 'vanguard mentality.' The IPTA was influenced by Mao's 1927 *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. The earlier 1920s *Kisan Sabhas* of the INC were very different from "Mao's peasant associations in China."[96]

The PWA and IPTA were connected with anti-imperialism and the CPI. The use of the cultural organs of the CPI had its roots in Marx, Engels and finally Lenin's work. Marx and Engels did not assign much importance to culture, especially avant-garde art and literature, to the working class struggle and revolution, even though it can be argued that there was an implicit connection between culture and political–economic revolution in their early work, such as Marx's *Parisian Manuscripts* and the *Communist Manifesto*. Neither did Marx and Engels conceive of the Communist Party as avant-garde of the working class.[97] Lenin was responsible for the creation of a cultural organ attached to the Communist political party. Lenin allied the working class with the peasantry. He based this alliance on "a detailed analysis of the transformations that were taking place in the agrarian economy of Russia and the pattern of social forces that was emerging as a result."[98] Lenin understood proletarian art and literature to be central to the proletarian revolution "...a cog and screw of one single great Social Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically conscious avant-garde of the entire working class."[99] It was Lenin who realised the importance of culture to the left-wing movement, which led to the dissolution of the Russian avant-garde of the early 1920s and the formation of socialist realism in 1934. However, socialist realism in India never became a prominent discourse because of Gandhi's folk-realism and the lack of a cultural ideology in the CPI.

The CPI developed a cultural organ. The CPI's *Janayuddha* (*People's War*, the name was changed because of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, which made

[95] IPTA Bulletin No. 1, July 1943, "People's Theatre Stars The People", Quoted on Pg 125, Pradhan, Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936-47)*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, July 1979, Pg 129.

[96] Gopal, Sarvepalli, *Jawaharlal Nehru A biography: Volume One 1889-1947*, Jonathon Cape, Thirty Bedford Square, London, 1975, Pg 54.

[97] See Marx and Engles, *On Literature and Art*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976.

[98] Alavi, Hamza, "Peasants and Revolution," *Socialist Register* 1965, pp. 241-77, Pg 242.

[99] Lenin, V.I, 'The Re-Organization of the Party' and 'Party Organization and Party Literature', London: IMG Publications, 1972, Pg 17.

the Indian communists acknowledge that the war was no longer an "Imperialist War" but rather a "People's War." The journal subsequently changed its name to People's Age to avoid circulation disruption) the weekly organ of an undivided CPI had a visual language that spread agitation propaganda throughout urban Calcutta and villages in Bengal. For instance, Sunil Janah's social-realist photography of the Bengal Famine and Chittoprasad's sketches became common reproductions in the journal.[100] The CPI disseminated propaganda directly in villages that were affected by the threat of Japanese invasion, the Bengal Famine, and the Tebhaga movement (1946). The CPI "People's War" was related to the Deoloi thesis (1941-42), which "declared that implementation of the 'People's War' required "a united front which extends to the foreign bureaucratic government...[T]he Indian people, led by the proletariat, must apply the logic of united front to imperialism—the same logic which they applied to the national bourgeoisie all these days."[101] In 1942, the British Government legalized the CPI.

The PWA, IPTA and the cultural front of the CPI had direct similarities to the Chinese woodcut movement, which was functioning as an avant-garde movement in China. The Chinese woodcut movement was, as Xiaobing Tang writes, a "self-conscious avant-garde." The movement created "more than a distinct body of artwork," whilst promoting "radically new conceptions of art, [it] maintained a critical distance from the existing art field, introduced innovative exhibition practices, and created a mobile national network for a different experience of art." Tang writes:

> ...the Chinese woodcut movement had much in common with the historical avant-garde movements in early-twentieth-century Europe, such as Dadaism: it voiced a radical critique of art as an institution or social subsystem, and it aimed at reintegrating art into the praxis of life.[102]

The movement rejected, as Peter Bürger observes, "the productive and distributive apparatus as well as the discourse of aesthetic autonomy in bourgeois society."[103] Although the conditions that prevailed in India were different to those of Europe or China, the Indian left-wing movement confronted, as Tang writes in the context of China, "... a nascent

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[100] Due to the lack of space in this survey Sunil Janah's Bengal Famine photographs will not be discussed, and precendence will be given to Chittoprasad Bhattacharya's artwork.

[101] Seth, Sanjay, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage Publications, India, 1995, Pg 185.

[102] Tang, Xiaobing, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008, Pg 4-5.

[103] Ibid, Pg 4. See: Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Pg 22.

modern system of artistic values and practices, but also an entrenched traditional aesthetic order and sensibility." The CPI confronted the Shantiniketan romantic appropriation of the peasantry. The CPI sought to give voice to the peasantry using social realism and graphic arts to represent the social body during a "looming national crisis,"[104] whilst using folk forms that were 'entrenched [in] traditional order and sensibility.' The IPTA situation changed rapidly after Indian Independence. In 1953 Chittaprasad, who in 1942 had written songs and dances that were performed by the Chittagong section of the IPTA,[105] thought the IPTA had become "peoples theatre minus the people".[106]

Tang's words, by analogy, speak true in the Indian condition of the CPI. The CPI artists 'promoted radical new conceptions of art', 'maintained a critical distance from the existing art field', and 'introduced innovative exhibition practices'. The CPI artists tried what other Indian artists had tried and were trying, such as the Shantiniketan school and the Tagore household: to reintegrate 'art into the praxis of life' by 'rejecting the productive and distributive apparatus of aesthetic autonomy in [Indian] bourgeois society.' To reject autonomy these artists rejected the Bengalisation of art and imperial academic art. Chittaprasad created a new discourse for politically motivated social-realism. He combined the PWA and IPTA manifestos to battle the dominance of the art from Shantiniketan and the Bengal School.

