ABSTRACT
ABSTRACT PAINTING IN INDIA (1947-93)

ABSTRACT

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
Doctor of Philosophy
IN
FINE ART

BY
BADAR JAHAN

Under the Supervision of
Professor Ashfaq M. Rizvi

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ART
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India, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, possesses a rich and highly cultivated culture, philosophy and art. Indian traditional art which is emphatically structured in the frame work of religion, is based on beliefs, superstitions, myth and spiritual connotation, where imagery, non-representational symbols and elementary representation of signs, objects and forms are used in folk, tribal and tantra art.

The symbology of folk, tribal and tantra art, which also encompasses grade of abstracted forms, patterns and motifs to achieve simple motives of daily house hold jobs, religious rituals and spiritual delight and ecstasy, has gained a new perspective in the world contemporary art scenario. The abstract quality of all these art forms have become an inspirational source for Abstract Art, all over the world.

Artists like Kandinsky, Kupka, Malevich, Mondrian and others are considered the real instigators of abstract painting, who structured a new form of art through employing primitive & traditional art of the
world with their creative impulses.

The realization and understanding of such possibility explored in India quite late, due to the political and social disturbance of 1940s. But parallel to the political developments, Indian art also underwent a sea change and in the wake of the most significant political development, “attainment of independence from the yoke of colonial rule,” Indian art reached into a new era. Among the various contemporary art forms. Abstraction also gained many innovations.

The objective of this study is structured around the concept of phenomenology of Indian art in context of abstraction and the adoption of indigenous sources with the innovative measurements. The subject is viewed from different vantage points such as: The dialectic of Abstract art, A chronology of world Abstract Art, Abstraction in Indian Contemporary Art and the Interpretations of Indian traditional Folk, Tribal Tantra art, symbols and scripts. The topic is vast and not everything can be covered of course, but a stock of all relevant past has been digged upon to re-read the movements in “Indian contemporary Art”. In the first Chapter the dialectic of Abstract is approached where along with several definition and interpretation, various stages of abstraction is also discussed.

Abstract which is a term, used to refer the state or condition, form, belief and idea in which various art forms, conditions in terms of
development stage, unnatural shapes, concept of spirit, and self realization could be encompassed.

Abstraction in the sense of art carries all these things in two ways one is ultimate result of non-representational form and the other is the process of abstraction, where the ultimate goal on non-representational form is deliberately avoided.

Abstraction has been defined as pure form, elementary form absolute idea, other being, non representational and non objective. Where a slightest adulteration of realistic form break the norms of Abstract art, a slightest gateway from the imitational representation bring it in the category of abstract. Such conditions are termed as near naturalism and semi-abstraction.

In pure abstraction, identification of natural forms is strictly prohibited. To contextualise, abstract art has to be defined largely by the elite domain who encroached every possible side of human brain.

In chapter two, a chronological survey of world abstract art is approached for a close speculation of the Abstract Art of Russia, Germany, Holland, America and in the light of such survey, the impact and transitory attitudes of Indian contemporary art scenario.

The saga of world abstract art begins with Russian Kandinsky’s first pure-nonrepresentational picture in 1910 which was inspired by lyricism of music and colour. Abstract Art during the last 60 years
formed from two main modern art movements both of which emerged from Impressionism. The first current finds its sources in the art and theories of Cézanne and Seurat, passes through the widening stream of cubism and finds its delta in various geometrical and constructivist movements which developed in Russia and Holland during the war and have since sprouted throughout the world. This current is based on geometrical language.

The second current has its principal source in the art and theories of Gauguin and his circle, flows through the Fauvism of Matisse to the Abstract Expressionism of the pre-war painting of Kandinsky, which is intuitional and emotional.

Various groups formed in further developmental process in Germany, France, Holland and later in America like Blue Rider, Rayonism, Abstract Expressionism, Orphism, suprmatism, De STIJAL, New - Plasticism, Elementarism, Abstract Dadaism, Surrealism, the Bauhaus, Abstraction- Creation group, Lyrical and Action painting, Informal art, Singh-paintings, Magical Abstraction, Hieroglyphics, colours field painting, Genetic - figuration, L'Art informal and Tachism, CoBrA concrete Art, Post - Painterly colour field Abstraction, Hard-Edge painting, the shaped canvas, Optical painting, Minimal Art and Primary Structures, Patterns and Decoration, the New Abstraction etc.

A chronology of contemporary Indian art is studied on the basis
of happenings in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi in chapter three. Artists belonging to these cities represent several contradictory attitude regarding art trends and their dilemma for acceptance and rejection of various art tendencies, these trends and tendencies could be roughly classified as

1. Traditionalistic vs Modernistic
2. Nationalistic vs Internationalists
3. Representational vs Non Representational
4. Idealistic vs Experimental
5. Individual conceptualism.

Chapter four comprises of different interpretation's & dilemma of acceptance and rejections of Internationalism and Abstraction in art. In the fifth chapter the abstraction quality of folk, tribal, tantra, symbols and scripts are approached. In the ritual performance of all these art forms many geometrical patterns, symbols of deities, of good or bad omen are painted for the well being and protection from all kind of atrocity to the family. Body tattooing is also a part of it.

Spiritualism which is based on the concept, faith and self realization has been achieved through tantra performance and practice. Tantra is creative mystery which impels inner awareness through transforming our act into creative evolution. To achieve fullest spiritual and material potential various diagrams, symbols and patterns are
drawn to perform the act. Most of these forms, symbols and diagrams are based on non-representational structure.

Chapter six deals with some abstract artists like Nasreen Mohammedi, Biren De, K.C.S. Panikar Jamini Roy & S.H. Raza. Their Ideology and concepts are shortly discussed on the basis of the previous discussions of Abstraction.
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Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh, India

Certificate

This is to certify that the research work embodied in this thesis entitled Abstract Art in India - 1947-93 has been carried out by Ms. Badar Jahan, under my guidance.

As far as my knowledge is concerned, this work is original and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree in this or any other university. She is allowed to submit the work for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Art of the Department of Fine Art, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Prof. (Dr.) Ashfaq M. Rizvi
Department of Fine Art
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh
Ph.: 0571-401710, 400920. ext. 356

A. 3. 1999
Dedicated to

My
Beloved Father

Late Mr. Laique Ahmed Khan
(Who sowed in me the seed of seeking higher values in Life)

My Loving Mother
Mrs. Noor Jahan
(Who through her prayers nurtured that seed in me to sprout)
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Badar Jahan
INTRODUCTION
Abstract is a term, used to refer the state or condition, form, belief and idea in which various art forms, conditions in terms of developmental stage, unnatural shapes, concept of spirit, "nirvana" and realization of self could be encompassed. Abstraction in the sense of art carries all these things in two ways – one is ultimate result and the other is the process of abstraction. A wide range of cognitive thoughts are provoked, where the question of a specific definition arises.

Abstraction has been defined as *pure form*, elementary form, absolute idea, other being, non-representational and non-objective. Where a slightest adulteration of realistic form breaks the norm of Abstract art, a slightest gateway from the imitational representation brings it in the category of *abstract*, Such conditions are termed as near naturalism and semi-abstraction.
In pure abstraction, identification of natural form is strictly prohibited. To contextualise, abstract art has to be defined largely by the elite domain who encroached every possible side of human brain.

The objective of this study is structured around the concept of a phenomenology of Indian art in context of abstraction. The subject is viewed from different vantage points such as: The dialectic of Abstract Art, A chronological survey of world Abstract Art, Abstraction in Indian contemporary Art and the Interpretations of Indian traditional folk, tribal, tantra art, symbols and scripts. The topic is vast and hat everything can be covered of course, but a stock of the relevant past has been digged upon to re-read the category of Movements in Indian contemporary Art.

Long time back in the history, it was easy to describe a period of artists like, in the early fifteenth century a passion for imitating nature was a common phenomenon. In Italy Renaissance marked universally by the science to discover the laws of perspective, of foreshortening, anatomy, movement and relief while in the early 20th century the dominant factor is extremely opposite. The pictorial conquest of the external visual world had been completed and refined by now. The boredom was reflected in their discarding imitational natural forms. Impressionism opened a gate way to pore in many new adventures, marked by a common and powerful impulse to drive away from natural representation.
A chronological survey of world abstract art is required here for a close speculation of the Abstract Art of Russia, Germany, Holland, America and in the light of such survey, the impact and transitory attitudes of Indian contemporary art scenario.

The Saga of world abstract art begins with Russian Kandinsky’s first pure-nonrepresentational picture in 1910 which was inspired by lyricism of music and colour. Along with him Kupka and later Malevich and Mondrian were considered the four great founders and real instigators of abstract painting.

Abstract Art during the last 60 years formed from two main modern art movements both of which emerged from Impressionism. The first current find its sources in the art and theories of Cezanne and seurat passes through the widen stream of cubism and find its delta in various geometrical and constructivist movements which developed in Russia and Holland during the war and have since sprouted throughout the world. This current is based on geometrical language.

The second current has its principal source in the art and theories of Gauguin and his circle, flows through the Fauvism of Matis to the Abstract Expressionism of the pre-war painting of Kandinsky, which is intutional and emotional.

Various groups formed in further developmental process in
Germany, France, Holland and later in America like Blue Rider, Rayonism, Abstract Expressionism, Orphism, Supermatism, de STIJL, New -Plasticism, Elementarism, Abstract Dadaism, Surrealism, the Bauhaus, Abstraction - Creation group, Lyrical and Action painting, Informal art, Singh-paintings, Magical Abstraction, Hieroglyphics, colour -field painting, Genetic-figuration, L’Art in formal and Tachism, CoBrA, concrete Art, Post-Painterly colour field Abstraction, Hard-Edge Painting, the shaped canvas, Optical Painting, Minimal Art and Primary structures, Patterns and Decoration+The New Abstraction etc.

In the process of these development artist broke and formed many theory, Rules and the boundaries of their respective working area and place to seek and find new avenues, new inspirational sources. Primitive, traditional, folk, tribal and other arts were explored for drawing a new Language to art away from Imitational gravity.

India was still passing through a gigantic social and political revolution during 40s, when the Abstract Art already reached to half way throughout the world. The year 1947 identified as a landmark for the freedom struggle from Colonial rule and Academic art, both of which caused the aggravated feeling for Liberation break through all sorts of boundage specially in the field of Art. The early modernists experienced the Independence euphoria which took a while to subside.
Initially, artists who gathered around New Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta drew their inspiration from both Indigenous and Western sources. Moving from one direction to another, one concept to another until they reached an ultimate goal. The progress of art activity in India, in terms of trend and tendencies are surveyed on the studies based on major cities like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. Artist belonging to these cities represent several contradictory attitude regarding art trends and their dilemma for acceptance and rejection of various art tendencies these trends and tendencies could be roughly classified as

1. Traditionalistic vs Modernistic
2. Nationalistic vs Internationalist
3. Representational vs non representationnal
4. Idealistic vs Experimental
5. Individual conceptualism.

The first generation artists like B.C. Sanyal, Amarnath Sehgal, P. N. Maga, K. C. Aryan, Kanwal Krishna, Satish Gujral and other represented Delhi art value. Various Art Akademic, Institutes, Galleries and Organizations started emerging all over India, the process was slow but steady.
The Bombay group of M.F. Husain, S. H. Raza, H.A. Gade, S.K. Bakre, F. N. Souza, and K. H. Ara allowed every kind of freedom in their expression and enthusiastically adopted the expressionism of Rouault, Van Gough, Klee, Mondigliani, in vogue in Paris during the 1940s. This artistic thrust could marked as the beginning of Abstraction in Indian contemporary art in the form of Cubism, Expressionism Impressionism and pure Non-representational approach.

Madras and Calcutta remained behind for quite along time in terms of new perspectives of world art but later a new generation artist caughtup with a strong, mature, more relevant and direct strike to the world art Gatonde, Narren Nath, Ramkumar, Surya Prakash, N, S, Bendre and other moved in the main stream of world art where inspiration from traditional and folk art was being drawn heavily by Klee, Mondrain Kupka, Kandensky and others.

Erotic imagery sex theme symbology, Neo Tantre inspirations were drawn by Souza, Himmat Shah 'Jivan Sundaram, J.Sultan Ali, Biren De, Bhupen Khakkar, Mansaram and others. The Genesis, the science, socio-political and cultural aspects and atrocities, personal fantasy, lyricism and poetic fantasy were represented with a personal idiom and exploration.

NCPA, AIFACS Lalit kala Akademi, Gallery of modern art
New Delhi, etc. contemporary art in India and the new generation artists of the later period of 80s and 90s. The adaptation of Abstraction in the contemporary art threw open a debate for a long time. The fear of losing one's identity as Indian or deforming the sanctity of indigenous culture was surfaced during the debate. Various point of views and concepts were offered to solve the problem. Ultimately the transitional phase of Indian contemporary art absorbed the term Abstract and became comfortable with it as a suitable rapport was settled between Indigenous art and Abstract art with the realization that Abstraction is not a foreign thing but it had always been there in the very root of our traditional art.

Coomaraswami aptly suggest here “On the other hand we have said ourselves that in the greatest work of art there is always a quality of abstraction, and have invoked the platonic endorsement of a geometrical beauty; we have said go, to, let us also make use of abstraction and have invoked the plastic endorsement of a geometrical beauty; we have said, go to, let us also make use of abstract formulae of ancient art were its natural vehicle and not a personal or even local invention but the common language of the world. The result of the modern interest in abstraction as such, and apart from questions of context and communicability, has been indeed to eliminate recognizability in art, but scarcely to modify recognizability in art, but scarcely to modify its still essentially representative purpose”.

1
As far as Indian traditional art is concerned it is emphatically structured in the framework of religion, religious beliefs, superstition, myth and spiritual connotation where imagery, non-representational symbols and elementary representation of sign, objects, and forms are used. In the ritual performance many Geometrical patterns, symbols of delights, of good or bad Omen are painted for the well being and the protection from all kind of atrocity to the family. Spiritualism which is based on concept, faith and self realization has been achieved through tantra performance and practice also both in art and ritual. Tantra is a creative mystery which impels inner awareness through transforming our act into creative evolution. To achieve fullest spiritual and material potential various diagrams, symbols and patterns are drawn to perform the act. Most of these forms, symbols and diagrams are based on non-representational structure.

The symbology of Folk and tribal art and also encompasses grade of abstracted forms, patterns motifs to achieve the simplest motives of daily house hold job & religious rituals.

Different states represent different beliefs, rituals and religious faith but the common factor is to achieve spiritual delight and religious beliefs.

The persistence of abstraction in Indian traditional art has
nothing to do with the changing scenario of the world refined art. It remain simple, elementary and pure as it was ages ago. The newness about that is that it caught the interest of 20th century Artists of the whole world. It reached to the places like France, Holland and Germany first because the situation out there was more suitable and the boredom from imitational representation was too strong.

While the world art was winding up all their experimental query after achieving the ultimate of abstraction, Indian artist were just started gathering, the broken wings of what they called Traditional art.

After an initial Chaos of independence, about a decade or so, the term Abstract started being heard and very few names like Raza, Gaitonde, Ram Kumar, Nasreen, Mohammedi and after a while Jeram Patel, Reddappa Naidu, J. Swaminathan Sunil Das, received recognition as an abstractionists. Abstraction though employed first by Rabindranath Tagore Gagindranath Tagore to some of their work in its present form or some times as a Cubist expression. It did not receive any strong hold in the Renaissance revolution of Bangal.

The most Interesting phenomenon about abstraction in Indian contemporary art is that they did not have to go for a second hand experience. A whole range of possibilities could be surfaced from their own root and the moment this fact was realized they zoomed to catchup
with the latest trends of the world art.

A second group of artist who believed that figuration has been an integral part of Indian culture, had so many possibilities to catch with main stream through following only process of abstraction. Nandlal Bose, Jamini Roy, Husain, Ram Kumar, Suza, Akbar Padamasi and others approached abstraction without reaching the ultimate goal. Taking into account their individual peculiarity and conservatism, they defined the traditional Indian art intermingled with contemporary art of the worlds.

In short, three dimensions: Tradition, Modernism & Post Modernism have been involved in Indian Contemporary Art. All three dimensions overlap and intersect. Indeed, their occurrence is often simultaneous. We take the uses of tradition first. Following this, is the difficult problem in Indian Modernism. Next comes the periodization of post Modernism. Then we focus on the Progressives, we go abroad to consider regionalist perspective on Modernity and Modernism in Asia. These issues crisscross the canvas of Indian Art implicating one from another multiple perspectives.

CHAPTER 1
The Dialectic of Abstract Art
Before approaching the dialectic of Abstract Art, the meaning and interpretation of the word Abstract is prerequisite. The term abstract, according to the Webster's New World Dictionary is - designating or of art abstracted from reality, in which designs or forms may be definite and geometric or fluid and amorphous: a generic term that encompasses various non-realistic contemporary schools. Abstraction, it says, is the - formation of an idea, as of the qualities or properties of a thing, by mental separation from particular instances or material objects.

Abstraction, according to the Dictionary of Philosophy is - "that aspect or form of cognition which mentally isolates properties of an object or connections between its properties from others. Both the process and its result are called Abstraction. In the process of Abstraction it is sometimes necessary to disregard certain of man's subjective possibilities... The various concepts and categories -
matter, motion, value are the results of Abstraction". The process of knowing in the broadest sense, including perception, conception, memory, and judgement is resulted through the processes of Abstraction. To penetrate the depth of an object it is necessary to breakdown that, separate out the essential aspects in their pure form. The process of this analysis could only be resulted with an intellectual work of abstraction.

It seems essential to quote Lenin here to justify the relevance of abstraction in the process of knowing "thought processing from the concrete to the abstract - provided it is 'correct'... does not get away from the truth but comes closer to it. The abstraction of matter, of a law of nature, the abstraction of value, etc., in short all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely".

ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE

According to the Dictionary of Philosophy abstract denotes a simple, elementary and undeveloped part of a whole, while concrete, it explains, as many sided, complex, developed, whole. Hegel, it informs, first categorised the abstract and concrete for a philosophical meaning which was later developed by marxist philosophers as - "the concrete is a synonym of dialectic interrelations of dismembered wholeness, the abstract is not metaphysically opposed to concrete but is a stage in the development of the concrete itself; it is the unrevealed, undeveloped concrete"
the relation between abstract and concrete for him is like bud and the fruit.

According to Hegal, the concrete is the description of an absolute idea which is the spirit of the thought process. The social relations and the nature are considered as other being, and abstract revelation of individual aspects or moments in the life of the absolute spirit. The abstract in real life unfolds only a limited nature of any of the fragments of the whole, as it is absolutely impossible, to reveal the absolute idea of the spirit. Abstract knowledge according to Hegal, therefore is one-sided, which expresses only one aspect of an object and isolates it from other aspects of the concrete nature of the whole.

The term abstract or abstraction has been variedly defined from a modest approach where it starts from near naturalism through semi abstraction to pure abstraction, to a very straight and direct one where it strictly prohibits even an accidental representation of any reality of natural forms.

Abstraction in Art Fundamentals - Theory and Practice is defined as "a term given to the visual effects that derive their appearance from natural objects but which have been simplified and or rearranged to satisfy artist's needs for organization or expression. Abstraction is a process of varying degrees of change - from near naturalism through semiabstraction to pure abstraction. Sometimes any resemblance of the final product to the original objects is
difficult to detect (as in pure abstraction, with its non representational art).

