



General Studies Manual for UPSC and State Public Services Examinations 2014

Salient Features of Indian Culture
Module-2: Modern Indian Paintings

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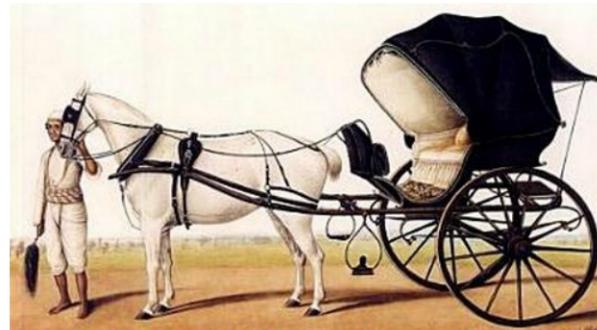
Chapter 1. Company Style of Paintings**Meaning & Origin**

During the later part of the 18th century, the British East India Company had firmly established its political dominion in India. A large number of employees of the East India Company arrived in India and as they accommodate themselves here, they came across the vivid indigenous culture and life.

They wanted to capture the images to send or take back home and thus they gradually became the **new patrons** of the Indian art.

These new patrons wanted that the artists depict Indian life and scenes but in a medium of their own liking. Thus, a **synthetic style** was born in which the Indian artists imitated the English style of paintings. The first region in India to saw the emergence of such style was the **Madras Presidency**. The work accomplished by the Indian artists was in a European style and palette, and this new Indo-European genre of painting known as the **Company Style**. In Hindi, it is called **Kampani Kalam**.

*The British set up schools in the major cities such as Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in order to train the Indian artists in Western Techniques. Artists, who graduated from these schools and / or those who deployed the techniques taught in these schools, were called **Company School** artists.*



Company Style : A Groom with horse and carriage
Artist: Shakhykh Mohammad Amir (Circa 1840)

Salient Features

- Company style is a hybrid Indo-European style of paintings.
- Combination of traditional elements from Rajput and Mughal painting blended with Western treatment..
- Paintings reflecting the Indian miniature tradition were usually small while those portraying the natural history paintings of plants and birds were significantly large.

Subjects

The subjects included:

- Landscapes and views of nature
- Monuments – The Delhi paintings specially had mughal monuments as subject matter.
- Indian People, dancers, fairs and festivals and costumes.
- Figures of different castes and trades.
- **Architectural subjects:** Usually done in a detailed and frontal style more like that of an architectural draftsman than the Romanticised style used by most European painters visiting India.

- Some animal or plant subjects
- Some erotic subjects also included.

Techniques

The technique varied but mostly was drawn upon western **water colour technique**, from which "*transparency of texture, soft tones and modelling in broad strokes*" were borrowed from west.

Paper was mostly used for these paintings. Ivory was also used.

They were mostly intended to be kept in portfolios or albums; the **muraqqa** or album was very well established among Indian collectors, though usually including calligraphy as well, at least in Muslim examples.

Growth of the style

- First region to produce what is called Company Painting to cater to the tastes of the westerners and of Indians who were acquiring these tastes was the **Madras Presidency**. Moreover, the **Tanjore artists** were the first to experiment with the new style.
- At the same time, as the political clout of East India Company grew, a number of centres arose; each of them was heavily influenced by the local traditions.
- The most important early production centre was Calcutta. Here the main patrons of the art were Lord Impey (Chief justice of the High Court) and Lord Wellesley (Governor General). We have been told that they were especially interested in the animal and plant life. They hired artists to paint the birds and animals including those at the Botanical Garden at Calcutta. By the time Wellesley retired in 1813, some 2,542 paintings had been assembled!

Major Centres

Apart from **Calcutta** and **Madras**, the other major centres were **Patna**, **Benaras** and later **Delhi**.

The subjects of the Delhi paintings were the *splendid Mughal monuments*. Delhi company style painting is also special as the artists here used the **Ivory as base for paintings**.

Famous Artists:

- **Sewak Ram (c. 1770-c. 1830)**: Sewak Ram was a well established Company Painter in Patna. Its worth note that some other prominent artists such as Shiv Lal, Hulas Lal, Jhoomak Lal, Fakir Chand and Jai Ram Das lived in Patna and they had such a fame that some people call their paintings belonging to the Patna School! However, calling it a Patna School was incorrect for many others. Patna was a great centre of the Company Paintings because it hosted many expatriates of the East India Company due to location of an important factory as well as Provincial Committee.
- **Ghulam Ali Khan**: The latter Delhi genre of Company paintings is represented in the work of artist Ghulam Ali Khan and his colleagues. He is known for various scenes of village life. He and his team were masters in making portraits.

Decline

The company style of paintings was **not a Pan-India** phenomenon. This style developed in some cities only which had any of the following qualities:

- These cities had monuments and an inflow of foreign officials or tourists
- These cities had expatriates from England.

The above statement implies that the Company Style did not develop in regions such as Rajasthan, Punjab Hills and Hyderabad which were home to the local traditions. At the same time, it can not be negated that the influence of British colonialism had profound impact on Indian arts which was visible in the deterioration of the above painting styles. In the early nineteenth century, this art was at its peak and its production was at a considerable level, with many of the cheaper paintings being copied by rote. By third and fourth decades of 19th century, many artists had shops to sell the work and workshops to produce it.

However, later, the style was subject to the competition with other styles and photography. The worst blow to the Company Style Paintings was given by the advent of Photography in early 1840s. But, the style did survive till 20th century. **Ishwari Prasad** (Patna), who died in 1950, is believed to be the *last notable exponent of Company Style Paintings*.

Nine artists whose work is art treasures

The **Archaeological Survey of India** had declared in 1976 and 1979, the works of the following nine artists "not being antiquities, to be **art treasures**, having regard to their artistic and aesthetic value." Here is a brief introduction; sourced from the ASI website.

- 1976: Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Sher-Gil, Jamini Roy and Nandalal Bose
- 1979: Raja Ravi Varma, Gaganendranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Sailoz Mookherjee and Nicholas Roerich.

Raja Ravi Varma

- The nineteenth century witnessed a change in the style of art that was institutionalized by the newly set up art schools encouraging British system of art education in India. It was in this context that Raja Ravi Varma (1848 -1906) came to be recognized as the first important Indian artist.
- He struggled to introduce many new elements into Indian painting - perspective, European drawing, construction and composition and a new medium that is oil.

Abanindranath Tagore

- The twentieth century saw a reaction against the existing western academic art education and emergence of a new movement towards "Modern Indian Art".
- Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) was the first major artistic figure to evolve a national style and a school of painting "The Bengal School". The sources of his inspiration were the frescoes of Ajanta, the Rajput miniature tradition, Chinese scrolls, Japanese woodcuts and the Shilpa Shastras.

Nandalal Bose

- The new artistic canon was also epitomized by Nandalal Bose (1882-1966), another artist of the Bengal School. *He was the first Indian artist to react meaningfully to the various linguistic facets of the Indian Art tradition.*
- He had a great breadth of sensibility and technical range. He made special efforts to establish contact between Indian artisans and artists. He pioneered experiments in modern Indian sculpture, fresco and graphics.

Gaganendranath Tagore

- The artistic career of Gaganendranath Tagore (1867-1938) was marked by bold originality of conception and execution of many themes in different styles.
- His open attitude towards experimenting with Japanese and modern western art, from futurism and cubism to the ideas of German expressionism and his caricature albums reflecting social and religious hypocrisies of his times, mark him as a pioneer in this field.