[104] Tang, Xiaobing, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008, Pg 4-5.
[105] *Chittaprasad: A Retrospective 1915-1978* Volume 1, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 213.
[106] Letter 2, 21st May 1953 from Chittaprasad to his brother from Andheri Bomba, Mallik, Sanjoy Kumar, *Yours Chitta: Translated Excerpts from Select Letters of Chittaprosad*, Delhi Art Gallery, 2011, New Delhi, Pg 9.

5.6 Chittaprosad Bhattacharya

> *I am not a monk...—for I love my mother, I love humanity, I love the country, I love a woman of this country, I love so many friends of this country, I love to paint and to see paintings...And having joined the party I have learnt one thing, that it is impossible to realize what is to be given and how it is to be given unless one knows whom to give [to] and why.*[107]

The use of images for protest and, adopting a revolutionary political stance, for serving the people, is exactly what Chittaprosad Bhattacharya did in the style of "narodnik ...politics."[108] This can be seen in Chittaprosad's ink and brush illustrations in both the social realist and socialist realist idioms for CPI's *People's War* and subsequently *People's Age* magazine. Chittaprosad's illustrations for the CPI were completed whilst the CPI and India were going through a 'national crisis', which defined how artists reacted to and understood the ways in which they wished art to return to the praxis of life. This was the area in which 'they sought to exert an impact'. Puran Chand Joshi, the first general secretary of the CPI stated, "...My faith comes from Chittaprosad whom I saw in 1943 making posters and himself pasting them on village walls, appealing to his passionate Bengali heart and he wanted to become a folk artist...I get my confidence from the common people whom Chitto sketches and I try to organise them under the banner of my party..."[109]

Chittaprosad's 'passionate Bengali heart' can be seen in the sketches in *People's War*, which was banned by the United Province (Uttar Pradesh) government in June 1945, an act condemned by both the Congress and Communist leaders. Chittaprosad critiqued the ban in his June 17th *Untitled* illustration in the *People's War.*

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[107] Letter 26th June 1953, from Chittaprasad to his brother Murari from Andheri Bomba, Mallik, Sanjoy Kumar, *Yours Chitta: Translated Excerpts from Select Letters of Chittaprosad*, Delhi Art Gallery, 2011, New Delhi, Pg 15.

[108] Kapur, Geeta, *When Was Modernism Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, Second Reprint, 2007, Pg 272.

[109] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 11.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled*, (Brush and Ink on Paper, June 17 1945, The *People's War*)

Further political commentary was seen, for instance, in his drawing *Quit Kashmir* published in the *People's Age* on June 9th 1946. The accompanying text called for the Release of Kashmir (*"Kashmir ko chorh do!"* Release Kashmir!) from the aggression of "Kak's terror."[110]

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Quit Kashmir*, (Brush and Ink on Paper, June 1946, The *People's Age*)

Progressive political agitation was visible in the *People's Age* through Chittaprosad's protest posters. The posters demonstrated a combination of landlord, and imperialist exploitation of the peasantry, and the peasantry revolting against both the Indian and British oppressors, making the peasantry revolutionary subjects of history. An example of a common man rising up to be a giant to destroy state evil is seen in his *Untitled* (1947) poster which

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[110] *The People's Age*, Vol. IV, No. 50, June 9th, 1946.

depicts a larger then life muscular working class man with broken chains trampling the Indian and Pakistani armies on either side of the border during partition.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled* (Brush and Ink on Paper, The *People's Age*)

Or in the drawing *Quit Asia* (1947) that depicts a united Asian front fighting off the imperialists. *Quit Asia* was the cover illustration for *People's Age*.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Quit Asia*, (Brush and Ink on Paper, The *People's Age*, Cover)

This can also be seen in the propagandist *Untitled* illustration for the *People's Age* Independence issue 1947, which depicted the backbone peasantry of the nation standing tall and muscularly proud with their freedom they had struggled for.

Independence Day Number

PEOPLE'S AGE

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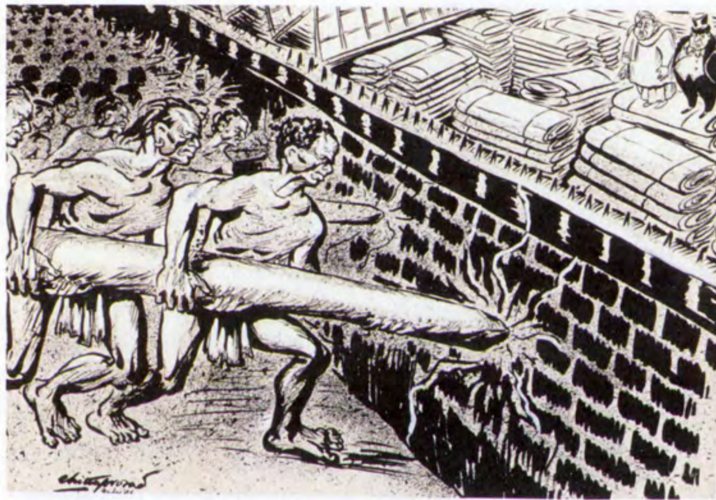
Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled* (pen and ink drawing, *People's Age* Sunday, January 1947, Vol. V, No. 30)