Abstract Art, it says, is a type of art which is entirely imaginative and not described from anything visually perceived by the artist. The elements, their organization, and their treatment by the artist are entirely personalized and, consequently, not associated by the observer with any previously experienced natural objects."^4

Abstraction in A companion to Aesthetics is described as - "absence of representation. In painting and sculpture, pure abstraction consists in the absence of representative elements, elements which recognizably resemble items in the external world and which the work is intended to portray. Abstraction, however, admits of degrees. Extremely realistic works display a minimum of abstract elements. As the artists introduces distortions or generalizations or purely decorative elements, the work grows more abstract."^5

While in the Dictionary of Abstract painting (Seuphor) the definition of Abstract Art is given as "... all art that does not recall or evoke reality regardless of whether that reality be the point from which the artist started or not." True abstract painting, it explains, should avoid representation, even of an accidental kind, or the depicting of any subject whatsoever. Its color, form, and textures exist for themselves alone depending on no reference to any external reality"."
The concept which did not arise from representational reality of objects or nature but out of spiritual - intellectual sources and the amorphous and geometric representation are accepted as pure forms. It has nothing to do with ideas taken from natural world, a different way of seeing came into existence, which generates and enjoys the inner sound of pure forms and characteristic quality of colors. "for nothing is more concrete, more real than a line, a colour, a surface (Van Doesburg)."\(^7\) and "remember that a picture, before being a bottle, horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a plane surface covered with colours (Maurice Denis)."\(^8\)

Abstraction can often be achieved with its own peculiar value of being the reality or an end in itself. The painter doesn't need to represent or initiate anything. He looks upon abstract painting as independent painting, emancipated painting. He can paint the symbols, forms, shapes geometric patterns, and even musical analogy, where he can use elements like line, texture, colours, rhythmic repetition, intensity, harmony etc. which could be composed without giving any hint of the natural forms, shapes and sounds.

A very strong support is provided in favour of abstract art long time back by Socrates' famous passage from the Philebus of Pleto. Section 51C:

"Socrates: What I am saying is not indeed directly obvious. I
must therefore try to make it clear. I will try to speak of the beauty of shapes, and I do not mean, as most people would think, the shapes of living figure, or their imitations in paintings but I mean straight lines and curves and the shapes made from them, flat or solid, by the lathe, ruler and square. If you see what I mean. These are not beautiful for any particular reason or purpose, as other things are, but are always by their very nature beautiful, and give pleasure of their own quite free from the itch of desire; and colours of this kind are beautiful, too, and give a similar pleasure”.

The dialectic of abstract art is based upon the assumption that the work of art, a painting for example, is worth looking at primarily because it presents a composition or organization of colour, line, light and shade. Resemblance to natural objects, while it does not necessarily destroy these aesthetic values, may easily adultrate their purity. Therefore, since resemblance to nature is at best superfluous and at worst distracting, it might as well be eliminated.

Hans Arp, although he long ago abandoned pure-abstraction, has expressed this point of view with engaging humour:

"Art is a fruit growing out of a man like the fruit out of a plant, like the child out of the mother. While the fruit of the plant assumes independent forms and never strikes to resemble a helicopter or a president in a cut a way, the artistic fruit of man shows, for the
most part, ridiculous ambition to imitate the appearance of other thing. I like nature but not its substitutes". 10

Abstraction not only generates the pure form of non-representational objectivity as an end in itself, it also explores the innermost abstraction feelings like emotions, experiences like pain, pleasure, mental stress, intellectual curiosity and mental voyage. "Thus the key to abstract art lies in the discovery of the self (also) and the exploitation by a suitable technique, of the hidden store of virgin material which we all carry within us and to which we all must find a path - and this is perhaps the hardest aspect of the artist's work - before it can be brought to light (Michel seupher)." 11 For the abstract expressionists, "the human gesture and its emotional content are absolutely key for interpreting the work; the work is a trace or record of the gestures that produced it, and can not be understood except as part of human emotional life." 12

Many of the early abstract artist represented their work as a spiritual exploration and have done justice to their approach which is undoubtedly incomprehensible without a sense of this purpose. They made their position clear by producing a proof away from the realistic approach for actual objects towards the spiritual. Kandinsky wrote:

"The artist must have something to say, for his task is not the mastery of form, but the suitability of that form to its content... (the artist's) actions and thoughts and feelings, like those of every
human being, constitute the spiritual atmosphere, in such a way that they purify or infect the spiritual air."

**ABSTRACT, NON-REPRESENTATIONAL, REAL, ABSOLUTE AND CONCRETE**

Concept such as **absolute, abstract, pure, non-representational** and later **non-depicting, non-figurative, concrete**, etc. are the so-called major terms concerned with the whole concept of Abstract Art. There are other less popular trends also like **Rayonnism, Unism, Structuralism, Taskism**, etc. which are distinguished by their different concepts, elements and functions. The main termini mentioned here mirror the great, indeed antagonistic, contradictions of two worlds: the representational and the abstract.

**Abstract** painting is a label like **Romantic** painting is for works of different origins and importance. The classical practitioners have defined this art as, "every kind of art which does not relate to visible reality, that is, it does not contain any abstract reality where it provides the initial impetus for the artist or not". That means a slight hint of natural reality spoils the abstract reality. In this case the term **art without objects** or **non-representational art** - that is, art separated from all concrete objects, are not appropriate as **art without objects** - the painting itself is an object so it can not exist without it. And formation of any abstraction when painted is again a representation...
of artists abstract thoughts. Therefore *non-representational* is also a defective term.".\(^{15}\)

The relationship of *reality* with only *representational art* is also looked more deeply which are determined by the existence of the object and the creation of its image.

The Dictionary defines *reality* as - that which exists, independently of ideas concerning it. Most of us have ideas about the things we look at or paint, unless we happen to be an undirected camera. Reality is such a relative thing from the artist's viewpoint certainly, that we must consider carefully before we condemn him for not painting *what is real*.

As painting itself is an *object* it also contains the property of being a *reality* weather it is abstract or realistic as Picasso said to emphasize the meaning of reality "*nature is a reality and my canvas is also a reality*".\(^{16}\) here the existence is motivated with the term reality it does not encompasses the content of the canvas but the canvas itself.

The term *absolute art* also needs to be defined, Adolf Hoelzel, the teacher of many abstractionists wrote: absolute art happens when the energy inherent in the artistic means is deployed without any outside interference. By *Interference* he means the imitation of objects.

Mondrian understood absolute art as totally free expression of art. He saw it not only liberated from imitation
but free of all individual means of expression, feeling and form. The aim is a concept of supra-individuality, objective art.

The concept pure art (Peinture pure) was coined by the poet Apollinaire around 1913. He demanded paintings without literary or practical content, integrated and pure like plants.

Near naturalism, semi-abstractions, pure-abstraction, non-objective, non-figurative, non-representational - all these terminology have different connotation in different countries. There are countries who adopted abstract art relatively late followed by Modern art and there are countries where the interpretation was wrongly understood. Indian contemporary artist from late 40's very liberally practicing all these termini, consciously or unconsciously, to reach their final approach towards pure abstraction.

All the synonyms of abstract art need to be discussed and analized in support of the wider frame work of abstract art.

NEAR NATURALISM, SEMI-ABSTRACTION AND PURE-ABSTRACTION

As per the definition of Art fundamentals - Theory & Practice "Abstraction is a process of varying degrees of change - from near naturalism through semi-abstractions to pure-abstraction". Abstract Art encompasses all the development of world art including Impressionism followed by trends in the history of Modern Art.
To resume: near naturalism is a breakage from pure realistic imitation in which pointillism, expressionism, fauvism etc. preceded by Impressionism could be taken. But only naturalistic tendencies in art, partly a reaction against the impressionist, including Art Nouveau and work of the symbolists; Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis, and Paul Serusier takes us gradually away towards semi-abstraction.

Near or semi abstractions are compositions in which the artist starting with natural forms, transforms them into abstraction or nearly abstract forms. He approaches an abstract goal but does not quite reach it. The best example for this category could be Cubism wherein the designs are derived from subject matter and natural forms that have been abstract- that is to say transposed from the subject and containing many hints of what the original natural form was. Even the most extreme Cubist distortion has some elements of the face, figure or guitar and wine glass still evident. As Picasso doesn't believe in pure abstraction, he says "There is no abstract art. We must always begin with something. Afterwards we can remove all appearances of reality; there is no danger because the idea of the object has left its indelible imprint. It was the object which provoked the artist, excited his ideas, stirred his emotions".18

Picasso had his niche in Paul Cezanne's concept of solidity of natural forms. His patient exploration of natural forms and
their depiction as solid images on the flat surface of the canvas provided the foundation for the experiments of the Cubists.

Cubism in Indian contemporary art has been a stronghold for a very long time. The modern artist who had a strong attraction towards Internationalism, crossed the forewalls of Indianness and adopted Cubism in search of a new meaning.

After so many new avenues semi-abstraction reaches the stage of pure-abstraction in which the artist makes a composition of abstract elements such as geometrical, spiritual, intellectual scientific and amorphous shapes. In India, abstraction is rather rediscovered as it has always been an integral part of Indian religion, mythology, traditional art, tantric meditation, symbolism and fantasy etc. New experimentation and curiosity towards colors and texture made Indian artists to divert towards more original forms with new philosophical and intellectual approach.

NON-OBJECTIVE AND NON-FIGURATIVE

The term non-figurative seems to please many artists who are in search of a word to describe a painting without figuration or representation of visual objects and forms. This term is used to describe most painting that depends on abstract and plastic qualities alone for expression and meaning. Non-objective, a term which describes a Pure Abstraction of the kind created by Kandinsky in which the image is regarded as being rejected.
Alfred H. Barr, Jr., an American writer in his book *Cubism and Abstract Art* does not keep *non-objective* and *non-figurative* in the category of *abstract*. He argues "Substitutes for abstract such as non-objective and non-figurative have been advocated as superior, but the image of a square is as much an object or a 'figure' as the image of a face or a landscape, in fact 'figure' is the very prefix used by geometers in naming A or B the abstractions with which they deal."

He explains "this is not to deny that the adjective abstract is confusing and even paradoxical. For an abstract painting is really a most positively concrete painting since it confines the attention to its immediate, sensuous, physicals surface for more than does the canvas of a sunset or a portrait."

THE REASON FOR ABSTRACTION

When the old imitative Renaissance realism were being severed, many new motivation set in to redefine the capabilities of human creative instinct. It became increasingly necessary to put certain distance between the artist and the world in reaction to the unpleasant criticism. The autonomy of creative impulse protested against any kind of dependence and limitations and proclaimed its right for freedom. 'As long as art is in bondage to objects, it condemns itself to slavery', Delaunay called out. Paul Gauguin had advised a friend:

'Art is abstraction; Take from nature only what you dream of it';
Abstract artist started a new dimension to his vision through a new perspective of the spiritual intellectual and experimental value system. It made him reinterpret the fundamentals of colour, line, design, texture etc. So modernists believed all the more in their own powers of imagination and intuition, in an autonomous art.

After 1908 these wishful concepts were voiced in a psychosis of image-making. "The human mind wants to force its order on to life and nature, indeed it wants to put itself above nature. It does this by changing nature, or leaving it out completely or by denying the validity of sensory perception altogether (Brion). Human order was therefore created in images. And it was believed that it was in correspondence with the universal order of things".20

The idea behind making - Abstract Painting is the visualization of an idea and the creative impulse of an abstract artist make him a different kind of creator of a different kind of a reality. Like the astronauts who launch themselves into the darkness of space and chart the existence of invisible stars. The invisible world which abstract painters try to show us, has a purely spiritual and intellectual origin. The forms they create often do not represent anything but themselves, having no origin in the outside world.

There are paintings which sometime exude a strong sense of cosmic experience and sometimes represent an excellent
resemblance of microbiological photography. There is tantric sublimity which unites the atma with parmatama through meditative representation. The symbolic achievement makes the mind exercise for recognition. Geometric and colour patterns and variation widely give the source to his creative mind. There are so many technical achievements which have their niche in non-representational way of painting. Sometimes it represents external resemblance, sometimes the inner reality of human mind and sometimes a curiosity of knowing the unknown.

The autonomy of abstract painting place this form of art at same level as the creative arts like music and architecture, as both of it does not resemble or represent anything but itself. An architect and a musician is an abstract artist, he does not imitate any natural object or voice in nature. The musician creates the magic with sounds and chords and the motif of music itself. Abstract painters also construct different kinds of ideas of invisible harmony, of the unending vibrations, the eternal contrasts, out of liberated means or elements. All these elements dance on a new tune which generates a new exciting energy.

In the same connotation color also received a new dimension by Kandinsky as he wrote in 1910; "Sharp colours express their natural qualities more vividly in a pointed form (for example yellow
in a triangle). Colours which tend towards depth are enhanced in their impact by the use of round forms (blue in a circle). These ideas on the psychological significance of colour were later developed by him for teaching purposes.

Kandinsky also believed that pure elements, especially colours, are capable of affecting our inner experiences, even apart from the traditional tripartite reaction to art; colour is a means of direct impact on the soul. The colour is the key. The eye is the hammer. The artist is the hand which sets the soul in vibration by means of this or that key". 21

ABSTRACTION HAS ALWAYS EXISTED

The presence of abstraction in art could be traced back in the pre-historic age when man was threatened by the mysterious forces of nature. It seems he wanted to please nature, protect himself from the atrocities and the confusion through his geometrical expression or witchcraft practice, which do not possess any reality of the outside world.

Later, perhaps in the first era of civilisation, man reached the conclusion that his capacity to reason and act made him superior to nature. Therefore he demonstrated his wish for order through abstract geometrical forms. At the same time he had to realise that his striving for order on the one hand, and the signs of flexibility on the other, did not only have the same geometrical forms but also the identical source which keeps the
universe in check: the higher eternal energies, the divine. The presence of abstraction, therefore, also meant being connected with the higher, divine principle and sometimes also a guarantee of immortality. Ornamental abstractions and geometry therefore became forms expressive of the divine. We can see how these dominate in Islamic, Byzantine, Medieval and to a certain extent in Ancient Indian art.

The epochs of predominantly Abstract Art were superseded gradually by representational ones when geometricism and the archaisms of the ancient Greeks came with the high praise of the beauty of nature of the Phidian and Hellenistic age; after the geometrical Romanesque and the abstract Gothic came the Florentines and their Renaissance realism.

If we perceive it more closely we could realise that even Renaissance realism is constructed on the abstract fundamentals, for Botticelli, Leonardo and especially Piero della Francesca built up their whole paintings from abstract basic structures. They constructed a compositional skeleton and dressed this architecture with realistic observations from nature. This became the standard procedure.

Abstraction had always been there, and has remained under the skin of every realistic work of art. By carefully observing a representational, figurative painting we discover not only the abstract structure of composition which gives order to the
whole, but also the ornamental arrangements of the figurative silhouettes, the musical rhythm of repeated motifs and the counterpoint of colour surfaces. We can even discover a great abstract sign which is generated by the contrast of darker and lighter shades of colour. Each representational painting is informed by this tension between the realistic imitation of life and abstract visual values. This interpretation is valuable in the study of Indian contemporary art where we find more possibility of near naturalism and semi-abstraction.
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CHAPTER - 2

World Abstract Art:
A Chronological Survey
Chapter 2

One day Wassily Kandinsky in his studio experienced a strange ‘indescribably beautiful painting infused with an inner glow’ the painting was resonant with a quite music. The tones of the colour and the sounds of their chords could be heard. It was an amazing experience for him. This is how a pure non-representational saga began. The chronology of pure-abstract painting, thus, starts with the Russian Kandinsky in 1910, the famous water-colour by him was held to be the earliest example of modern non-representational painting. This way Kandinsky is known as the father of Abstract Art.

The movement towards abstraction in our own days differs from similar trends in earlier period by being far more extreme and much more violently antinaturalistic. But the roots of the present artistic revolution may be traced at least as far back as the mid nineteenth century.
In 19th century a number of paintings had already broached the realism of the abstract, even if only in a limited way. After Turner and the haunting ink drawing of the poet Victor Hugo, it was the artists of the Art Nouveau movement (in 1893, Henry Van de Velde and in 1900 Heman Obrist and his pupil Hans Schmithals) who perhaps came closest to realising an abstract art.¹

The French poets, Theophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, began to consider words as much for their value as pure sounds as for their intrinsic meaning, and in their poems they strove to achieve the purity of music, the most abstract of all arts. Inspired by the poets, artists such as James Abbott, McNeill, Whistler spoke of their works as harmonies or nocturnes, and consciously attempted to equate colours with music.²

Between the year 1908 and 1910 the concern with the problems of non-representational art became even more acute. In 1908 Francis Picabia started a series of abstract drawings and a year later he even painted a series of pictures with circular motifs, but then abandoned these researches. The Lithuanian composer and painter M.K. Ciurlionis also contributed to the discovery of abstract painting in the years 1905-11. In his painting the traces of unknown plants and landscapes flow into each other like the motifs of a piano sonata. Czech Kupka had also been occupied with two basic elements since
1903, in particular movement and colour. In doing this he found a factual motif unnecessary and a hindrance. Although he sometimes joined the Key board motifs with a water surface or with a female silhouettle, nevertheless around 1909-10 he stepped forward into the realms of pure forms.

There were other occasional explorers in the area of the non-representational, like the Americans Weber, Walkowitz and Dove, the Belgian Lacasse and others. But it was Kupka and Kandinsky who were the first to be fully conscious of the far reaching importance of their discoveries. Perhaps they did not create the first abstract paintings and are not the first discoverers of Abstract Art, but - and this is important- they built the foundations and developed them.

Kandinsky and Kupka, and later Malevich and Mondrian developed abstraction by hard but successful experiments which were eventually strengthened by theory. These are the four great founders and real investigators of abstract painting.

TWO MAIN TRADITIONS OF ABSTRACT ART

Abstract art during the past sixty years maybe divided historically into two main currents, both of which emerged from Impressionism. The first and more important current finds its sources in the art and theories of Cezanne and Seurat, passes through the widening stream of Cubism and finds its delta in the various
geometrical and constructionist movements which developed in Russia and Holland during the war and have since spread throughout the world. This current may be described as intellectual, structural, architectural, geometrical, rectilinear and classical in its austerity and dependence upon logic and calculation.

The second current has its principal source in the art and theories of Gauguin and his circle, flows through the Fauvism of Matisse to the Abstract expressionism of the pre-war paintings of Kandinsky. After running under ground for a few years it reappeared vigorously among the masters of abstract art associated with surrealism.

This tradition, by contrast with the first, is intimitional and emotional rather than geometrical in its forms; curvilinear rather than rectilinear, decorative rather than structural, and romantic rather than classical in its exaltation of mystical, the spontaneous and the irrational. Often, of course, these two currents intermingle and they may both appear in one man.

In the pre-abstractionist trends two main aspects were seen that is a gradual abolition of the representational elements and the crystallisation of purely visual elements. For the impressionists - the specialists of fleeting impressions and of pure eye the search for the transitory effects and beauty of light was more important than the object. On the other hand a rhythmic, visual vibration of pure colour
resulted which guaranteed the visual unity.

Next to the impressionist fleeting moments is the search for geometrical and other intellectual basic supports of Cezanne's opinion "Everything in nature models itself like balls, cones and cylinders. One has to learn to paint on the basis of these simple forms..."^4

While Ganguin's interpretation was intuitional, emotional and romantic 'The impression, however, which results from the simple distribution of colour light and shadow, is the music of the painting'. He thought of the creative energies.^5

H. Matisse spoke of the 'condensation of feeling' and wanted to achieve 'through simplifications of ideas and structural forms ...an inner equilibrium' of composition.^6

For futurist 'objects in motion multiply themselves ceaselessly, they deform because they follow each other like vibrations moving forward in space ... this simultaneously results in a change, in the decomposition of objects, in a scattering and melting of details'. It was a need for expression or the will to bring an intellectual spiritual pre-occupation into the realm of the visible, which guided these painters.^7

Braque, rather laconically, formulated the difference between expressionist and Cubist way of seeing ; 'The senses distort, but the
mind forms'. The cubists started not so much from a study of nature, but from the artificial, geometrical existence of a painted rectangle. The amorphous, broken up parts of objects are articulated in a crystalline structure. It was out of this structure that the formation of cubist painting, with its dependence on the environment and its rhythmic surfaces soon developed.

**BLUE RIDER**

In 1912 the painters of the group called Der Blue Reiter of Munich expressionists in Germany was second only to the cubists of Paris in importance among pre-war abstract movements, contradicted the cubist rationalism. Kandinsky, the leader, Marc and Klee were the nucleous of the group. They wished to transpose the drama of sound composition, which they experienced, into colour forms. Their way of painting carried a metaphysical message.