Jamini Roy

- A very different journey was being pursued by another artist Jamini Roy (1887-1972). He was the first Indian artist to draw sustainable inspiration from the living folk and tribal art forms and tradition.
- The colours he used were also drawn from folk usage both in their selection and in their making. His art derived its strength in his ability to distill the design in the pictorial space to the barest essential.

Rabindranath Tagore

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) gave artistic priority to the free creative spirit within a local-national-Pan Asian-Universal framework that made him stand out as a true artistic visionary.
- He created a new unity by welding together of many arts and movements. Bold and compact spatial design, a sombreness of palette, a matted tapestry of graphic textures and use of small range of materials highlight his works.

Amrita Sher-Gil

- Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941) evolved a technique, which was essentially Indian in spirit and highlighted by emphasis on colour.
- The content of her paintings evolved based on her experience of the Indian reality - the people and the environment. She was the window of India onto the international expression in art.

Nicholas Roerich

- Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947) who moved to India in 1936 expressed a sense of freedom through the imagery of nature's vastness juxtaposed with the solitariness of the human.

- Enchanted by the Himalayas, Roerich painted them not only to show their physical grandeur but as a symbolist to unravel the mountain's soul. Interwoven in his artistic visions are his philosophies on life.

Sailoz Mookherjea

- Sailoz Mookherjea (1906-1960) pursued an inner creative journey exuding a sense of joy in his expressionism, focusing on the lyrical nature of line and an outburst of warm colours.
- The simplification of form and vibrancy were derived from his years in Europe and inspiration from works of Matisse but his main influences were folk art and Basohli miniatures. He focused on themes such as oneness with nature and rural serenity.

Chapter 2. Paintings of Raja Ravi Varma

The introduction of the Company style in the 18th and 19th centuries by the art schools, the Indian artist created works of art that were British in style but Indian in content. The



Hamsa Damayanti; Raja Ravi Varma 1899

discussion about the company style makes it clear that the artists painted in an Indo-European style using Western linear perspective, shading and English watercolours. This was seen as a degeneration and threat for Indian traditional art. Here, we find the most celebrated painter of 19th century, Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906), who tried to re-establish Indian art *through western methods and technique*.

Raja Ravi Varma hailed from the princely state of Travancore and is best known for depiction of scenes from Indian mythology and epics.



Raja Ravi Varma



Jatayu Vadham; Raja Ravi Varma- 1895

Important Paintings of Raja Ravi Varma

Shakuntala

Ravi Varma is particularly noted for his paintings depicting episodes from the story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, and Nala and Damayanti, from the Mahabharata. In this most famous painting of his, Shakuntala pretends to remove a thorn from her foot, while actually looking for Dushyantha, while her friends call her bluff.

Hamsa Damayanti

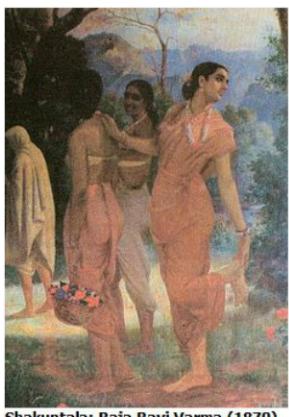
The story of Nala & Damayanti is a very interesting story as told in Mahabharata.

Jatayu Vadham

Jatayu was the son of Aruna and nephew of Garuda. A demi-god in form of a vulture, he was an old friend of Dasharatha and he unsuccessfully tried to rescue Sita from Ravana when Ravana was on his way to Lanka after kidnapping Sita. It has been vividly depicted by Raja Ravi Varma.



Draupadi; Raja Ravi Varma



Shakuntala; Raja Ravi Varma (1870)

Draupadi

In this famous painting, Raja Ravi Varma depicts Draupadi, the common wife of Pandavas, not happy to carry beverages to Keechaka, the army commander of Matsya, during the one year of Agyatvas (hiding). Later Bhima killed him with bare hands, when he disguised as Malini (Draupadi) and inserted himself in the bed of Keechaka.

Other Paintings:

The first picture printed at Varma's press is said to be **The Birth of Shakuntala**. This was followed by an array of images of gods from the Hindu pantheon, including Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganpati, and Vishnu and his avatars such as Rama and Krishna. Other images included those of revered gurus and saints such as Adi Shankaracharya and Vaishanava Guru. There were also extensive series of oleographs representing women figures from Hindu mythology such as Draupadi, Damayanti, Menaka, Shakuntala, and Rambha.



Woman Holding a Fan; Raja Ravi Varma

- Woman Holding a Fan
- Village Belle
- Lady Lost in Thought
- The Orchestra
- Arjuna and Subhadra
- The heartbroken
- Swarbat Player
- Shakuntala
- Lord Krishna as Ambassador
- Victory of Indrajit
- A Family of Beggars
- A Lady Playing Swarbat
- Lady Giving Alms at the Temple
- Lord Rama Conquers Varuna
- Nair Woman
- Maharashtrian Lady
- Romancing Couple
- Shantanu and Matsyagandha
- Shakuntala Composing a Love Letter to King Dushyanta
- Girl in Sage Kanwa's Hermitage (Rishi-Kanya)

Salient Features of Paintings of Raja Ravi Varma

- His iconic and figural portraits of Indian women, mythological gods, royal life, literary figures and national heroes and heroines were an *amalgamation of the European Realism technique and material but were Indian in subject as well as narration*.
- While the company style is known for extensive use of the English watercolours, Raja Ravi Varma modified the European style of perspective and composition with the Indian Iconography and used oil painting. The oil painting was an **inexpensive** technology and coupled with Raja Ravi Varma's oleographs, his paintings gained immense popularity due to their mass production and cheap prices. Due to mass production of his work, the poor could also afford his work.
- Raja Ravi Varma is also known to have launched the popular painting industry in India. He was highly encouraged by his patrons and the demand for his work (and obviously earnings)

was such that he was able to establish *India's first chromolithographic press in Bombay in 1891.*

- He initially learnt the painting from his uncle Raja Raja Varma. His early work seems to be in Company Style but in the due course of time, he mastered the western art of oil painting and "realistic" life study. The scene after scene he created on the canvas were those which he witnessed during the theatrical performances of Ramayana and Mahabharata during the tour of the Bombay presidency.
- In the later years of the 19th century, his paintings were so much liked by the Indian princes and art collectors that these patrons filled their palace galleries with the works of Raja Ravi Varma.

Can Raja Ravi Varma's paintings called National?

Raja Ravi Varma can be called **India's first modern artist**, first Indian artist to master perspective and the use of the **oil medium**; probably first to use human models to illustrate Hindu gods and goddesses on a wide scale and first Indian artist to become widely famous.

His works were accessible to the common man because of his venture of printing and distributing the Oleographs.

Around the same time, Calcutta rose as a hub of political as well as cultural activities. By now, the print medium had also become the ideal channel for the wide circulation of images and ideas to the public. Apart from Calcutta, Bombay and Pune emerged as two major centres for mass print production.

*The mass printing of the Ramayana and Mahabharata images of Raja Ravi Varma helped the art to reach every nook and corner of the country thus helped to forge a **national identity in modern India**. Thus, the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma created a culture that was need of the hour for a very diverse country like India. On the basis of this argument, we can call Raja Ravi Varma's paintings as National.*

What is Oleography?