Chittaprosad also demonstrated his artistic indebtedness to socialist realism through his 1946 drawing *After Cheremnykh* published in the *People's Age*. Mikhail Mikhailovich Cheremnykh was the Russian avant-garde artist and satirist who had won the Stalin Prize in 1942 and had received the honorific title People's Artist of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1952. Further use of socialist realism can be seen in Chittaprosad's *Untitled* drawing of the muscular peasantry ramming the walls and revolting against the economic injustices of the (hoarding) comprador Indian and British capitalists.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *After Cheremnykh* (pen and ink drawing, *People's Age* 1946)



Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled* (watercolour and ink on paper, *People's Age* 1946)

Chittaprosad felt that the Government's role of propagandizing the people during the 1942 Japanese bombing of Chittagong was "crude", and a "hollow mockery when the people themselves were denied every right and help to defend their own land."[111] This was for propagandizing the "People's War." Thus the fall of Rangoon to the Japanese led to the cutting of rice supply from Burma.[112] The INC Quit India movement in 1942 brought a determined struggle in Tamluk and Contai subdivision of Midnapore drawing repressive measures[113], which Chittaprosad to produce the linocut *Quit India.*

[111] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 6.
[112] For the cutting off of Rice supplies in Burma and the link to the Bengal Famine see:
Keneally, Thomas, *Three Famines*, North Sydney, Vintage Books, 2011.
[113] Mallik, Sanjoy, *Chittaprosad 1915-1978 A Retrospective*, Delhi Art Gallery, No Publication Date, Pg 21.

Chittaprasad Bhattacharya *Quit India* (1942, linocut)

It depicts a child scribbling Quit India on a wall, a child lying on the ground dead, and two other children looking at an armoured car that is actively shooting. This was part of the Communist agitation against the 'Quit India resolution'[114] and depicts the Communist attitudes towards the Indian National Congress: sloganeering at a time when the children are dying. Chittaprosad's linocut needs to be understood within the wider context of the Communist ideology against the Quit India movement. The CPI weekly wrote, "After nine days of labour the Working Committee has brought forth an abortion. The resolution it has produced has bankruptcy writ large upon it. From the rut of inactivity it now seeks to lead the nation into the politics of blind desperation and disaster."[115] However, Communist Propaganda attacked the arrest of Gandhi, Nehru, and the entire Congress Working Committee (on 9th August 1942,), and the subsequent suppression of the Congress organisation. Chittaprosad understood the "tremendous scope" of graphic during and after the World War. He joined the CPI in 1942 and left it after independence (c. 1948-9)[116], and focused his efforts on humanitarianism and world peace.[117]

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[114] The Congress Working Committee on 14th July 1942 passed the Quit India Resolution. The resolution, as Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri notes, "...reiterated the demand that the British must withdraw from india and warned that if the British turned a deaf ear to this demand the Congress would be reluctantly compelled to launch a massive movement for the vindication of political rights and liberty of the people of India." See Chowdhuri, Rai, Satyabarta, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, Pg 121.

[115] Chowdhuri, Rai, Satyabarta, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, Pg 122.

[116] See *Chittaprosad*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1993.

[117] *Chittaprasad: A Retrospective 1915-1978* Volume 2, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 305.

Chittaprosad graduated from Chittagong Government College (1932-36) in what is now Bangladesh studying humanities. He never had any formal education in fine arts.[118] After completing his education Chittaprosad left for Calcutta. Reminiscing about his youth he wrote, "I used to dabble in clay modelling while at home, after seeing the village clay-image makers work all my boyhood." The village and folk traditions that surrounded him which he absorbed in his boyhood and youth, integrated with his CPI and IPTA ideologies were pivotal in his exploration of folk idioms in his graphic arts. He wrote, "I used to fashion out things in imitation of temple-sculptures as well as the painted clay-idols which has a rich long tradition of Bengal." He "worked hard and for long in this craft till there was no more room in our house to store more wares." Chittaprosad had earned "admiration of the town middle class as to earn a silver medal from a 'Zamindar' in a village education."[119] Later, Chittaprosad renounced his last name, which was a marker of his Brahmanical caste, in an attempt to transcend Hindu dominance and landlordism over the peasantry, whom he saw as dominated by bourgeois ideology, colonial-capitalism, and Hindu dominance. Chittaprosad wrote that he is "not a parasite on one's father's property".[120]

Chittaprosad re-worked the discourse on Indian primitivism in painting and graphic media. He ruptured the dominant discourses of the Calcutta School, Bengal School and Shantiniketan artists by using non-romantic social realism, and political art for mass dissemination. Chittaprosad considered "engraving with its fast, cheap reproduction as the most effective means of communication for the learned and also for the unlearned."[121] He wrote, "it is possible to spread around the pictures—the legends of the country on a national scale, even on a global scale, which is impossible with paintings that are part of an exhibition-patron circuit or the journal dependent on black-and-whites."[122]

Chittaprosad went from the Indian tradition of graphic arts, especially pata-chitras, and relativized them with the techniques he had applied to his works of social and socialist realism. Chittaprosad does not state through which avenue the discourse diffusion of graphic arts of the West and the East reached him. But, referring to French and German

[118] Ibid, Pg 225

[119] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 2.

[120] Letter 3 26th June 1953, from Chittaprasad to his brother from Andheri Bombay, Mallik, Sanjoy Kumar, *Yours Chitta: Translated Excerpts from Selected Letters of Chittaprosad*, Delhi Art Gallery, 2011, New Delhi, Pg 15.