Kandinsky who brought about new direction further in his later work is associated with many new developments. Throughout his life he occupied himself with new ideas specially in abstract art. He had written an essay on the theoretical possibilities of non-representational way of painting in 1910, which was published in 1912 as *on the spiritual in Art*, the guiding principles of which were followed by the young painters as a revelation and a sign post into fresh areas of art.
His first abstraction period was known as expressive - lyrical or hot trend. He started his career in painting at Munich at the age of 30. He longed to express in painting the great synaesthetic emotions of ecstasy and frenzy such as frustration, meanness, crazy richness, lavishness, thunderstorms, the humming of mosquitoes etc.

RAYONISM

Parallel to Blue Rider in Germany as abstract expressionism, formed Rayonism Lutchism in Russia during the Year 1911-12 by Michael Larionov as the most purely abstract movement in Europe. Rayonism was an offshoot of Cubism, and also related to Italian Futurism in its emphasis on dynamic, linear light rays. Rayonism started with the disintegration of forms - figures or landscapes - into radiating rays of light. The ideas, involving and art that was synthesis of what one may call 'the fourth dimension', were of the greatest significance in their influence on Malevich and the development of superematism. Rayonism though shortly lived but produced some of very significant work.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Abstract Expressionism is associated with Kandinsky, Dada and Surrealists' theories of automatism and lately around 1940's with some American artists, notably Jackson Pollock who was inspired partly by the painter Andre Masson and Joan Miro. He applied the automatic
techniques to paintings, and the process was christened Action painting by the critics.

The definition for Abstract Expressionism Is a loose one because many of the works of painters often exhibited together as abstract expressionists are far from similar in manner or intent. The technique of Abstract Expressionism is generally based on free and automatic action painting. Nothing interposes itself between the gesture of painting and the artist. The painter allows the brush and color to give expression (of an abstract kind) to his feeling and emotions. Sometimes the idea and statement to be revealed is conceived before painting, but as often as not the spontaneous gesture and engagement before the canvas generates its own energies and conclusions.

In this way painting itself becomes the theme. Unlike the paintings of the Cubists who took the subject and revitalized it by new ways of seeing, the abstract expressionist generally begins without a preconceived image - the strokes and textures and colors became the subject. Sire Herbert Read speaks of "... another kind of image, not an associated pictorial image, but a sensational image an image of an indeterminate shape and imprecise colours, which perhaps comes from a deeper layer of the unconscious, with no immediate perceptual associations from the external world."

ORPHISM
Orphism is associated with the works of Delaunay and Frank Kupka, started in Paris. Picasso and Braque approached very near geometrical abstract design in their cubist manner, but during these years Delaunay and Kupka went further to print the first pure abstractions in Western Europe.

Delaunay said about his approach. "I have dared an architecture of colour, ... in the hope of creating a dynamic poetry which remains wholly in the realm of visual means, without any kind of literary associations and descriptive anecdotes." He called his art of this time simultaneisme - simultaneous colour - contrast while Apollinaire called it orphism - an art of pure musical lyricism of colour.

In 1912 he painted a series of window compositions. He constructed these paintings on the principle of light. He explained it: "It was a really new way of creating without analogy with the past or the present."

Czech Kupka was not only the founder of 'geometrical' abstraction but also the most significant as well as the most ingenious abstract painter in France. Probably this was he who painted the first geometrical curvilinear and the first rectilinear pure - abstractions in modern act. Before the first world war, next to the musical and coloured architectural manner, he developed two further techniques, the lyrical technique of the 'created motifs' and the very sober sort
of 'triangular motifs'. After the war he drew a great deal of inspiration from the world of science and mechanical engineering and the musical world of Jazz.

SUPERMATISM

The first artist to establish a system of absolutely pure geometrical abstract composition was the Russo - Polish painter Kasimir Malevich of Moscow. His geometrical constructions expressed the movement of emotions; "The things and objects of the real world have vanished like smoke. I have created nothing, I have simply experienced spirit, and in it I have gleaned the new, which I have called suprematism. It has expressed itself in me through this black surface (Basic suprematist element. 1913. Drawing), which formed a square, and then a circle. In them I have realised a new world of fresh colours..."  

The black square done in lead pencil was the first suprematist picture. By suprematism, Malevich wrote, "I mean the supremacy of pure feeling or perception in the pictorial arts." "It was no 'empty square' which I had exhibited but rather the experience of non-objectivity".  

After 1920 Malevich realised that these pictures were the closing chapters of painting. In the history of abstract art Malevich is a figure of fundamental importance. As a pioneer, a theorist and an artist he influenced not only a large following in Russia but also, the course of abstract art in central Europe. He stands at the heart of the
movement which swept westward from Russia after the war and, mingling with the eastward moving influence of the Dutch Stijl group, transformed the architecture, furniture, typography and commercial art of Germany and much of the rest of Europe.

De STIJL (de stal - the style)

In Webster's New World Dictionary de Stijl is a name of a journal founded in 1917 in Holland (during the war) by Mondrian and Theodore Van Doesburg - also an abstract art movement marked by the use of rectangular forms and by emphasis on primary colour or grays and blacks.

De Stijl, one of the longest lived and most influential groups of modern artists, was marketed by extraordinary collaboration on the part of painters and sculptors on the one hand and architects and practical designers on the other.

In 1917, the influential theoreticians Van Doesburg published a book, *The New movement in painting*, and Mondrian Published a series of articles in De stijl, including *New - plasticism in Paintings*, which in 1920, after his return to France, he expanded into his book "*Le Neo - Plasticism* ", one of the key documents of abstract art.

The years 1920 - 24 saw an astonishing expansion of the influence of de stijl, first in Belgium, then in Germany, France, Eastern Europe and even in Russia where it met the earlier but less practicable
abstract traditions of supererematism and constructivism.

**NEW - PLASTICISM**

The work and thoughts of Piet Mondrian formed the backbone of the movement, the New - Plasticists or later elementalists gathered around the journal De stijl. Mondrian had a mathematical answer to the question of the substance of things. He reduced all physical and mental actions to a basic law of contradiction, that of the vertical and horizontal. This basic contradiction, which he related to the feminine and masculine principles, exists everywhere. In the rectangle, which became the hallmark of his work, the principle shows itself in its most concentrated form. In addition, Mondrian resorted to six further elements, three colours (Yellow, blue, red) and three non-colours (gray, black and white,) to express the concept of the universal at its most simple. He knew that 'the Universal aspect behind each individual manifestation of nature rests on the equilibrium of objects'.

*Finally in 1921, after eight years of non-representational experiments Mondrian achieved a very strict formula consisting of eight basic elements. The change to its textural proportions' and the colour - rhythms resulted in further variants of harmony until 1940.**

**ELEMENTARISM**
Oblique compositions, Van Doesburg’s architectural projects and group exhibition De stijl in Paris in 1924 initiated a further period, that of Elementarism. The Elementarism manifestos and theories (particularly at the Bauhaus since 1921) were the works of its dynamic spokesman, Van Doesburg. His last theoretical contribution, the explanation of concrete art rendered artists more conscious of the possibilities of highly artificial and independent visual systems. This was his real contribution to the group Abstraction - Creation.

ABSTRACT DADAISM

Abstract Dadaism is a provisional name for the diverse kinds of Dada painting which approached or achieved abstraction. Dadaism itself was primarily a state of mind. It began in Zurich in 1916, partly as a literary movement, and developed stronghold during or after the war in New York, Cologne, Paris and Hanover with outposts in many other cities.

Dada was born of scepticism, disillusion, cynicism and nourished by war, peace and inflation The dadaists scoffed at all standards and traditions, both conservative and advanced. The program of contempt for art did not, however, prevent the Dadaist painters from appropriating and developing the ideas and techniques of pre-war movements of which in many cases they had been members.
Duchamp and Picabia, active as pioneers of Dada, brought to the movement not merely a spirit of iconoclasm bitter and humorous by turns but also two methods of organic or bio-morphic abstraction and is admirably illustrated by Duchamp's half-Cubists Bride of 1912, four years before the Dada explosion occurred. It also anticipates the later, abstract surrealist art of Ernst, Arp, Picasso, Miro etc.

The second method contributed to Dada by Duchamp and Picabia was an abstraction not of organic forms but of mechanical forms. His very rare picture upon the earth and amorous procession, done just before and after the beginning of Dadaism, are characteristic of Dadaist Machinism.

The German - Swiss Klee outside the Dada movement was admired, though originally a member of the Blue Rider group in Munich, he influenced both Dadaism and surrealism by the inexhaustible variety of his ingenious fantasies.

**SURREALISM**

Surrealism was like Dadaism, a point of view, a faith almost a way of life. In their rejection of the rational and intellectual in favour of the subconscious world of impulse they looked for sanction to Freud and the psychology of the subconscious. Many of their painting and drawing are the results of automatic technique (like automatic writing, it is done in a state of semi-hypnosis in which conscious
control is presumably abandoned) or of an attempt to recapture the atmosphere of dreams - both related to psychoanalytic method.

Abstract art has no connection with Surrealist. From a strictly Surrealist point of view an abstract design is merely a by product. But a fine link could be traced if we go deep. Surrealist painting may be divided into two kinds. First could be called automatic pictures. Second, the dream pictures. The first suggests a maximum of technical spontaneity, a direct record of an uncensored graphic or pictorial impulse. To this category belongs much of the surrealist work of Masson, Miro, Arp and often Picasso.

The second kind also depends upon spontaneity of imagination but not of technique. Tanguy, Dali and often Ernst, in their effort to make as convincing as possible a fantastic or dreamlike world, used a technique as realistic and deliberate as that of a Flemish or Italian master of the 15th century.

From a formal, plastic point of view the first kind of surrealist painting in its abstract aspects belongs not to the tradition of Cezanne and cubism but to that which comes down from Gauguin through Matisse to Kandinsky and Klee of the Blue Rider group in Munich.

Klee though had no desire to involve himself with Surrealist, achieved along with his more literary and representation at work a
long series of abstract and near abstract fantasies, minor in key and of extreme subtlety and wit.

The art of Masson or Miro at its most characteristic, is flat, two dimensional and linear. Miro's drawing is at times almost meditative, wandering, like a river over a flat plain; his colour possesses an extraordinary freshness; and his forms have the convincing gusto of primitive cave paintings or children's water colours. Of all the surrealists Miro has the most plastic humour.

THE BAUHAUS

The various abstract currents alive in Germany after the war, together with influences from Holland and Russia, were united in the Famous Bauhaus, founded by the architect Walter Gropius in Weimar in 1919. He invited Klee, Feininger and Kandinsky as Professors at Bauhaus, all three of whom remained with it long after it had moved to Dessau in 1926 and passed in spirit from expressionist to geometrical, functionalist and constructivist principles. It was like research laboratory which contributed to the *neo geometrical* style of functionalism.

The experimental transformation of constructive forms into the production of consumer goods was the task the reformed Bauhaus had set itself. The methods and systems of the Bauhaus teachers. Plus the work of the leading abstract painters such as Mondrian and
Malevich, were collected and published in the 'Bauhaus books'.

After 1933 the National socialists closed this progressive institute. While the Nazis branded the abstract Bauhaus artists as a Jewish - Bolshevic evil, the abstractionists, forbidden to paint in their own country, emigrated to be able to preserve their movement.

**ABSTRACTION - CREATION GROUP**

An international group founded in 1931 in Paris, by Naum Gabo and Antonie Pevsher. Although it possessed no definite program, the group served for a time as the focus of some of the more radical currents in abstract painting. Among the important movements represented in the group were the constructivism of Gabo and Pevsner, the De stijl movement, represented by Piet Mondrian and Surrealism of Jean Arp and his followers.

They strongly opposed the artistic irrationalists and the cultural and political reaction especially in Germany, Central Europe and later in Spain. Their activity and the clear, scientific theory of the Concreists produced remarkable results long before the second world war when it was broken up.

**LYRICAL AND ACTION PAINTING**

The first group of American Abstract Artists was founded in 1936 and in 1942 the gallery Art of this century was founded, which gave
magnificent support to surrealists and constructivists artists. Mondrian was an adviser there and under its aegis the energetic Jackson Pollock began his enormous symbol - an action paintings.

In America it was the immigrants who helped to ignite the fire of abstraction by their example. Many of young artists applied their skills to abstract painting in 1945-50 through Neo-Cubism and Expressionism. The irrational explosion and the prattle in paint of the Abstract Lyricists increasingly gained the upper hand over the geometrical objective tendency in Paris as well as in New York.

The overturn of this turbulent lyrical kind of abstraction, began between 1936 and 1944. It was Jackson Pollock who started the era of Abstract Expressionism in 1943 with his murals for P. Guggenheim, and discovered the foundations of the so called 'Action Painting' around 1947. Action painting is a very dramatic way of painting full of bold, careless and monumental gestures. Huge canvases on which the paint was spurted dripped and poured were called overall compositions.

The rise of the Lyrical Abstractionists began in America in 1947 and remained unshaken throughout the 50s. Georges Mathieu, the leading figure of the lyrical school gave a comprehensive and pragmatic character to the movement. The original title of this exhibition, on Lyrical Abstraction, painted to a particular concept of
art which originated with Van Gogh, Picasso, and Arp and ended with Bryen, Brauner Hartung, Mathieu etc.

This was a real revolution. Not the painting itself but the act of painting, in which the pent-up emotions wildly break loose in whirling brush strokes of destructive explosiveness, became the symbol of such art. By destroying the discipline of form the painter thought he was destroying all other tyrannies as well. He felt liberated of fear, of the rational shackles of convention and the symbols of repression. Therefore the lyricists influence was of an emotionally vital and therefore expressive kind.

After 1951 most lyrical painters came together under the new labeler of Informal art. The main stress was on the non-means of matter and the not-yet-forms, for example in the openness of the canvas.

A peculiar aspect of lyrical Abstraction appeared in the 'sign-paintings' of Hartung, Tobey, Lapicque, Kline and Morita who wanted to communicate visionary mediations.

The paintings of Magical Abstraction showed different aspects. The signs and hieroglyphics were to make possible a connection with a hidden world of energies. Burri, Baumeister, and some Spaniards liked to work with rough materials, and other liked for unmaterial as Miro, Music, Medek and some Japanese and Chinese painters. There
are three more movements under lyrical tendency. American colour-field painting (Newman, Rothko), with enormous chromatic surfaces suggestive of the American sense of space. These painters had a strong influence on the later post-painterly abstraction and the so called hard-edge painting.

A further phenomenon which arose out of the non-dogmatic, humanist concept of content within the lyrical tradition is called Genetic Figuration. The figurative which appears in the paintings of this movement is broken parts and signs (de kooning), but also as a whole structure (de stael), did not hinder the lyrical urge to make the nature of things apparent: on contrary. At times this style tended also to the imaginative post-surrealist conceptions.

**L' ART INFORMEL AND TECHISM**

Parallel to lyrical abstraction of America a new expressive brush gesture emerged in 1940s and 1950s in Paris and from Europe it soon spread throughout the world. It represented the departure from the tradition of Cubism and geometric abstraction in the creation of a new form of expression. L' Art informel refers to intuitive, spontaneous, undisciplined art - the essence is creation with no desire for, nor preconceptions of, control, geometric or otherwise. It is painting that begins with the brush and a blank canvas, may go anywhere, and thus generated various other verbal categories; like
Tachism - a French word means stain, spot or blot. The chief exponent of this way of painting is Georges Mathieu.

'The term L 'Art, like Abstract Expressionism, is so broad and all-inclusive as to be almost meaningless, but its usefulness is the emphasis it places on opposition to all phases of disciplined, geometric, or concrete art.'

CoBrA

An international expressionist group (Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam) was formed in Netherlands in 1948 when Karel Appel, Cornelis Corneille and George Constant established the experimental Group. Most of the painters associated with the CoBrA group employed some sort of subject of figuration, usually derived from folk art, children's art, prehistoric or primitive art. The most important unifying principle among these divergent artists were their doctrine of complete freedom of abstract expressive forms, with accent on brush gesture.

Around 1960 as the decline of the manifold movements of lyrical Abstraction began to be felt, the trend still acted as a powerful starting point for the counter movements: Pop-art, New Figuration, Systematic painting, Kinetism, New realism and Minimal Art.

During the sixties, however, before the underlying complexity of pop had been fully appreciated, it was abstraction that dominated
Within the world of art itself, mainly because its essential sobriety and internal processes of self-purification engaged the attention of the most serious critics and thinkers.

In Europe the new nonobjective artists went forward by looking back to the constructivism of the 1930s Abstraction-Creation group, or beyond that to the Bauhaus, De Stijl, and the Russian avant garde. The Americans pursued ever greater reductiveness by translating into geometric form or non-relatedness of the Abstract Expressionists field-like structure.

**CONCRETE ART**

In 1930 Theo Van Doesburge coined the word "concrete" as a substitute for non-objective. In 1931 Abstraction-Creation group advanced the principles of pure abstraction and of Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism which was also based on pure concept.

The concept of concrete Art was revived in 1947 in the salon Des Realites Nouvelles, while the gallery of Denise Rene, opened in Paris in 1944, became an international center for the propagation of concrete art.

The French Josef Albers influenced the united States while in Europe Swiss-Max Bill. Concrete Art, a term he began applying to his own work in 1936. It has the advantage over the word abstract, in
that it referred to a particular phase of abstract art. It also serves as a rallying cry in its emphasis on the painting as an entity in itself, as something concrete rather than as something abstracted from nature. According to Bill, concrete painting eliminates all naturalistic representation; it avails itself exclusively of the fundamental elements of painting, the colour and form of the surface. Its essence is, then, the complete emancipation of every natural model; pure creation.\textsuperscript{14}

POST-PAINTERLY COLOUR FIELD ABSTRACTION

A number of exhibitions held in the 1960s drew attention to certain changes that were occurring in American Painting. The critic element Greenberg, acting as consultant, organized a series of one-man exhibitions including Barnett Newman, David Smith, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Julea Olitski and Friedel Dzubas - artists who were to be recognized as major forces in the color field painting and primary structures of the 1960s. He entitled an exhibition in 1964 as Post-painterly Abstraction, means, among other things, the blurred, broken, loose definition of colour and contour. Greenberg applied the term painterly to the abstract Expressionism of Pollock, Hofmann, De kooning, Kline and their immediate followers who employed the apparent brush gesture - \textit{the stroke left by the loaded brush or knife that prays out, when the stroke is long enough into streaks, ripples and speaks of paint.}\textsuperscript{15}
The next exhibition to document aspects of the new abstraction came in 1966 and was entitled *systematic painting* by Lawrence Alloway, who organized the show for the Guggenheim Museum. It suggests significant new directions in American abstract painting. It refers to paintings which consist of a single field of colour, or to groups of such paintings. Paintings based on modules are included, with the grid either contained in a rectangle or expanding to take in parts of the surroundings space. It refers to work in much freer manner, but who end up with either a holistic area or a reduced number of colors.

**HARD-EDGE PAINTING**

The term “hard edge” was first used by the California critic Jules Langsner in 1959, and then given its current definition by Lawrence Alloway in 1959-60. According to him “The ‘cone, cylinder, and sphere’ of Cezanne - fame have persisted in much 20th - century painting. Even where these form are not purely represented, abstract artists have tended toward a compilation of separable elements. Form has been treated as discrete entities,” where as “forms are few in hard - edge and the surface immaculate ... The whole picture becomes the unit ; forms extend the length of the painting or are restricted to two or three tones. The result of this sparseness is that the spatial effect of figures on a field is avoided.” The important distinction drawn
here between Hard - Edge and the older geometric tradition is the search for a total unity in which there is generally no foreground or background, no figures on a field." Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhard, Leon Polk Smith, Alexander Liberman, Sidney Wolfson, and Agnes Martin were the principal pioneers.

THE SHAPED CANVAS

Of 1960s the so-termed "shaped canvas", was applied to the smoker series of Wesselmann. He cut the edges of the canvas in curvilinear shapes that reiterate the shapes of the hand and mouth and smoke within the painting. These works do not involve projections or recession in the canvas but simply an organically shaped contour.

OPTICAL PAINTING (OP ART)

What is called Op Art overlaps at one end with light sculpture or construction (in its concern with illusion, perceptions, and the physical and psychological impact of colour), and with light experiments on the spectator: At the other end, it impinges on some, though not by any means all, aspects of color filed painting in its use of brilliant unmodulated color in retinally stimulating combinations, especially in the art of Larry Poons.