Oleography refers to the method of reproducing an oil painting on paper in such a manner that the exact colors and brushstrokes textures are duplicated. It is also called litho-printing (stone printing) and requires as many litho-stones as there are colors and tones in a painting. Raja Ravi Varma started his Lithographic Press in 1894 in Bombay. Until, the Raja Ravi Varma used oleography in his prints, it was used for gaudy 'calendar art' and commodity packaging.

Chapter 3. Bengal School of Art

Origin

In Bengal, a new group of nationalist artists gathered around Abinandranatha Tagore (1871-1951). Abinandranath Tagore was a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. This new group of painters rejected the art of Raja Ravi Varma as imitative and westernized. They declared that such a style was unsuitable for depicting the nation's ancient myths and legends. This group felt that a genuine Indian style of painting must draw the inspiration from the non-western art tradition and should try to capture the spiritual essence of the East. So, these artists started doing experiments. They did the following things:

- They broke away from the tradition of oil painting

- They broke away from the realistic style of Raja Ravi Varma and company artists
- They turned to the inspiration to medieval Indian traditions of the miniature paintings and ancient art of mural paintings in Ajanta Caves. The paintings of Ajanta and Bagh, Mogul, Rajput and Pahari miniatures provided the models.
- The continuity of earlier traditions was sought to be maintained by borrowing from legends and classical literature like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Gita, and Puranas, the writings of Kalidasa and Omar Khayyam.
- At the same time, these artists were also influenced by the art of the Japanese artists who visited India at the time to develop an Asian Art movement. The initial artists are known for borrowing in profusion from Chinese calligraphy, Japanese colouring and Persian finish.

The above experiments called "*avant garde*" in artist's parlance, led to the development of the Bengal School of Art. *Avant Garde* refers to the people or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to art, culture, and politics. One more immediate reason of rise of such artists was the widespread influence of the Indian spiritual idea to west. The Pilots of this school were **Ernest Binfield Havel** and **Abanindranath Tagore**. The other artists of this group were Gaganendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar, M.A.R Chughtai, Sunayani Devi (sister of Abanindranath Tagore), Kshitindranath Majumdar, Nandalal Bose, Kalipada Ghoshal, Sughra Rababi and Sudhir Khastgir.

Salient Features of the Bengal School of Art

- Bengal school in painting was called the **Renaissance School** as well as the **Revivalist School** because this movement endeavoured for revival of the Indian ancient and medieval traditions.
- However, it is sometimes criticised because it took art back to the subject matter of ancient periods in an imitative manner without much creativity. The paintings were Simple and standard paintings with attractive colour scheme technique. Bright colours were not used in such paintings.
- The Bengal painters have made best possible efforts to bring in the rhythm, linear gracefulness and poise of Ajanta in their painting. Influence of Mughal and Rajasthan School can also be seen.
- Elegant and refined figures and the paintings exhibited skilfully exposed light and shade without any hardness.
- The artistic creed of this school was gradually challenged and new developments came about. A genuinely individual search for content and form led to a successful synthesis of Indian and European techniques.

EB Havell

The art traditions of India witnessed a steady decline in the 19th century, and Bengal was not too isolated to the deterioration. What could survive during those times were only the **Kalighat folk**

paintings. In 1854, the Calcutta school of Art came into existence. Here, E.B. Havel, Head of the Calcutta School of Art, set for himself the *twofold task of propagating a truer appreciation abroad of India's cultural heritage and of weaning young Indians from indiscriminate admiration of Western art, specially its decadent and uninspiring products.* In this, he was helped by Dr AK. Coomaraswamy and Abanindranath Tagore. While Dr Coomaraswamy rendered invaluable service in interpreting and popularizing our artistic heritage, the Indian Society of Oriental Art under Abanindranath's patronage helped to free young artists who had allowed them to be hypnotized by the West from its spell.

Abanindranath Tagore

Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) was a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. He was born at Jorasanko and was educated at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. He learnt painting privately under English and Italian instructors. He led the revivalist movement in Bengal in the field of modern Indian paintings with the help of a band of disciples such as Nandalal Bose, A.K. Halder, K.N. Majumdar, S.N. Gupta and a host of others. The first major exponent of Swadeshi values in Indian art, he is known to have founded the **Bengal School of Art or Neo-Bengal School**. He was also a noted writer and known as **Aban Thakur**. In the realm of painting, Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose are *known to have expressed the nationalist ethos.*

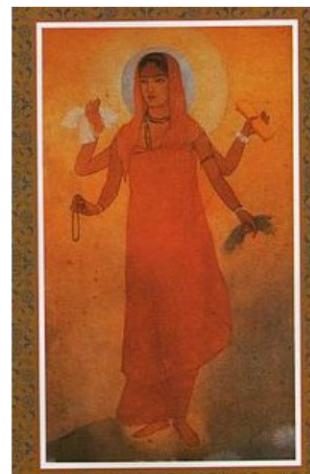
Contribution of Abanindranath Tagore in Indian Paintings:

- He was of the belief that the western art was materialistic in character and India needed to return to its own traditions to recover the spiritual values in the art.
- Abanindranath Tagore's works reflect the synthesis of **Ajanta murals and Mughal painting**. Essentially a romantic painter, he delighted in painting the hoary past. He along with his disciples viz. **Nandalal Bose** and **Ashit Kumar Halder** are said to be the **Pre-Raphaelites of Bengal**. Pre-Raphaelites refer to a group of reformer English painters, poets, and critics, who came together and tried to reform art by rejecting what it considered the mechanistic approach first adopted by Mannerist artists.
- In those times, the Hindu Philosophy was becoming more and more influencing in the west. Taking clue from that, Abanindranath Tagore believed that Indian traditions could be adapted to express these new values, and to promote a progressive Indian national culture.
- The first major work accomplished by him was **Arabian Nights** series (1930). His later works show the influence of Chinese and Japanese calligraphic traditions.
- Famous paintings are: *Bharat Mata*, *The Passing of Shah Jahan* (1900), *My Mother* (1912–13), *Fairyland illustration* (1913), *Journey's End* (circa 1913)

Abanindranath Tagore portrayed Bhārat Mātā (1905) as a four-armed Hindu goddess wearing saffron-colored robes, holding a **book, sheaves of rice, a mala, and a white cloth**. The image of Bharatmata was an icon to create nationalist feeling in Indians during the freedom struggle.

The image was imaginative, with Bharatmata standing on green earth and blue sky behind her; feet with four lotuses, four arms meaning divine power; white halo and sincere eyes.

- The historical context, in which Abanindranath painted Bharatmata was the Swadeshi Movement sparked off in 1905 around the partition of Bengal. This image does not incorporate the map of India; instead it had followed the protocols of the emergent "Neo-Bengal" revivalist style of depicting the female form as ethereal and austere.
- She has four arms, which to Indian thinking, denote the divine power. The ***Shiksha, Diksha, Anna , Bastra***, these are the four gifts of the motherland which she has been depicted as offering with her four hands.
- Though, she has been painted as a common Bengali woman, her divine statuette is most obvious from her four arms and the delicate halo that rings her head. The impact of this painting was that Bharatmata became the new deity of the country, even if she was first named "**Banga Mata**" and later was renamed by him as "**Bharat Mata**".
- Bharatmata was used as a mobilizing artefact during the anti-partition processions. The critics appreciated as a new nationalist aesthetic.
- Sister Nivedita was such an admirer of this painting that she wanted to publish it in tens of thousands and scatter it all over the land so that there is not a peasant's cottage is left between Kedarnath to Cape Camorin that had not the presence of Bharatmata somewhere on her walls.



