
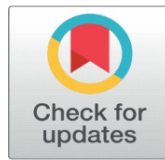


CHARACTERISTICS OF BENGAL SCHOOL IN THE ART OF ARTIST SHIVKUMARI JOSHI OF MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The modern art in India is the result of the growth of various modern art genres in the perspective of European art. Under the British rule, when Western techniques in art were more appreciated and disseminated, a challenge arose before Indian art. Having seen adverse situations, art historian E. B. Havell has drawn the attention of the world towards rich Indian culture by glorifying it through his publications. Later, while holding the post of Principal of the Calcutta Art School, E. B. Havell came in contact with Abanindranath Tagore and their mutual cooperation in support of Indian art led to the development of Bengal School.

The purpose of the presented research paper is to explore the characteristics of Bengal School in the art of artist Shivkumari Joshi of Madhya Pradesh. After introducing the Bengal School in brief, the study has been extended towards the aim of this research, for which reliable sources and artworks have been analyzed. Some images of artworks have been presented as required.

On analyzing the art of Shivkumari Joshi, the characteristics of the Bengal School such as the inclusion of Indian cultures, harmony in color-scheme, attractive countenance, figures with delicate limbs, rhythm in lines, simple and clear depiction, especially the use of wash technique etc. have been observed in her artworks which have been described in detail.

Keywords: Bengal School, Artist, Shivkumari Joshi, E. B. Havell, Abanindranath Tagore

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of various movements of modern art in the art scenario of Europe is somewhere behind the emergence of modern art in India. In the period of seventeenth century, the signs of Western impact started to see in Indian art in the guise of illusionistic techniques of chiaroscuro and perspective. This impact became more influential here under the political power of Britishers with the formation of East India Company in 1600. Further, the establishment of art schools initially in Madras, then in Calcutta and Bombay after the half of nineteenth century to grant training in Western art methods in an efficient way, was considered to be the origin of modern art in India (Mago, 2000).

Due to the Britisher's attitude towards greater appreciation and promotion for their Western art techniques, the problem of authenticity raised in front of Indian art practitioners. Among British officials, E. B. Havell was one, who only did honest efforts to overcome these challenging situations with the support of Indian art proponents.

Ernest Binfield Havell, was very illustrious among art enthusiasts as E. B. Havell (Babu, 2020). He was a rather enigmatic personality who made a brief but inspiring presence on the platform of Indian nationalist art in the end of nineteenth and the early twentieth century. He arrived in India in 1884, and same year decorated the post of Superintendent at art school of Madras. Later, he became the Principal at Art School of Calcutta in year 1896. At here, he realized himself free to introducing drastic changes in art training of India and with the companionship of artist Abanindranath Tagore, he shaped his decision of establishing an ideal school of Indian art. The implementation of new standards of art training in this institute by Abanindranath Tagore, the then Vice-Principal of Art School at Calcutta, led to the beginning of a novel school of Modern Indian Art which came to be called as "Bengal school" (Banerji, 2002).

Despite of being British, E. B. Havell glorified the greatness of Indian culture through his written books on Indian art and architecture. His thought of expressions of rising artists by copying works of senior Indian masters and Ajanta, Rajput and Mughal paintings resulted in the birth of novel traditional art style: revivalist style under the directions of pioneer modern Indian artist Abanindranath Tagore. It was stated by art critic and author Krishna Chaitanya that revivalism was not a revolution opposed to all foreign impacts but opposed to the Western arts that dominated at that time (Sharma, 2019).

The Bengal School offered the platform for the revivalists. This school was basically a revivalist school. The credit goes to Bengal School that through it the early use of term "modern" was seen in regard to Indian art. This artistic school got its start in Bengal in the early decade of the twenty first century, that's why known as Bengal School. It is not just a school of Bengali artists as its literal meaning suggests. This is a national school not a regional one.

The characteristics of the Bengal School include impressive themes that brought from the mythology, literature, frescos of Ajanta, Sigiriya caves and miniatures of the Mughal and Rajput Schools (Raman, 1953). The influence of Ajanta caves frescos simplified and comprehensible paintings, rhythmic figures with soft and delicate limbs, harmonious color scheme, wash technique, tonality, effect of Mughal and Rajasthani miniature schools, abundance of Indian traditions, all these have been the main characteristics of Bengal School (Sharma, 2019). These characteristics are apparent in the artworks of the artist Shivkumari Joshi of Madhya Pradesh.

Shivkumari Joshi, a well-known artist and art mentor, was born in 1936 in district Dewas of Madhya Pradesh state. She wedded to renowned artist Dr. Shrikrishna Joshi of Madhya Pradesh. She obtained degree of B. A. in Painting from Madhav College of Ujjain before reaching Aligarh for post-graduation in the same field. Besides this, she passed M. A. examination with distinction from Agra University in the year 1962 for which she was esteemed with a gold medal (Pandya, 2019).

After working as an art master in Vijaya Raje Girls school of Ujjain in 1964, It was a matter of great pride for Shivkumari when the celebrated Indian poet Shivmangal Singh 'Suman' and the then Principal of Madhav College, Ujjain, invited her to take up the post of art lecturer in the same college. It was here in 1970 that she became the head of the painting department. Moreover, she also received a Diploma in Art from the India's prestigious J. J. School of Art, Mumbai (Patidar, 1998).

Shivkumari Joshi was skilled in various mediums such as wash, watercolor, tempera, oil, fresco, collage etc. along with this she proved her talent by working in different genres like still life, landscape, portrait, nature study, line-drawing, composition etc. (Pandya, 2019). Despite being comprehensive, her art reflect the characteristics of Bengal School.