There were elements of optical illusion in the paintings of
Mondrian, Van Doesburg, and other painters of De Stijl, although this was not a control factor except in Mondrian's late paintings. Moholy Nagy and Albers introduced optical experiments into the curriculum of the Bauhaus, both in terms of color and perspective. During the 1960s a new generation of painters as Victor Vasarely and Yaacov Agam and others, throughout the world turned to forms of art involving optical illusion or some other specific aspect of perception.

MINIMAL ART AND PRIMARY STRUCTURES

In the 1960-70s constructivism gained a new impetus in the so-called Primary structure and minimal or ABC Art. Minimalism represented a significant attitude of the 1960s, even more in United States than in England, but also in Japan, Germany Australia, Canada and other countries. It related closely to a number of significant tendencies of the decade; the paintings involving the shaped canvas; and the paintings with mathematical systems as the basis of their organization. It also had relations to certain aspects of colour field painting that in turn, overlapped with systematic painting. In almost all these different sculptural and pictorial experiments there was usually a strong geometrical base, the use of intense, unmodulated industrial colors, and elemental shapes.
PATTERNS AND DECORATION

As the period of 1970s sees a strong influence of illusinism a new pattern and decoration movement, sometimes called "The decorativeness" began to stir in the early 1970 and coalesced as a major development in the second half of the decade. Pattern painting, albeit based on the same grid as that underlying formalist structures of minimal Art. Patterning's energy source is its refusal to eliminate any possibilities. In a review of P and D, the critic Johan Perreanit declared:

Naked surfaces are being filled in; lifeless redundancy is being replaced by lively fields that engage the eye as well as the mind. The grids of Minimal - type painting are being transformed into nets or lattices for the drawing out of patterns that are sensuous and that have content that goes beyond self-reference and the immediate art context, although including both."

THE NEW ABSTRACTION

With the turn of the 1980s the reaction against the minimalism assumed a new intensity in the form of New Expressionism, and New-Surrealism with a youthful love of bold gesture, heroic scale, mythic content, and rebellious figuration.

The younger American and European painters evinced an aggressive, daring embrace of every possibility - metaphor, allegory
or narrative, surfaces energized by and packed with photographic processes, broken crockery, or even oil paint. Nothing was created afresh. Rather, they are appropriated from some pre-established source and then recontextualized by the artist in his own painting.

The new Abstraction in a quest for symmetry with the concurrent Neo-Expressionist or Neo-Surrealist developments, strongly independent non-representational art became resurgent towards the mid-1980s, has been called, New Abstraction.

"Neo-Abstraction" implies an almost fashion-conscious, sentimental, opportunistic, recycling process utterly at variance with the slow, solitary, out-of-the-limelight circumstance in which most of the abstract artists found their artistic identity.

Among the artists of abstractions, it may indeed be anything but aloof, self-starving Minimalism - except as a style to deconstruct. David Read, a leading member of the group, put it this way:

"The hiatus in attention was extremely healthy for public view, it gives you time to learn how you want to proceed. The situation was worse when abstraction but only abstract art about process and surface - was prominent. There was a pressure to conform. Now the situation seems open again. A lot of reexamination has been going on in abstract painting. People don't know what abstraction should be and so it can be any number of things".18

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15. Ibid, P.488.


17. Ibid, P.616.

CHAPTER 3

Historical Background of Post Independence Indian Painting 1947-93
In India independence came with the partition chaos and communal rights which resulted in the migration and insecure social and political condition, it was indeed a dark period for any creative activity. However, after the Indian Independence and partition in 1947, some art activity could be noticed.

During migration some artists came to Delhi from Punjab, among them were B.C. Sanyal, Amarnath Sehaga, P.N Mago, K.C. Aryan, Kanwal Krishna and Satish Gugral. Artists such as Sailoz Mookherjea, N.S. Bendre, K.K. Bebbar, K.H. Ara, Shivax Chavda, Gopal Ghosh, K.K. Sen, Sushil Sen, M.M. Roy, Dhanraj Bhagat and Vajubhai Bhagat became the source of inspiration to the younger generation artists through imparting their spirit of *joy de vivre* during this transition, creating the theme of oneness with nature and rural serenity.
In their expression the joy of lyrical nature of the line and an outburst of warm colours shared its rhythms with music and dance. All these senior group artists gradually disseminated in different parts of the country and contributed in forming different groups, discipline and ideology.

As soon as the political situation became comparatively normal and stabilized, the artistic activities were revitalized and accelerated on the base formed by the pioneers of Indian modernist Rabindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Nand Lal Bose and Amrita Sher-Gil. Though Indian artists found many impediments on the way to developing a modern visual idiom, the torch was already lighted somewhere in Bengal renaissance to give a guide line.

In the process of gradual study of art activity after independence the idea to establish the Lalit Kala Akadami should be mentioned as the earliest initiative taken by the first education minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, to promote and disseminate the cause of artistic activities in the country. The most important event in the happenings of art activities at the moment was the comprehensive exhibition of Indian Art, held in London from November, 1947, for three months under the auspices of the Royal Academy of Art, where many unknown masterpieces and significant specimens of Indian Art were displayed and the reaction came as:
"There is certainly something in its extraordinary blending of an uninhibited sensuousness with the extremes of spirituality and abstraction to explain why it was so long before it won serious attention in the West".

At home the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru played a serious role in the development of art and culture. Nehru in his attempt to resurrect the nation following the physical and psychological devastation of partition and Gandhiji's death, used art as a symbolic balm to heal the fragmented society, and a way to commemorate India's freedom. At the Presidential Palace, Nehru held an exhibition of ancient Indian art. Even in the five year plan, the development of artistic activity was stressed. Nehru himself emphasised the modern approach in Indian art and initiated a series of steps towards the creation of the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Lalit Kala Akadami and other institutions.

The setting up of All-India Association of Fine Arts on 25th March 1947 also heralded a new infrastructure for the future art scenario along with already formed AIFACS, B.A.S. and Calcutta Art society (C.A.S.).

The formation of Delhi Silpi Chakra in 1949 by a group of artists as Bhabesh Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, Dinkar Kowshik, Jaya Appasamy, Prannath Mago, Hari Krishna Lal and Damianti Batra was an attempt at social reconstruction. Most of these displaced artists from the newly created Pakistan faced the central issue of how to pursue formal
aesthetic exploration in a society beleaguered by mass hunger, class conflict, and through destitution. The group questioned the very meaning of art to whom should it appeal? What kind of massage could it carry? What response would it command? with their new ideals and programmes they attracted many local intelligentsia and artists seeking change and progress. Though their approach was social they looked their environment critically yet sympathetically specially towards the brutalities of man.

Ram Kumar among the young artists tried to define himself through his art during the Delhi Silpi Chakra region. One artist who helped create the patina of New Delhi artistic history was Sailoz Mukerjee who's reform came with the hint provided by the French master Matiss when he suggested you came from the land of Nataraja and I have nothing to teach you. Mukerjee received a kind of guru mantra and fused Matissian form the Mughal colours, bringing modern Indian art closer to the International art scenario. Satish Gujral as a New Delhi artist made a remarkable impression with his expressionistic approach towards tackling the issues of brutality and the mass genocide of partition head-on. In his work, one notices a collective sorrow and sense of looming pathos. He used the forced migration of Hindus and Muslims to create an art of social protest. India's First private art gallery, the Dhoomimal Gallery formed in 1939 at Cannaught Place played an important role in promoting all these artists.
Calcutta also to some extend came into the grip of partition trouble because of the emergence of East Pakistan in Bengal. Therefore, the difference between the expressionist values of the Calcutta group and Delhi group were mainly based on social and natural conditions governing at that time. Children with swollen bellies and skeletal human figures with mask-like faces were a powerful subject, but the member of the Calcutta Group (1943-53) artists wanted to create art for art's sake to bring progress. The group formed by Raithin Moitra, Gopal Ghose, Nirode Mazumadar, Paritosh Sen, Krishna Pal, Sunil Madhave Sen, Prodosh Dasgupta, Bansi Chandragupta, Subho Tagore and Pran Krishna pal presented their manifesto, Art should be international and interdependent, displayed a similar sense of excitement of Bombay Progressives about the modern world claiming that the Paris of Sartre, Stravinsky and Picasso is the centre of the day.

However, a group of independent artists, including Chitraprasad, Somenath Hore, Ramkinkar Baij, Benode Behari Mukherjee and Zainul Abedin, picked up this very subject of Human suffering and produced powerful images in expressionist language dealing directly with issues of human agony and aspiration. Red, black and grays were the dominating colours of the pallete of both of the group which suited well to their subject.

On the contrary, the Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad and Baroda
had no breakage of social or natural atrocities and therefore elements of human suffering are absent in the exposition of these groups. The 'Bombay Progressive Artists Group' emerged between 1948-56 consisting of F.N. Sauza, S.H. Raza, H.A. Gade, S.K. Bakre, M.F. Husain and K.H. Ara. "The Group was founded on the belief that true life of art lay in its formal vocabulary, and that existing pictorial vocabularies had run dry. Some where hidden in all this was our implicit belief in the eternal low of change." The group was quite open-ended. Each artist followed his own aesthetic horizon. As Sadanandji Bakre recalls "The only ism we had in common was 'individualism'. We shared a desire to get out of the mould, to free ourselves and our work." His desire for freedom came as Exploded Atom (1966) which reflects the Young and mesmerizing spirit of the year 1947, exemplifies his desire to loose himself emotionally free. The determination to shut out the misery of reality infuses the heavy brushstrokes of this painting with a sense of pleasure, and renders the entire canvas of celebration.

Raza's approach towards abstraction reflects in his marine Drive, K.H. Ara's desire to break the forms to its most basic origin received perfection in his still life's. Husain's Zameen reflected the very soil of his origin. F.N. Souza's self portrait bring about a revolutionary visual reality to cultivate his viewers habit to experience what they were not accustomed. His confident ability to transform his erotic - religious feelings in to a wild - discipline of expressionist drawing and pigment
handling, brought him significant international acclaim by the 1950.

The new conceptual freedom was emphasized in all these artist's use of colour also allowing it to express their individual pent up emotions, desperate to break with the past orthodoxies. The green the blues, the yellows with a little bit of red for the use of contrast were the main colours which dominated the pallete of the artists. The expressionism of Rauault, Van Gogh, Klee, Mordiqiani in vogue in Paris during the 1940s formed the inspirational basis of these artistic thrust. As F.N Souza, S.H. Raza, S.K. Bakre and M.F. Husain crossed the boundary of India for quite some time, artists like V.S. Gaitonde, Krishen Khanna, and Mohan Samant joined the progressive Artists Group in 1950.

Cubism which was dominating the 40s artist along with Paritosh Sen, J. Sabavala, Satish Gujral and Ram Kumar helped them to shed their hesitation to adopt abstract form in later years.

The trend in Madras art world was either iconographic or realistic in this decade. Though many artists later adopted idioms of the modern Art folk experiences in art and craft were still alive in their environment.

In August 1949 at Calcutta, an all India conference on Arts, was held, presided over by the minister of education, to invite expert opinion in promoting the visual art and culture of Fine Art in independent India. The most important items discussed were:
1. The scope of Traditional Indian Art in relation to modern development;

2. the role of Art in general education including,
   (a) - art teaching in general schools and
   (b) - at the University stage;

3. The place of Art in
   (a) - Industry and
   (b) - commerce;

4. Art schools and their syllabuses;

5. Ways and means of promoting social education through art;

6. The place of Museums and Art Galleries in education;

7. The desirability of establishing a central institute of art;

8. The formation of a central organization to coordinate art activities;

The most important resolution was the recommendation that the culture of the visual art should find a place in all stages of education, beginning from the primary education stage.4

With the establishment of foreign missions in New Delhi and their sub-offices in regional centers at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, and
with the signing of Cultural Exchange Programmes, a group of promising Indian artists from various regional centres went abroad to study. A couple of them had the opportunity for exposure at important centers such as Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, Students Arts league, New York etc. visiting Paris with its international artistic atmosphere became the dream of most Indian artists. Pandit Nehru in *Discovery of India* puts it this way "we in India do not go abroad in search of the past ... we go to foreign countries in search of the present. That search is necessary, for isolation from it means backwardness and decay..." Through this process a new phase of Indian contemporary Art came in to a new form. The adoption and importation of new aesthetic ideology at par with Internationalism gave birth to an eclecticism.

Various art associations and art societies started establishing in the country during 50s, some of which were very active in organizing periodical exhibition of art. Among new societies an important one was *Rupa Rasika Sabha, the society for the connoisseur of Beauty* founded in Calcutta in 1950.

The Jehangir Gallery in Bombay was established in 1952, essentially with the patronage of Sir Cowasji Jehangir and the Parsi community with its democratic values. With the Government's First Five Year Plan (1951-56), Lalit Kala Akadami and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi were established in 1954, and later Lalit Kala Akadami held its First National Exhibition in 1955. While in Baroda the
establishment of M.S. University, devoted to Arts, in 1950 was devotional move of Markhand Bhatt, Hansa Mehta, N.S. Bendre and Sanko Chaudhri. The team was joined later by K.G. Subramanayn in 1951. The M.S. University soon became a leading academic institution for the arts in India.

This was the time when two very clear approaches were visible on the art scene in India in the form of Representational versus Non-representational art along with Nationalistic approach versus Internationalistic one. At the same time it was realized by a group of artists that the artist is neither a commentator nor a social reformer. As such, sticking to an idea, theme or philosophy was of no value.

The representational group of Delhi and Calcutta accepted the philosophy of aesthetic and Indian principle of Iconography. For them Indian tradition and religious belief is formed on a positive shape which gives a way to even abstract feelings and deities, therefore abstraction was fundamentally obliterated for them.

But as by the mid-1950s, the modern Western abstract idiom had filtered into the contemporary Indian Art. This rigid attitude was perceived differently when the Non-representational group of Bombay etc. formed a new ideology with a belief that abstraction has been long rooted in Indian art tradition and the authenticity of Indian contemporary abstraction comes from a philosophical idealism. Some
artist chose a very different connotation having the concept that while Indian artist should not adopt western traditions, should not also repeat the old Indian traditions of the Buddhist, Mughal, or Rajput Schools, but have no prejudice against the assimilation of the latest phases of the European paintings of the post impressionists, Abstract and Cubists, without dominating the basic Indian national manner of expression.

To vitalize and strengthen the best phase of modern non-representational art of the modernistic French Schools, some of that artists like Bendre, Hebbar, Sailoz Mokherjee, without abandoning figurative art, tended a flat plane on which colour was laid in such a way as to create an interesting surface, pallet knife became more important instrument to acquire the textural quality. They took folk theme, street scene, daily routine, the women, the toilet, cattle and the field etc. M.F. Husain became the most influential and popular painter, an epitome of India’s intuitive creative energy. He possessed a sense of the Basohli spirit of colours and spontaneous brushstroke, tempered within a calligraphic discipline, and ability to fuse the innocence of folk art forms, music, dance, popular cinema & Indian sculpture.

The first post - Independence Indian artists to sustain the international abstract idiom were Raza, V.S. Gaitonde, Biren De, G.R. Santosh, later followed by certain members of the Group 1890 such as Ambdas, J. Swaminathan and Jeram Patel among others. Ram Kumar
from their own soil and cherish a revivalist cult of the past. The more broad point of view were presented to co-relate science and technology with art by some contemporary artists and critics.

The urges of contemporary art of 60s belong to the climate of modern world, its metaphysical question marks, its restlessness and anxiety, its disillusionment and confusion. The artist, in the solitude of an isolated existence amidst (to him) unmeaningful political and social demands, was under an intolerable necessity to express himself in a new realism, and a new objectivity created the peculiar icons for its tensioned expression. The symbolic values of the reality, his own conception, exploration of his own troubled soul, or the mysteries of sub-conscious, to reveal a new dimension of the mind was a flight from earlier simplified expression. The philosophical concept to get the bottom of the thing whether evolution of innerself or the outer reality expressed in semi-abstraction and abstraction.

On August 25, 1962, a group of artist called Group 1890 issued a manifest referring “art for us is not born out of a pre-occupation with the human condition, we do not sing of man, nor are we his messiah. The function or art is not to interpret and annotate, comprehend and guide, such attitudinising may seem heroic in an age where man, caught up in the mesh of his own civilization hunger for vindication.” The group declared “art is neither conforming to reality nor flight from it; it is reality itself.”
Swaminathan as a spokesperson of the Group 1890 says - "the artist does not communicate an experience or an idea. The act of painting is itself experience to him. The viewer has to look for communication, he has to be in communion with the work of art. I then becomes ... a thing of wonder, as when a child first open its eyes to its surroundings." The instinctive creative impulses, which Swaminathan had wished to express, slowly transformed themselves into a compulsion. To recreate the very aura and myth of ritual which the American Abstract expressionists had set themselves was being done with authenticity by someone like him.

Art for them did not need to be representational or abstract, figurative or non-figurative, it defined its own space, delineation, colour and pattern it was neither the translation of an experience, feeling or idea nor the objective realization of form in space, the criteria of perspective, harmony and dimension being objective, were foreign to it.

The Group 1890 was membered by Jyoti Bhatt, Himmat Shah, Jeram Patel, Rajesh Mehra, J. Swaminathan, G. M. Sheikh, Ambadas, Balkrishna Patel, Eric Browen and Reddappa Naidu.

In general abstract idiom were being practice moderately and was receiving attention of critics as well. "His work is an art for those who see rather than read, it aims to be a kind of visual music." Says Jaya Appasamy about abstract artists. She discriminates abstraction in tow
categories - *planer abstraction* and *variation on colour field abstraction*, Ram Kumar's later work which are different from his previous figurative, extended to abstraction in Landscapes. Surya Prakash indulge in machine and metal than to nature. Textural quality, broken edges, glazed smooth grading contrasting but more favoured in this decade, signify the first category. In the second she keeps Gaitonde and Nareen Nath. "The colours are limited and quite and often consist of hues of the same colour ... There is a certain sense of mysery in these painting. The artists of gestural abstraction paints in an expressionist way."

In February 1964 K.G. Subramanyan, K.C.S. Paniker, N.S. Bendre and others established the Cholamandal Artists village, near Mahablipuram in Baroda. Their ideology was expressed in their first journal *Artrend* in 1961 as "Life in India today seems to provoke her artists to begin to think more pertinently of their aesthetic requirements, and to evolve in their own minds a cleaner picture of what they are looking for in the art of their time. They fairly accept that what passes for modern Indian art in many quarters here, is, at best, and almost sterile Indian version of a European way of art expression. It still lacks vital Indian inspiration, which alone can ultimately fuse the apparent contradictions into an acceptable pattern..." The existential feeling at that level which agitate the drawing all through, was the true contemporary experience, they clarified.

Their drawing broke structure, spread itself out and patterned out the agitation. K.G. Subramanyan who was earlier full of his slade
school experience with abstraction soon returned to media closer to his local roots, but with in an evolving universal vision.

The breakthrough was based by K.C.S Paniker of Madras in South India who created a unique direction and imagery for himself and his students. The central idea advanced in his paintings and in those of his associates was that of patterning. Since the grammar of patterning has nothing to do with laws of nature, the rules of realistic representation can not hold at all, and one can picture freely.

By the mid-1960s a number of talented artist were working in an atmosphere of urgent inner search, focusing on the use of the line, within an idiom which respected the traditional south Indian craftsmanship, especially its decorative aspect, hand in hand with a conceptual and spiritual rigor. Painters attempted this by conjugating symbolically, colours and shapes in to primordial patterns and fields.

The erotic imagery was produced by Souza, Avinash Chandra, Himmat Shah and Vivan Sundram. Satish Gujral, Sultan Ali and Biren De used sex themes. On the other hand Bhupen Khakkar, Mansram and Vian Sundram worked to create Pop Art by using symbols of Pan shop, picture of Durga, photographs of the Khajuraho mmithuna couples, crude folk art toys, plastic scorpions and other things.