Bharat Mata
Abanindranath Tagore (1905)

Contribution of Japanese artists in the development of Neo-Bengal School.

In 1901-02, Josephine MacLeod, an American pupil of Swami Vivekananda had invited Japanese arts stalwart **Kakuzo Okakura** to India. Kakuzo Okakura wished to invite Swami Vivekananda, who by that time had become world famous, to Japan. However, Swami Vivekananda passed away in 1902 itself. Kakuzo Okakura came in touch with the Tagores during his stay in India. This was the beginning of India's cultural relations with Modern Japan. This meeting had a lasting impact on Indian art.

Contribution of Japanese artists

After Kakuzo Okakura went back to Japan, he sent two Japanese artists, Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunso to India. These two artists taught the techniques of Japanese brush-n-ink works and watercolour wash to Abanindranath and his elder brother Gaganendranath Tagore. They learnt the technique and were free for innovating and modifying it to better suit their own needs.

The technique was so much liked, appreciated and promoted by Abanindranath Tagore that most of his students, who were later known as the artists of the Neo-Bengal school of paintings, followed this practice.

Contribution of Kokka Magazine

During the first decade of the 20th century, the Indian Society of Oriental Art brought out the exquisite color reproductions of original paintings by Abanindranath Tagore, Surendranath Ganguly, Nandalal Bose and other old masters of Mughal and Rajput art. The ISOA was helped by the expert technicians of the Japanese Art periodical **Kokka** and the Japanese woodblock printing method was used as a technique. Kokka, which literally means "National Essence" was an influential art magazine of East Asia and Japan.

Nandalal Bose

Nandalal Bose (1882 – 1966) was a disciple of Abanindranath Tagore. He became the principal of Kala Bhavan, Shanti Niketan in 1922. His paintings show the scenes from Indian mythologies, women, and village life. Here are some notable trivia on his contribution to Indian art.



Nandalal Bose

- As a young artist, he was deeply influenced by the murals of the Ajanta Caves and joined the band of artists who wished to revive classical Indian culture.
- To mark the 1930 occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's arrest for protesting the British tax on salt, Bose created a black on white linocut print of Gandhi walking with a staff.

It became the iconic image for the non-violence movement.

- Nandalal Bose also originally painted the Indian flag, slightly different from its present form, and it was inspired by the freedom struggle.
- He became principal of the Kala Bhavan at Tagore's International University Santiniketan in 1922.

Government of India's awards, including the Bharat Ratna and the Padma Shri.

- He is also known to have taken up the task of ***beautifying the original manuscript of the Constitution of India.***
- Most of his paintings have scenes from Indian mythologies, women, and village life. Due to influence of Rabindranath Tagore, **he was invited to decorate the Congress sessions at Lucknow, Faizpur and Haripura.** In the Faizpur session, the visual impact of his decorations pleased Gandhi very much and he remarked in his opening address "If Gandhi

Indian Society of Oriental Art

Gaganendranath Tagore, along with his brother Abanindranath, is known for founding the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1907. This ISOA, sponsored by Europeans, much popularized Tagore's Bengal School, as well as art and crafts of other Asian nations. It held regular exhibitions in India and abroad, and came out with exquisite color reproductions of original paintings by Abanindranath Tagore, Surendranath Ganguly, Nandalal Bose and other old masters of Mughal and Rajput art. This society later brought out a journal called **Ranam**.

was the redeemer of the village and Rabindranath its poet...no artist of India has revealed the soul of the village people as Nanda babu..".

Nandalal Bose was awarded a prize of Rs. 500 for his painting 'Shiva-Sati' in 1908. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1954. He became the second artist to be elected as Fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi, India's National Academy of Art in the year 1956. He was conferred the title of 'Deshikottama' by the Vishvabharati University. He was honoured with the Silver Jubilee Medal by the Academy of Fine Arts in Calcutta. In 1965, he was awarded the Tagore Birth Centenary Medal by the Asiatic Society of Bengal. His works have been kept in the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi which includes Gandhiji's Dandi March and the seven posters made for the Indian National Congress for the Haripura Session in 1938. He expired in the year 1996.

Gaganendranath Tagore

Gaganendranath Tagore was a great-grandson of Dwarkanath Tagore, a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore and elder brother of Abinandranath Tagore. Like other Tagores, he was also involved in painting, theatre, reading and photography. But he is best known as a cartoonist who created political cartoons and social satires on Westernised Bengalis. He was one of the most famous cartoonists of his times.



Himalayan Bride: Gaganendranath Tagore

Contribution to Indian Art

- Gaganendranath Tagore, along with his brother Abanindranath, is known for **founding the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1907**. This society later brought out a journal called **Rupam**.
- He was inspired by the visiting Japanese artist Yokoyama Taikan and other Far Eastern styles, early in his artistic life.
- He is said to be the *first artist to explore with the French Style of paintings in India*.
- He also came under the influence of experimentalist art prevalent in Europe at that time and was allured towards geometric compositions. This led him to develop his own brand of **Cubism**.
- Thus, Gaganendranath, elder by five years to Abanindranath, shared his brother's enthusiasm for painting, but not revivalism. He was interested in near-contemporary experiments like **Cubism**.

Bichitra

Bichitra was the name of a studio, which was provided by Rabindranath Tagore to the painters particularly his nephews Abinandranath and Gaganendranath Tagore of Bengal School of Art. It was located at the Jorasanko House, the ancestral home of the Tagores. What we know as Bichitra today is called the Rabindra Bhavan, a Research Centre and Museum where the Gurudev's personal belongings, paintings & various editions of his works are exhibited. This today's Bichitra has been designed by the Rabindranath tagore's son Shamindranath Tagore.

Project Bichitra

Moreover, in May 2013, the **Bichitra Tagore Variorum Website** under the Project Bichitra has been launched by Indian President at the Jadavpur University, Kolkata. This website would convey the message of Tagore's art and thought across the world. The valuable material has been provided by Visva-Bharati, Harvard University and other institutions.

- At the same time, their uncle Rabindranath Tagore committed to neither revivalism nor Cubism, and in fact, he came out to be the first truly modern Indian painter, while playing the role of a patron by providing to painters a studio, called "**Bichitra**" at the ancestral Jorasanko house.

Cubism



Seated Nude, Femme nue assise
Pablo Picasso (1909-10)

Cubism is a school of paintings as well as sculpture in which the viewpoints of natural forms are amalgamated with the multifaceted surface of geometrical planes, thus rendering the painting or sculpture non-objective. It was initiated in 1907 by Pablo Picasso, the Spanish painter and sculptor (1881-1973) and Georges Braque, the French painter (1882-1963). The adjacent image of a painting by Pablo Picasso is an example of Cubism. Cubism is known to have revolutionized European painting and sculpture, and inspired related movements in music, literature and architecture. Cubism has been considered the most influential art movement of the 20th century. In Cubist artwork, objects are analysed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

Asit Kumar Haldar

AK Haldar (1890–1964) was a relative and one of the lieutenants of Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan. His father as well as grand father was painter. Haldar became the first Indian to be appointed as the principal of a Government Art School. He was also the first Indian to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London in 1934. The Allahabad Museum opened a large "Haldar Hall" with many of his works in 1938.