[121] *Chittaprasad: A Retrospective 1915-1978* Volume 2, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 489.

[122] Letter 26th June 1953 to his brother Murari, from Chittaprasad to his brother from Andheri Bombay, Mallik, Sanjoy Kumar, *Yours Chitta: Translated Excerpts from Select Letters of Chittaprosad*, Delhi Art Gallery, 2011, New Delhi, Pg 15.

Expressionism, Chittaprosad said it was "...during the war-days itself, I came to learn about the great traditions of popular arts of the West."[123] During the war he was influenced by "Goya's etchings about the sacred sorrows and wreath of a moth against all wars and injustice..." Chittaprosad found the "overwhelming black and whites of Käethe Kollwitz" and the "bewildering sorrows a simple soul in a mercilessly arrogant world" experiences as inheritances.[124] The "mercilessly blunt drawing of Georges Rouault" were "about the existence and richness of an art world which grew right out of the flesh and blood and tears and mighty passions of the teeming masses and remained loyal [and] truthful to the masses." Art must be representative and "truthful to the masses" whilst holding "high the banner of freedom and peace and progress at the head of the masses..."—this motivated Chittaprosad—this was social realism as a destabilizing discourse, an avant-garde discourse in India.[125] Chittaprosad had already established a radical opposition to India's colonial domination, "...when I was backing under the Buddhist idea of 'Do not Kill', the British guns were busy mowing down innocent children and women and unarmed men in Punjab, the floods and droughts together with all economic crises were playing havoc all over the Continent."[126] He wrote Indians were a "...people whose presence was under the blood and fire grip of an alien power and whose future was everybody's guess."[127]

Deeply traumatized and influenced by the World Wars, Chittaprosad developed his vision of art as causing functional of societal change. He became a humanist peace activist. He disassociated himself from the CPI and IPTA (c. 1948). He wrote, "it is against the background of death," that on "the face of a devastating war" one "discovers for oneself some of the profoundest of truths" and "...worthwhile values of humanity..." It was against the "background of the last world war" that he grasped "fully the simple fact that Art" is "one of the many other means of most effective human communications," a means of communication that was "as dynamic as human ideas and sentiments and as much involved with life as human beings themselves, and as ever-changing." Indeed, during the "out-bursts of forces of brutality and destruction and death," which "threatens ... humanity," Chittaprosad wrote, "an artist either lays down his brush and picks up a gun or walks out of the human world and joins the devil and...watch[es] him trample over everything which is precious to us including

[123] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 14.
[124] Ibid, Pg 14.
[125] Ibid, Pg 14.
[126] Ibid, Pg 14.
[127] Ibid, Pg 14.

Art itself." [128] Chittaprosad "could," he wrote, "never lay down [his] brush." Simply because he "could not find a gun to pick up," to hold "against the fascist hoards." Chittaprosad "was forced by circumstances to turn [his] brush into as sharp a weapon as [he] could make it." Chittaprosad through his utopian vision, echoing Saint-Simon's avant-gardist call for writers, scientists, and artists at the forefront of the society to recognize their rights and responsibilities to be at the ideological forefront, "realised...another fact...that an artist stands in equal footing with the scientists in the society and in human history." He regarded artists as having the "fundamental capacity of uniting and leading his fellow beings for an active denial of Death and destruction and barbarism." This created in the artist a "doubly active and conscious assertion of creative and progressive rights and talents of his fellow-beings as well as his own."

Chittaprosad understood art to be a "weapon" in contemporary society. He wrote, "This realisation merged me and my artistic ambition completely with my contemporary world," and allowed "[me] to see that Art was not only my weapon or not only artists self-expression, but fundamentally Art is a weapon of his whole society, which includes himself, self-expression of his fellow beings to whom he belongs."[129] Chittaprosad linked it to the anti-fascist and anti-imperial movement. The CPI were paramount in his art, the social and socialist representations of the subalterns, becoming a 'weapon' to battle the agendas oppressing the poor. Chittaprosad's "native province...Bengal", where he was living at the time when it became "the immediate target of Japanese fascists after they marauded across Burma" motivated Chittaprosad to join the CPI and agitate in villages, because, he wrote, "the British government denied all power and facilities to the people of Bengal to defend themselves." Chittaprosad thought this led to the inability to "keep themselves free from internal, particularly economic chaos," which inevitably led to "the government" keeping "the people in complete ignorance about its defence power ... [and its] "preparations," and "what was most fatal it gave absolutely free-reign to inflation to meet the war supply." This created "the notorious Bengal Famine of 1943-44." [130]

Chittaprosad influenced other socially progressive artists like Somnath Hore. Hore recollects that it was Chittaprosad who taught him to sketch directly from the suffering of the people around him:

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[128] Ibid, Pg 5.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 6.

