

Kaupner.
26th May 1866

My dear Raza.

As always your letter was a great pleasure to receive & it arrived after the customs had opened it and revealed it! Thanks for returning the slides and I had expected you to prefer "Advent of Autumn" to the others. Actually they had all been in the London Show.

Your letter is full of good & sad news. Yes I read in the papers on the 6th that Raman had died and I got a terrible shock indeed. I was in Calcutta at the time, to attend the opening of my exhibition at Asoka Gallery and after the first day I was scanning the papers for the writs when my eye fell on the news of his death. I couldn't take my eyes off it & a feeling of disbelief fought with the knowledge that news of this sort is never incorrect. I had been talking about him with my friend Pottle Lee with whom I was staying, the evening before. What can one do with the irrevocable fact of death except to accept it & to relate it with the common knowledge that it's a gate we have to all pass under. Somehow - even through letters, I had got to know him so well & he regarded me with such warmth and friendship. His last letter to me which I

received a few months ago was full of the most wonderful friendship which one person can give another. We were to have met later this year & I had planned for us to go south to the festival & he had promised that he & his wife would come and stay with us — & it all comes to nothing in the blankness of death. I am sending you a copy of his last letter which I am sure you would like to read. It will add just one more aspect of the man to his memory in you. If he had succeeded in conveying such a beautiful feeling of friendship through letters to someone he had never met, what he must have meant to friends such as you is incomprehensible & I can understand your deep feeling of sorrow and your helplessness expressing itself in tears. I wrote to his wife soon after I had read the news & addressed my letter to her care of the UN office with a request to readdress the cover. I am sure my letter was forwarded.

My exhibition in Calcutta went well. The Gallery (Asoka Gallery) were doubtful whether my paintings would go down well in Calcutta. As Huiami one of the partners, told me that the most modern thing people in Calcutta are used to is Husain & my paintings were altogether off the beaten track and it was therefore not possible to predict

what would happen + that I shouldn't be surprised if there wasn't even one sale! She also thought that I was pricing my paintings much too much after all. Susan has put a maximum of 1200p to 1300p. whereas I was putting 1500p. 1800p. + 2500p. I was determined to hold my prices even if none sold. You have no idea the repercussions which the Leicester Galleries show has had and will continue to have here. I sold seven out of 22 for just over £7700 + the most expensive painting (£2500p.) went. In fact the woman (would have to be a woman!) who bought it, bought two others at 1800p. + 800p. The press was extremely good indeed + I have no doubt that the Gallery will sell a few others in due course. I have sent you a catalogue which I hope you will receive one day. The idea of including press opinions was not mine. I personally don't care to give weight to others' opinions about me - I know what I am about and my own worth.

This brings me to some news which I know you will welcome as it has been a topic of discussion between us for several years now. I have resigned and am now only waiting for the bank to accept my resignation and to release me. Actually I resigned three months ago but the management asked me to reconsider my decision + the branch here was passing through a very difficult time + they thought that it would be a good thing for me to

stay on. After having worked nearly 14 years
in an institution I would not like to leave
with any feelings of bitterness on either
side and in fairness to the bank I have naturally
said that I would be prepared to leave when
ever it is convenient for them to find a
suitable relief. We have in any case to
give six months notice. They are still
trying to persuade me to change my
mind and have offered me all sorts of
new advantages including a transfer to
Madras on an independent charge.

All of this is very fine but as my
resignation was not sent on a momentary
impulse & I had taken everything into
consideration before submitting it, these friendly
overtures are not going to change my mind.
Good Lord, it has taken me 14 years to
~~come~~ come to this point and now that I
feel that the time is ripe, I shall go ahead.
You will be pleasantly surprised to hear
that my whole family is behind me & have
all been urging me to leave the bank. Since
you have taken such a close interest in
me, & I believe that you have faith in my
capacities as a painter, I am enclosing a

letter which I received from my father today which speaks for itself. In a previous letter he had assured me that I should have no fear on account of ~~the~~ security etc as the whole family would be behind me. I count myself blessed to have such a wonderful family. It is not easy for a family which has a tradition of service & the good living which goes with it to overthrow middle class material values ~~etc~~ for the sake of the uncertain vocation of painting. Sacrifices like this still make one believe in the goodness of man in a world which seems to be going crazier & crazier everyday. Please return this letter to me in your next letter, as I want to preserve it. I refer of course to my father's letter.

