

Bombay
16 Aug. 64

1.

My dear Raza,

Just recd. your letter yesterday — thanks.

It seems ~~that~~ from what I have been hearing, though I have not met Butcher (he is in Madras) that the show will be a fiasco. It seems that he has gone around choosing and even buying the most atrocious stuff, from Panniker, Swaminathan etc. for the Commonwealth exh. — all the talk of having 5 paintings of select painters seems now a remote possibility, it is going to be a bhel-puri show. However, let him have his way, ~~as~~ he is too obstinate to listen to anybody, though I will try when I meet him. Once again from what I hear from Bal, Gai, Krishna, he seems to have made a mess of everything, even his own finances, he has got some idea of buying stuff in India & selling it at fantastic rates in London. Well, one can't change human beings, and as far as I am concerned I will co-operate by giving the paintings, but without any hope for the exhibition being anything worthwhile.

Bombay art-life has deteriorated, mainly due to the lack of interest shown by painters, the Bombay Art Society has been taken over by a certain Dalal, devout Congressman who rents out the hall, ^{of Dehagire, not better} mostly for Congress meetings & weddings, occasionally also for art-exhibitions, but the atmosphere stinks of a bazaar with banners, posters, placards sticking out of ~~everywhere~~ everywhere,

One of the most tragic news I heard was the suicide of Shankar, the artist who worked as a peon at the Jehangir Art Gallery. Dabul + Bahlmalla (who by the way has degenerated into a crook and bastard) refused to allow him to paint in the room upstairs which he used as his studio, besides I am told that Bahlmalla particularly persecuted him as he was Oate's man, i.e. had been supported in the past by Oate. - well he drank poison, though Bahlmalla claims that it was throat liguor that killed him, anyway Bahlmalla made a moving speech and collected some funds for his family, - what is still more surprising than I heard this story from Ketur Gaudhey, as none of the artists ever mentioned him to me, and when I questioned them they vaguely answered, 'aasi kooch baat ho thi' anyway on the 7th Sept. I am invited to the Artist Aid Fund as guest speaker, and I intend giving them a piece of my mind. The problem here is not primarily plastic, the spirit itself is touched. Politically, all the camouflage methods are in vogue, how best not to see and understand the problem, the morale is so low that if the Chinese attacked again, ~~they~~ India would be like an open city. It is only in the crevices of this vast baneness, that there is greenery, and prosperous mushrooms thrive in the gloom, big black-market cadillacs, groan their way through a noisy and disorderly crowd, and serene turbaned heads peep out of this polished and immaculate

body of metal. Yes of course, there are demonstrations, 3.
every day, the police with steel & steel helmets are posted
along Flora-fountain and Museum, but the demonstrators
are like school-boys on strike, their weak, unconvinced
voices repeat the leader's slogans, the banks are
disrupted due to the go-slow strikes, as such we go
slow, and the go-slow in our slow going, means
~~hurry~~ coming to a stand-still. ~~It is~~ So it!

My book is progressing well, and Shambel has
landed in the text, so everything is ready for it to
go into the press. I am having a show of my drawings
and posters at Chemould's on the 22nd of Sept.
Belov is d'accord about handling the Couturier
show, but I am waiting to get ~~the~~ the terms down
in writing before writing to Couturier, it will take
a week more, but I would rather wait and send in
the typed contract guaranteeing a minimum purchase
of 6000 Rs. I have conveyed your message to Krishna,
everything is o.k. on the subject we discussed.
Gai is coming in October, & you do need ^{not} take
him to the Louvre! for his glass of milk!

All the best to you and Jaume,
do write when you have the time

Akbar

Bal has done very good work.

P. I. O.

I have given your address to Patsy
Currimboy as she wanted to
meet you in Paris.