2. BENGAL SCHOOL

The late nineteenth century was a time in the history of Indian art when the Britishers attempted to teach English culture to the Indians by distracting them from cultural heritage. Simultaneously, Indian art continued to be a victim of criticism by the British. Amidst these adverse circumstances, E. B. Havell not only drew the attention of the whole world towards Indian art but also called European art as giving knowledge only of worldly things, whereas Indian art as universal, immense and immortal. In 1896, when Havell became the Principal of Calcutta Art School, he met Abanindranath Tagore and later both of them initiated the "Bengal Style" (Agrawal, 2019).

Bengal Style born as a result of E. B. Havell's liberal attitude towards Indian art as well as bold revolutionary thoughts of Abanindranath Tagore. The country's independence movement and love for indigenusness helped this revivalist style flourish. Abanindranath's disciples like Nandlal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, K. Venkatappa etc. have been behind the propagation of this art style. Techniques like opaque, wash and transparent were used for Bengal style paintings. Mainly these paintings were made in wash technique with the blend of European, Indian, Japanese and Chinese art. According to the Indian art historian Dr. Anand Coomaraswamy, the renaissance of Indian art through novel art experiments by Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples and the efforts of all artists to create in original style, is commendable (Pratap, 2022).

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF BENGAL SCHOOL IN THE ART OF SHIVKUMARI JOSHI

The primary sources of inspiration for Bengal style paintings have been the frescos of Ajanta caves and miniatures of the Rajput and the Mughal. The merged influence of the art of Europe, Japan, China and Iran was seen on the paintings of this style. These paintings were full of spontaneity, simplicity and clarity. The flexibility of rules in the Bengal School has given freedom to the painters so that each painter could develop his own distinct characteristics. Through soft, rhythmic and dynamic lines, the painters of these schools have succeeded in reflecting the ancient painting of India. Additionally, harmonious color scheme, use of wash and tempera method, depiction of mythological, historical and literary subjects, landscapes, social life etc. are all the characteristics of Bengal School paintings (Agrawal, 2019).

Shivkumari Joshi's entire creative field has been wide ranging including composition, still life, life study, landscapes in different mediums and techniques such as oil, watercolor, tempera, fresco, wash etc. Out of her depicted genres, she specially painted on Kalidas's literature like depiction of its mentioned heroines and yakshinis of Meghduta in which beauty of the females are worth seeing. Moreover, she painted for the poetry "Mitti Ki Barat" of great Indian poet Dr. Shivmangal Singh 'Suman' and publication of the Sanskrit academician V. Venkatachalam.

The landscapes in watercolor depicted by Shivkumari in Shimla, Mussoorie, Gangotri, Jaipur, Bundi, Udaipur, Kolkata, Kanyakumari, even Nepal etc. are fluent. The enhancement of female's beauty by executing them in distinct hairstyles in Shivkumari's women centered drawings reflect the ancient frescos of Ajanta and Bagh caves. Some of her human focused paintings are based on the social life of Gadriya Lohar people. She painted on religious themes in which artwork of Goddess Saraswati was gracefully depicted (Pandya, Rath, 2019).

The extensive subject-matter of Shivkumari's artworks includes titles like Abhisarika, Yakshini aur Sakhiya, Moti dhundana, Chand baho me, Nrityangnae, Yakshini painting, Kinnariyo ke gaan etc. (Patidar, 1998). All these artworks are expressively painted in her signature style wash technique. The inclusion of Indian traditions, harmonious color scheme, beautiful countenance, portrayal of females with soft and delicate limbs, use of rhythmic lines, ornamentation, clear and simple execution are the features in these paintings that match the characteristics of the Bengal School (See image 1 and 2). Apart from these, the selection of themes from literature (See image 3 and 4), landscape paintings, influence of the frescos of Ajanta and Bagh caves in hairstyles in women's drawings, social life depiction etc. also reflect the peculiarities of the Bengal School.

Image 1



Image 1 Shivkumari Joshi, Abhisarika, Wash (Source Artist Meera Gupta)

Image 2

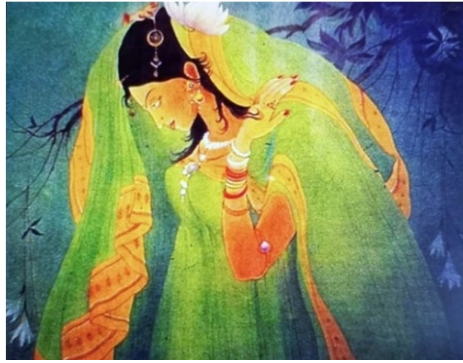


Image 2 A. R. Chughtai (Bengal School Artist), Gloomy Radhika, Wash and Tempera (**Source** Mago, P. N., 2000, p. 41)

Image 3



Image 3 Shivkumari Joshi, Yaksha (Literary theme from Kalidasa's Meghduta), Wash (**Source** Artist Meera Gupta)

Image 4



Image 4 K. Venkatappa, Death of Maricha (Literary theme from Ramayana), Wash (**Source** Nivedita, S., 1913, p. 56)

Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the characteristics of Bengal School are found in the art of artist Shivkumari Joshi of Madhya Pradesh.

4. CONCLUSION

As mentioned, the end of the nineteenth century was an era of change in the perspective of Indian art. At the same time, with the mutual collaboration of E. B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore, Modern Indian Art began from the Bengal School. It has been a revivalist school due to which the wave of renaissance of Indian art originated from Bengal and reached to every region of the country. The Bengal School has been important in the chronicle of Indian art and even today there are artists in the country who paint inspired by the same. In this regard, Madhya Pradesh artist Shivkumari Joshi has been mentioned, whose art oeuvre; religious, literary, social etc. have often painted in her forte wash technique, rich in Indian tradition that definitely reflect the characteristics of Bengal School.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None .

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None.

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