"He was my first mentor. He took me virtually by the hand and guided and encouraged me to draw portraits of the hungry, sick and dying people. Whenever he was in Chittagong he gave me company."[131]

Portraits of the sick and dying can be seen in Chittaprosad social-realist illustrations in the book *Hungry Bengal*, many copies of which were destroyed the Raj as soon as it was published due to the de-stabilizing influence of Chittaprosad's depictions. These illustrations were also published in *People's War*.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Untitled* (Pen and Ink sketch *Hungry Bengal*, 1943)

Pen and Ink sketches as well as linocuts such as *Orphans* were also seen in *People's War*.[132]

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Orphans* (linocut)

It was the devastation of the Bengal Famine that made him criticise the surrounding art discourses of India. His criticisms made him an avant-garde artist who was not a part of

[131] Quoted in Mallik, Sanjoy, http://mohileparikhcenter.org/mpcva/?page_id=412 last accessed 4th August, 2010.
[132] Chittaprasad: A Retrospective 1915-1978 Volume 2, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 287.
Chittaprosad: A Retrospective 1915-1978 Volume 1, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2011, Pg 26-44.

the institutions of art in India. He created several works for rapid dissemination, detouring around the prevalent discourses by employing the social-realist agitational propaganda mode. He wrote, "I did not go to generalise famine in my works and did not get lost in moral or formal abstractions." Nor did he go in "for…ineffective "theatrical hysterics," which were "the very unhappy weaknesses…overcome[ing] many important artists of the country." Chittaprosad makes clear reference to Nandalal Bose's *Annapurna and Rudra*, which used a mythological theme as a metaphor for the famine.

Nandalal Bose *Annapurna and Rudra* 1943 (tempera on canvas, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi)

The artists with 'weaknesses' were "those who could afford to avoid any direct contact with famine victims." Referring to Nandalal Bose, Chittaprosad wrote, "I remember… a tempera composition by one of the very leading painters of Bengal" that was "reproduced in…leading journals and well eulogized." The painting showed the "famine deified as Rudra (Siva), the Hindu god of destruction, dancing through fire, which, I was told symbolized social or political revolution! While his goddess consort held up all the world's food in a tiny but heavenly bowl and this goddess symbolized Mother Earth and Destiny rolled into one!" Chittaprosad this to be an "incredible grotesqueness," due to the disconnect between the plight of the famine peasant sufferers and Nandalal Bose. Atul Bose also painted

a series of mythological themes for the Bengal Famine. He used the mythological theme of the Birth of Kalki as a metaphor for the famine.[133] This demonstrated to Chittaprosad the "gaping hollowness of the contemporary Art-World of Bengal which holds a great influence on the cultural outlook of rest of India." [134] Chittaprosad's approach was essential to Indian modernism as it vigorously introduced social realism as a discourse to depict the realities of India. His approach broke through the need for commercial gain and the contemporary Indian art that separated the suffering and the true-life values of peasantry from its art. Chittaprosad, Somnath Hore, and Zainul Abedin gave political expression to the peasantry during the period of intense political and social upheaval, allowing for the entrance of political expression into Indian modernism.[135]

Chittaprosad commented on other artists affiliated with the Bengal School and its associated Indian School of Painting, and also commented on Calcutta based art groups who came from Art Rebel Center, such as Govardhan Ash and Gopal Ghose.[136] Chittaprosad found that they "looked at national tragedy through their respective individual formal mannerism[s]," reducing "the famine-victims to performers of ghastly and ridiculous tricks to draw the attention of the world." This was a "shocking debauchery committed by these artists against the dignity and integrity of the great masses." This was despite Chittaprosad's view that the members of the Calcutta Group (formed in 1943) extirpated sentimentalism and overcame the Bengal School discourses by moving into exogenous discourses and by combining them with local endogenous discourses. Indeed, the Calcutta Group and the Bombay Progressives exhibited with each other in 1950, marking the confluence of Calcutta and Bombay into internationalist idioms.[137] The Calcutta Group exclaimed, "Man is supreme, there is none above him."[138] They moved into exogenous discourses suggesting that, "Art

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[133] As Sanjoy Mallik writes, ""with an initial small pencil drawing, probably the first impression of an actual personal experience. This was then followed up with carefully drawn studies of individual figures corresponding to the postures in the initial drawing. These tonally shaded, intensive studies were accompanied by several layouts, till the final satisfactory composition could be achieved. An oil sketch as a penultimate exercise preceded the final canvas. After such rigorous discipline, the image possessed a planned clarity and preciseness, but not an urgency of feeling or expressive vigour. It is finally picture more concerned with studied elegance and balance of arranged postures." Ibid. See: Mallik, Sanjoy, "Bengal 1943-46" in ed, Sinha, Gayatri, *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007*, Marg Publications, Mumbai, 2009, Pg 160.

[134] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A Doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 9.

[135] A similar argument is made by Albert Boime. Boime, Albert, *Art and the French Commune Imagining Paris after War and Revolution*, Princeton University Press, 1995, See Pg 3.

[136] Eight artists exhibited at the Calcutta Groups' first show in Calcutta. They were, Prodosh Das Gupta, Kamala Das Gupta, Rathin Maitra, Nirode Majumdar, Paritosh Sen, Prankrishna Pal, Gopal Ghose and Subho Tagore.

[137] For the development of this modernism see Dalmia, Yashodhara, *The Making of Modern Indian Art: The Progressives*, New Delhi, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.

[138] Mallik, Sanjoy, "Impulses of the 1940s" in *Indian Art an Overview*, ed, Gayatri Sinha, Pg 86.

should be international and interdependent."[139] They asserted:

> …from Egyptian and Assyrian arts to the works of Italian, Dutch, French masters—we have to study all of them deeply, develop our appreciation of them and take from them all that we could profitably synthesise with our requirements and traditions. This is all the more necessary because our art has stood still since the seventeenth century. But during the past three hundred years the world outside India has made vast strides in art, has evolved epoch making discoveries in forms and techniques.