During the 60s most artist became self taught. In Calcutta a new generation artists were tempted to surrealist way in their socio-political
comment. The society for contemporary Artists, established in 1960 was founded by Nikhil Biswas, Bijan Chawdhry, Shyamal Dutta Ray, Sanl Kar, Ganesh Holoi and others, contributed in sustaining many artistic journey. Sunil Das's brilliant spanish inspired Bull & Matador series in charcoal best reflects the mood of the time. In total the realisation to re-created Indian identity with something fresh with a guideline of modern 'isms' became the motivation of the late 60s.

The contemporary art of 70s shows a kind of return towards its culture, tradition and religion, with more sensitive perception of world around. Indian artists also tried to harmonize colours, shapes and volumes clothed in their tradition. Symbolism and tantra concepts had been used frequently both in religious theme and self exertion. Biren De and K.C. S. Paniker represent these tendencies at their best.

K.C.S. Paniker's words & symbols series represents an abrupt break from his earlier work. The importance is given to the geometric as a means of creating the decorative center, was partially inspired by Tantric symbolism. Biren De was the first artist to be seen as a tantric inspired artist who shared many characteristic with tantric philosophy, such as pursuing an understanding of the male-female unity and the nature of human energy. His Genesis-1 and 2 represents New - Tantric inspired modern art. G.R. Santosh also has uncompromisingly sustained the New - Tantric idiom. By 1971, the international awareness regarding
Tantra was at its peak with the first international exhibition on Tantric Art at the Hayward Gallery in London. It provided contemporary art a chance to create an original and abstract idiom upon which to construct an artistic Indianness.

Triennale - India, first opened in 1968 broadend the vision of Indian art scene and made a platform for India in the art map of the world, while mar. 74 exhibition of National Gallery showed exhilaratingly adventurous experimentalism. The conflict between traditional and abstract still continued. Some artist chose in between way of semi-abstraction like Rekha Rao, Lalita lagmi, Charan sharma, Chavda etc. Thus, by the 70s renewed urban sense of social awareness began to inspire the international artistic vision. In India, many Calcutta based artist continued to reflect an artistic sense of social responsibility, for Bengal once again bore the brunt of extreme violence with the Bangladesh war (1971-72) and naxalite movements.

Bikash Bhattacharjee shifted to realism. The theme of women and the injustice done against them became his focus by the late 1970s. 1970 represents the emergence of many Indian women artist with a great self - confidence. Artists such as the brilliant Ira Roy, Arkita singh, veena Bhargave, Kishori Kaul ,Madhvi Parekh, suruchi Chand, Arhawaz Vasudev, Navjot and others, held their first solo or group shows during 1971-73. Nalini Malani also worked on women series during the early
1970s. Nasreen Mohammed, Anjali Ela Menon and Gogi Saroj Pal are other prominent women artist.

During the 1970s a range of post-independence second generation artists such as A. Ramachandran, G.M. Shaikh, Grieve Patel, Rameshwar Broota, Vivan Sundram, S. Patwardhan among others, best expressed another perspective of urban pain and protest in cities such as Bombay and New Delhi. Their work highlighted the shift in emphasis towards a greater urban art consciousness, with its willingness to comment on social political issues, contextualising the figurative idiom. One such group came together in the *Pace for People* exhibition (Nov-Dec. 1981) at the Jehangir Gallery, Bombay, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.

"When cultural conflicts are setup, things will emerge in open awareness, one begins to believe (specially in art) that one we do what we please. At such moment artistic individuality is claimed to an absolute degree - just anything is thought possible, and deemed self - justifying." This statement supports the individualism mostly adopted by the 80s artists referring to the developments of the 80s one may notice a strongly demarketed vision of modernistic and traditionalistic trends, and the controversy which was still on. The first section comprises those who pursue a fusion of content and form, through an ongoing exploration of images, the second consists of those who are modern in concept. 1980s artist represents many art style and technique - figurative, non-
figurative, objective, non-objective, faddists, charlatans, etc. It became a phenomenon, a curious mixture of socio-political and cultural aspects, also of personal fantasy. There are some who draw their imagery from the world of dreams, lyricism and poetic fantasy to express their volatile emotions through a personal idiom and exploration.

Although accepting internationalism, the Indian artist also became conscious of not getting merged into it. Indian paintings during this period reached its formative stage, had though cleared some of its pitfalls. "The modern age has gifted the human mind with a keen sense of curiosity."^{10}

The Madras artists like S. Dhanapal K.Srinivasula and P. L. Narasimhamarthy remained totally unaffected by the new influences. Artist like K.C.S. Painiker and others felt the urge to move into the world stream of art. A Alphonso, K.M. Adimoolam, R. B Bhaskaran, S.G. Vasudev, C. Dakshinamoorthy, P. Gopinath and S. Nandgopal constitute the core of the modern generation of artists in Tamil Nadu, involved in experimentation and creativity without losing their Indianness. The most innovative and dynamic name in Indian art world is Satish Gujral who has not been content with one medium, but experimented in several.

The popularity of Tantric art, Folk art and Tribal art increased in this decade, Biren De, K.C.S. Paniker & G.R. Santosh continued these
trends. The Madras Chola Mandal artist Gopinath inspired by Madhubani paintings of Northern India expresses himself in *Ritual Memories*. J. Sultan Ali combined the bright colors and bold lines of folk paintings, Sunil Das of Calcutta used rhythm and energy in his forms, Bhupen Khakhar looks into the future, criticises the society used the manner of Mughal miniatures. Jahangir Sabaval returned to his human after a long landscape period. Manu Parekh's work is akin to a hallucination. Tyeb Mehta's despair, agony of the helpless, reached to icon of alkali. The agonising fear of the fugitive is repealed by the ferocity of the proclaimed outside in Souza. Akbar Padamsee has experimented with art films, did figures in gray which irradiated states of eternal suspense of sorrow.

The two contemporary Indian art exhibitions in Tate Gallery of Britain and Oxford Showed the work of almost all the prominent artists during 1982. In the continuation the two Triennial 1982 and 1986 brings the world art at home, and the east - west visual arts encounter organized by NCPA during 1985 aimed to reflect modern art specially in contest of the antagonism between individual creativity and experimentation versus communication in art, which appeared as a major problem for the whole world artists who preferred individual expressionism.

In this decade art patronage was wide spread. The art galleries
came up to boost awareness among the people, though sophisticated, highly professional galleries had yet to emerge - a gallery conforming to the highest or international standards. Many Academies in all the major cities both at the national and regional levels, started playing a pivotal role in promoting art and artists through publications, productions, seminars, direct purchases, cultural exchanges etc. similarly the national gallery of Modern art, AIFACS and the Indian Council for cultural relation actively involved in art promotion.

The contemporary art scene of 90s is more mature and more aware and is like a lush forest of unique fruits with different taste. The mature and establish artists continue with a big bunch of new talents, emerging of the art scene, experimental art is one of the major perspective among the young artists of 90s. Mixed medium is more popular in self expression. Some artists have worked with glass as Giridhar Gowd, some with copper as Sujata Bajaj. Sound and light gave a new dimension to painting. Terrycot canvases are used with thick layers of paint to bring painting closer to sculpture. Vivan Sundaram used engine oil and charcoal on paper, Acrylic is used more comfortably. Sunil Gawde used roller technique, producing poetic motions. Among Calcutta artist most of the artists' work border on the abstracts. Some artists say that they generally chose their subjects subconsciously, the choice may be the result of people they may have met or incidents that might have taken place in childhood or even long ago in history, that have left an
indelible impression on their mind.

Rameshwar broota Switches over a variety of subject. Bombay based artist Jehangir Jani's characters in painting are deliberately faceless. Naina Konodia, Arul Raj, Sivanesan, Neeraj Goswami, Mona Rai, Dilip Tamuly and Brij Raj Goel all are more close to social and human conditions, always looking forwards with new experiments. The helpless condition of human being specially of women is depicted in this decade also by many artists including female artists as Imtiaz Dharkar's Purdah Series'.

Arun Goswami's style of smooth colour blending, realistic brush work with sketchy, rough and emotive strokes evoking a dreamscape peapled with bizarre characters, grotesque birds, tense look. While Calcutta artist Abhijit Mitra's woman, is distorted figuration.

1990 ends with a new sensational form of art computer painting. A mixed response was received, an enthusiastic expression of Husain shows his approval “I envision a time when, sitting here, I will be able to do a mural in Tokyc... we need a push - button speed now - to capture the speed of thought.”

A number of important group shows came up during early 90s like sparrow show, and Journeys within Landscape. At Gallery masterpiece in Delhi three important shows were done during mar. 1992. First black and white drawing by Gaitonde, second Ganesh Pyne show of again
brilliant black and white drawing, third was of Manish Kamal Biswas's acrylic on papers.

Group shows and auctions, acquaintance with commercialisation of art increases during early 90s though it is, some time, used for fund raising. In Sep. 90 Husain's birthday auction money was collected for the gulf evacuees. Nov. 90s Ashish Balaram Nagpal auctioned Manjit Bawa's paintings of animals for animal hospitals in Delhi. Many auctions were done to help the organization like CRY, Help Age India. Bombay Art Society and others actively involved in social welfare. The motive was also to help the young artists to come up, as 1991 Help Age auction selected the paintings from all parts of India including Atul Dodiya, Amitava Das Arpita Singh, Bikash Bhattacharjee, C. Budikins, C. Doughlas, Reddappa, Naidu, Jehangir Sabavala, Rekha Rodwitty, K.G. subramanyan, Shamshad Husain, Thotaa Tharani and Yusuf Arakkal.

The Homage auction of 12 Sep. of Bikash Bhattacharya's canvases at Victoria memoriel in Calcutta during 1992 was conceived as a special project to remember some of the great sons of Bengal who are integral to story of Calcutta.

According to Lakshmi Lal "the art market is a whole network of circumstances, such as rising levels of awareness, an accelerating gallery movement and increased art activity. Besides, auctions have brought a lot of
international attention to contemporary Indian Art.\textsuperscript{12}

While an accelerated art activity marked the early 90s, an evil business attitude crawled out to fetch money out of art talent. A handful well established and popular artist's work fetched very high rates as M.F. Husain, Satish Gujral, Anjolie Ela Menon and fellow artists, comparatively to the younger generation artist which created a knife of Havoc and dissatisfaction among new emerging talents.

There are several factors that influence art tangible among the fellow artists, buyers, gallery owners and critics. At times, these proved to be hurdles in the artists growth or rather, his evolution. Since he has to whether unconsciously or not, resort to compromise, or stay within certain parameters that are defined by the above mentioned factors.

To combat the damages done by the commercialization of art Showtambani of M.F. Husain in 1992 was an appreciable symbolic gesture, which was followed by the erosion of his six paintings in Calcutta at Tate centre. Along with M.F. Husain many artist including Navjot preferred atmospheric art which hampers the buying and selling art. This art form could be classified as kinetic art, which was long time back practiced all over the world for one more, among other reasons to expand the possibilities of new art invention and take out art from all the four corners of any canvas in support of freedom of mind, freedom of expression and freedom of space.
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7. Jaya Appasamy "The Path of Abstraction", The critical vision selected writing, (Lalit Kala Akadamy, New Delhi), P. 62.

8. Ibid. P. 63-64.


CHAPTER - 4

Abstraction in Indian Contemporary Art: An Interpretation
Chapter 4

The term Abstract has been used in reference to many new art forms of 20th century modern art throughout the world. This term has been defined and applied differently in different perspectives and historical circumstances ruling the particular country. Abstract provides two different conditions - a process and a result. This way the term abstract is seen in a very wide perspective and it opens two different connotations to its definition one which strictly adhere the final result and the other which follow the development.

Its final result is the pure abstraction where any adulteration of representational form or imitation of any kind which may evoke any sign of realistic world is strictly prohibited. It is totally divorced from objective or visual reality. The second condition deals a long process where abstraction evolve varying degrees from near naturalism through semiabstraction to pure abstraction.
Pure abstraction belongs to an extreme, fully developed condition while abstraction merely provides a passage to the ultimate goal which sometimes deliberately is not reached. Often abstraction is an unacknowledged process in modern Art while Abstract Art is a complete and developed art form to represent its real and pure meaning.

Though abstract art facilitates the work of Kandinsky, Miro, Monderian, Klee, Jackson Pollock and other abstract artists their work also induce a narrow speculation in terms of the differences of their nature. In the context of Indian contemporary art the work and ideology of V.S. Gaitonde, Mohan Samant, Ambadas, Suryaprak as, Jeram Pate, S.H. Raza and Narren Nath evoke the similar speculation under the infrastructural study of pure Abstract Art.

Abstraction as a processing condition provide more space to coalesce all art development bifurcated from naturalism towards modern art. To study the abstraction in Indian contemporary Art we need to follow abstraction rather as a process of varying degrees of change - from near naturalism through semi abstraction to pure abstraction. This type of infrastructure enables to comprise most of the contemporary Indian artists who received their initial inspiration from European Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism, Futurism, Expressionism, constructivism, Dadaism, Op Art etc. and from Indian cave paintings, miniature
painting, folk art, tribal art, tantra art, symbolism and spiritual Fantasy.

Often a narrow use of the term abstract and the domination of the figuration in Indian contemporary Art scenario have limited the understanding and applicability, therefore the association and the implication of the term applied to contemporary art could be abrasive. It does not mean that abstraction has no place in Indian art. It is because the term figurative has been so much religiously conjugated to the traditional and classical art¹ that it often performed as a preoccupation from any broad perception and interpretation of the possibilities of abstraction in Indian traditional and classical art. The danger of misinterpretation and practice of the abstract quality of traditional art in current circumstance was warned by Coomaraswamy.

"On the other hand we have said to ourselves that in the greatest works of art there is always a quality of abstraction, and have invoked the platonic endorsement of a geometrical beauty; we have said, go to, let us also make use of abstract formulae. It was overlooked here that the abstract formulae of ancient art were its natural vehicle, and not a personal or even local invention but the common language of the world. The result of the modern interest in abstraction as such, and apart from questions of context and communicability, has been indeed to eliminate recognizability in art, but scarcely to modify its still essentially representative purpose. "²

Abstraction often connived consciously or unconsciously with a
preoccupation with the ongoing conflict of traditional versus modern approach of the initial stratum to the extreme of representational versus non representational dilemma.

The initial diversion towards abstraction in the form of cubism of late 40s were criticised to be a baffled state of expression resulted merely in a puzzled attitudinizing the fashion by some sharlatanries who essentially did not follow the right track of selfscrutiny and a subtle approach.

"Without the school-taught ability to copy nature, without even the academic formula for design and colour, the counterfeit art of the modernist camp followers is about the poorest thing in the whole scale. It usually avoids cheap sentiment, but cheap aesthetics is just as futile. Its one chance of acceptance lies in the snobbism that swallows the rubbish of the so-called moderns because it took different from the bad things of the old school. One more chance of Ananias to mislead artists and public."

Walter Pach in his book Ananias, The False Artist. Quoted by Dr. A.S. Raman while criticising the abstractionists of modern Indian art - saying "... abstract art in India is the first and last phase of a naively narcissistic modernists weak experimentation which seldom goes beyond textural effects."
Contemporary Indian art, a journey

Different point of views and connotations have been drawn in effort to provide Indian contemporary art a right direction as what should be the acceptable form of art to be practiced or labeled to the contemporary Indian Art. One thing which is noticed common to all of them is to draw a new line, a new perspective, a new dimension to the contemporary art. And the pattern was some what like Kalidas has written in Malvikagnimitra -

Puranamityeva na sudhv sarvam na
chani kavyam navamityavadyam
santah parikshyanyataradhajante
muddhah parapratyayaneya buddhih.

("Whatever is old is not necessarily excellent ' neither is the new in arts or poetry blame worthy. The critical and accomplished mind after examining various forms chooses the right ones while the undiscerning fool follows the path laid down by others.") 

A dialogue on :

Traditionalistic versus Modern

"Today it is not the story of the tradition that has lived long, but of a growing tradition, in a continuous process of evolution ...many of us are inclined to think that it has nothing to do with ancient culture, that it is not a serious affair and if encouraged will have ruinous effects .... If it grew first in France, Germany or Italy, it was only because the situations there were
more suitable for its growth.”

S.H. Raza.

"... Emotion is not tradition; nor the awareness of historical affinities. Experience is always an invariably contemporary, and from experience we get a concept of integral, significant form... To go through the essential paces he must repeat something of the achievements of the Europeans. It is a question of necessity, not of design... the Indian expressionist can not but be conditioned (not necessarily influenced) by the work of Van Gogh, Gauguin, by the brilliance of the impressionists... Here the Indian painter is Indian. Our Younger painters like Husain, Grade, Bendre, Samant, Pai, etc. are each differently influenced by the west. Their drawing (based on temple sculpture and the folk motifs) is Indian. Their use of flaming, and unsubdued colour, is Indian... The copyists one easily distinguishable from the experiments. And a period of transition, as today, must be experimental.”

Richard Bartholomew

"Modern developments in Bengal and Bombay represent attempts either to recover a lost tradition, or for the development of an electric style, neither wholly Indian nor wholly European. At the present day the Indian genius is finding expression rather in the field of conduct than in art.”

A.K. coomaraswamy

"Tradition does not mean imitation, that is, routine repetition of
familiar forms, mindless manipulation of lines and spaces."  

Dr. A.S. Raman

"Introduction of modernity in terms of ability of an artist, has no limitation whatsoever. Therefore a modern idiom could be evolved independent of Western influence." 

J. Sultan Ali

Nationalistic versus Internationalistic

"Each race contributes something essential to the world's civilisation in the course of its own self-expression and self-realisation. The character built up in solving its own problems, in the experience of its own misfortunes, is itself a gift which each offers to the world. The essential contribution of India, then, is simply her Indianness; her great humiliation would be to have substituted for this own character (Svabhava) a cosmopolitan veneer, for then indeed she must come before the world empty handed." 

A.K. Coomaraswamy

"An Indian can remain modern and contemporary by rejecting Western influences and asserting his Indian identity." 

M. Reddappa Naidu

"An artist thinks that he has arrived by winning a national award. no he has just begun his work. Indian talents in general are a match for international talents. 

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But we must work hard."  

Laxman Pai

"The fact that we had been imitating. ... to reproduce and manifest the attitudes and approach to life and nature existing in other culture. I only hope that this alienation has not taken hold of us for good; it is commonly believed that the attitudes and mannerisms we are projecting today, are of an international or global nature."  

P.N. Mago

"Van Gogh copied Japanese prints, Matisse drew from Persian Miniatures, Picasso lifted from African Carvings, Gauguin painted in the south sea Island. Even earlier Rembrandt made drawings from Mughal paintings and Beethoven read from the upanishads."

F.N. Souza

"...Maurayan art successfully assimilated elements from western Asia and Persia; Gandhara art imbibed Greeco-Roman influence to gain distinction; and sasanian influences are conspicuous in the art of Ajanta. The Moghal school was founded on Persian tradition and the painters in its ateliers did not fight shy of European influences... the first chaos and meaningless technical experimentation, a definite Indian International in its approach but wedded to the soil, is gradually coming to the surface."

Moti Chandra
Figurative versus Abstraction

"In figurative works, I feel that I am able to bring out different kinds of expressions and rasas, as we have in Indian aesthetic. I can not convey these significant moods in abstract style where main concern is with arrangements of non visual forms and harmony of colours."  

J. Sultan Ali.

"It was with the advent of the cubism that the final curtain fell and art became completely liberated from the tradition of representing optical images and committed to guide another aim, that of substituting abstract or symbolic forms of images...It is the sphere of abstract art, the new images seemed to be veering towards two different sensibilities-one which still retains an interest in feeling, animation and life as we sense it in nature, and the other which is quite insensitive to life or animation, but not to dynamism or automation...."

Chintamani Kar

"I have no doubt that these painter felt that the figure game had been played out by then,... In relation to art it is a process of creative expression adducing ideal and abstract values, referring to the inherent form of the idea. It is also a mode of expression which though non-representational embodies intrinsic feeling and overtly formal values. Abstract Art, which is the product of the process of abstraction, has very concrete qualities sensuous connotations but presupposes that the art effect possesses sublimity because
it has been free from descriptive meaning.”

**Richard Brindolmen**

“By choosing to be ruthlessly abstract and non-representational, and by reflecting traditionally handed down tales, characters and symbols as aids to communication, modern artists have made it exceedingly difficult for contemporary spectators to respond to or penetrate their world....”

