

RACA, GORRIO, 06920, FRANCE
JULY, 1977.

✓ IRVING
In October 1950, at the age of 28, I came to France in search of light. It happened in the purest Indian tradition with the only difference that instead of going to an ashram in the Himalaya, I came to Paris. I had a restless desire to know, learn & work. India was independent & we were free to face with our destinies. Already in Bombay we had formed one of the most dynamic groups of painters & had shown our work all over the country. A book at that stage set fire to our imagination - "Lust for Life" by Irving Stone. It was the passionate life of Vincent Van Gogh, a Dutch artist, who lived, worked & died in France. An exhibition of large prints of living French painters, organised by the French Consulate in Bombay in 1949 confirmed my decision. I wanted to see the originals, & Paris being a living center of contemporary art, not only offered this possibility but also an access to all the sources of world art.

The initial plan was to stay in France for two years. I had a French government scholarship. The museums, galleries & cathedrals were open to me. I loved Paris from the first encounter. Though unread & naïve, I was confident. I believed I was equipped with the most powerful resources of senses, instincts & intuitions. I visited the exhibitions & museums without a catalogue or a guide, seeking a direct encounter & a personal & unbiased reaction. Books & prints were in abundance. André Malraux's Musée Imaginaire had just been published. The French film, "La vie commence demain" ("ला वी कमन्स दमा") had created an immense enthusiasm. Mahise was showing his collages at the Maison de la Pensée Française (मेजों द ला पंसे फ्रांसेज) I went from discovery to discovery looking at art

Jean Paul Satre
was at the
height of his
lit. world
as

expressions face to face. At the Louvre (लुव्र) the later Renaissance paintings left me indifferent, but I greatly admired the Pieta d'Avignon (पियेता द'अविन्यो), Paolo Uccello's "Battle" + the Italian Primitives. There was so much to see from past + present, + there was life also to cope with. At the Musée Jeu de Paume (जु द पौम), I stood in front of the self portrait of van Gogh with tears in my eyes. Happily Cézanne's ~~paintings were~~ ^{paintings were} in the next room. His master piece "Card-Players" brought me back to reason + revealed "Construction". The impressionists had captured the light of France, but Gauguin + Denureau Rousseau reminded me of my origins. In the museum of Moderne Art Georges Rouault's "Sainte-Face" was a climax of ecstasy. Braque's restraint + colour made me think. I knew, I had to start all over again.

I set down to work. A desire for knowledge + awareness demands courage, passion + involves immeasurable risks. I knew even at that time that my journey was going to be long + hazardous. All the same, I was convinced that every human being has enormous latent resources, slumbering energies, + they need to be exploited awakened. Then only life starts. The more I faced difficulties in the early years of my stay in Paris, the more I was determined to dominate them. This opposition was the major reason why I stayed on. It took me six years of persistent + restless efforts to come to substantial results + hold my first individual exhibition in Paris. The prix de la Critique, awarded in 1956, made life livable freeing me from material worries. The press covered my exhibition so well that I was famous overnight. My paintings started selling + fetched high prices. It was a good start, but my aims were different. The self portrait of van Gogh was still haunting me + also the "Sainte-^{Face} Face" of Georges Rouault. (रुओ). In the darkness of my nights, I hoped ultimately to discover my own face, an echo of my own dormant potentialities.

★ A companion from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Janine MONGILLAT shared this struggle, this restlessness + also the joy in ~~the~~ every new achievement.

French

Many long years have passed since then. My work has evolved with time through a complex EMOTION-THOUGHT process. I haven't much to say about it at present, nor do I have any aesthetic theories to propound. I can however assert ~~that~~ though the Indian sources remain intact deep down in me, the French climate has contributed considerably to fortify ~~my~~ ^{my} imagination + expression. It ^{has} helped towards ^a better understanding of ^{the} significance of form + the complexities of the painted language, with its own inner logic. ~~representation~~. Passionately interested in NATURE + its moods, the French landscape became the special theme of my paintings. It provided all the variations of colour + form. Illuminated by a strange light, the villages + churches seemed to be ornaments of a beautiful body. For me they became positive elements of construction + space orchestration. COLOUR - the life force, animated form relations, revealed their independent rhythm, bringing me to painting in its purest form.

the effort
Complexity