Woman and the tree-AK Haldar

Contribution to Indian Art

- Between 1909 to 1911, Haldar visited Ajanta documenting the paintings and made efforts to bring the cave art to a wider Indian audience. A decade later, he undertook another expedition to the Bagh Caves.
- The art movement of Abanindra Nath Tagore succeeded to a great extent because of the assistance rendered by Asit Kumar Haldar, Nandalal Bose and Surendra Nath Ganguli.
- As a principal of the Kala Bhavan School from 1911 to 1915, he introduced many different styles to art to the students, and revolutionized decorative and ceremonial displays there.
- In 1923, he went on a study tour through England, France and Germany. On his return, he became Principal of the Maharaja's School of Arts and Crafts, Jaipur where he remained for a year, before moving to the Maharaja's School of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow. During the Europe tour, he found out that the Realism in European art had numerous limitations. He sought to balance physical attributes in proportion to the magnitude of the subject matter.

- He remained a budding poet also throughout his life. In his book *Ravitirthe*, he has acknowledged his debt to Rabindranath Tagore and Santiniketan in helping to establish him as an artist.

Jamini Roy

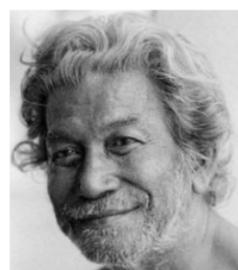
Jamini Roy was born in 1887 Beliatore, Bankura District (Bengal). He was one of the most famous pupils of Abanindranath Tagore. He studied at the Government School of Art in Calcutta. He received his Diploma in Fine Art in 1908. He was inspired by the living folks and tribal art forms. He was influenced by the Kalighat Pat, a style of art with bold sweeping brush-strokes. Between 1921 and 1924, he moved away from his earlier impressionist landscapes and portraits and his first period of experimentation started with the Santhal dance.

Contribution to Indian art

- His painting style was a reaction against the Western tradition. His techniques as well as subject matter were influenced by traditional art of Bengal. Initially he experimented with Kalighat paintings but found that it has ceased to be strictly a "patua" and went to learn from village patuas. His underlying quest was threefold: to capture the essence of simplicity embodied in the life of the folk people, to make art accessible to a wider section of people, and to give Indian art its own identity.
- He received a Viceroy's gold medal in an all India exhibition in 1934. He was awarded the *Padma Bhushan* by the Government of India in 1955. In 1955, he also became the first recipient of *Lalit Kala Akademi Fellowship*. He died in 1972.

Ramkinkar Baij

Ramkinkar Baij (1906-1980), was a powerful modern painter and sculptor, best known for his *magnum opus* "**Santhal Family**" sculpture. Born in the Bankura District of West Bengal, Baij was a son of a village masseuse and barber. He came to Santiniketan on account of the skilful posters he painted during the non-cooperation movement. Here, he became another disciple of Nandalal Bose, and then became one of the pioneers of modern Indian sculpture. He joined the Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan as a fine arts student. At Santiniketan, under the guidance of Nandalal Bose, his artistic skills and intellectual horizons acquired new depth and complexity.



(Note: I have devoted some more time to Shri Baij in Indian Sculpture Module; here are two specimens of his genius)

Contribution to Sculpture – Santhal Family

Initially, he started making **sculptures** which were innovative in subject matter and personal in style. His first *magnum opus* in this genre was the **Santhal Family** done in 1938. **Santhal Family** is widely considered to be the first public Modernist sculpture in India. This sculpture depicts a mother,



Santhal Family (1938), Ramkinkar Baij

father, child and dog from the Santhal tribe, carrying their few possessions with them to a new life. It was made of cement cast and laterite pebbles.

The artistic creations of Ramkinkar Baij have been inspired by the lifestyles of rural dalit or Adivasi communities. Through his sculptures, he represented the tribal peasants of the region, giving the figures iconic presence and dignified grace that was so far limited to the images of Gods and Rulers. He took a great interest in human figures, body language, and in the general human drama. His main points of reference were modern western art and pre and post-classical Indian art. Regarding his work, he said: "*I do not know whether what I am doing is modern or not, but it is based on my experience.*"

Contribution to Sculpture- Yaksha and Yakshini

On achieving independence, Jawaharlal Nehru had an idea that the public buildings, many of which were large imposing structures, could be utilised to 'encourage Indian artists to function in some way' and sculptors, painters, designers, etc. could be asked to cooperate. At that time, the RBI was in the process of constructing/contemplating new buildings at New Delhi, Madras and Nagpur. A committee was set up to examine the proposal and to make recommendations on the subject. This committee recommended that the sculptures could be erected on either side of the main entrance of the RBI office at New Delhi, one depicting the idea of "prosperity through industry" and the other "prosperity through agriculture". Then, the views of Carl Khandalawalla, an eminent critic and connoisseur of art, were sought. He suggested that RBI could consider having figures of "Yaksha" and "Yakshini" on the two sides. The artists were invited and the proposal that was accepted was of Ram Kinkar Baij. The art form of the male 'Yaksha' was drawn from the statue of the '*Parkham Yaksha*' in the Mathura museum and the art form of the female Yakshini was derived from "*Bisnagar Yakshini*" from the Calcutta Museum. This is how Ram Kinkar Baij became immortal with his Yaksha and Yakshini ☺ (information comes from RBI website)



Yaksha and Yakshini at RBI Building, New Delhi

Paintings

His paintings too take on expressionist dimensions like his sculptures, which are filled with force and vitality.

Legacy and awards

There is a book called '**Dekhi Nai Fire**' based on Baij's life and work, written by Samaresh Basu. In 1975, Ritwik Ghatak wisely made a documentary on Baij named '**Ramkinkar**' where he featured

him as a political icon. He was awarded *Deshikottam* by Visva-Bharati University. In 1970, he was honoured with *Padma Bhushan* by the Government of India. He died in 1980.

Chapter 4. Transition to Modern Indian Paintings

In 1867, EB Havel was appointed the Principal of the Art College at Calcutta. He, as we discussed above, gave greater importance to the art traditions of this country, instead of those of Europe. However, he himself was not able to produce some outstanding works. This task was taken up by Abanindranath Tagore and the result was the Bengal School of Art. This school proclaimed Raja Ravi Varma, who was a leading practitioner of the academic style, to be in bad taste. Whatever its shortcomings, the Bengal School restored to health the indigenous tradition in painting and infused self-confidence among the Indian artists. This school was followed by the Santiniketan School, led by Rabindranath Tagore's harking back to idyllic rural folk and rural life. By the time of Independence in 1947, several schools of art in India provided access to modern techniques and ideas. Galleries were established to showcase these artists. This was the dawn of Modern Indian Paintings.

The Calcutta Group

The Calcutta Group was the first group of modern artists in India, formed in 1943 in Kolkata. Its leading members included the sculptor **Pradosh Das Gupta** and the painters **Subho Tagore, Paritosh Sen, Gopal Ghose, Nirode Mazumdar and Zainul Abedin**. The group held exhibitions from 1945, and held a joint exhibition in 1950 with the Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay.

This group of artists expressed the need for a visual language that could reflect the crisis of urban society. For the first time in modern Indian art, artists began to paint images that evoked anguish and trauma and reflected the urban situation. Rural scenes were no longer purely idyllic, and the formal treatment of the paintings began to reflect the influence of European modernism.

Progressive Artists' Group, Bombay

Progressive Artists' Group, Bombay was established **Francis Newton Souza**, first post-independence Indian artist to achieve high recognition in the West. Its early members were S. H. Raza, M. F. Husain and Manishi Dey.