**Sibnarayan Roy**

**Experimental versus Indigenous**

“Caught up in this speed, even the artist is confused. His ambition stirred, he turns his studio into a production unit, manipulating his medium and constantly inventing, the reward being recognition, ultimate fame and comfort. His work suffers from the lack of self-expression and depth. Lacks poetry and philosophy as there is no time to reflect or contemplate. For his art is not way of living but is made for the gallery.”

**Krishna Reddy**

“It is for the first time in human history that the artist has to struggle hard to express his feelings and discover his own kind of expression.... The handling of the pigment or drawing of the line itself can be satisfying art form.”

**K.S. Kulkarni**
plastic arts, are quite apparent in the works and aspirations of many artists. The work of post-Independence period, particularly of the 60s, 70s and 80s reflect the times, the weight of civilization that bears down on the artist's images, giving rise to an underlying scene of confusion and turmoil. There is as much borrowing from Cubism, Expressionism and Abstractionism as suits the individual expressive need and purpose of the artist. There are wide scale visual and ideological explorations in their work that one characteristic of the contemporary art movement in Europe."\(^{23}\)

P.N. Mago

"The most successful of the modern paintings based on indigenous sources are Tantric ... this label however, is controversial, because the artists who use their formulae are not practicing tantrics in original sense of this word nor do they use the pictures as devices to aid their contemplation. They are tantric in-so-far-as the ancient yantras, mandalas or other diagrams have served as origin...."\(^{24}\)

Jaya Appasamy

"K.C. S. Panikar's ... words and symbols will have to be, therefore, regarded as an echo of the cryptic content of the astrological chart or a page from a mystery-ridden mathematical note book... J. Swaminathan ... owes to the upanishadic thoughts... Biren De's creations are the visions of the effulgent light, flame and fire of the Upanishads. Dharaj Bhagat owes very much to the
idea of genesis, and to twin life principles of Sive-Saktim, ... Haridasan is... inspired by the Purusha - Prakriti theme, and the doctrine of Bija (the seed), and Yantra (tantric diagrammatic symbol).... Santosh stands quite apart, ... his work is a most graphic and impeccable realization of the tantric ideal of non-asceticism. He depicts the union of Siva and Sakti in an exoteric manner, regarding sex as the supreme symbol of the sense." 25

S.A. Krishnan

Individual Conceptualism

"Today when to a great extent elaborate conceptional work has taken the place of creativity, one talks of the disappearance, yes, even the death of the artist. Conceptual art, Happenings and fluxes make new demands on the viewers..." 26

Ursula Bickelmann

"...I do try to do something different each time, and I try to build up a kind of a pictorial vocabulary of my own so that I can use it time and again." 27

Tyeb Mehta

"... Painting has been a sort of confrontation from the time..." 28

Gulam Mohammed Sheikh

"...My paintings help me to find hope in my self and in my life..." 29

Profulla Mohanti
"... When I paint I just try to assemble certain objects. For me the human figure is like an object and I arrange it on the support of the thing..., most of my paintings are very esoteric in their concept and technique,..."  

**F.N. Souza**

"My present work is the result of two parallel inquiries. Firstly, it aimed at pure plastic order, form order. Secondly, it concerns the theme of nature. Both have converged into a single point and became inseparable. The point, the bindu, symbolizes the seed bearing the potential of all life, in a sense..."**

**S.H. Raza**

The contemporary art of India has been interpreted and redefined many times and in many ways to cosset the critical and creative impulses of Indian critics and artists of the time. The need to interpret it in the context of abstraction is approached here.

Abstraction though deeply rooted in Indian art and rituals could not acquire a centre stage as an art form till late because the atmosphere was not favourable for it here in India. Abstraction in Indian art developed during the 1940s through an opposition to the prevailing condition of Academic art, Indian traditional art and to a certain extent to the figurative art.

The term **figurative** often wrongly, as traditional art is figurative,
had been associated with traditional and classical art of India, is an essential art form to the art practitioner and has been a pivotal till now.

"... till the end of the first two decades after independence, Indian art shows a marked affinity for human figure." \(^{32}\)

"human shape is always there in Indian art, it was never abandoned, it was the medium of expression par excellence" \(^{33}\)

This attitude was first confronted by some of the progressive artists of the time who initiated towards abstraction to draw a new idiom to Indian contemporary art. In the free air of freedom the modern approach to catch up with the world art was quite expected but an attitude to restore the traditional heritage also came as patriotism, where abstraction of any kind was perceived as foreign and degenerating factor if intermingled with traditional art of India. On the other hand this abstraction was modulating its final shape drawing the inspiration from all the idioms of spiritualism, folk art, tantra art, symbolism miniature painting in France Germany and Russia.

The term pure abstraction can not be tagged to any emerging movement or period of time ever since 1940s except in some individual cases. Though Bombay Progressive Group, Calcutta Group, Group 1890, and cholamandal Artists Group exude in the direction of new ethos but its paradigms were not solely constructed on pure abstract idiom.

While abstract art in Europe took a gradual progress from
Academic Art to French Realism to pre-Raphaelites and from there to impressionism and modern Art towards various abstract Art movements, in India we reach directly from Academic Art to various types of abstraction. Contemporary Indian Art confronted Abstract Art as a tree full of fruits to pick and enjoy the taste. Among various modern European art forms as Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Op art - Abstract art also provided a patina to the contemporary Indian Art.

Classification of Abstraction

Abstraction in contemporary Indian painting is a complex thing because it inherits paradigms from both Western and Indian traditions. Both these traditions represent very different trajectories in general.

Abstraction which empirically to anchor the profusion of new possibilities suggested by the changing ethos, developed particularly around 1940 in India.

On the basis of certain speculation contemporary Indian Art of the past fifty years may be classified as;

1. Abstraction adopted from modern European Art.
3. Abstraction as an individual commentary.
4. Combination Abstraction.

The first classification which was received from modern
European Art specifically from France, Germany and Holland provided, a paradigm to the contemporary Indian artists. A consolidated inspirational source was also drawn directly from Cezanne. Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat and Picasso to Kandinsky, John Miro and Paul Klee. Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism and Abstract Art was adopted freely in some parts of the country specially Bombay and Madras. This type of abstraction maybe described as intellectual, perceptive, expressionistic, Illusionistic and geometric.

This type of abstraction which came first as a reaction to the realistic approach may be identified as non realistic, which is only limitation. In this type of abstract approach artist takes the subject from realistic world, sometimes unrecognizable. He could emphasize a particular aspect by exaggerating it, as Goya did. He could use the colour that we expect to see, or he could use a completely unexpected colour that meant something to him personally, as Van Gogh did. He could make scientific experiments in colour, as Seurat did. He could take parts of a landscape or still life as seen by the moving eye, and rearrange them in one composition, as Cezanne did, or break up the subject and put it together again in a different way, as the Cubists did. He could present the subject distorted by his own feelings, as the Expressionists did or almost drop the recognizable subjects, as Kandinsky did when he filled spaces with color and suggestions of objects to express feelings and sensations.
In the second classification the principle inspiration is based on the Indian traditional art culture and the theory and interpretation drawn from spiritualism, symbolism and mysticism embedded in Indian soil. This type of abstraction may be expressive, decorative, symbolic, mystic, illusionistic, geometric and flat.

This type of abstraction is a counter reaction against European influence which was initiated, before independence, through Bengal school of art by Abanindranat Tagore, Nandlal Bose, Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher Gil among other artists of the country who were fighting for the revival of Indian Traditional art. Abanindranat Tagore returned to Ajanta painting and miniature Paintings, Jamini Roy took inspiration from folk Art and Nandlal Bose got busy in experimenting all the medium and style.

Among post independence artists B.C. Sanyal, Biren De, K.C.S. Panikar, G. R. Santosh, J. Sultan Ali, Manjit Bawa, Bhupen Khakhar, G.M. Sheikh drew their inspiration directly from Indian traditional art or their indigenous surrounding with the profusion of abstraction to a certain degree.

The third classification facilitates the pure abstraction concept where painting does not represent any theme or subject but becomes self explanatory of its fundamentals and principals as texture, line color, balance, rhythm etc. speaks itself. Exploration of unknown and self is
another pivotal. This type of abstraction may be drawn from both European and Indian traditional art. Perspective value and spiritual are the base of pure abstraction.

This type of abstraction is scientific, constructive, experimental, spiritual, symbolic, and self explanatory, Rabindranath Tagore who is known as the Father of Modern Indian Art, first profused abstraction in its purest degree drawing his initial inspiration from klee and provided a patina to the younger generation artist. Many among them fused their concepts with pure abstraction.


The form of abstraction adopted in Indian contemporary Art is generally noticed as multifaced which does not represent only one kind of abstraction but most of the time is intermingling with more than one kind of abstraction. It provides a paradigms, of both European and Indian inheritance. It produces a different result that consolidates a unique identity for contemporary art of India. This type of abstraction maybe classified as combination abstraction.
The term Decorative and Illusionistic which is considered to be alien for abstract is welcomed in this type of abstraction. As in decoration no intellectual and aesthetical values are detected, and illusion represent the plastic reality both are considered a drive away from abstract. In India where abstraction mostly is adopted not as an end but as a process of development such idioms are easily adjusted with other combinations of European and Indian style of abstraction, to represent a unique result.

Rabindranath Tagore, Jogen Chowdhury, Ranbir kaleka, Laxman pai, Reddeppa Naidu, K. Ramanujan, M.F. Husain, Anjali Ela menon, J. Sultan Ali represent, such type of abstraction in their various phases.

2. Ibid, P. 83.

3. Dr. A.S. Raman "How can art be abstract?" the Times of India, 1980.


8. Dr. A.S. Reman, "We can not only keep pace with the west but even go beyond but...", The Times of India, 1981.

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23. Prof. P.N. Mago, "Beckons of Indian Art World Around the Mid Century," Seminar Papers - Sanyal and The Art of His Time, (Lalit Kala Akademi New Delhi, 30 April, 1992)


32. N. Bhuvanendrah, “Jaya Appasamy” Interpretation of Indian Art; (Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1991) P. 114.

CHAPTER - 5

Abstraction Through Indigenous Sources

I. Abstraction and Folk & Tribal Art
II. Abstraction and Tantra Art
III. Abstraction and Symbols & Manuscripts
Chapter 5

Folk Art

The discovery of folk and tribal art is a 19th century phenomenon in the wake of the national consciousness which was generated due to the imposition of British concepts in art. The other factor partially, may be the increasing interest in folk and traditional art throughout the world and a rapid and enthusiastic adaptation by Gauguin, Picasso and other abstractionists.

Folk and tribal art as being simple, bold, symbolic and elemental became the best source for abstraction for both eastern and western artists. Folk and tribal art which are known as an extension to the primitive art, produced an inspirational source to the abstractionists - Miro, Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Cubists - Czanne, Picasso and Primitivist Gauguin etc. In India this source was first exploited by Jamini Roy, Nandlal Bose, Ravindranath Tagore & Amrita-Sher-Gil which was later handed down to the
next generation artists, who experimented and exploited folk and tribal motifs and elements into various personal styles.

In India, folk art was discovered in Bengal and began to be collected by the Tagores, Ajit Ghosh and other artists and connoisseurs early in the 20th century. The origin of folk and tribal art goes back to the art of primitive society, while its persistence is attested by the survival of Indian tribal communities which have succeeded in preserving their respective cultural identities in the very heart of the developed Hindu community of today. On the subcontinent, as in Africa and Oceania, tribal art (or traditional art), bears the unmistakable stamp of an achievement that is not only ancient and indigenous, but also notably creative. In India, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa were, as they still continue, important centers of folk art. And a large number of tribal communities are settled and their descendants are still restoring their heritage through their artistic creativity.

There is a very little information to be gleaned from early literary sources on the history and nature of folk art. The very earliest works, such as the poetry of Rigveda, do not provide a complete catalogue of crafts and calligs. Early Buddhist literature is a source of much detailed information on the work of craftsmen.
and contains many allusions to their organization and their local and social obligations as well as accounts of whole craft villages located in the neighborhood of the larger towns. In the towns themselves craftsmen lived in certain districts or streets, while crafts determined by caste and handed down from father to son.\(^5\)

The art of the hunters and food gatherers of the earliest peasant settlers and of the urban dwellers of the Harappan culture, while forming part of a continuous chain of development, is in each case comprehensible only when considered in the context of changing economic and social circumstances. Not only prior to, but also during the earlier phases of the class society, all art was functional or, one might say, utilitarian, no matter whether its object was to give aesthetic shape to tools and articles of every day use, or the bolster the ideology of social structures by the production of ritual objects and paintings.

The continued independent development and recognizable local character of folk art in any given region was not determined by the narrow confines of state or province but, rather, given stable conditions, by supra regional and, in particular, socio-economic factors such as climate, the nature of the soil, the routes taken by hunters and food gatherers and the potential for agricultural settlement.
The earliest manifestations of folk art could be distinguished through the archaeological findings. The history of Indian folk art must be traced in indirect references found in early writings as folk art materials are perishable and easily destroyed. The usefulness of such objects expires once they have served their ritual and religious purpose. Sculpture and paintings produced specifically for domestic or public festival are completely disregarded once these are over. They are laid aside or thrown into a river or the sea, while the murals and the paintings on mud floors outside the houses are left to fade in the sun and crumble away in the rain. Continuity in folk art is achieved solely by means of constant repetition and reproduction. Thus a modern work of folk art may also be regarded to some extent as an indirect source of information on the folk art of earlier periods.

The most important artistic link between past and present consists in a number of decorative motifs, attributes and symbols, motifs which regularly recur and can be shown to have remained constant throughout, although the message they carry may vary from epoch to epoch. They constitute what might be described as a formal, structural framework of tradition, the only pitfall here being that the visual message, though apparently easy to read, nevertheless admits of a number of different interpretations. The inner logic of historical processes would seem to suggest that, in
each concrete instance, this clarity of the image should be placed within the context of the conventions prevalent at the time. There can be no doubt that in the art of today symbols such as the sun and the moon lend themselves to a different interpretation from that applicable in, say a community, of hunters and food gatherers. By and large, it may be said that the outward, formal manifestations of folk art are more readily comprehensible than is its actual significance.

In India, some form of folk art is found in most provinces in local variations. The range of work is immense: terracottas, wooden and clay toys, dolls and images, paintings objects of pith and cane, rag, embroidery, metal objects, an objects of miscellaneous materials most of them require some form of craftsmanship, and show a lively imagination and of uncultured understanding of the materials. Their strong living shapes and bright colours contribute to a vigour and animation not to be found in more complex art.

Usually the folk artists are recruited from the villages by princes, municipalities and religious bodies to work on their ambitious artistic undertaking. Although the caste of the artist-craftsman means that he is intimately bounded with his faith, there appears to be no religious restrictions upon his professional activities. In this respect he is a free agent who may undertake
work from anyone, irrespective of caste or religion. Thus tribal members may commission work from Hindu craftsmen, who, for their part, show themselves in every respect capable of meeting down to the last detail of their customers’ requirements in regard to style, form and content.⁶

The second largest group of craft workers in the village consists of women whose artistic activities are bound up with home and family. Their work has never been of a commercial nature rather regarded as a part of their other domestic duties. The materials and techniques they use are purely of local origin. The amateur production of these women relates largely to ritual, magical ideas and is directed towards obtaining results which they hope will promote the welfare of the family. Being made of perishable material, their products have a limited life. The continuity of this form of art has persisted through generations, passing from mother to daughter and is assured, both as regards techniques and content, by the transmission of an uninterrupted sequence of experience. The historical development of professional village craftsmanship, like its content tends towards Indian high art, whereas the distinctive nature of female domestic art is reminiscent rather of the earliest beginnings of artistic activity, as are its absolute fidelity to tradition, its unsophisticated aesthetic, non-industrial creativity and its conservative technique.
brings it far closer to the tribal art than the caste restricted craftsmanship of the men. In the amateur production of the Indian housewife today we may see a reflections of the earliest type of India’s pre-historic folk art. The traditional arts, practiced by women in the home still, continue to service in the major cities of India.

Among some of the characteristics of folk decoration few are emphatic as:

1. Simple and bold outline, and rejection of unnecessary emphasis.
2. Simple and flat use of colour to omit shading.
3. Size and gesture exaggeration to enhance expression.
4. Decorative representation of motifs and patterns.
5. Emphasis on rhythmic repetition of lines, figures, dots, motifs or designs.

Two-dimensional representation in folk art

The two-dimensional art have recourse to materials which, though subject to decay, are not only easily available but are to be found in their natural form almost every where in India. The raw materials for mat-making are universally to hand. Cotton is known to have been grown at a very early date consequent upon
the development of agriculture. Silk yarns came somewhat later, while animal fibers were also available long before. Besides possessing the ability to extract a rich range of colours from plants, the Indians are also skilled in producing dyes and paints from minerals, clay shreds and other materials. Suitable rock faces, flattened earth, leaves egg-shells, bone and even the skin of human beings and animals (tattooing) had always served as foundations for painting or, where appropriate,, as surfaces for incised and relief decoration as later on, did house walls and the internal and external surfaces of simple pottery. All these materials were available to everyone no matter how poor the individual might be. Finally the formal content of two dimensional art was not subject to any kind of restraint. On an even ground, decorative geometrical and vegetable forms can be multiplied and varied at will and lend themselves to the play of fancy. Again, simple figures, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, disposed haphazardly or otherwise at the top, the bottom or an either side of the composition, evidently formed part of the artist's immediate environment and, while evincing a degree of creative imagination, cannot have required more than a modicum of skill.

The two-dimensional folk paintings generally in flat areas are finished with strong lines tersely delineating the form. There are variations in the type of painting occur in different provinces, we
may take the example of Bengal's *Kalighat pat* which were in point of time the earliest to be discovered as art.

**Kalighat pat**

These paintings are either single sheets or paper mounted as a scroll. They are known for their strong simplified brush-work and their lively depiction of religious and social motifs. The painted scrolls generally illustrate the epics and function as the visual accompaniment to the recitation of a story. The composition is not continuous but divided into picture areas in each of which some episode occurs. In the illustrations the heroes and heroines are the largest in size which by their gestures and actions impart animation to the scene. The figures are generally painted in tempera, in flat colours enclosed by strong brush lines. There may be some surface decoration or indication of landscape but in most cases the paper itself function as a background and scenery is left to the imagination of the spectator. A parallel obtains in 'Yatra folk' drama, where properties are negligible or minimal. Painted folk toys made of wood or terra-cotta show the same characteristics. Each part of the figure has a ground colour and is finished with bold brush strokes. The finishing is generally restricted to details such as jewellery, folds of the drapery, the facial feathers, hands and feet. There is no colour gradation except
sometimes for a red line accompanying the black line forming a
transitional 'modelling line. One notices in the toys especially the
strong frontality characteristic of primitive art, the figure faces
the spectator, the back is often ignored. Also the head is
comparatively large and special attention is paid to the eyes which
are large and staring.

Tribal Art

The tribes in general are integrated groups which are more
or less independent of each other. Their main occupation is
agriculture, mostly slash and burn cultivation, fishing and
bumming supplement food-production, crafts such as weaving and
basketry.

Magico-religious beliefs and practices have a predominant
role in the religions of the majority of the tribes. Disease, death
and calamities are attributed to malevolent spirits, who are
appealed to and appeased for protection and succour. The idea of
a supreme Being prevails among certain tribes, which, however
has no active part to play in their religion. The institution of
priest though present among all the tribes is not properly
organized, and any one who has the capacity, can officiate as a
priest. Birth and death ceremonies are performed with elaborate
rituals. Marriage seems to be an economic contract; there being no ritualistic observance for marriage. Payment of bride-price is most important factor in marriages.

The bonds of tribal folk and their plants surrounding are inseparable. It provides them food medicine, clothing, domestic utensils etc. Cane and bamboo form the raw material which meet the requirements of every day life - from house building to making baskets, fishing traps, items of dress, construction of suspension bridges, religious paraphernalia etc. In fact there is nothing in a tribal hut which is made without using indigenous plants.