However, the portrayal of the Bengal Famine by artists such as Ram Kinkar Vaij, Gopal Ghose, and Govardhan Ashe dismayed Chittaprosad. Vaij's *Famine Series*, Ashe's *Food! Where is the Food?* and Gopal Ghose's *Famine* are reproduced below.

Ram Kinkar Vaij *Famine Series* (1943 Private Collection)

[139] Ibid, Pg 86.

Govardhan Ashe *Food! Where is the Food?* (1943 Watercolour on Paper, Private Collection)

Gopal Ghose *Famine* (1943, Wash on paper, Collection of Deepa Bose, Kolkata)

Chittaprosad thought that these artists "looked at national tragedy through their respective individual formal mannerism[s]." Their art was disconnected with the "dignity and integrity" of the masses and peasantry. These artists claimed their works were, wrote

Chittaprosad, "fundamentally an expression of social realism and experiments in Indian national form!" Chittaprosad regarded this as a "shocking demonstration of their ignorance... before the social reality of the living or dying society around them," and was an expression of "their lunatic craze for personal formal mannerisms." The artists had "demonstrated the very elementary weaknesses which must be consciously overcome by artists who desire to succeed as social realists in Art."[140]

At another register Chittaprosad wanted to become a folk artist because he could appeal to the peasantry by rendering Indian modern history and the grand Hindu narratives—Ramayana and Mahabharata—in folk form. By doing this he felt would subvert and rupture the Brahmanical and bourgeois dominance imposed on the construction of modern Indian history as well as Hindu mythological narratives. In order to do this he constructed a vast series of linocuts that appropriated visual motifs from existing folk forms such as *pata-chitras*, attempting to narrate the image from, and for, the mental-image of the peasantry, and icons familiar to their non-bourgeois cultural-system. T.J. Clark has noted in reference to European modernism:

> ...In its most acute form – in Courbet, in Manet, in Seurat – the problem was whether to exploit popular forms and iconography to reanimate the culture of the dominant classes, or attempt some kind of provocative fusion of the two, and in so doing destroy the dominance of the latter. On its own, a Utopian project...once again, the connection of art with political action.[141]

Chittaprosad tried to 'provocatively' fuse the Hindu indigenous narratological systems that the peasantry understood with a new aesthetic discourse he had arrived at through his understanding of folk, village and German expressionist forms. In other words, Chittaprosad had turned to using mythology. When Chittaprosad was staying in a village outside of Chittagong, a peasant visited him and demanded that he (Chittaprosad) serve the country through his art.[142] This is a demonstration of his connection with the people, and their connection to art, and his art. The people wanted Chittaprosad to produce their image. He did so without romanticising them or appropriating them into his works, ensuring that he kept the truth of their circumstance, and their nobility intact. Chittaprosad fused Hindu dominant discourses the peasantry were used to, and fused them with folk forms such as pata-chitras that Jamini Roy used. Chittaprasad made a series on the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He

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[140]Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 9-10.
[141] Clark, T.J, Image of the People – Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution, Thames and Hudson, 1982, Pg 20.
[142] Ghosh, Prodyot, *Chittaprosad: A doyen of the Art World*, Shilpayan Artists' Society, Calcutta, 1995, Pg 7.

'destroyed the dominance' of the religious sacral forms by using the folk forms that the peasantry, his audience, would understand. In the linocut *Sita Swayamvar* he uses the folk tradition of the pata-chitras to describe the indigenous story of Ram lifting and breaking the bow that no one else could, which was the test that one who would marry Sita had to overcome. Chittaprosad destabilised the painting traditions from Varma onward by using social realism, socialist realism, and folk discourses to describe large-scale indigenous narratives.

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya *Sita Swayamvar* (linocut) No Date.

Chittaprosad, as an avant-gardist sought and created an art for the people that was political, and folk, continuing the use of low art graphic forms into India and using them to create a discourse, and art, that was embedded within the praxis of life. Chittaprosad sought a utopian vision within his artwork. His philosophy, approach, intention, and works were fundamental to the use of social and socialist realism in India. This created a rupture in Indian modern art and helped create a new endogenous modernism. In this manner he continued the process of creating ruptures and bifurcations in Indian modern art.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Indian modernism is an endogenous structural causality that has to be viewed from the inside out in relation to global modernity. In doing so, the study has paid attention to the complexities of socio-political, philosophical and historical changes in Indian society and to the cultural-system(s) from 1890-1947. The study has conducted an internally charged micro art history[1] of the above processes and developed a systematic understanding of Indian modernism. By emphasising India's condition of colonial modernity this study has demonstrated Indian modernity within its own parameters and has mapped the return to an endogenous cultural system. The study has also demonstrated how European modernism has had similar processes under differing conditions of power.

The study has demonstrated that the processes through which modern Indian art developed were not the same as those in Europe. Indian modernism grew out of a direct critical entanglement with colonial capitalist dominance. No modernism needs to be regarded in relation to Euroamerican modernism because the capitalist and power structures that modernism develops from are varied, and differ significantly from cultural-system to cultural-system. Similar processes occur in all modernisms when the modern state tries to integrate a populace. This can be seen to be an Image of the People, which is foundational in both European and Indian modernism. The differing reactions to the construction of an Indian image of the people between the INC and CPI demonstrate antagonisms in Indian modernism. These antagonisms catalysed the global left-movements, and their understanding of the peasantry as revolutionary subjects of history created an avant-garde rupture of the dominance of the INC by the CPI. There was an endogenous avant-garde in India related to India's power structure and lack of capitalist hierarchies. Capitalist hierarchies have been theorised as essential in the rise of the European avant-gardes.[2] The study has implied that European modernism was itself an endogenous structural causality, which sought to rupture, subvert and critique its own sets of internal power relationships and art historical traditions. Indeed, European modernism also relativised exogenous (for example, African and Asian) with endogenous discourses.