The news of your exhibition is very good indeed and I was delighted to read that your recent exhibition had been such a wonderful success and that as a result of it further opportunities were coming your way. Lena is perfectly right when she says that I cannot expect opportunities to come my way when I am sitting in the bank. Let's hope that things will work out well though my prime aim is going to be to focus my entire energies

on painting, whether or not this will yield material results will not matter as I am personally prepared to live on the minimum. It is rather amusing in a way how fate decrees different things for different men. Husain & Bal were here last winter for a couple of days and as you can imagine, there was much talk - light and serious. One evening I said that all I wanted was 1000 to 1500 per month to live quite comfortably & without worry. This of course would have meant a very considerable reduction in my present standard of living (my ret. emoluments after taking into account a free furnished house & my income tax paid by the bank) is in the region of Rs 3000/- per month) - to this Husain replied that he required at least 5000/- per month. He has now severed all connections with the Galleries and has started his own - somewhere on Warden Road I gather and has a paid private secretary who attends to all his correspondence etc. He is still the same affectionate fellow and we are fine friends. I have just received a telegram from him & Ram asking me to come to Delhi for the week end as there are important issues involved. Both of them are in the General Council of the Lalit Kala as eminent artists - so some cognizance is being given by the Government to Modern Painters. I wish it had been possible for me to go to Delhi for the week end but it isn't. There is enormous labour difficulties to face during the next week & I cannot very well leave my duty here.

I did hear from Akbar and have sent
the printing to The Lalit Kala Akademi.
As you say we are all over age - I was 35
last year & so I suppose I must be classed
as an "old" painter!! Awfully glad to hear
about Janine doing so well. I was impressed
by her talents and am sure shall get a
gallery. She's more than a good artist - she's
a wonderful person and I did enjoy living
with you & her. Tell her that I have the most
marvellous NAGA shawl for her. It has been
specially reserved for her. My mother got it
for us when she went to Assam to
visit my brother earlier this year. I'm
afraid old chap I never despatched those
cushion covers. In the end Rena prevented
me on the grounds that they were used &
old and could therefore not be sent. He
shall get you some new ones - we shall not
forget but give no time.

At present Rena is in Simla with the
children and I am by myself in this
terrible place. This office is undergoing
a crisis and we are expecting the climax
soon. Though I have been particularly kind
& fair to the clerks here - they are really such
a greedy & mean lot of individuals that
I don't think anything will satisfy them.
The situation is aggravated by the fact that
they are in the hands of a Communist Union who

wants to capitalise on discontent. I have
never seen such blatant shameless lying
and complete disregard for scruples as I
have seen here. It is a trying experience
full of tension & which leaves me with no
energy or peace of mind to paint just now -
but then this is a necessary concomitant
of my present job & it has enabled me
to see one side of human behaviour which
I may never have if I had been a painter
from the very beginning. You said in
your letter that every painting has a
base in visual reality - I wouldn't agree
with you completely, or rather I would extend
your definition to say that every painting
has a base in experience which is itself a
reality. There are feelings which do not
have visual equivalents in nature &
which achieve reality only in paint.
Perhaps we are saying the same thing
I don't know - I too don't really care for
too much analyses or too many academic
preoccupations - these have little bearing
on actual painting which is an independent
activity.

Rudi was here & spent a day and a night
with us. It was marvellous seeing him after so long.
(The last time I saw him was when you were here.)
We had a lot to talk about and he gave his advice
on whether I should leave or not. Quite inevitably
his advice is influenced by his own life and his

own uncertainties as he approaches retirement. He says that he is prepared to go anywhere in the world where he can be assured of a position (to maintain his standard of living) for the next 10 years at least. Both Renu & I had a feeling that he was a bit tired & a bit sad. He seemed to lack a certain youthful exuberance which he always had. He is a bit perplexed about the changing values in painting & though he admits that he can react to a modern work, he is not at all sure that it is sufficient. His rational approach persuades him to take shelter in established values. It is so safe to do so and there are no risks to take.

What news of Hannel? How is he doing? You know one needs more than enthusiasm to paint well, also something more than what we call talent - one needs a hard bitten sense of intellectual discipline or call it integrity if you like - something which can hold the wild horses of passion & spontaneity - then there is tension. Of course no one is born with this, it develops and I hope it does in his case. The pitfall is easy success or unrelieved failures.

Well old man - dear boy - you can hardly accuse me of not responding & that too quickly. The ball is now in your court - so play. Haven't had a word from Krishna though she was in India last year & I had written to her in Paris. Ask her if she has forgotten me! I wonder how many of my friends will drop me when I leave this bourgeois existence. I am enclosing a few slides to prove that I am still painting in spite of a rather difficult situation in the office aggravated by the foul climate of this place. My fond love to Janine - a kiss on both cheeks - & to you & mon ami, a warm embrace. As ever,
Krishna,