Other prominent painters of the group included S. K. Bakre, Akbar Padamsee, Ram Kumar and Tyeb Mehta.

They wanted to paint with absolute freedom for content and technique. This group was basically an *omnium-gatherum* of different styles and influences. The most important influence on the group was of European Modernism. The group later lost into oblivion in late 1950s.

Young Turks

Beside the Calcutta Group, there was another group called the Young Turks, among whom P. T. Reddy was the prominent member. The Young Turks encouraged by Charles Gerrard, principal of

Objective of the Progressive Artists' Group

The objective of the Progressive Artists' Group was to break away with the revivalist nationalism established by the Bengal school of art and to encourage an Indian avant-garde, engaged at an international level. The group was highly influenced by the Indian inner vision or the *antar-gyan* and the same was now being portrayed in their art rather than the European realism.

Sir J.J. School of Art held their first exhibition in 1941. Then there were Bhabesh Sanyal and Sailoz Mukherjee, who left Calcutta. The first went to Lahore and the second came to Delhi in search of employment. These artists find prominent place in the National Gallery of Modern Arts collection.

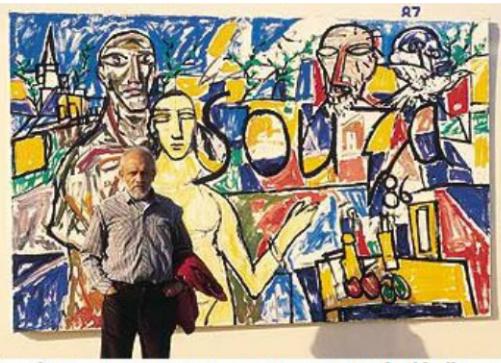
Chapter 5. Modern Indian Painters

Francis Newton Souza

Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002) was a famous Indian painter, born in Goa. He was the first Indian artist to receive recognition in the west. He attended Sir J.J. School of Art but due to his involvement in the Quit India Movement, he was suspended in the year 1945.

Contribution in Indian Art'

- Souza was the founder of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group. In 1949, he went to London and started getting recognised there for his works at Gallery One, North London. In 1954, his work was included in an exhibition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts. His autobiographical work '**Nirvana of a Maggot**' was published in Encounter, a journal then edited by Stephen Spender. In 1959, another book by him called Words and Lines got published which was highly acknowledged.
- Souza's initial work created an impact both in India and abroad as a strong mode mist. His strong, bold lines delineated the head in a distinctive way where it virtually re-invented the circles, hatchings and crosses. His forms retained their plasticity in later years but became less incentive. In later years, his forms retained their plasticity but became less incentive.
- *As per John Berger, Souza's style was deliberately eclectic and essentially expressionist. But at the same time his work was often considered highly erotic as he depicted post-war Art Brut movement and elements of British Neo-romanticism.*
- He went to New York in 1967 and settled there. He later returned to India shortly before his death. He was honoured with the *Kala Samman* in the year 2000 by the Madhya Pradesh government. He died in 2002. In 2008, his painting '**Birth**' (1955) set a world auction record for the most expensive Indian painting sold till then by selling for Rupees 1.3 crore.



Francis Newton Souza; Image Source: Outlookindia.com

S. H. Raza

Syed Haider Raza (born 1922), is the 2013 *Padma Vibhushan* awardee. He was born in Babaria, Mandla (Madhya Pradesh), studied at the Nagpur School of Art and later went to Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay. In 1946, his first solo show was held at Bombay Art Society Salon for which he also was awarded the Silver Medal. He then went to France in October 1950 on a Government of France scholarship. He studied at the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux-Arts* (ENSBA) in Paris



S H Raza

from 1950 to 1953. He travelled across Europe after his studies, and lived and exhibited his work in Paris. In 1956, he became the first non-French artist to be awarded the *Prix de la critique*.

Painting Style – The Razabindu

- For Raza, Bindu is a point where he concentrates, his energy, his mind, and has become his Bhagvat Gita, Swadharma etc. For him, the 'bindu' has been a vast subject with its variations throughout his life. Raza's works make price history.
- Bindu shows the emergence of symbolic and ritual elements in traditional art as pure abstractions. Abstraction is the dominant element in Raza's Bindu series at the turn of the 1980s.
- Hailed as one of the country's most expensive artists, he set a milestone last year when his work, 'Saurashtra', sold for Rs16.42 crore in an auction at Christie's.
- He uses very rich colours, replete with icons from Indian cosmology as well as its philosophy. His works are mainly abstracts in oil or acrylic. Raza's style has evolved over the years. His paintings eventually became more abstract in nature. From his fluent water colours of landscapes and townscapes, he moved towards a more expressive language painting landscapes of the mind.



Relation by SH Raza

Awards

In the year 1981, he was awarded the *Padma Shri* and *Fellowship of the Lalit Kala Akademi*. In 2010, he became India's priciest modern artist seminal work, 'Saurashtra' which was sold for ₹16.42 crore INR. He was honoured with the *Padma Bhushan* in 2007 and in 2013; he was awarded *Padma Vibhushan* by the Government of India.

Maqbool Fida Husain

Maqbool Fida Husain (1915-2011), India's most charismatic and most internationally recognised painter, was romance personified in both work and life. Husain's crime was that he had painted Hindu gods and goddesses, in the nude sometime in the 1970s. Though there are many examples of Hindu deities depicted in the nude in exquisite ancient temple sculptures, the Hindu right wing hounded him out of India.

He was born on September 17, 1915, in a poor household in Pandharpur, Maharashtra. His father was a timekeeper in a small mill and had the additional responsibility of bringing up his motherless son. Hussain had lost his mother when he was an infant. He remained a devotee of women and womanhood for the rest of his life.

As a co-founder of Progressive Art Group

Hussain went to study at **V.D. Devlalikar's** art school in Indore while in his teens. The family's finances were strained, but it somehow managed to send him to the school of Devlalikar because he was a respected artist and teacher who painted in the Indian style. It's worth note that other famous artists such as S.H. Raza, H.A. Gade and Ingole had also studied under Devlalikar.

The paucity of resources led Husain to move to Bombay where he became a painter of huge film banners. He also

studied for a while at the Sir JJ School

of Art. Later, he came into contact with the Austrian expressionist Langheimer and the art critic Rudy Von Leydon, both refugees from Hitler's Nazi Germany. These two men played a seminal role in introducing 20th century Western art in Bombay. Husain became a co-founder, along with Francis Newton Souza, of the Progressive Artists Group in 1948. In

1952, his first solo exhibition was held at Zurich. He was awarded *Padma Shri* by the Government of India in 1955. In 1967, he made his first film, '**Through the Eyes of a Painter**'. In 1971, he was a special invitee along with Pablo Picasso at the Sao Paulo Biennial (Brazil). In 1973, he was awarded *Padma Bhushan*. He was nominated as a Rajya Sabha member in 1986. Later, in 1991, he was awarded *Padma Vibhushan* by the Indian Government.

Contribution to Indian Art

- His narrative paintings, executed in a modified Cubist style, can be caustic and funny as well as serious and sombre. His themes which were usually treated in series included diverse topics such as Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the British raj, and motifs of Indian urban and rural life.
- He has also produced & directed several movies, including **Gaja Gamini** and **Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities**.
- Husain was charged with "hurting sentiments of people" because of his nude portraits of Hindu gods and goddesses in 2006. Since then he lived in self-imposed exile from until his death. At Christie's auction in 2008, Husain became the best-paid painter in India, with his highest-selling piece fetching \$1.6 million. He was conferred Qatari nationality in 2010. For the last years of his life Husain lived in Dubai and London. M. F. Husain died in 2011.

