

18th August

My dear Raza,

You have no idea how happy your letter made us both. It is quite true that you have not had a real heart-felt letter from me for a long time. If I can remember correctly, my last was written rather hurriedly on one of those bits of paper which the Post Office use to restrict writing. Let us hope that this will certainly not be so scrappy. I am not in any hurry and I have a drink on my table, a cigarette between my fingers, and a heart full of talk.

Our trip till we reached Japan was sketchy, brief bits of jerky leap frogging. I have come to dislike this mode of experiencing things and like you, much prefer to stay longer in one place and savour it fully. My trips to the various South East Asian countries was, as Abe Weisblat put it, to benefit the painters there rather than obtain any great benefits myself. I saw dozens of painters and their work which is pretty poor. I cannot think of one genuine artist I met there. Of course every country has its highlights relative to its essential inepticity. What I was impressed with was some of the ancient works.

I had a strange experience in Borobudur in Java. I had heard that it was an impressive monument but when I saw it I was quite amazed. The enormity of it and its consistency of it quite overpowered me. This edifice was sculpted over a period of 180 years, which means that many generations of architects and sculptors were at

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work. The question rises as to how they maintained such a consistency of style and of quality. The answer, at least the one that comes to my mind, is that within the community there was never any question of another style and sculptors were quite content to work within the given language of a particular style - hence such a colossal achievement.

By the very nature of our times and our emphasis on individual values, it is not possible for us to create such monuments. I am not bemoaning the fact, simply recognising it & it is this recognition which makes me realise that the accent on personal styles must in fact lead to many kinds of art - not just one - and it is therefore not rational to try and equate everything that is being done to a single norm. In fact under modern circumstances it is ridiculous to try and look for single principles which apply with equal validity to all things. Painting now has achieved several functions and it is as well to be clear as to the kind of need which a painter is fulfilling. You see what I am driving at? There are no principles of universal applicability. When you say that you like A B or C & do not like D E + F, you are merely voicing a personal (it may be a professional one) opinion. So we can understand and accept the existence of many styles & ways of saying things & doing things which are really esoteric. You'll wonder how the hell I am talking theory - but this is what Borobudur started me off on. It has some important repercussions, but more of this when we meet.

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Japan is overflowing with activity. I have been particularly impressed by their wood block printers. The modern ones I mean. They have brought to bear an enormous flexibility in what one thought was a rigid medium. Some of the artists are really good. The work in oils is more derived + therefore less inventive + quite academic. I believe that there are some good Japanese painters in the States. I have been asked to meet one of them at in San Francisco. Maybe we can meet him together if we find his work interesting, otherwise there is hardly any point in meeting.

This in fact has been the bane of my travelling existence so far. I have had to meet a certain number of people whose work does not interest me too much and in any case since we cannot speak a common language such meetings amount to bowing several times to each other, smiling and drinking Japanese tea together. If there is an interpreter handy, he is generally more interested in pushing his own views! Seeing so much work + meeting so many people is making me a bit tired and I long to settle down to doing some consistent work. While in Kyoto I had a belly full of lovely temples + some very good sculpture. After a few days I

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went and bought some paint and canvas and began working quietly in my Inn. The space was confined and I could not physically handle a canvas larger than the little ones I did in your studio years ago. Anyway it was a satisfying experience and I have three small paintings with me. I'm hoping that I shall be able to paint a little more while I'm here before leaving.

As you know I am exhibiting in London again on the 3rd Oct. I sent them 20 fair sized paintings which is really not enough, specially as three of them already belong to people and cannot therefore be sold. I suppose you know that John Levy was in India earlier this year. I Narayana & Nevon and I were at a concert and who should we see but John - a great meeting & he came for a much needed drink to my studio after the concert. He saw my recent work which I was keeping aside for London & he bought one. I shall have to treat it as a sale from the Gallery in London.

This year has been quite extraordinary so far. I don't know if I told you about my exhibition at Kunike. I expect Akbar gave you the Gen. It went exceedingly well and with so few paintings left I was faced with a great shortage for London. However I was able to work in spite of the heat of Delhi and I think I have

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done some of my best painting during this period. I used to think that I was working pretty hard in the bank, but it was really nothing compared to the kind of work I put in this summer before leaving. Kumar was willing to buy my entire London exhibition! This is encouraging though I know it doesn't mean a thing as far as painting is concerned. One ~~Kang~~ incident will amuse you I know. When I was showing in Bombay last year, Neville Wadia who is a director of my ex bank (!) came in and bought 2 paintings. He bought a couple more in my Delhi exhibition and yet 2 more large ones just before I was leaving. I introduced him to Bal, Akbar & Gai - He has bought from them all. Before I left he said to me that he would have to ask me to go back to the bank if he continued to buy so many of my paintings. The position in India has very considerably improved & if we can keep out of a war with China, there is no reason why things should not get better. I think it wouldn't be a bad idea for all of us to exhibit again in Bombay next year. You will be coming won't you?