[1] For more on "micro-history" See Ginzburg, Carlo, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I know about It", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Autumn, 1993, pp. 10-35.
[2] See Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Indian modernism is related to global modernity and European modernism, is fundamentally endogenous, and is created by the process of discourse relativisation. The study re-positions Indian modernism by demonstrating that the genealogy and history of Indian modern art has to be traced back to the search for endogeny, and the existence of "dominance without hegemony."

The detailed micro-histories contained in this study demonstrated that the further emergence of Indian modern art was a pluralistic movement. Some of the entities it emerged from are: The Bengal School, Shantiniketan, The J.J. School of Art, The Rebel Art Centre, The Calcutta Group, the Bombay Progressives, and the Delhi Shilpi Chakra. Many, if not most of these movements started in opposition to the Bengal School's dominance. The Bengal School's (Abanindranath Tagore's) pedagogy becoming dominant across the art schools in India helped in the creation of a new reconstructed tradition. The history of nationalism and the independence movement played a key role. By demonstrating how the peasantry were pivotal to Indian nationalism in the 1920s and how art came to reflect this paradigm in the *Image of the people*, Indian modernism once again ruptured and bifurcated itself due to differing political and socio-cultural ideologies regarding the position of the peasantry. The CPI affiliated artists formed a critical avant-garde against the Bengal School, the Calcutta Group, and the Shantiniketan artists. Chittaprosad systematically denied mythological or European expressionist individual artistic techniques to represent the peasantry. Social-realism became used within India and this acted as a formal rupture against the INC and Amrita Sher-Gil's Image of the people. This study has also shown how the Bengal School gained autonomy of art and why Rabindranath Tagore thought that this situation needed to be amended. The changing of the situation by the influx of exogenous discourses in the Bauhaus exhibition also allowed for the Bengal School to change under the influence of Rabindranath Tagore and his Visva-Bharati School.

The study has demonstrated that Indian modern art was a series of ruptures due to the critical evaluations of Indian philosophy, history, society and culture in relation to the Raj's cultural-system, and has repositioned Indian modern art by following the political and social history of the period using the subaltern historiography: one can infer that all modernisms are endogenous structural causalities that operate through the relativisation of exogenous with endogenous discourses to suit particular *life-world* conditions. The *life-world* conditions are expressive of certain ambiguous, hybrid, interstitial, national and international identities.

These identities—marked through cultural production—operate within and through disparate cultural-systems (local) on an international scale and help in the creation of new artistic discourse sharing globally and within interconnected cultural-systems and cultural spheres. For instance, Indian artists who went to Europe or America to train returned to India and relativised European discourses with Indian ones. This was prior to the interventions by K.G. Subramanyan and the development of the Group 1890, which sought to use all discourses in Indian art history related to two-dimensional space as marker of Indianness and also to show International modernism that Indian art history and Indian modernism had aspects which the European discourse of modernism were trying to tackle.[3]

As an example, Laxman Pai, who studied at the J.J. School of Art in Bombay (1943-47) and came under the influence of the Progressives, went to Paris from 1951-61. Amrita Sher-Gil was as Pai notes, a "revelation to the public." Pai was asked what was the influence of Ecole de Paris in his art? Pai answered:

> ...the revolution ignited by the Ecole de Paris was a protest movement rejecting the classical Greek tradition and, in essence, accepting the Oriental concepts of design and flat, two dimensional treatment. And, I added, being from the Orient, and with an Oriental sensibility, I could see nothing new—at any rate revolutionary—in what the Ecole de Paris had been projecting and that, as far as the basic concepts were concerned, the Western painters were following the East and not the other way round. Of course, in some technical aspects, I did learn a lesson or two from the Ecole de Paris.[4]

Another artist, S.H. Raza, studied at Nagpur School of Art (1939-43), then at the J.J. School of Art (1943-47), and then at École Nationale Supérieure de Beaux Arts (1950-53). He was the first non-French artist to win the Prix de la critique in Paris in 1956. Raza studied in Paris and later followed Swaminathan's neo-tantra movement, transitioning from European discourses into Indian thematic matter. Both these artists with their European training and their relativisation of exogenous and endogenous discourses on aesthetic and philosophical dimensions brought to Indian modern art another round of discourse relativisation.

If the study were to continue it would trace the ruptures and subversions from Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras and demonstrate the relativisation of international idioms. The study would assess these ruptural periods as part of the larger process of the new

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[3] See Zitzewitz, Karin, *The Aesthetics of Secularism: Modernist Art and Visual Culture in India*, PhD Thesis, University of Columbia, 2006.

[4] Pg 24, Pai, Laxman, "As a painter looks at it" in *Lalit Kala Contemporary 37*, March, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1991, pp 24-25.

nation state's integration on a pan-Indian level. The integration also led to varied waves of rupture.

