

101 Rue de Charonne, 2 Cité du Couvent, 75011 PARIS
Paris, 29th October, 1989 - France

My dear Akhilesh,

Your letter dated 18th October, sent to Gribio, reached me here in Paris only yesterday. I did write to you on the 23rd October from Paris, as I had the vision of your face of that morning when you called at the International Centre. I could see your anxieties, your concern, your fears. Only I could never guess how anguished you were. As a responsible man, I could not give you any news of the exhibition - ~~nor~~ nor an idea of the awards, I did not know then & even now I do not know, what the French Conseller will decide, because his decision was final. I wrote to you & also to Yusuf not to be too concerned or effected by the success or failure of this particular aspect & assured you that the overall result of this exhibition will be favourable in different ways to every exhibiting artist.

Your letter reveals your dismay, anguish & frustration. Perhaps the results are known to you, even if it was planned that the exhibition will go to Bombay & if it did, the results will be announced after the show. I do not know if our recommendations were fully accepted. I did not know who sold & what was the overall reaction of critics, collectors, public. I did not see Dilip nor Geetha Sen who was supposed to ~~be~~ write for the times. At O.P. Jain's dinner party I requested him to give the exhibition the attention it deserved. I scolded Geetha as she did not come to the opening. Since the show was simply beautiful, the standard really high, I took the initiative with Shida Parikh & ~~talked~~ ~~to~~ met Jamshed Bhabha & try to see if the exhibition could be presented at N.C.P.A. in Bombay. But for this quick initiatives had to be taken & I had only one day in Bombay.

Your numerous letters, very beautiful, which reveal your sensitivities & intelligence, never mentioned the problems you faced in Bharat Bhavan. Hence this letter came as a surprise. I wish you had talked to me last time in Bombay or this time in Delhi. You know I am a very

discontent personnel. I hate politics of the art world, the agitations or the controversies. My actions are positive. They are in favour of ideas, in favour of art & artists. I never criticize. I never condemn. I never abuse. I love to appreciate, admire, develop a logic, an argument, I like to point out what is beautiful in life, what is significant in art. For the rest, I prefer, assimilating situations in silence, even if I ~~scrutinize~~ ^{scrutinize} ~~analyze~~ situations & people & try to understand.

It will have helped matters, if you had talked to me, opened up your heart. I am not blaming you, I know how difficult all this is. But you should know that in an artist's life, there are "immense" hurdles, turps & disappointments & invariably every artist has to face it. If you had revealed your conditions & your problems, I would have put you on guard, I would have told you what I have myself lived in India & in Paris, & how slow the results came. Imagine the life of Van Gogh whose letters you have so meaningfully quoted & who faced a total & general neglect from the public of his time. Happily his brother, Theo gave him the indispensable affection & necessary material assistance for regeneration or sympathy, or "Life".

Let me tell you, my dear Akhilesh, that your entries were first rate. The paintings were powerful, homogenous & revealed a vision already developed which drew attention & admiration. I was myself keen on buying one, but I have so many prospects at hand at present, that I resisted. I wish I had taken the decision, which may have helped you. But I did not know your financial situation. I am glad that you wrote about it & I will be happy to acquire a painting when I come to India again in January 90 - which will be very soon.

But let me come to essential. All that matters is your work. Painting is the foundation on which every thing is built: Life, prestige, sales

Your work is progressing most logically, slowly but steadily & believe me I am a very attentive observer. Since I saw the set you showed at the Bhopal Biennale, I felt convinced of the validity & authenticity of your "démarche." So please feel confident. Get rid of all your fears & disappointments. Money, sales are no scale of values. Nor are prizes & awards. These do come ultimately. Have patience, feel confident, I assure you, they will come.

I will advise you to remain in peace at Bharat Bhavan. The next "3^{es} Fig" will be seen, & you all have to work hard. I feel all of you who work there are doing a national service. There is so much of self-sacrifice, but imagine what has been done in a period of 7 or 8 years. Bhopal has the most important multi-arts Center in India. And the credit goes to every one of you, who have made Bharat Bhavan a reality.

Continue to work. I will look forward to seeing the 3 other paintings - perhaps more - when I come next to India. I will gladly do a page to present your next exhibition. But as I said, I need time to see, to think, to write. I will need at least one year more. I do not know if Dr. Guimard will abide by my recommendations & what will be the choice of the French Committee. Whatever it is, please do not give too much importance. You must take it sportingly - even if it is difficult. Did you get your paintings framed at Konica Chemould? Is that the problem? Or the others. Let your bills await my arrival. It will be soon. I am scheduled to come to India on the 14th January for one month & I will ~~be able~~ ^{try} to assist to the best of my ability.

I hope that this letter brings you my real affection, that it leaves you no doubt as to the validity of your work & that you feel assured that you are not alone.

In Paris, in 1954, I carried a large painting at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Museum of Modern Art. It was so big that I asked

a dear friend of mine Rajesh RAWAT to help me to the exhibition hall.
We walked, we took the 'metro', delivered the paintings for the jury.

Four days later, in all fear & trembling, we went again to the museum.
My painting was rejected. I was terribly sad. The salon was mediocre.
& so many insignificant works were accepted & shown.

We brought back the painting to Cité Universitaire where I stayed. For two
years I worked day & night. In 1956, I was awarded "Prix de La Critique"
& was known overnight. The entire French & European press covered my
exhibitions. And I continued to work with conviction with all the vicissitudes,
failures & success ever since. In fact it is only for the last 8 years I have
seen positive results of a life long research.



So cheer up. Paint, paint & paint. Do not leave Bharat Bhawan at
present. Plan your next show. Exhibit only where you are invited.
Never mind when you are not. Rely on your work. Read books, write
letters. Live life fully, intensely & ~~for~~ project the life experience on canvas.
Life's essence is not necessarily figurative. The moods, the Rasa & Bhava can
find a valid expression through form & colour. Develop your formal vocabulary.
Attempt towards greater form & colour co-ordination, greater intensity. The
simpler your "propos", the greater will be your expression. This process is
slow, very slow & demands great patience from you, as from any
genuine artist.

Write to Paris always.
Never forget we are here.

I am sending you two photographs: one is the desk, where I am writing to
you, with my papers, books & familiar objects. There is so much of India
present here. The other is a corner of my home temple, where three religions
meet. I have faith: God is with me. I pray & hope God is with you too.
Atkish, & helps & guides you in your struggle.

With most affectionate thoughts & love —