Tyeb Mehta

Tyeb had grown up in the Crawford Market of Mumbai within the orthodox Shiite community of the Dawoodi Bohras. He had witnessed the violence and experienced the frowzled remains of the



Autobiography by MF Husain

Indian society. During his childhood, he used to live at Mohammed Ali Road. It was a time of India's partition. One day he saw a man getting slaughtered on the streets just below his house. The man was hammered by the mob and his head smashed because he happened to be a Muslim. This incident made Tyeb ill for several days and then the memory haunted him through out his life. The violence that he saw during his childhood, gave way to the emotions, which reflects in his paintings.

In 1947, he got enrolled at Sir JJ School of Art in Mumbai. There he met the graduates of this school including MF Husain and FN Souza, who comprised the Progressives and rejected both Western classicism and the nationalist Bengal school in favor of a new Indian *avant-garde*.

Following a self-imposed separation from his extended family at age 29, Mehta went abroad to London and Paris for four months in 1954 to study

Western art, both the old masters and European modernists. In 1956, he completed his first important works, **Rickshaw Pullers** and **Trussed Bull**, abstract canvases composed of hard-edged shapes that prefigured, in both subject and style, his best-known works.

Diagonal Series

The Diagonal Series of paintings creates an effect a partition of space that was homogenous until the making of this gesture, into two related but separate parts. This series reverberates an echo of the 1947 Partition of British India. It was the partition of India, that put Mehta and other Muslims under the pressure to choose between the homeland or new collective ideal based upon only religion. The diagonal series also emphasises separation and twinning and the psychology of schism that haunted this painter, while he was alive.



Diagonal : Tyeb Mehta

Falling Series

The Falling Series also reverberates the traumatic memory from his childhood when he witnessed the violent death of a man during the Partition riots of 1947. The Falling Figures series represent an exceptional moment of synergy between Tyeb's artistic and social concerns. The emotions behind the falling figures were to define a



An untitled Falling Figure by Tyeb Mehta

resistance and control the tension in the paintings through spaces, colors, images and matrices in order to bring out a catastrophe. The Falling Series won a lots of accolades for him in India as well as abroad. His famous painting titled the "Falling Figure and Bird" displays a human figure in a state of deliberation while falling. The painting shows his intellectual rendezvous with modernist existentialism and international concepts of the "Universal Man".

Akbar Padamsee

The art of Akbar Padamsee

The work of Akbar Padamsee is introspective. His "Metascapes" or his "Mirror Images" are abstract



Akbar Padamsee

images formed from the search for a formal logic. His topics include landscapes, female nudes, heads and he has done portraits created in pencil and charcoal.

The depth which emerges from his oil-based works emanates from the colored matter. He has also done black and white photographs which use light to create dimension.

Padamsee's heads reflect the radiant presence of the prophets and martyrs who fascinated him during the

Akbar Padamsee: Brief Biography

Akbar Padamsee is considered one of the pioneers in Modern Indian painting. He was born in Mumbai, India. He met his first mentor Shirsat, a watercolourist in St. Xavier's High School, Fort. He initially received training in this medium. Subsequently, he attended classes on nudes in preparation for his studies at the Sir J.J. School of Art. Due to his deep understanding about the intricacies of art, he was directly admitted to the third year in Sir J.J. School of Art. It was then where he came in close contact with pioneers of modern Indian paintings like by Francis Newton Souza, S. H. Raza, and M. F. Husain who had formed the Progressive Artists' Group in 1947. This close association has a deep influence on his work. He has worked with various mediums from oil painting, plastic emulsion, water colour, sculpture, printmaking, to computer graphics, and photography, as worked a film maker, sculptor, photographer, engraver, and lithographer.

In 1951, he went to France where he met the surrealist Stanley Hayter, who became his next mentor. He joined his studio named "Atelier 17". In 1952, Padamsee's first exhibition was held in Paris for which he was awarded by the French magazine Journal d'Arte along with the painter Jean Carzou. It was only in 1954, when his first solo exhibition was held at the Jehangir Art Gallery. In 1962, he received the Lalit Kala Akademi Fellowship. He also received a fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1965, after which he was subsequently invited to be an artist-in-residence by the University of Wisconsin-Stout. In the year 1997, he was honoured with the Kalidas Samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. He received many



Untitled (Reclined Nude) by Akbar Padamsee

1960s.

The "Metascapes" he did in the early to mid-1990s have won him accolades in India as well as abroad and is considered to be his finest work. The distinct identity of the Metascapes is the depiction of Sun and Moon. The idea of using the sun and moon in the metascapes originated when Akbar was reading the introductory stanza to Abhijnanashakuntalam. Here Kalidasa speaks of the eight visible forms of the Lord without mentioning them by name, the sun and the moon as the two controllers of time, water as the origin of all life, fire as the link between man and god, and the earth as the source of all seed. This is the subjection of the denotative sense to a poetic meaning. Through this process, the artist deals with reality without



Metandscape-1 by Akbar Padamsee

describing it; when poetic meaning is superimposed upon the sign a new form arises - this belongs to the mind of the artist, not to nature.' (Courtesy: <http://akbarpadamsee.net/>)

In order to explore new genres, Padamsee created "SYZYGY", "Events in a Cloud Chamber" films shot in 1970, and explored computers in "Compugraphics". His painting 'Reclining Nude' was sold for USD 1,426,500 in 2011.

Amrita Sher-Gil

The Birth Centenary Celebrations of Amrita Sher-Gil was launched in February 2013 at the National Gallery of Modern Art. To celebrate the life and works of Amrita Sher-Gil, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India is organizing a series of events under the auspices of the Centenary Celebrations.

- Here are some important points about her life and her work:
- Known as **India's Frida Kahlo**.
- A 2006 auction made her most expensive woman painter of India.
- Born in Hungary to a Sikh Aristocrat, mother was a Jewish opera singer from Hungary.
- Trained in Europe as a painter, drew inspiration from European painters such as Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin. Early paintings display a significant influence of the Western modes of painting with special influence of works of Hungarian painters, especially the Nagybanya School of painting.
- The first important painting was "**Young Girls**". This painting led to her election as an Associate of the Grand Salon in Paris in 1933, making her the youngest ever to have received this recognition.
- She was greatly impressed and influenced by the **Mughal** and **Pahari schools** of painting and the cave paintings at Ajanta.
- In 1937, she produced famous South Indian trilogy of paintings - "**Bride's Toilet**", "**Brahmacharis**" and "**The South Indian Villagers**". By this time, her style had transformed and her paintings expressed the life of Indian people through her canvas.
- While living in Saraya, Gorakhpur, she painted the "**Village Scene**", "**In the Ladies' Enclosure**" and "**Siesta**" all of which portray the leisurely rhythms of life in rural India. Siesta and In the Ladies' Enclosure reflect her experimentation with the miniature school of painting while Village Scene reflects influences of the Pahari school of painting.
- Initially, her painting found no buyers.
- The Government of India has declared her works as **National Art Treasures**, and most of them are housed in the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

Important Paintings

- Young Girls
- Camels
- Hill Women
- Two Women
- Hungarian Market Scene
- Tribal Women
- Two Elephants
- Bride's Toilet
- Brahmacharis
- The South Indian Villagers
- In the Ladies' Enclosure
- Village Scene
- Siesta

- Amrita was known for her many affairs with both men and women and many of the latter she also painted. Her work "**Two Women**" is thought to be a painting of herself and her lover Marie Louise.
- A postage stamp depicting her painting 'Hill Women' was released in 1978 by India Post, and the Amrita Shergill Marg is a road in Lutyens' Delhi named after her. In 2006, her painting "Village Scene" sold for ₹ 6.9 crores at an auction in New Delhi which was at the time the highest amount ever paid for a painting in India.
- Her work is a key theme in the contemporary Indian novel "**Faking It**" by Amrita Chowdhury.