And now about our forthcoming visit to the States. I had planned on going to Los Angeles not to see Hollywood or any glamour

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girls, but to meet a few people I know and I have kept a couple of days for this only. We arrive there on the 1st Sept and leave on the 3rd morning for San Francisco arriving there on the same day. We are planning to stay in San Francisco from the 3rd till the 10th Sept. at The Baldwin Hotel, 321 Grant Avenue. On the ~~10~~ 11th we arrive in Berkeley and had so far (before your letter arrived that is) planned to stay there till the 17th Sept & had ~~the~~ expected to leave for New York via Seattle on the 18th. The Institute of International Education have booked us to stay at The Durant Hotel, Durant Avenue at Bowditch, Berkeley. Since you are going to be there, there will be some point in our staying longer and your plan that we should share a flat or an apartment sounds excellent and fine all for spending a longer time in one place and working. I think. Do you think 9 days is too long for San Francisco? From all that I have heard of it it would not seem so. We could stay in Berkeley from the 11th Sept till the 26th ~~and~~ or 27th Sept. when I we would go to New York. I have got to be in London for my

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opening
exhibition on the 3rd Oct. and I should reach there at the latest by the 1st. This would give us just three days in New York to settle down in. We shall be staying there for the first month with an old friend (Mr. Arthur H. Jacobs, 45 Gramercy Park North New York 10 - Tel. GR. J - 4780) - Question now is would you be able to find an apartment in which we could all stay in Berkeley for such a short time - ie 11th Sept - 27th Sept? It would be wonderful if we could. It would have to be furnished with kitchen ware, bed sheets etc. I don't suppose you are carrying any! If this is not possible, then let us at least stay at the same hotel. If the Durrant is suitable you could move there, or if you can find something more suitable & convenient, you could cancel our accommodation at the Durrant and book us where you are booking for yourself. I leave this to you entirely & any arrangements which you may make will be suitable for us. If it becomes necessary to cancel Durrants, would you please tell drop a line to this effect to The Institute of International Education, 291, Geary Street, San Francisco 2 - TEL Douglas 2-6520. Mr. David M. Houston is the director.

If you decide that Durrants is good enough for you, then you might inform them

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that we propose to stay longer & they should book accordingly.

Sorry if I have sounded pedantic and bandobasti ~~that~~ and I know that all this will encroach on your time which you can ill afford to waste, but you being on the spot can achieve far more than me sitting here in Tokyo!

I am very glad to read that you are enjoying yourself though I am somewhat surprised at the long hours you have to work. This sounds worse than banking! I am looking forward to being in the kind of atmosphere you describe. It would be new for me I'm sure. I can't imagine you as a Professor sahib or Punditji but your letter gives me a pretty accurate picture of yourself amongst so many different kinds of students. It is must also be a novel experience for you and being the serious minded person that you are I cannot imagine you taking your duties lightly. As for being "liked" - my dear fellow how can they fail to!

As for my "lecturing" - It is true that I have got some colour slides of Husain, Gaitonde, Nasreen, Ravi Kumar, Akbar. 2 of yours, and my own and where I have felt that people would be interested I have shown them, adding an informal commentary. Quite often people have been asking me questions which I have tried to answer. If this conforms to your definition of lecture I don't mind projecting the slides and yapping alongside. Let's see anyway.

I am looking forward very much to seeing you and Janine again and this

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is going to be a wonderful opportunity. I hope I am in Berkeley when you exhibit. ~~His~~ and I shall be able to see your work in a comprehensible collection - this is always more important than seeing a few good paintings. You said that you were going to New York in October. How long are you going to stay there?

I'm absolutely delighted that Janine is doing so well - we spotted her before the others did! Is she talking more English now or is her English like my French. I have decided to learn it properly in New York and when you see me in Paris I shall have perfect fluency with an American accent! Maybe Janine will prefer this to my English accent.

Must close now - this has gone on and on & I have gone through innumerable cigarettes and several drinks - you think that is evident from this letter?

We must celebrate royally when we meet and I shall try and bring some champagne with me.

Much love to Janine & to you from us both -

As always,
Krishen

P.S. Do you know if Mrs. Laman is in New York? I'd like to meet her.