

Kaupura
30th November 59

My dear Raza - I turn to you after nine hours of painting, playing with my children and painting a masterpiece. My head full of thoughts - diverse - unconnected and my conscience so heavy with guilt for so many undischarged obligations - to those with whom I say - those who want to understand me will do so & those who don't - don't matter anyway, but such casuistry is so bloody reasonable and basically one is a cowardly bourgeois who does care for all the unreplied letters and unreturned acts of friendship. They all pile one on top of each other and reduce me to inactivity. I don't know where to begin & so I sit and watch the smoke that rises from my cigarette. I should I suppose be writing to my many obligants instead of to you from whom I hardly expect an answer. That's just it, it's when one ceases to expect that the real and most beautiful relationships result. Since I am rambling and not writing a letter, let me recount a recent episode with which involved me with our mutual friend Husain. I was recently in Delhi with a dozen new paintings which I may say astounded our mutual friend - so much so that he bought one (barter system) - having already bought a drawing I did in Paris! This however is not the point of my story. Husain said he would meet me at 10. in the evening at the airport where we were assembling to meet Tom Keenan. Rakha and I waited there - & of course no sign of Husain - she left with Tom & I hung around for an hour and a half in the night-time and bored & in no mood to paint the portrait for which I was meeting him - he never turned up & I lost my way home and when I finally hit my pillow, my head was sore & my eyes were aching. But believe me that not for a second did I curse or blame Husain for letting me down. I knew that he had an appointment with a young lady friend & I should have known what really to expect. It was my fault to misread old Raghu in his present state. Funny thing is that he felt not the slightest qualms of conscience - I would have died under its weight if I had done such a thing. I wish I could treat my obligations as lightly.

I meant to write to you from London and thought of you on the day of your wedding - but somehow never got down to writing. I remember now that I was very busy in London, painting & negotiating for a one man show at Leicester Galleries. I can tell you that it isn't an easy

thing at all negotiating with a couple of smooth Englishmen. They wanted to try me out in their annual show called "Artists of Fame & of Promise" - I suppose I belonged to the latter category! I put in a couple of small paintings, one a landscape painted on the small canvas we bought in rue de Seine, & another 20" x 30" "Head of a Girl" priced them at 35 guineas and 45 guineas respectively. To my surprise the Head was sold on the opening day along with half a dozen other paintings, and the landscape sold subsequently. In the meantime I sold three or four other paintings including the large ones. At last Leicester Galleries agreed to giving me a one man show but next year in either October, November, or December, so I shall be over again with a roll of paintings. This time you must come to London for the opening - *g! i! j!* - I hope you can still read some Urdu.

So here am I in this damned town, cut off from friends & all civilised activity & my life lovers between the bank and my studio. I have been working pretty hard - have to in view of three exhibitions within the next ten months. The first of these is on the 26th December at Kumar Gallery in Delhi. I've told Kumar that I'm not interested in selling and may have three or four available for sale. In Feb. I am having a one man show at Gallery '59 - & then there is the one to be in London.

I was on the telephone with Bal this morning & he said "shall I give you some good news? ... I've sold a painting of yours for 2000/-". It was a straightforward, rather elegant nude I had done recently!

I am observing a most peculiar phenomena in my work these days. I fluctuate between the safe and elegant and thoroughly comprehensible, and the abstract and difficult. As a matter of fact the painting Hasan bought of mine is an abstract. It's a strange method of working - a sort of trying to reconcile two different strains in one but there it is - it is mine, just as the life I am living.

On returning home I had a most friendly letter from

J. A. Ramer who introduced himself as a friend of yours and as the person who had bought my painting in the States. He said that he wanted to buy another one or two. I sent him slides of some of the ones I did in London & have recently heard from him again. He says that I should let him know of a painting to which I attach special significance and he will then buy it. Seems a very pleasant fellow indeed and I look forward to meeting him when he next comes to India.

Radi sent me an inscribed copy of the monograph on you. It is well produced and Radi's writing is as usual admirable. I have several writing assignments on hand but I'm not bothered to much about them. As I told Mulk, it is far more important that I should paint myself rather than write on other people's paintings.

Paris must be cold now. It is cold here and I wore my camel hair coat for the first time this evening. I was reminded of the evening when it first received its chastisement in your studio & the time you took to clear it with, what was it called...? Turpentine or some such name. Which reminds me of the earlier part of the same evening at Jean & Françoise. How are they? Give them my love & humble salutations & what news of Latish? Of course I saw quite a bit of him in London since we stayed together in the same house but then I believe he went to Cambridge - have you heard from him yet? We did get involved in one or two arguments & it struck me at the time that he had it been exposed to world yet & had been too much cloistered in the classroom. — I saw the nude which he had of yours. I expect this must have been your second nude - the first being the one I finished in 1934.

and which is at present with Prana Telwar.

Talking about Prana Telwar, he has broken off his engagement. I expect he got cold feet. I'm going to Delhi on the 25th and shall see him there. I've had no news of Jean & Krishna since I left Paris and I'm wondering if they are here or in Paris. You might let me know - that is if you know. Somehow knowing you, I have a feeling that you never saw them again after that day when you came to drop me.

After writing so much the thought comes to me that I haven't congratulated you & Jeanine on your marriage. Empty words & congratulations are useless - wait till I can give some substance to them. Of course both Rene & I are very very happy that you have at last achieved a marriage which you had ~~set~~ wanted to though the overcoming of the obstacles wasn't easy at all. We wish you every conceivable happiness now & in the future.

I have been writing this in bed - hence the scrawl. It is very late now and my head and eyes are full of sleep - so good night old man - do drop me a line sometime

As always,
Krishna