



Question 5. Why can we think of Raja Ravi Varma's paintings as national?

Answer:

Raja Ravi Varma was one of the first artists who tried to create a style that was both modern and national. He used the Western art of oil painting and realistic life study to paint themes from Indian mythology. He dramatised on canvas scene after scene from the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. This portrayal of an Indian consciousness is what makes his paintings national. This was perhaps one of the reasons why his paintings were popular not only among Indian princes and art collectors but also among the masses.

Question 6. In what way did the British history paintings in India reflect the attitudes of imperial conquerors?

Answer:

The British history paintings sought to dramatise and recreate various episodes of British imperial history. These paintings celebrated the British: their power, their victories and their supremacy. The imperial history paintings attempted to create a public memory of imperial triumphs. Victories had to be remembered, implanted in the memory of people, both in India and Britain. Only then could the British appear invincible and all-powerful.

Question 7. Why do you think some artists wanted to develop a national style of art?

Answer:

Many painters, towards the end of nineteenth century, wanted to establish a stronger connection between art and nationalism. To do so, they tried to develop a style of art that could be considered both modern and Indian. This attempt to create a national style of art can be seen in the works produced by Raja Ravi Varma. He used the Western art of oil painting and realistic life study to portray scene after scene from the Indian mythology. However, there never was a clear consensus as to what defined an authentic Indian style of art. Nationalist artists like Abanindranath Tagore rejected the art of Ravi Varma and felt that a genuine Indian style of painting needed to draw inspiration from non-Western art traditions, and try to capture the spiritual essence of the East. So, they turned to medieval Indian traditions of miniature painting and the ancient Indian art of mural painting. They were also influenced by the Japanese art tradition.

There were others who felt that an authentic Indian style of art would be one which explored the real life instead of illustrating ancient books: one which looked for inspiration from living folk art and tribal designs rather than ancient art forms. Ultimately, what all these artists aimed at representing was a certain national consciousness with which each Indian could relate.

Question 8. Why did some artists produce cheap popular prints? What influence would such prints have had on the minds of people who looked at them?

Answer:

By the late nineteenth century mechanical printing presses were set up in different parts of India. This allowed prints to be produced in

large numbers These prints could therefore be sold cheap in the market. As a result, even the poor could buy them With the spread of nationalism, the popular prints of the early twentieth century began carrying nationalist messages Such popular prints would have inspired people to fight British rule.

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