



DETERIORATION OF INDIAN ART

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ABSTRACT

Art is a glorious chapter in the history of Indian art history. India has witnessed immense creative activity in the field of architecture, painting, sculpture and other fields of art, for over two thousand years. This great heritage was gradually deteriorated with the invasion of British East India Company. It reached almost a dead end towards the end of the nineteenth century. With the fall of Mughal Empire in 1757, the art of Mughals and Rajput miniatures had become exhausted and lost their vitality. During the company rule Indian art has undergone intensive changes. Those changes were more crucial because the Indian people were not fully prepared for them. As a result, a special type of Indian painting style emerged to satisfy European patrons, those painting displays an amalgam of heavily influenced European naturalistic style and the stylization of Mughal miniature. This new genre was termed "company painting"

KEYWORDS : Mughal, Painting, Art, India, Modern

The impact of academic style created an entirely new atmosphere which resists expressing Indian thoughts and ideas in painting. Due to the dominance of this style Indian thought and expression had been suppressed for a long time. But after independence Indian art moves forward rapidly. The Indian artists breaks all the boundaries of traditions, norms established by British and nationalist style of Bengal school to develop a creativity of their own. To express themselves they had explored new techniques, new materials and their feelings

"By the 18th century, India was in the melting pot politically, with diverse forces crossing swords and intriguing against one another for supremacy. The great Mughal Empire already on its last legs conceded the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the English East India Company. Bengal was ravaged by famine and misrule of the Company and the Nawabs. The vacuum in Punjab politics paved the way for the rise of the Sikhs. Foreign adventurers—Portuguese, Dane and Dutch, French and English—were marking their time to strike for ultimate political power. The English indeed had entrenched themselves to take the best advantage of the situation and to launch their agonizingly long imperialist regime.

Art cannot flourish when life is unstable. In the foregoing state of instability, Indian painting followed a path of decline and finally degenerated into soulless imitative skill of artisans only."²

The flourishing art of miniature paintings, which received patronage under the Mughal rulers, gradually spread to other regional centers, after the decline of the Mughal patronage under Muhammad Shah about 1730. The artists who migrated to the regional centers received patronage in the regional courts. Prominent among these are the courts of Oudh, Mysore, Murshidabad and Lahore.

Since Shah Jahan's reign painters had been shifting away from the royal court to the folk paintings of bazaar such as Lucknow, Hyderabad, Neconda, Poona, Satara, Benares, Mathura, Mysore and Tanjore. During the unstable condition in Bengal, painters finally migrated to Patna from 1750 to 1760. Unstable socio-economic condition on 18th century of led artists to migrate one place to another in search of livelihood.

After fall of the Mughal Empire, British colonial power laid the foundation as new ruler of India. Major changes take effect when some European artist such as Thomas and William Daniel, Joshua Reynolds, George Chinnery, J. Zoffany, Tilly Kettle, T. Daniell, W. Daniell, Hodges, Longcroft, Robert Home and others came India in search of profitable commissions and begun getting royal patronage for their realistic painting skill. These artists from the West introduced realistic drawings, romanticized landscapes and portraits in oil colour. They introduced a new form of art, techniques and mediums to the native Indian artists, there are many examples when Indian artists tried to imitate their western counterparts. A competition arose between Native painters and European painters, to survive native painters brought changes in their style and subject matter. Establishment of linear and ariel perspective, chiaroscuro, light and shadow with Indian miniature style gives birth to new Indo-European hybrid style called

"company style" or "Patna school". It was so named because it emerged primarily under the patronage of the British East India Company. The style first emerged in Murshidabad, West Bengal, and then spread to other centres of British trade: Benares, Delhi, Lucknow, and Patna. The subject matter was changed by the European demand for documentary pictures of castes and costumes. Indian artists were deliberately showing new aspects of life in the society, in the same old form. This kind of art became very popular among the company artists. Slightly different from this art was the European academic art, showing still portraits of leaders and rulers, landscapes, and still life. Soon the style and subject matter of Kalighatpata painting was also affected with the emergence of popular company style.

The Europeans who came to India had no intention of settling here and were not really interested in a cultural synthesis between the East and the West. Indian artists were recruited by the East India Company for drawings blue prints for railway projects, natural history survey and for making naturalistic drawings of flora and fauna for the Botanical research society in England. They employed in Great Indian Peninsula railway, colleges, high schools, draftsman in architect company, municipal office etc.