Chapter 6. Other Modern Painters

Binod Behari Mukherjee

- Binod Behari Mukherjee, a pupil of Nandalal Bose, was one of the pioneers of Indian modern art. He was a painter and a celebrated muralist. *He was one of the earliest artists in modern India to take up mural as a mode of artistic expression, and his murals display a subtle understanding of environmental and architectural nuances.*
- In 1972 filmmaker Satyajit Ray, who was also Mukherjee's student, made a documentary film named "The Inner Eye" on him.

K. G. Subramanyan

- K. G. Subramanyan (Born 1924) is a renowned Painter, Sculptor and muralist. Presidency College, Madras is his alma mater where he studied economics. He was greatly influenced by Gandhian philosophy and he participated in Indian freedom struggle with full enthusiasm for which he was also imprisoned.
- During British rule, he was even restricted from taking admission in government colleges. In 1944 he went to Shantiniketan to study in Kala Bhavan (Art Faculty of Visva Bharti University). It proved to be a turning point of his art career and he studied there till 1948.
- In Santiniketan he came into intimate contact with Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, and Ramkinkar Baij who sensitized him to the requisites of a national modernism.
- It was their influence which persuaded him to look art as response to social and personal needs for communication and expression. *In 1981, he became the first artist to be awarded the Kalidas samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2012*

K.H. Ara

- Krishnaji Howlaji Ara was an Indian painter, born in 1914 in Bolarum, Secunderabad. He is recognised as the first contemporary Indian painter to focus on the female nude as a subject while staying within the limits of naturalism. Initially, he started with landscapes and paintings on socio-historical themes but he is best known for his still lifes and nudes.

Manjit Bawa

- He was born in Dhuri, Punjab in the year 1941. He received the *Kalidas Samman* by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 2006. He expired in the year 2008. Manjit Bawa was a figurative painter from the beginning. The main charm of his paintings is the sense - saturating expanse of colour-fields which create space and define the contour of figures. He was one of the first painters to break out of the dominant grays and browns and opted for more traditionally Indian colors like pinks, reds and violet. *Bawa is known for his vibrant paintings but at the same time he is also known for his love of spirituality and sufism. There is an undercurrent of Sufi mysticism in the choice of his subjects.*

Ram Kumar

- Ram Kumar was born in Shimla in 1924. He is one of the pioneers of abstract painting. He gave up figurativism for abstract art. He is known for his abstract landscapes in oil or acrylic. One of the main concerns of the artist is human condition which was depicted in his paintings through alienated individual within the city. Increasingly abstract works done in sweeping strokes of paint evoke both exultation of natural spaces and more recently an incipient violence within human habitation. He fetched \$1.1 million for his work "**The Vagabond**" at Christie's, New York. His works are usually sold at a very high price both in domestic and international market. *Kalidas Samman* was given to him in 1986. In 2010, the Indian government honoured him with *Padma Bhushan*. He was awarded the *Fellowship of Lalit Kala Akademi* in 2011.

Bhupen Khakhar

- Bhupen Khakhar was an internationally recognised Indian contemporary artist. He was born in 1934 in Bombay. He openly portrayed homosexuality through his paintings and he explored his own Homosexuality in a very sensitive way. The life of a homosexual from Indian perspective was beautifully portrayed by him even though a subject like homosexuality was uncommon at that time. His paintings were often compared to that of David Hockney.

V. S. Gaitonde

- Vasudeo S. Gaitonde was regarded as India's foremost abstract artist. He was born in Maharashtra in 1924. Gaitonde's abstract paintings with their translucent beams of light refer to nothing other than themselves and evoke subliminal depths. He experimented hugely with form and shape in his works. His use of symbolic element and very few ground lines made his work appear like a flowing river. His paintings invoke a concealed and obscure description of the real world. He was the first Indian contemporary painter whose work was sold for Rs. 92 lakhs at the Osians art auction.

Mukul Dey

- Mukul Chandra Dey is considered as a *pioneer of drypoint-etching in India*. He was the first Indian artist to travel abroad for the purpose of studying printmaking as an art. For the

portrayal of Indian life, Dey essentially chose Western medium. He concentrated on dry-point etching which was not common to the Indian painting culture. He chose Indian subjects such as river scenes in Bengal or traditional baul singers, even when his medium of portrayal and techniques were Western. Some of his finer works are dry-point etchings that have been hand-colored with watercolors, colored pencils, or thin washes of ink. In 1928, he became the first Indian to be appointed as the principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

Satish Gujral

- Satish Gujral, younger brother of former PM Inderkumar Gujral, is a Prominent Indian painter, sculptor, muralist, graphic designer, writer and architect. He was born in Jhelum, West Punjab (British India). A sickness at the age of 8 years resulted in impairment of hearing.
- He has consistently dominated the art scene in India for the entire post-independent era. *He has won an equal acclaim as an architect. His design of the Belgium Embassy in New Delhi has been selected by the international Forum of architects as one of the one thousand best built in the 20th century round the world.* “**A Brush with Life**” is a 24 minute documentary made on his life. It was released in 2012 and it explores the literary, cultural, political and personal influences on his life and works. In 1999, the Government of India honoured him with the *Padma Vibhushan*.

Ebrahim Alkazi

- Ebrahim Alkazi is one of the pioneers of **Indian theatre**. He is considered as one of the most influential Indian theatre directors of all time. Initially, he was associated with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group and got in close contact with art pioneers like M.F.Husain, F.N.Souza, S.H.Raza, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta. These artists have also painted and designed his sets. Nearly 50 plays including numerous Shakespeare and Greek plays, Girish Karnad's ***Tughlaq***, Mohan Rakesh's ***Ashadhpukar*** and Dharamvir Bharati's ***Andha Yug***, were directed by him.
- In 1950, he won the **BBC Broadcasting Award**. He began his theatrical career in the English-language Theatre Group of Sultan “Bobby” Padamsee, a pioneer of the English theatre movement in India. In 1954, he initiated his own Theatre Unit and began to revolutionise Indian theatre by the magnificence of his vision, and the meticulousness of his technical discipline. He became the Director of National School of Drama, New Delhi in 1962 and held the post till 1977. He also founded the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi along Roshan Alkazi, his wife.
- In 2004, he became the first recipient of ***Roopwedh Pratishtan's the Tanvir Award*** for his lifetime contribution to the Indian theatre. For his outstanding Direction, he has been awarded The ***Sangeet Natak Akademi Award*** in 1962. Later, he was awarded ***Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship*** for lifetime contribution to theatre. The Government of India awarded him ***Padma Shri*** in 1966, the ***Padma Bhushan*** in 1991 and the ***Padma Vibhushan*** in 2010.