The Calcutta Group (1943), where a whole generation of Calcutta modernist painters emerged from (although not a critical avant-garde like Chittaprosad), ruptured against the Shantiniketan and Bengal Schools. The Calcutta Group still paid attention to the endogenous discourses but sought relativisation. A critic under the hold of the Bengal School reproached the group and wrote (c.1944):

> ...And though it is categorically denied that these artists are not affected by the dusty wind from distant Europe, their national traditions appear to be submerged, full five fathoms deep, under the dirt carried by that dubious dirty wind...[5]

In 1950 the joint exhibition of the Calcutta Group with the Bombay Progressives demonstrated the movement of Calcutta and Bombay based artists into the development of internationalism in Indian Art.

With the influx of refugee and migrants after the turmoil of Indian partition (1947), Delhi became a centre of new artists who had trained and practised in Lahore and had come under the spell of Amrita Sher-Gil. They quickly went about dissolving the remnants of the Bengal School whom they had been influenced by in Lahore. A key figure was B.C. Sanyal who was influenced by Amrita Sher-Gil and had not come under the influence of Bengal School in either Lahore or Delhi. He ruptured the Delhi Bengal School dominance of Barada Ukil. The Ukil School of Art and the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society which were set up by Ukil, and The Art Department of the Delhi Polytechnic (1942) which was under the control of the Education Department of the Central Government, were the only operating artistic institutions in Delhi.

International modernism and the Eurocentrism of the decolonizing period of the Cold War and America's ascension to world power made Indian modernism seem to be derivative, and lacking in qualities of a national identity. In opposition to the cultural hegemony of abstract expressionism there was a return to indigenous discourses that highlighted the similarities of European modernism to the Indian art historical tradition such as two-dimensional space (as has already been discussed). In light of the art historical tradition and the reliance on a European perspective of Indian art history there was a return to an Indian

[5] Dutta, Santo, *After the Fall*, Delhi Art Gallery, Delhi, 2005, Pg 233.

cultural mentality that privileged the Indian art historical and theoretical discourses as the primary mode of expression whilst also relativising exogenous discourses. An artist like Sailoz Mukherjea who was influential to the Group 1890 and their Delhi ruptural wave presaged this mentality. As Mukherjea noted:

> ...I owe my basic inspiration to Matisse's odalisques. I accept whatever new forms of self-expression suit my oriental temperament and tradition. No doubt any simplification of form and vibrancy of color derive from the Ecole de Paris...but my main influences are the folk art of India and the Basohli miniatures.[6]

Mukherjea influenced Jagdish Swaminathan. Swaminathan in the Group 1860 manifesto (1862) wrote:

> From its early beginnings in the vulgar naturalism of Raja Ravi Varma and the pastoral idealism of the Bengal school, down through the hybrid mannerisms resulting from the imposition of concepts evolved by successive movements in modern European art on classical, miniature and folk styles to the flight into 'abstraction' in the name of cosmopolitanism, tortured alternately by memories of a glorious past born out of a sense of futility in the face of a dynamic present and the urge to catch up with the times so as to merit recognition, modern Indian art by and large has been inhibited by the self-defeating purposiveness of its attempts at establishing an identity.

The goal of 1890 was clearly to create an identity for Indian art that was distinctly endogenous and could use their art historical heritage as a base to relativise exogenous discourses. The Group 1890 allowed for all types of art. Eclecticism would allow the Indian tradition to be relativised in a multiplicity of ways. Swaminathan wrote (and in it can be heard echoes of Abanindranath, Coomaraswamy, and Rabindranath):

> The self-conscious search for significance between tradition and contemporaneity, between representation and abstraction, between communication and expression lies at the root of all eclecticism in art. *To us creative expression is not the search for, but the unfolding of personality.* A work of art is neither representational nor abstract, figurative or non-figurative. It is unique and sufficient unto itself, palpable in its reality and generating its own life. The image proper in art describes itself inevitably through the creative act. *It is neither the translation of an experience, feeling, idea or act nor the objective organization of form in space.* The image proper defines its own space, delineation, colour and composition. Any objective criterion of perspective, of harmony and dimension is unreal to it.[7]

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[6] Quoted on Website < http://www.saffronart.com/artist/artistprofile.aspx?artistid=129> Last Accessed Monday 21st November 2011.

[7] Exhibition Catalogue Group 1890, Exhibition Inaugurated by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi 20—29 October, 1963, emphasis added.

Octavio Paz writes about the rupturing and the use of tradition in the catalogue for Group 1890's exhibition in 1963:

> ...what is called tradition is nothing else but an ensemble or successions of works. That is, of inventions and variations on those inventions, contemplated from an ever-changing point of view: the present. Even if art critics and historians feel themselves installed in eternity. Tradition: change. 1890: breakthrough and re-start.[8]

He continued:

> The true subject of this exhibition is the confrontations of the vision of these painters with the inherited image. Contemporary Indian art, if this country is to have an art worthy of its past, cannot but be born from this violent clash.[9]

Indian modernism as a varied development through ruptures continued demonstrating how artists in the 1950s from Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras moved away from the Bengal School and adopted European discourses. They used European discourses to depict Indian conditions. Nehru's state socialism, the formation of the Lalit Kala Akademi, the Delhi Shilpi Chakra and groups desiring international recognition, as well as artists travelling to the USSR, America, Mexico, Europe and England further allowed the development of an international modernism. Ruptures continued. There was a movement away from internationalism, which was seen as another cultural hegemony debasing the cultural system. The movement into narrative art and further relativisations of realism by the Baroda School completes the picture up to the '70s and completes this study of Indian modernism as a endogenous structural causality.

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[8] Exhibition Catalogue Group 1890, Exhibition Inaugurated by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi 20—29 October, 1963.

[9] Ibid.

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