"It is remarkable that in the art of many tribes the world over ornament that appears to us as purely formal, is associated with meanings, that it is interpreted." Various authorities on primitive art including Boas, Golden weiser, etc. found that geometrical patterns invariably represent zoomorphs. As for example among the Brazilian Indian various geometric forms in their art represent fish, bats, bees, uluri and many other animals. "The patterns on pots, baskets, rugs, walls of caves or houses sides of canoes, dished and the like, often suggest more or less realistically the form of animals, birds, snakes, crocodiles or of plants or objects of human manufacture." Every geometrical pattern and symbol have a meaning attached to it is the ultimate result of thought to realism as diamond and
angular patterns symbolize an eye and the butterfly. A lot of animal symbols, surprisingly in many cases, are entirely negative.

Body tattooing and decoration is another important and serious factor of the tribal folk where they use different signs, symbols and patterns to maintain the identity of their tribe, individual person and to decorate their body.

In Indian contemporary art of mid 40s folk and tribal art forms are attributed as indigenous inspirational source firstly, as a part of the revival and Jamini Roy took the lead in turning to more robust clarity of folk art, in an effort to free his art from the romantic directions of the Bengal school. Paradoxically this reflection again led the occurrence of romantic selection. His invented style was derived from ‘Kalighat pat’ with a certain individual style. Folk toys, terracottas etc. were also looked into with deep interest.

Secondly, the folk and tribal art elements flavoured with contemporary abstraction elements to create certain decorative or abstract form for the modern painters of 50s as Hebbar, Chavada, Sanyal, Sailoz Mookherjee, Satish Gujral, M.F. Husain, Nirod Mazumdar, Rathin Moitra etc. All of them used folk and tribal motifs and elements in certain phase of their return towards nationalistic mood.
of one's desires, feelings and situations as human beings. It is neither a religion or mysticism but an empirical - experimental method valid to everyone and not limited to any exclusive group or sect.\textsuperscript{15}

The sign-language of tantra art and the work of many modern abstract artists run parallel. Tantra which posses an age old foundation only recently rediscovered and anticipated by contemporary artists. We find an striking similarity between the spiritual aspects of tantraic art and the works of several twentieth century abstract artists, such as Klee, Mondrian, Brancus. In the contemporary art of India, Tantra posses an important role for more than two decades (60s and 70s), to provide signs, symbols, pictorial language, patterns and designs for the artistic amusement and their nationalistic feelings.

In view of the critic Jaya Appaswamy "The most successful of the modern paintings based on indigenous sources are Tantric... This label however, is controversial, because the artists who use these formulae are not practicing tantrics in the original sense of this word nor do they use the pictures as devices to do their contemplation, they are tantric only in - so far- as the ancient yantras, mandals or other diagrams have served as origin. The tantric painters make compositions here there are male and female or other similar symbolic elements which
It is difficult to determine the exact origin of tantra but its ritual symbols are found in Harappan culture (Indus valley Civilization, C. 3000 B.C.) Its base is determined as Indo - Aryan. The influences of Upanishads, Epics, Puranas and Vedas are detected. In the early medieval period the reference of tantra is found in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Literatures. Tantric practices are also found in Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, parts of South - East Asia, Mediterranean Cultures such as Egypt and Crete. In India the most important canters of Tantric worship is Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, Kashmir, the foothills of the north western Himalayas, Rajasthan and parts of South India.

The principal sects of Tantrikas are broadly divided as Saivas (worshippers of Siva), Vaishnavas (worshippers of Vishnu), and Saktas (Worshippers of Sakti or female energy) which are divided into various sub-sects.

Though derived from the Indian philosophy and traditional system, it grew independently and acquired its own outlook. Tantra’s psycho-experimental technique has highly elaborate systems of atomic theory, space-time relationship, astronomical observations, cosmology, palmistry, astrology, chemistry, alchemy
and the like. Human experience owes to tantra the discovery and location of the psychic centers in the human body and its various yogic disciplines which are supported by visual and abstract symbols.

The basic tenets of tantra could be started both in ascending or descending order, from cosmic plane at tantra's precepts concerning the ultimate reality and come down to its notion of creation and the constitutions of the objective world, and finally arrive at its understanding of the human body and its properties, and the psychic process which interlink man and universe, or through man - world - cosmos, culminating in the nature of the ultimate reality. It could be achieved either through the human body (Kundalini - Yoga), through performance of rites and rituals, or visually through Yantras, Mandalsas and deities, or verbally by the repetition of seed syllables (Mantra). Tantra's diverse methods which invoke the involvement of all senses, at different levels - physical, mental or psychic - in concert or singly, are directed towards self-enlightenment and a realization of the vision of unity.

The abstract approach of contemporary artists to express the complexities of life and nature was, long time back, achieved by tantra artists. Many of the tantric forms, their colour
combinations, patterns signs etc. are included in the works of contemporary artists. An striking difference between the two is that what a modern artist struggles to achieve through a process of distillation by and expression of his individual consciousness, came spontaneously in the aesthetic vision of the tantric artist within the defined collective sign-system. Tantric artists exposes in their art mysteries of the universe and the laws which govern them. Tantra art has a deeper significance when compared with barren abstraction, which has arisen principally from a search from the unconventional contrast to the tantra's deep spiritual faith and vision.

But some of abstract artists like Klee, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Brancusi etc. tried to reach this spiritual depth as for them art was not merely an optical manifestation but a revelation of certain metaphysical concepts. "Mondrian's chief concern, for example was to transcend the particular in order to express the universal. Throughout his life he was interested in Hindu philosophy and was so inspired by mystic ideas that he equated plastic expression with the spiritual. The vertical and horizontal theme in his work reflects the interplay of contrasting forces: male and female, active and passive, spirit and matter. He expressed it himself as the static balance and dynamic equilibrium which constitute reality. Mondrian identified the vertical with the female. In a similar way, Paul klee explored spatial
energy through the concept of polarity: a concept is to thinkable without its opposite - every concept has its apposite more or less in the manner of thesis-antithesis. To express the eternal dialectic of the static and dynamic in its essence, he aligned the notion of polarity to geometry, creating an infinitely variable harmony of coloured plane. These artist's pictorial affinities to tantric art and their metaphysical ideas suggest a link with tantra's dualistic philosophy". 19

Tantra Art

Like most of the Indian art Tantra Art being an age old form is also based on the spiritual values to bring out the hidden universality of basic forms. Tantra art reveals an abundant variety of forms, carried inflections of tone and colours, graphic patterns, powerful symbols with personal and universal significance. In tantric imagery, the power-patterns and configuration are built up from primal abstract forms to complexity. Tantra art forms retain their intrinsic character and serve to create visual reactions both psychological and spiritual. Most tantric images tend to stress the analogies between the individual and the cosmos, and the life forces which govern them. Tantric images have a meditative resilience expressed mostly in abstract signs and symbols. A geometrical configuration such as a triangle representing Prakriti or female energy is a primal root - form representing the governing principle of life in abstract imagery as a sign. In Rig
Veda, the creative principle of life is conceived of as a 'golden embryo' or Hiranya - garbha, the womb of energy from which the universe develops. The same symbol is used in the conception of the Siva - Linga, or cosmic egg, in the tantras. Such representations are abstract as apposed to imitative, universal as against individualistic and cognitive as apposed to emotional. Tantric art form once accepted, continues to retain its significance through the centuries providing a timeless quality and pre-established code as mathematical formulas.

In tantra art the act of creation becomes a contemplative process, an orchestral symphony in which both the seer and the seen become one. The achievement of emancipation from surface perception is the aim of tantra art. The artist does not attempt to absorb something external but releases what he has experienced inwardly, in this way tantra art is visual metaphysical. The world of art and the world of experience, though different in their very nature, are not separate entities. Tantric art is in union with the nature and its order and is a projection of an intrinsic consciousness permeating the outer and the inner world.

Tantra art which has a deep spiritual faith and vision, is understood by Philip Rawson as: "The essence of these works is that they are all meant to provide a focus for mediations. Their diagrams
are meant to open doors in the mind that reflects them and so open for it a new and higher level of consciousness.”

Many aspects of tantric art have been adopted quite frequently by contemporary Indian artists like Biren de, G.R. Santosh and S.H. Raza, hence achieved an extra prominence during 70s. In Biren-de's each work a central point is found, the concept of Garbha Griha, the union of Purusha and Prakriti are approached with an individual abstract language. G.R. Santosh also represented the meditative poses, creation of life and the union of Shiva - Shakti. “The most well known of the tantric painters is undoubtedly G. R. santosh. His vast compositions consist of curvilinear forms which are partly seen and partly lost in mystery.” S.H. Raza found his niche in the concept of a bindu - the origin of life, the central point of the whole world, bigning, and a compressed or concentrated point of every thing.

Here a precise study of such prominent aspects and forms adopted by Indian contemporary artists, with their original interpretation is approached.

**Yantras and Mandalas**

**Yantra**

A yantra, which means aid or tool is generally drawn on paper or engraved on metal, either to aid meditation or as a tangible
image of the deity. Just as a mantra is a sound equivalent, the yantra is a diagrammatic equivalent of the deity and consists of linear and spatial geometrical permutations of the deity. The primal abstract shapes, such as the point, line, circle, triangle, square and the lotus symbol are harmonized in composition to provide a formal equilibrium which is both static and dynamic. If we could penetrate the reality behind this static structures we could see the vibrational patterns, which are regarded as a primary cosmogenic element which gives rise to all structures and movement. As movement increases, form is condensed into a whole which is represented as a mathematical point of zero dimension. When the movement decreases, currents and eddies are set in motion and form becomes more differentiated; the bindu begins to evolve into a primary geometrical shape till the multiple spaces interpenetrate, overlap, collide and generate energy to form the whole pattern.

The yantras are not only based on mathematical form but also on a mathematical method. The artist must look beyond appearances and penetrate to structure and essence; he must reorganize reality in terms of distinctions and relationships of mathematical dimensions as C’ezanne did "To relate nature to the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, all put into perspective so that each side of the object, of a plane, moves towards a central point." This central
point is a Bindu which is place in the center of the yantras. Bindu is the ultimate point of power beyond which a thing or energy can not be contracted or condensed. It is the repository of all manifestation in its complexity and variety and the basis of all vibration, movement and form, it controls everything which is projected from it. A point also functions as a mental point or mano-bindu 'serving as the vehicle of the mind, an area which is the meeting ground of subject and object. The bindu being the last chakra in a yantra is known as Sarva-anandamaya, full of bliss in union. The point is light itself, beyond all colours, and is therefore represented as colorless.

The straight line signifies growth and development. Pure linear patterns are drawn lyrically to illustrate sound vibrations, or geometrically in criss-cross manner, to form a certain order of the divisions of space, measures of time and the base lines of the universe. A striking line-form is the matrika yantra: on a plane of yellow ochre horizontal surface, a sweeping red line evokes tension and divides the picture field. The red line denotes Sakti as the epitome of energy.

The circle is derived principally from the motion of the revolution of planets. It symbolizes wholeness or totality and, in a yantra, is normally placed within a square pattern with four re-entrant gates.
The square symbolizes the elemental earth or the material quality of nature. The four gates represent the earthly plane which one must transcend gradually to identify with the core of the pattern in which resides the essence.

The triangle represents the three worlds: the neutral, the positive and the negative Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The triangle with its apex downwards represents the yoni, the female energy or nature (Prakrit). The triangle pointing upwards is identified with the male principle (Purusha). When the two triangles penetrate each other in a form of five-pointed star or a pentagon, each of its five points represent the five elements—earth (Kshiti), water (ap), energy (Tejas), air (marut), and space (vyoman). When the two triangles are separated and from an hourglass pattern or the shape of a danoru, the drum of Bhairava, they represent dissolution, time and space cease to exist.

**Mandala—**

The word mandala means circle, is an archetypal image signifying wholeness and totality. Usually painted on cloth or paper, it is initiated to visualize the primal essence of the mandala in its external contemplation into a psychic force. It represents the cosmos or the potent core of psychic energy, and is a perennial
balance of force whose beginning is in its end, whose end is in its beginning. The square, triangle, labyrinthine patterns etc., represent the absolute and the paradoxical elements of totality. In mandala the predominant shape is the circle, or concentric circles, enclosing a square, which is sometimes divided into four triangles; this basic composition itself contained within a square of four gates.

Painted in fine brush strokes between the spaces in hot reds, evanescent emeralds, soft terracottas and pearly whites, are labyrinthine designs, serene and static images of deities in meditative postures or terrific deities spewing out aureoles of smoke and flame. Each of the five component part of the mandala - the four sides and the center is psychologically significant; they correspond to the five structural elements of the human personality and five Buddhas of the Diamond vehicle: Vairochana, The Brilliant one: Akshobhya, the Unshakable; Ratnasambhava, the matrix of the Jewel; Amitaba The Infinite light; and Amoghasiddhi, the infallible realization. The five colours also correspond to the five cosmic elements: white water, yellow earth, red fire, green earth and blue space.

Mandala's each inner circuit makes a phase in spiritual ascent. The outer border denotes a 'barrier of fire or metaphysical
knowledge which burns ignorance: next comes the ring of diamonds suggesting illumination or the quality of unchangeability, never lost once knowledge is attained. In mandalas dedicated to terrifying aspects of divinities the iconographic motif of a cemetery is drawn within the girdle of diamonds and outside the inner circle. Symbolizing the eight aspects of disintegrated consciousness, these are what bind the adept to common run of the world and they must be conquered during one's spiritual pilgrimage. The four portals which open up in the middle of each side of the mandala are useful flanked by awe-inspiring divinities, obstructive force in the unconscious which must be overcome before realization is sought.

The next stage is usually represented by a girdle of lotus petal leaves or interwining floral patterns, symbols of spiritual rebirth. Finally, in the center, or the 'vimana', is the seat of the deity of the cosmic zone, the last stage of spiritual integration.23

The human body and its representation

In the symbology of tantra art, the structures of the various psychic centers in the subtle body are represented in lotus forms known as chakras, and the paths of the energy currents are mapped visually in the form of spirals. Lotus is a symbol of the unfolding of the self and expanding consciousness which cuts
through psychic opacity and ultimately raises the aspirant from the dark depths of ignorance to the radiant heights of inner awakening.

The kundalini sakti, a serpent coiled and dormant cosmic power, is the supreme force in the human body. When the Kundalini sleeps, man is aware of his immediate earthly circumstances only, but when it awakes to a higher spiritual plane, the individual is not limited to his ascent, the kundalini absorbs within herself all the kinetic energy with which the different psychic centers are charged. Kundalini's rising, in the language of modern science, means the activation of the vast dormant areas of the brain.

The ascent of kundalini is accompanied by an experience of a mystical light of various colours. The colours of the division or Prana do not correspond on what we ordinarily associate with the solar spectrum but are the arrangement of colours on a supernormal plane. According to Goethe's analysis: colours have a mystical significance. For every diagram that shows the many colours is suggestive of primeval conditions which belong equally to man's perceptions as to nature.24
Cosmological and astrological charts

In tantra the description of the origin of the universe is represented by cosmological and astrological charts. These representations are philosophical constructs of a world image and provide a background to sadhana, it is also used for the conception of a cosmic man whose body is filled with pictorial symbols and patterns resembling some of Paul Klee's abstract paintings. Tantric cosmograms comprised of intuitive insight also manifested by a mathematical framework, also involve symbols derived from mythology.

According to cosmological motions, the universe has three zones, or lake as: in ascending order, the subterranean region, the earth and the heavenly bodies. Dominating the center of the universe is the mythical mount meru around which is the earth the island continent with seven concentric circles symbolically representing cosmic fields, spheres, atmospheric zones. Bordering the outermost circle is the cosmic sphere separating the visible world from the non-visible, and finally, beyond it, the region of non-universe space, or aloka. The diagram of this idea is a circular disc within seven concentric circles or vertical currents, all with ascetic simplicity are indispensable for transmitting the message.

As the celestial tides and the movement of planets determine
the time for various sites, astronomy has a decisive influence on tantra planetary signs found their way into cosmograms, giving tantric diagrams a great diversity of geometric patterns. Space, time, light and motion were conceived of against the background of atmospheric phenomena. Grid patterns of flat colours have a mosaic-like simultaneity; kinetic curves encircling solar and lunar orbs create powerful gestalt sensations. Planetary signs abound: the sun as a red solar disc; the moon as an opalescent crescent; Mars represented as a vermilion triangle; Mercury as a sap-green droplet; a yellow straight line represents Jupiter; a blue five-pointed star denotes Venus; and Saturn is represented as purple, the densest of all colours. Innumerable other biographic shapes and void spheres resulted as a fusion of primary shapes in an attempt to record astronomical concepts.25

Iconographic images-

Iconographic image of sakti in both negative and positive aspects of female energy does not have any abstract quality but possess a symbolic representation through exaggeration and distortion of figure. In contemporary Indian art the pictorial aspect of Siva-Sakti union are represented in different way. The iconography of Kali have a symbolic significance. Her three eyes govern the three forces of creation: preservation and distraction. Her white teeth symbolic of sattva, the translucent intelligence
stuff, suppress her lolling tongue which is red, indicative of Rajas, a determinate level of existence leading down words to Tamas, inertia. Kali has four hands: one left hand hold severed head, indicating destruction, and the other carries the sword of physical extermination, with which she cuts the thread of bondage. Her two right hands dispel fear and exhort to spiritual strength. She is the changeless, unlimited primordial power active in the great drama awakening the unmanifested Siva, a passive on looker. Their inseparable union reflects non-duality.

The concept of the polarity principle determining the relationship between man and woman, a creative interaction in which the conflict between outward and inward of head and heart, can be resolved. Tantra's spectrum of experiential techniques provides a possible psychotherapeutic alternative in the quest of a love and joy that unite.26

The sound

On, the cosmic sound which has been used in its pictorial value and script form in contemporary art, is a combination of three syllables - a, v, m - that represent three phases of the cosmic cycle - creation, preservation and dissolution - condensed into a single sound unit. This primal sound as the monosyllabic mantra om is the basis of cosmic evolution. All the elemental sound -
forms of mantras emanate from this eternal sound. Sound and form are interdependent, and every form is a vibration of a certain density; conversely, every sound has a visual equivalent. Sound is the reflex of form and form is the product of sound. All that is animate and inanimate are vibrations of a particular frequency. Kandinsky, too, recalled the sound-form dialectic in the tantras when he said; "sound ten, is the soul of form, which comes to life only through sound from the inside out". All the mantras have their colour forms, and when a mantra is pronounced properly its visual correlates begin to manifest. The dynamic power-pattern rooted in sound by which it is revealed is called a yantra.

Abstraction and symbols & Scripts

Symbols -

Symbols represent the earliest record of man’s urge for self-expression. The purpose of such expression was to produce a form which may be aniconic, anthropomorphic or the isomorphic. The primitive man made idols, sketches paintings and fetishes, presumably in order to propitiate hostile spirits and to bring in mysterious forces under control. The primitive art may occasionally represent man’s delight in exercising his play instinct during leisure and at other times, the struggle for existence through the worship of super personal being in the face of an
overwhelmingly hostile and brutal world around him.\textsuperscript{28}

Art is a visual expression of human mind and portrays both the sensory and the abstract feelings about life. Art in a way becomes the language of images and symbols by which man expresses his perception of the world whether seen or unseen, benevolent or malevolent.\textsuperscript{29} symbols represent a definite concept or a theme and to be treated as the life-views of period concerned. Symbols have their own meaning whether drawn in a painting or anywhere on the ground or on the wall in course of rituals. At time some unusual symbol transcended a particular age, the people, the faith, the country or the philosophy with which they were first concerned. The experience gained by the primitive man facing the powers of the elements, earth, water, fire, air, and weather, stimulated awe and in turn these elements were worshipped as conscious entities in different symbolic forms. A perfect example of this phenomenon is to be seen in the 'Svastika' symbol, which knew no bounds in course of its dissemination through the ages and region. The worship of the sun was also prevalent throughout the world from the times immemorial in different appellations and forms, such as disc, lotus, etc. The warmth and productive power of sun have been considered beneficial. Light which dissipates the darkness, was considered by the primitive man as a friend and defender of humanity against
evil. Sunshine and rain were considered necessary amidst the threat of drought, flood and storm etc. These environmental forces which could not be conceived in realistic form, were represented by signs and symbols or personified by certain distinct marks.