To fulfill growing demand of painters and craftsman and to spread Western values in art education along with the colonial agenda, the British established art schools. To fulfill their desire, a systematic training for the industrial arts started in India with the establishment of "Madras school of art" as a private enterprise at Madras in 1850, by Dr. Hunter. It was in a way a poly technique institute to encourage and revive the Indian art crafts.

The next art school to be established in India was the one at Calcutta, which came into existence in 1854 under the name "Calcutta School of Industrial art". In 1854 Rajendralal Mitra, Justice Pratt, Jatindra Mohan Tagore and several British officers of East India Company who formed "The Industrial Art Society" were responsible for its foundation. It was handed over to the British Government in 1864, and H.H. Locke was appointed as the first full-fledged principal.

"Mayo School of Industrial art" was established at Lahore in 1857. Lockwood Kipling, who had arrived from South Kensington to run the sculpture department of the art school in Bombay, was appointed its first Principal. The art school focused on decorative and industrial arts. The Madras School had provided inspiration for the foundation of the "Sir J.J. School of art" in 1857. Sir James donated one lakh rupees to set up the new industrial school. The school was founded for the purpose to provide instructions in Painting, Drawing and Designs, Ornamental Pottery, Metal and wood carving and turning.

The Education provided by those School of Art was based on the British pattern. The teaching in Royal Academy was supposed to be the ideal-method. The European principals and other British teachers were trained in England and were often the diploma-holders of the Royal Academy, London. Naturally the influence of realistic style filtered through the art training given by them in the works of the students, in terms of themes, and mediums, perspective, modeling, light shade,

portraiture, anatomy, landscape and still life to name a few. This academic perspective was not the manner with which the Indian vision had been fashioned.

Reawakening of Indian art

"The development of contemporary or modern art in India has been intimately linked with the development of modern art in Europe. Although it's an evolution in India has been unlike that in the West." Kakuzo Okakura, a famous Japanese art critic and a master of the then modern Japanese art, and many other Japanese artists came to Calcutta and following the ancient Indian technique painted pictures of Indian subjects and gave demonstrations in right lines in Calcutta from 1900 A.D. They warned the Bengali artists against cheap imitations of the West and advised them to follow their own old traditions.

The Japanese Masters demonstrated them how to draw and paint on paper and silk in the technique of Ajanta and Bagh paintings. Gaganendranath, Abanindranath and his pupils were thus inspired.

The style developed by Abanindranath Tagore soon it spread all over India with his pupils. Bengal School of Art brought changes in modern Indian painting. It encouraged the beginning of the revival style. But it failed to show proper way of further development of Indian art.

The spirit of European art on the other hand could not be successfully assimilated by the Indian artists in their blind imitation. The influences of the British art school, inspired many talented artists of that time. Among them Raja Ravi Varma was the first Indian to master the technique of oil painting.

But the lessons run deeper. Recent critics have a tendency to dismiss harmony, to reduce it to an arbitrary cultural prejudice. Redwood groves, fields of sunflowers, or a mirrored lake-all this is beautiful but only in the eye of each beholder. The melding of art and landscape languages has within it the seeds of a new sensibility of harmony. Having deconstructed the purely human view of harmonious landscape, humans now have the joy of turning to landscape from richly different points of view. The bio centric sense of landscape harmony owes gratitude, in part, to the modern and conceptualist painters. Tired of pastoral scenes of the cow, the beech tree, and the setting sun, they offer us delight in connectivity, in the composition of elements in space and their configurations, and intuitive senses of colour and touch.

Beginning of New Art Movements

Some Independent artist of that time neither followed Company style nor the style of Bengal School. Rabindranath and Gaganendranath were not familiar with the aesthetic theories of Abanindranath. They experimented with modern international art movements. They inspired many young artists who did not agree with the revivalists. Like them Jamini Roy, Amrita Shergill took their inspiration from traditional folk and village life.

In 1902 Rabindranath Tagore founded "VisvaBharati University" at Santiniketan and started a full-fledged art school named "Kala Bhavan". The school laid the basis of modern art in India. Kala Bhavan became integral part of it. Nandalal Bose was one of the most significant artist in 20's. Rabindranath invited Nandalal to take the responsibility of "Kala Bhavan". "Kala Bhavan" flourished under Nandalal's leadership from 1921 to 1940s. Under the influence of Tagore's forward looking cosmopolitanism, Nandalal's style underwent a markable change, as he was not inspired by miniatures or the orientlists but by his surrounding landscapes and the people. Nandalal's work of this phase shows a remarkable fusion of Bengal school and Shantiniketan school of thoughts. He and his first batch of students such as RamkinkarBajj, Benodebihari Mukherjee, among others pioneered the experiments in the modern Indian art.

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