Symbols are used by human beings not merely to communicate ideas, but also for lyrical expression and for the clarification of one's own idea and feelings to oneself.\(^{30}\)

The symbols also, however, served the purpose of decoration and space-filling. Nevertheless, there too they helped in the expression of ideas aesthetically, bringing in the charm which enhanced the appeal and in a manner that contributed to the enrichment of the other forms of life in relation to the inner growth of the mind.\(^{31}\)

Indian art truly reflects the deep relationship between idea and life and natural observation and inner substances.\(^{32}\) In Indian art, we find a large number of symbols occupying pre-eminent position right from the time of the Harappan culture. With our limited knowledge, it is not possible to ascertain the precise significance and meaning of all these symbols and to determine the system according to which they were employed. But generally their religious significance have been upheld.

A symbol can be called the cryptic representation of religions,
or generally of an auspicious idea for that matter.

The abstract ideas were also expressed through symbolic language in Indian Art from very early times. It dominated the entire realm of Indian art. The language through which art came in a form was of symbols. The symbols or signs depicting the divine and semi-divine, manifest the invisible through the visible form. The unexpressed concepts represent aspects of paramount truth as seen by men through the ages.

The Vedic literature is full of references to the symbolic forms revealing the truth of cosmic realities. The sense of dependence of human welfare on nature, with supposed, supernatural character, led to aniconic, theriomorphic and anthropomorphic forms of worship. The principal environmental forces, represented by Surya, Indra, Agni, Vayu an Varuna were given paramount status in the galaxy of deities personifying different elemental aspects of nature and metal state.

The conception of deva virtually stands for the transcendent, universal and immortal life, which is the basic creative power behind all manifestations, serving different function. For example - Agni. Surya and Indra represent the fundamental spiritual-cum-material forces. They embody the source of emanation of both animate and inanimate substances. Prthvi, Antariksa and Dyau are
controlled by an aspect of Agni under different names of Agni, Vayu and Aditya. Agni thus symbolises three great manifestations, viz., matter, life and mind.\textsuperscript{35}

We may precisely classify most of the symbols accepted in art, under animals. Human beings, semi-divine, vegetation, inanimate objects, attributes and auspicious motifs.\textsuperscript{36} Which are related to socio-religious institutions, rituals and ceremonies, that is, man's entire cosmic view itself. Those symbols which do not possess such deep significance have nevertheless some significance of social or political nature. In any case, the symbols cannot be treated as trivialities.

**Script**

Script is described in the dictionary as written words, letters or figures. This art of expression through forming the word to convey the message has been associated with a language. As the world is full of different languages, each language possesses its own typical script. India itself possess hundreds of language and their script. India possess a rich urban cultural background since Harappa and Mohanjodaro, where pictorial and sign language (heirography) is found which was lately made possible to read and understand the whole civilization. Even the primitive man also used the sign language to communicate. In folk art, tantra art
and many other local and traditional art, different scripts and signs are used for their religious rites and rituals.

Apart from its conveying quality a script could be transformed into a beautiful design and pattern through calligraphy. Calligraphy is generally understood as an art of writing. Various Indian traditional and modern languages are being calligraphed to beautify the language apart from its simple writing purpose.

In the contemporary Indian art scene of 60s and 70s, when a very strong inclination was experienced towards Indigenous and traditional art, the use of calligraphic motifs and script also regarded as an extended link with the traditional values. Unlike medieval manuscript writing, and without going into a hard competitive exercise and expertise in the art of calligraphy, a number of Indian painters during the past fifty years or so, recognizing the abstract values of the Alphabets, have tried to use some sort of script in order to supplement demand of the pictorial space. Precisely, the script is used to fill in the gaps and to harmonize the important compositional factor of the canvas.

Sometimes script is duly used to convey a message, as Rabindranath Tagore, S.H. Raza, Laxman pai, J. Sultan Ali did. It is also used for decorative picture plane as K.C.S. Paniker did, "...
The scripts are not intended to be read. To make them illegible introduce strange shapes and characters in between the group of letters."

Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, Urdu and other regional scripts and calligraphic languages are used for filling a large area of the space, or a single word or letter as a whole composition, like (ॐ) om- Narendra srivastava produced hundreds of facts of Om, like (الله) Allah- Deyayani Krishna produced Allah series exploiting the Arabic script with an abstract a compositional background for support.

In his paintings Husain has used Hindi script in folk description, Urdu and Arabic script in his Karbala series. G.R. Santosh in late 1950s and early 1960s used Arabic calligraphic motifs like - iam a alif, do - chasmihe, and Tashdid which resembles with the sign of Trishul, as a base for his abstract compositions. Nirod Mazumdar, Shanti Dav, Satish Gujral, Mohan Samant , Man Saraim etc. used different language scripts for abstraction or some individual pictorial plane.
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A Brief Study of:
Nasreen Mohammedi, Biren De,
K.C.S. Panikar, Jamini Roy, S.H. Raza
Nasreen Mohammedi

Nasreen Mohammedi, whose introspection found expression through a geometrically disciplined abstract idiom all through her life, was untouched by the basic anthropomorphic intent; embedded in Indian art. The condensation of symbology, iconography and subjectivities of metaphysical paradoxes, was evacuated by Nasreen Mohammedi. Her ink on paper coalesce the pure abstract thoughts of Kaimir Malevich, Kandinsky, Op art and minimalist.

Nasreen Mohammedi found her niche particularly in disengaging the representational ethics with a supporting mentor like Gaitonde, in 1960s, in Bombay and colleague, Jeram Patel in Baroda.
In the early period like many other contemporary artists, Nasreen also experienced transitional phase which gradually settled with her strong sense of silence of desert. A deep silent trajectories of Nasreen’s work starts with lyrical mode inspired by Kandinsky and Paul Klee. (A vertical watery stroke at the edge of the paper suggested an approaching storm, or the sky was made eventful by majestic sweeps of soil red and black colour). In her diary she mentioned “again I am reassured by Kandinsky - the need to take from an outer environment and bring it an inner necessity,”¹, which may be the extended perception of her late 1960 “The new image for pure rationalism. Pure intellect which has to be separated from emotion... A state beyond pain and pleasure. Again a difficult task begins.”²

Further, she worked with a sense of shadows, the shadow of the Hiroshima victim on the rock, she replaced the icon with the indexical sign that is always determinedly against the symbols as well.

A strong Eastern aesthetic sense of fleeting, evanescent, always at the point of vanishing, and taking the view with it,³ and the spontaneity of Chinese and Japanese painting is visible in her work from late fifties through the sixties.

Her first hand interaction with European abstraction came
at the age of seventeen when she was studying at St. Martins School of Art in London, which lingered on as foundational base later after her return to India in 1958. She used oil and ink mixed with thick, flat-tipped brush with hard bristles or a roller, and the oil was allowed to seep into the paper on either side of the colour. A saturated red or watery grey-blue with sepia or black seems to be utilized for its tonal and textural values which was later eliminated by the use of black ink. Her calligraphic brushstrokes are visible in her later pen and ink drawings, which later resembled with Arabic inscriptions in her desert landscapes.

The nature-bound imagery, calligraphic brush work and tonal and textural seduction gave way to pure abstraction in early seventies at her arrival to Baroda as a drawing teacher. Her aesthetic temperament finally turned towards the potential austerity of an abstract idiom devoid of colour. Her fascination for sanded desert of Gulf, the terraces of the Mughal movement accented by linear patterns, the geometric arrangement of the sandstone slabs of Fatehpur Sikri, the variations of the rectangular slabs, irregular crisscrossing of their fitting, the narrow streak of shadow of a water channel across the field, terrace steps descending into a square water tank shown in her photograph series, the intricacies of her mediating design of the cobweb, it
seemed inevitable that the idiom of Op-Art would be appropriate to reflect her own inner turmoil, which was searching for some clear-cut order by the late 1970s.

In the early days at Baroda she began to use straight lines measured and drawn with the help of the geometrical scale. Mark by mark, small ink drawing evolved into a grid-like structure. During late seventies her drawings and large, built up into a close-knit web of silken lines. Diagonal Intersecting with the vertical and horizontal lines of the grid itself creates a regulated pulsation across the surface. The drawing thus generates surface movements and under currents that vary in different parts of the paper.4

Her inspiration also came from post war abstractionists of French tachistes like Mathieu and Michaux in her middle 1960s biomorphic forms. She was also, strangely enough, interested in technology, in cars, in industrial movements, in water storage tanks, in the street, telegraph wires, airport runway, cameras, and precision instruments and architectural drawings and architectural spaces.

With the minimalists such as Carl Andre or Angnes Martin north American, Zen and Tao, She shared precedence in non-platonic thought. While the Minimalists used a language of
abstraction, their mode differed from Abstract art in that the latter is posited on the platonic idea of representation as a reflection of the natural world.\textsuperscript{5}

Jamini Roy

Jamini Roy's turning towards the folk tradition was not the reaction against the Bengal school but the realization of his own culture. "the important point to recognize is that he approached folk art not as an out sider, but as one who had intimate knowledge and understanding of the living experiences of the people where lay the roots of the folk culture itself".\textsuperscript{6}

Jamini Roy went back to the primordial experiences of the community village life, exposing the archetypal. In Jamini Roy's painting, a figure, an animal or any ornamental motif cannot be understood at its face value. He transforms his objects and figures with the intention of uncovering a stream of experiences shared by the community. His choice of subjects consisted by the elements of ecstatic dancing, the rhythms of music and song, animal motifs, etc.

"His art started a trend not only in the fine art but also in illustration, design and revival of handicrafts is one of the major achievements of our time, but we owe to Jamini Roy the vision to
reconsider the varies of folk art and to incorporate it in contemporary work something of its vitality, gaiety and innocence".7

The abstraction in his approach achieved quietly to be realized by the evaluations. He never intended to bring about any abstract element, but his work is identified with the process of abstraction where imitation of forms are of identical as its main approach is towards expression. The simplification of forms and coloures are remarkably contemporary which made Jamini Roy works widely accepted. It is non familiar to lots of people in Asia, in Europe - East and West, in Africa and in America where he has countless admires.

"It is sometimes asked why an orthodox Hindu who has never even read the new testament should be interested in the subject of Christ. Jamini Roy gives several reasons. In the first place, he wanted to find our if his new technique could be applied with equal effect to subject remote from his personal life... he wanted to show that the human and the divine could be made one only by abstract, symbolic means.. In particular, one can find a close parallel between Jamini Roy's studies of Christ and the anonymous French folk - painters of the 12th century whom Gauguin copied".8
Biren De

To approach the philosophy of Biren De's Tantric thought one requires to find the beginning and the end of the leading thread of the whole, on which it is based. It grows with the line of Indian tradition.

His Tantric concepts are based on the truth of union of Siva and Sakti or Purusha and Prakriti, the spheroid, which stands for the world - egg, Bindus, which is the focal tension, the creation of this universe. Specifically one find in each of Biren De's canvas a center point which constitutes its pivot is the invariable center immovably fixed and serenely poised of the unmanifested (avyakta) around which other forms of the manifested (Vyakta) fold and unfold.

"Biren De's arrival at this stage of plastic statement has not been a sudden one. It is the result of a long and arduous journey through life. It is the ultimate achievement of a power which is crowned by compassion - a silent and potent power that points towards transcedence".

Biren De's preoccupation with the concept of man-universe relationship, his efforts at pictorial depiction of manifestations of a supreme energy in man and nature could be seen even at the
time of his years at the Govt. College of Art in Calcutta where he studied from 1944 to 1949. Though he acquired proficiency in techniques of Western three-dimensional approach to painting, his interest was mainly in human body and mind. His compositions though were totally abstract as he declares "They represented the pressing (somewhat romantic) urge within my developing consciousness to explore the unknown and the unknowable. Questions regarding origin of Life, meaning of life itself, man's evolution from purely physical to spiritual state, existence of God etc., were troubling my immature mind at that time. All this resulted in some strange compositions arrangements based on thin, muted colours and strong unbroken lines, with titles such as: Energy, Path, Quest, God, etc. They were tentative, unsatisfactory essay, and certainly not Art., but they recorded faithfully the workings of my grouping mind".

Biren De's inspiration sources also came from the tribal people Kole, Veel, Oraon and Santhal during his Calcutta period. His visits of Hardwar, Lachmanjhula and Rishikesh, south of India and Bengal Mathura and Vrindavan inspired him for spiritual expressions "In my own way I was trying to assimilate these two seemingly desperate experiences of mine: one with the tribal folks and the other with the seekers of truth; one vital and raw, the other austere and serene. To me a synthesis of the two was the ideal, as I felt they
were only two different manifestations of the same source - energy. So my canvases continued to depict sadhus, monks, vaishnavis, the private symbols of the shrine, the mystique of the conch and the trident, the saffron mantle of renunciation and the blue of Mokhsa, as well as full blooded tribal couples and south Indian devadasis in various stances and moods."¹¹

Biren De does not directly accept his any association with Tantra as he says “It was a logical development of mine, I was interested in having man and Universe together; that was my journey ...” His understanding on Tantra goes like this; “Tantra is expansion of your consciousness. All three faculties exist simultaneously; objective realism, fantasy and a urge to transcend... The energy that you see in my work is not because of some God, “guru”. ¹²

K.C. S. Panikar

“...My work of the words and symbols series, started in 1963, using mathematical symbols, Arabic figures and the roman script, helping me create an atmosphere of new picture making which I seemed very much to need... in the course the Malayalam script more congenial.. The scripts are not intended to be read. To make them illegible I introduce strange shapes and characters in between the groups of letters. The symbols and diagrams, the tabular columns etc. have no meaning
whatsoever other than their visual aspect and images born out of association of ideas".\textsuperscript{13}

The Madras School Artist K.C.S. Panikar represents the best intimacy with his consciously adopted calligraphic motifs as a regular pursuit in order to move into the world stream of art, he used the script in a more painterly context. Apart from the problems related to intimacy or visual image, Paniker adopted different script as one of his fundamental motifs in order to build up his canvases. Tamil or Malyalam characters of the script in his compositions hardly denote any meaning, content or clue to the painted surface, yet, these characters are so integrally interwoven that if they are presumably removed form the canvas there would remain nothing except the dead shaded or silhettted, elongated parabolas or allied monochrome geometrically based shaped.\textsuperscript{14} K.C.S. Panikar went on with the researches into the discipline of figuration which he had started while at the college of Art at Madras. \emph{In his words and symbols} series he worked off the ego consciousness and its burden of emotion with an extremely craftily organization of purely syntactic graphic conventions.\textsuperscript{15}

In uniform and equal strength, the script flow sometimes vertically and sometime horizontally in spontaneous character harmonizing to the tune of the monochrome spaces. His way of
using the Indian script on the canvas is the best example of Indianization of modern art.

S. H. Raza

"Whatever the direction art expression may take, the language of form imposes its own inner logic and reveals infinite variations and mutations. The mind can perceive these mysteries only partially. The highest perception is to an insentive order, where all human faculties participate, including intellect, which is ultimately a minor participant in the creative process. This stage is total bliss and defies analysis". ¹⁶

S.H.Raza always aimed at pure plastic order through which he expresses his deepest concerns of nature and elemental philosophy. The early paintings of Raza resonate with profundity as does a full throated alaap in Indian classical music. His later artistic approach towards the genetic vocabulary of point, the line, element and colour and structural unity, all signifies his quest as "the task of art is to make things visible so that they may become objects of reflection". ¹⁷

The bindu the natural elements, terrestrial explorations, fertility symbols and other issues bordering Indian spiritualism, have persisted in his painting over the years without a tangible evolutionary credibility. For:
"The kinds is a sign with marker metaphysical implications. Like a seed – vital, a symbol of human, natural and universal energy".18

In pursuit of his preoccupation with landscapes, town scapes, temples, and village in his early paintings he says, "It was an impressionistic style - more or less European, because our whole curriculum was based on Victorian thought".19 For him the construction of a picture and colour is very important.

His formative period took 25 years to reach a certain point. At a point he went through the lyrical abstraction and than towards Indian music like ragas and ragnis.

Raza emphasizes that music is co-related to his work. He refers to a large canvas called Germination: "there is a preplanned structure, with something akin to teen tall, with the possibility of dividing the space and time into squares, and where the colours are arranged in a certain order to create almost an orchestration of lines, forms and colour. Something akin to music".20

The paintings done in acrylics, in Zamin 1971, and Oasis 1975, this vision and perception is freed further from the slightest reference to representational elements. There are no specific forms that relate to architecture or to the forest, nor is there any indication of a point of view or a perspective, A dark, calligraphic structure or a series of impetuous notations float over a variegated
field of continuously placed motifs which are luminates and streaked and veined with membranous textures.

For three or four years, Raza underwent a period of thought process - until he came to the realization that his vision had something to do with the bindu. His perception goes as: "it punctuates our manuscripts. It is a sign with major metaphysical implications, like a seed vital, a symbol of human, natural and universal energy".21

The significance of the bindu developed gradually in Raza's mind. Ever since Raza received the full revelation of this symbol around 1975, his work has revolved around this seed.

The metaphysical awakening, the fertility symbols as in Ma and other issues bordering Indian spiritualism, (we have Naga, Jala-Bindu, Tree of life and emergence have) persisted in his paintings. His canvases depict a point that becomes a circle around which there are four lines that make it a square. At the heart of the circle a horizontal and vertical line intersect - and there are colours, radiating energy.

The act of painting is a form of yoga, he analyses. "You have to be so near to it, that you stop thinking about yourself. You become a part of the whole activity, and some of the best paintings are created in this elevated state where reason has little access. It is not the intellect that decides, it is the instinct and essentially intuition, that have the upper hand".22
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34. G.R. Santosh. **Untitled.** 1971, 35.5 x 27.5 W/C, Private, Bombay.


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46. Nasreen Mohammendi, **Untitled.** 1965, 91.3 x 61.3, Oil, Geeta Khandelwal, Bombay.


49. Biren De. Genesis; 64, 1964, 76 x 152.5, Oil, NGMA.


52. G.R. Santosh. **Untitled**. 1985, 178 x 127, Oil NGMA


“Black, strong, gliding wires Creating drama,
As one moves along
Patterns of grey
Drops intersecting”.

July 18. 1966, Deolali, Nasreen's Diary.


56. Nasreen Mohammedi. **Untitled.** 1959 - 61, Oil on canvas.


58. Nasreen Mohammedi. **Untitled.** Circa 1976. 18.75 x 18.75 cm, ink on paper, private collection.

“Each particle in me becomes alive. Yes these deserts are necessary to growth.
The full moon - a perfect circle
- complete serenity.”

- July 10, 1971, Delhi,
Nasreen's Diary.
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2. The five elements, in ascending order.

3. Detail from Kali Yantra.

4. Diagram of the unity of the two principles, male and female.

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13. Footprint with symbols: fish, screen, shell, diagram, banner, vase, lotus, wheel, etc. Page from a contemporary calendar.
14. The seed - syllable Om.

15. A set of seven paintings illustrating various phases of cosmic evolution and involution. Rajasthan, 18th century. Gouache on paper.

16. Bindu. The universe in its unmanifested from is conceived as the most minute point from which the expansion of the world takes place and into which, completing the cosmic cycles, it recedes. Rajasthan, C 18th century. Gouache on paper.

17. "The beginning of my "Manadalas" : Inside the womb the cells get together to form a new life ; signifying (for me) a kind of regeneration : beginning of a new consciousness - a new birth ... putting the pieces together to make a composite" whole" - The "Light" within and "Light" around us : a simultaneous "implosion - explosion" of perception." Biren De. (Lalit Kala contemporary 32), P. 38.

18. Sketches by Biren De.

19. Sketches by Biren De.


22. Ritual dance. The right hand dancer is probably wearing a bison-born mask and the dancer next to him a plumed head - dress. Mesolithic rock painting. Bhimbatka, Madhya Pradesh.

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44. Punch - marks on tribal coins. 2nd half of 1st millennium B.C.


46. Punch - marks on tribal coins. 2nd half of 1st millennium B.C.

47. Tattoo designs for women in Gadia Labor, Nath Jogi and Banjara, Rajasthan, Nath Logi man with tatter marks, Rajasthan.
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